The Quality Review Report

The Quality Review is a two-day school visit by an experienced educator. During the review, the reviewer visits classrooms, talks with parents, students, teachers, and school leaders and uses a rubric to evaluate how well the school is organized to support student achievement.

The Quality Review Report provides a rating for all ten indicators of the Quality Review Rubric in three categories: Instructional Core, School Culture, and Systems for Improvement. One indicator is identified as the **Area of Celebration** to highlight an area in which the school does well to support student learning and achievement. One indicator is identified as the **Area of Focus** to highlight an area the school should work on to support student learning and achievement. The remaining indicators are identified as **Additional Finding**. This report presents written findings, impact, and site-specific supporting evidence for six indicators.

Information about the School

J.H.S. 259 William McKinley serves students in grade 6 through grade 8. You will find information about this school, including enrollment, attendance, student demographics, and data regarding academic performance, at http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/tools/report/default.htm.

School Quality Ratings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Core</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To what extent does the school...</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.1 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to State standards and/or content standards</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by State standards and the Danielson Framework for Teaching, aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Area of Focus</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## School Quality Ratings continued

### School Culture

**To what extent does the school...**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of Celebration</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

### Systems for Improvement

**To what extent does the school...**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area of Celebration</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school’s instructional goals and meet student learning needs, as evidenced by meaningful student work products</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Establish a coherent vision of school improvement that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are tracked for progress and are understood and supported by the entire school community</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.1 Observe teachers using the Danielson Framework for Teaching along with the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate schoolwide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.1 Evaluate the quality of school-level decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school, with particular attention to State standards</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Findings

The school community’s approach to culture building is informed by a collaborative effort to support the needs and interests of students. Schoolwide enrichment activities and guidance supports ensure that every student is known well by more than one adult.

Impact

The structures in place support improved student attendance, communication, and organization skills and promote a safe and inclusive environment where student voice is meaningfully involved in school improvement efforts.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders shared that the school culture is founded on the underlying belief that all “Mckinleyan’s” can learn and grow. The school culture is driven by the community’s mission to continually develop and improve. Students are represented on the School Leadership Team (SLT), and their voice is included in school improvement decisions initiated and implemented by the SLT. This includes schoolwide programs and initiatives, and Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP) goals. Students take leadership roles on the Student Government, International Student Council, and Leadership Club. In these roles, student leaders make key decisions on student events, monthly cultural celebrations, and fundraising initiatives. For example, students led “Just Say Hi” and “No Child Sits Alone” events in support of inclusion and anti-bullying.

- Students shared that the teachers make them feel safe and a part of the school community. Students highlighted monthly cultural celebrations and memorials as ways in which they learn about each other’s culture and history. They shared that teachers greet students in a positive way, no matter what, and always notice when a student is upset. They also shared that students demonstrate respect for teachers by paying attention in class and focusing on the work. One student shared that teachers try to help students meet their goals and students try to help teachers by taking on responsibilities in class and helping with tasks. Students also approach teachers and school leaders to share their interests and make requests for clubs and activities. Currently, the school has 34 extracurricular activities and 34 academic programs designed to meet the needs and interests of students.

- The school’s attendance committee holds a monthly meeting to monitor attendance data, revise supports, and coordinate services for students. The attendance teacher creates personalized plans for students who are persistently absent. Postcards and phone calls are used to contact families directly and keep them informed. There are three guidance counselors and a social worker on staff, who ensure that mandated and at-risk counseling services are available. In addition, the counseling team develops a variety of social-emotional and youth development supports for students. Currently the guidance team is developing a meditation space for students to enhance their self-regulation skills. The wide variety of activities and clubs, organized based on student interest and facilitated by adults, ensures that all students are known well by more than one adult. Student-centered activities support high attendance, engagement, and positive work habits. In 2019 and to date this year, 90 percent of the student population has maintained a 90 percent or better attendance rate.
Area of Focus

Quality Indicator: 2.2 Assessment
Rating: Proficient

Findings
Assessment practices and rubrics align to the curricula but do not always provide a clear portrait of mastery across contents. Teachers use questioning and observation to assess student understanding, however, practices in some classrooms do not reflect consistent checks for understanding or self-assessment.

