



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

**Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning**

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Ralph R. McKee Career and Technical Education

High School R600

**290 Saint Marks Place
Staten Island, NY 10301**

Principal: Sharon Henry

**Date of review: May 12, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Caron Martin**

The School Context

Ralph R. McKee is a high school with 624 students from grade 9 through 12. The school population comprises 33% Black, 41% Hispanic and 21% White and 5% Asian/Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander students. The student body includes 3% English language learners and 26% special education students. Boys account for 70% of the students enrolled and girls account for 30%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 84.0%.

School Quality Criteria

Instructional Core		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
1.1 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards	Additional Findings	Proficient
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the instructional shifts and Danielson Framework for Teaching, aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products	Additional Findings	Developing
2.2 Align assessments to curricula, use on-going assessment and grading practices, and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom levels	Focus	Developing
School Culture		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations	Celebration	Well Developed
Systems for Improvement		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning	Additional Findings	Proficient

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders and teachers consistently communicate high expectations to parents and families in a variety of ways. Using the Danielson Framework for Teaching, school staff sustains school wide expectations that inform instructional guidance and support that prepare students for the next level.

Impact

Clear expectations and communication result in students, their families, and all teachers having a deep personal investment in the success of every student, informed by systematic progress checks resulting in clear next steps leading to improved learning for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the staff regarding professionalism, instruction, expectations and training through a variety of venues: Danielson focused weekly professional development sessions, observations and feedback, school calendars for staff and families, departmental and grade team meetings. Staff, students and parents echoed the use of Skedula/Pupil Path, an online grade book and data warehouse, to track student progress and to communicate student strengths and next steps for parents and other teachers across classes.
- McKee is a career technical school that affords students approximately seven different career pathways in which upon graduation, they are certified and often times unionized in a specific field such as cosmetology, construction, automotive and software engineering to name a few. One student stated, "You feel honored when you finally get accepted into your shop."
- The principal provides parents with multiple opportunities to meet and partner with the school regarding student progress or to assist in connecting parents with other community resources. One parent stated, "Ms. Henry has made the school what it is today. She gives opportunity to every student." Another parent stated, "Ms. Henry and the other administrators always extend themselves. There is nothing that we ever feel ashamed about when it comes to asking for help with our kids and they are there."
- During both the student and parent meeting, parents overwhelming stated that the guidance counselor engages all students in college readiness experiences such as visits, and monthly workshops while also inform parents of the college application process, FASFA application process and other advisement priorities.
- When asked what the school values, during the student meeting, multiple students stated, "Teachers make the connection with us. They value us. The focus is always on just us and our futures." When asked what they found challenging about the school multiple students chorally responded, "Skills USA. It's awesome. We partner with colleges all over the city and they meet with us and help us so that we know exactly what we need to get into their schools."

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

2.2 Assessment

Rating:

Developing

Findings

The school is beginning to use formative and summative assessment practices and checks for understanding more consistently to measure student progress towards goals across grades.

Impact

Although the school has implemented structures to assess student learning across classrooms, inconsistent use of such techniques results in missed opportunities to identify and plan for gaps in comprehension and application of skill mastery.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers monitor student understanding during lessons by asking students to make connections to the learning target through the primary use of questioning and visual checks such as thumbs up/down and reference to stoplights to gauge student understanding of content. However, actual questions posed during lessons were Costas lower level questions and mostly teacher moderated. For example, in an Algebra class students were asked the following in a whole group setting, “How did Isaiah realize he could use the formula? What are your Y values? Can you just square? What happened to negate that? while in 11th grade Literature class the teacher asks students a series of questions about The Scarlett Letter, “What does Dimsdale decide and why – talk with your partner?” providing students opportunities to speak with one another prior to returning back to asking students directly and students responding back to the teacher, “What did he ask her seven years later? (student response) Forgiveness, (teacher response) Excellent!” and while the teacher required specific evidence, the nature of the conversation was teacher directed whereby students could have continued the conversation with the teacher acting as facilitator.
- Across classrooms, teachers used or created rubrics as well as peer review rubrics and data trackers aligned with the school’s curriculum. Feedback via rubrics, teacher notations written on student work and praise was evident. However, upon analysis of feedback, there was inconsistent evidence that feedback always provides actionable, meaningful next steps to students, such as “Total seven out of ten. Graph was done completely and correctly over given intervals. Domain was labeled correctly... forgot to label range. Did not answer transformation question,” “State the page, structure is off, writing is unclear.” Yet in another example, the teacher provided sufficient feedback for student to improve their writing, “Good! Structure of essay is off however good use of textual evidence. Go into detail. Really back up how evidence deals with the idea.”
- McKee utilizes Prosper, an online assessment and data tracking tool to monitor progress for students through administered common assessments in math, literacy, social studies and science core classes. Teachers then review the disaggregated data from Prosper to inform both lesson and unit planning.
- In the English Language Arts(ELA) department, teachers examine beginning of year and mid-year assessments. In response to question item analysis, teachers identified on the curriculum maps to work with non-fiction text, identify claims, and counter-arguments as well as writing arguments and align in class assessments with the ELA Regents.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