Impact
While teachers provide actionable feedback to students on written tasks, some of the feedback is limited and hinders students’ abilities to make meaning across subjects and tasks. Limited adjustments and opportunities for self-assessment do not enable some students to be aware of their next learning steps.

Supporting Evidence

- Across content areas, teachers use rubrics aligned to the curriculum and assess students on criteria aligned to specific content or tasks. For example, an argumentative extended response rubric is used to assess student performance in presenting a claim, evidence, conventions, and counterclaim. Similarly, a science extended response rubric is used to assess students’ use of science vocabulary, understanding of science content, writing organization, fluency, and coherence. However, a review of student work demonstrated that meaningful feedback is not consistently provided across contents. Feedback seen on written tasks in English Language Arts (ELA) provided students with clear next steps for mastery. In one example, feedback in ELA highlighted a student’s use of claim and evidence, but asked the student to expand upon their analysis to help convince the reader of their claim. However, this level of meaningful feedback was not consistently evident across contents. For example, on a science task, the teacher checked off a list of items under the title “Good Job On”, but did not check off any items under the title, “Improvements for Next Time.” Limited access to meaningful feedback across content areas does not offer some students a clear portrait of their level of mastery.

- Across classrooms, teachers ask questions across the range of Webb’s Depth of Knowledge. Teachers ask questions and listen-in during whole and small group instruction to determine students’ levels of understanding. For example, in an eighth-grade math class, the teacher asked a series of questions, such as “Why would this be a reflection?”, “What do you know about a reflection?”, and “What words do you associate with reflection?” In a science class the teacher asked “How does wood left in a field connect to cellular respiration?” In these classes, teacher questioning led to adjustments for some students, who revised their thinking or added new information to their notes. In other classes, there were missed opportunities to adjust instruction to meet the needs of students. For example, in a seventh-grade class, students responded to a series of low-level definition questions, some of which were already defined in their notes and on charts posted around the room. In a sixth-grade class, the teacher asked leading questions before listening in to check on students’ level of understanding.

- Some teachers provided opportunities for students to assess their own work and the work of their peers, but this was not a consistent practice in other visited classes. In an eighth-grade math class, the teacher used student work samples completed on whiteboards to enable students to provide feedback on the misconceptions of their peers. In a seventh-grade ELA class, students responded to the prompts to share what they excelled at and what was challenging in the lesson. In an eighth-grade gallery walk, students were instructed to place their responses on charts based on their level of understanding. However, limited opportunities for self-assessment in some classes hindered students’ awareness of their next learning steps.
Additional Finding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.1 Curriculum</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
</tr>
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</table>

Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that lessons and unit plans are strategically aligned to State standards across all grades and content areas. Faculty members plan and revise tasks using student work, as well as formative and benchmark performance data.

Impact

Curricular alignment to State standards builds coherence and promotes college and career readiness for all students. Lesson plans include scaffolds, supports, and enrichment activities to provide access for lower and higher achieving students, English Language Learners (ELLs), Multilingual Learners (MLLs), and students with disabilities.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and teachers meet weekly to develop and revise curricula and strategically align them to content and State standards. Lessons are planned using a teacher-developed lesson plan format to support coherence across grades and content areas. The lesson plan format includes an overarching question, learning target, State and content standards, key terms, student groupings, scaffolds, and enrichment. The vast majority of teachers use this format, and outline the State standards that support the learning targets for each lesson. For example, a math lesson with the learning target, “I can define and solve the volume of three-dimensional figures” highlighted the standard to “know the formulas for the volumes of cones, cylinders, and spheres and use them to solve real-world and mathematical problems.”

- Lesson plans include prepared questions and planning for a variety of heterogeneous and skill-based groupings to engage all learners. For example, a math lesson includes the question, “If a cylinder, cone and sphere have the same dimensions, which solid will hold more and why?” This lesson also plans for heterogeneous groupings, with assigned roles purposefully designed to group higher performing and lower performing students based on a prior closing activity. Across curricula, an alignment to appropriate grade-level State standards promotes college and career readiness for all students.

- Teachers use data from student work samples, closing activities, as well as unit and benchmark assessments, to plan targeted groups for intervention and reteaching, and to design scaffolds and enrichment activities for students. Lessons include key vocabulary, translated reference sheets, opportunities for students to respond using illustrations, modified instructions, sentence starters, modified graphic organizers, and enrichment activities that include higher-order questions aligned to State assessments. For example, an ELA lesson on how the structure of a poem contributes to the theme includes two versions of the task, one with more scaffolds than the other, such as larger print, and visual cues such as shading, bold type, underlining, italics, and definitions. Lessons are planned to provide access to curricula and tasks for all students.
Findings
Across classrooms, teaching practices align to articulated beliefs around creating a positive learning environment, preparation, planning, and classroom structures. Teachers use graphic organizers, varied texts, manipulatives, and visuals as scaffolds to provide multiple entry points for students.

Impact
Alignment to State standards and the provision of multiple entry points support students’ engagement in challenging tasks and provide opportunities for students to demonstrate higher-order thinking in their work products.

Supporting Evidence
- School leaders and teachers shared the articulated belief that students learn best when they are learning in a positive and welcoming environment. Across visited classrooms, teachers engaged students with a positive tone and encouraged them to ask questions. Teachers across grades demonstrated respectful communication with students in small and large groups, as well as during one-to-one conversations. Teachers joined in small group conversations and encouraged students to continue with their work. In a math class, the teacher approached a student who had come to an incorrect answer to help the student try to sketch out the answer, stating, "Let’s go back to square one.” Across classes, teacher practices create an environment of respect and rapport.

- Preparation and planning were evident across classrooms in the organization of the physical space to support partner and group work and the common tools used to organize instruction. Classroom environments highlighted student work and outlined learning expectations using a common board configuration that included an agenda, the overarching question, learning target, standards, and key terms for each lesson. The board configuration in most of the visited classrooms were aligned to the lesson and unit structure, and the materials required for the lessons were prepared in advance. In a grade-eight ELA class, the teacher prepared narrative texts, a variety of song lyrics, and color-coded notes to support students in a gallery walk to “evaluate how authors use extended metaphors as a tool to further develop their point of view in a text.” Across classrooms, teachers demonstrated knowledge of and prepared resources needed to support student learning.

- Across classrooms, teachers used a variety of graphic organizers, including word webs, vocabulary sheets, and common tools adapted to the specific content area. For example, a common restate, answer, cite, explain and repeat (RACER) model is used across contents. In the math RACER model, c reminds students to create a diagram and show all calculations. In the science RACER model, c reminds students to cite evidence from simulations, labs, models, and data. In one ELA RACER model, the c reminds students to cite a direct quote from the text. Racer strategies were present across classrooms. Scaffolds present across classrooms provided access for diverse learners. For example, during a seventh-grade ELA lesson, the teacher facilitated station activities that supported a variety of learning styles using visual images, tactile word tiles, a group word web, annotated text, question stems, sentence starters, and individually modified work packets. Supports in this classroom and others engaged students in appropriately challenging tasks and enabled students to demonstrate their thinking using multiple modalities.
Additional Finding

### 3.4 High Expectations

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<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>Rating: Well Developed</th>
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**Findings**

School leaders provide training and consistently communicate high expectations for a supportive environment, teacher planning, and preparation for instruction. Teacher teams and all staff systematically communicate a unified set of high expectations for all students.

**Impact**

Faculty and school leaders hold each other accountable for student learning and school improvement. Guidance supports and enrichment activities promote student ownership and they are prepared for the next level of learning.

**Supporting Evidence**

- School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to all faculty and staff via faculty meetings, professional learning (PL), the school policy handbook, and a document entitled “McKinley Way: Logistics and Protocols”. School leaders consistently reinforce the expectations for teaching and learning, articulated and shared as the McKinley Way. The handbook, along with logistics and protocols documents delineate expectations for teaching tools, grading policies, discipline, safety, and behavior management. The protocol document reminds all faculty of the McKinley lesson plan, blackboard, and student notebook formats. All staff members are required to familiarize themselves with these documents, which are also revisited during the beginning of the year faculty meeting. Teachers and school leaders hold each other accountable for the McKinley Way of teaching and learning. Teachers actively develop and revise curricula, teaching tools and practices, including the common lesson plan and board configurations.