The school has aligned curricula to the Common Core Learning Standards with the integration of the instructional shifts. Teachers consistently emphasize critical thinking skills and analysis and they coherently plan for all learners across grades and subjects.

Impact

The curricular planning promotes coherence, which ensures that students are college and career ready. Tasks across grades and content areas encourage thinking for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers meet in content area teams on a weekly basis and align their work to the instructional focus for the year which is to prepare students to become college and career ready through using Advancement Via Individual Determination (AVID) methodologies in all subject areas ensuring that students become independent, critical thinkers that explore paths to post-secondary options.
- The assistant principal assists teachers with the refinement of academic tasks for the English Language Learners (ELL) by providing teachers with necessary instructional resources as well as organizing professional development school wide to address the needs of the 37% ELL population. In January 2015, the English as a second language teacher (ESL) and Special Education Teachers co-facilitated a session to the whole staff on "Multiple opportunities to write and talk about argumentative essays," providing their colleagues strategies to assist students with disabilities and English language learners identifying claim and counter claim in their writing.
- Lesson plans include unit essential questions, content and learning objectives, assessment plans and identification of Costa's Levels of Thinking as well as strategies for explicit vocabulary instruction.
- The use of AVID strategies such as Cornell Notes, Costas Level of Thinking and Writing, Inquiry, Collaboration and Reading (WICR) is evident in lesson plans and unit planning.

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Developing
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Findings

The school is beginning to align teaching practices with the Danielson Framework for Teaching and teachers provide some instructional supports, however, the focus upon multiple entry points and the use of instructional shifts are inconsistent.

Impact

Since pedagogy is beginning to align practices that focus on the instructional shifts, the inconsistencies result in uneven engagement in appropriately challenging tasks that promote students' demonstration of higher-order thinking skills in their work products.

Supporting Evidence

- In all eight classrooms visited, students were either sitting in groups or pairs however, it was not always clear the purpose of the grouping, as some students in a Trigonometry class completed tasks in a parallel manner while others in a ninth grade English class spoke with group members about "Why do American's get offended when they are called communists or socialists?"
- All lesson plans identified the use of questioning and various paired activities during the period although delivery was met with mixed results therefore missed opportunities occurred in allowing students to expand and question one another's thinking. In the ninth grade English class students were prompted to respond to the question of why American's get offended when they are called communists or socialists. As students began to first connect communism to various foreign countries, others made connections to "American's being capitalists, living in Democracy and having choice." However, the students were not able to continue their discussion as the teacher made a connection from the initial question to the economics of capitalism and communism and did not check-in with students to gauge their understanding of the connection and moved right into the read aloud portion of the period.
- While all lesson plans followed the suggested McKee format, aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching, the indicated differentiation strategies such as using alternate methods of graphing, sitting with a partner due to interest and ability, there will be entry points for all students, resulted in uneven access to the content across classrooms for students with disabilities and English language learners.

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across the school, teachers participate in structured inquiry-based teacher teams, which address the instructional focus and the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards.

Impact

Inquiry-team collaborations are building teacher capacity that is leading to student progress.

Supporting Evidence

- The school schedule supports common planning periods while also providing teachers additional time to meet and discuss curriculum, thereby ensuring alignment to the Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts.
- In meetings with two teacher teams, one team used an instructional tuning protocol to look at a lesson plan and student work. As the math team determined they'd be revisiting the content of the previous day based on the student work, one teacher made physical changes and annotations on the curriculum map stating they'd revisit the specific content of the lesson plan this and adjust when curriculum was revised prior to September 2015.
- During the conversation with cross content area teachers, each cited the use of AVID Strategies in their teaching and that they all use common planning time for lesson planning and use of Tuning Protocols to examine student work and make curricular adjustments. Teachers also review rubrics and curriculum maps, and one teacher stated: "As we consistently get the kids to use these strategies identified here, we push our own teaching to make sure we hit targets for them."
- Using Skedula and Google Docs, targeted student performance data is tracked and analyzed weekly, through both departmental, administrative and the professional development planning team meetings.