- School leaders provide training for all faculty and staff. Topics for PL are developed based on teacher and student data, trends and patterns from assistant principal inquiry, and self-identified areas for development. The 2019–2020 PL calendar outlines the dates, subject areas, topics, goals, and measurable objectives for PL sessions this year. The calendar includes multiple fall and winter sessions on the new science curriculum, ELA skills for grades six to nine, focusing on vocabulary and reading comprehension, and a variety of sessions on Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) models. PL also includes paraprofessional inquiry courses taught by a master teacher. These courses include topics such as brain-based learning, introduction to accommodations and modifications, and supporting students with speech and language impairments. Faculty and staff play an active role in the development of schoolwide PL via the Professional Development team. The team develops topics, informed by data and inquiry trends from each cycle.

- Teacher teams and staff establish a positive culture for learning, and communicate a unified set of high expectations via common teaching practices, tools, and enrichment opportunities. Students shared that teachers and guidance staff are always available to support them and offer help. Expectations are reinforced via the common classroom structures, notebook configuration, expectations for student notetaking, and participation in academic and extra-curricular activities. Students are taught leadership skills via their participation in small group facilitation roles, as volunteers to perform various classroom tasks, and in theatre productions, college readiness courses, and entrepreneurship programs. For example, students write and produce their own play each year, and create their own virtual enterprise. This year, students have designed a prototype for eye glasses that can capture and download photos. The multitude of academic and enrichment activities provided for all students prepare them for the next level of learning. The 2018–2019 next level readiness score shows that 95 percent of the school’s former eighth graders earned enough credit in grade nine to be on track for high school graduation.
### Additional Finding

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
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</table>

#### Findings

The vast majority of teachers are engaged in weekly inquiry and professional collaborations that strengthen teacher planning and preparation and promote the implementation of State standards. Teacher teams systematically analyze teacher and student work.

#### Impact

A focus on State standards-based instruction supports the development of schoolwide protocols, coherence, and increased student achievement for all learners. Collaboration supports shared improvements in teacher practice and increased mastery toward goals for groups of students.

#### Supporting Evidence

- Teacher teams meet weekly to analyze student and teacher data in four inquiry cycles per year. This year, cycles I and II have focused on benchmark data from the beginning of the year assessment and the RACER format to support organization and explanation in short response writing. Inquiry in each cycle follows a week by week protocol to complete the cycle. For example, the protocol during cycle II, week I required teachers to select a task and introduce the RACER format. Reviewed inquiry notes demonstrate that teachers selected individual tasks to apply the RACER tool, and adapted the tool to accommodate their learners, adding sentence starters and think-alouds for MLLs and students with disabilities. Teachers shared that a coherent, week by week protocol strengthens teachers’ capacity to use and apply new strategies and increases student success in effectively applying new strategies to their work.

- Inquiry cycles focus on State standards, and skills identified as in need of progress based on teachers’ analysis of benchmark data. Across classrooms, teachers post State standards in board configurations, and highlight standards in lesson plans. Inquiry notes for cycle II week 2 evidence that the protocol required teachers to note indications of student mastery or non-mastery, and the corresponding next steps. A focus on State standards and coherent inquiry practices support increased student achievement in ELA and math. A comparison of 2018 and 2019 State assessment data shows an overall increase from 65 to 69 percent proficiency in ELA and from 70 to 73 percent proficiency in math.

- Through benchmark analysis and inquiry practices, teachers identified focus standards and skills in ELA, math, social studies, and science, and developed common strategies to address these skills. Enhanced practices include the use of the common lesson plan format, board and notebook configuration, RACER response tool, and vocabulary strategies such as the word web. Across the visited classes, teachers utilized these tools to engage students. Teachers also shared that a focus on standards has led to progress for groups of students in using the RACER tool and grade-level progress on benchmark assessments. A review of 2019 – 2020 benchmark data shows growth for all grades in ELA, math, social studies, and science from benchmark quarter one to benchmark quarter two.