In 2009 McKay was one of the worst comprehensive high schools in the State of Oregon. Passing rates in class and on standardized tests were extremely low, while violence and dropout rates were at all-time high. In 2010 McKay applied for and received the federal Student Improvement Grant (SIG), which provided additional funding for staffing, training and staff changes. Over the course of the next four years McKay became a model school for change in the United States. Passing rates on standardized tests tripled, student attendance improved, school violence disappeared and the dropout rate decreased to a single student. This placed McKay in the top 1% of SIG schools in the entire country.

In 2015 our school was presented with a new challenge called the Smarter Balance Assessment Consortium, also known as the SBAC test. The new testing model has been extremely challenging for students across the country and especially challenging for McKay students. The test offers a unique challenge at McKay because many of the students have limited English skills and their math skills are often at a sixth grade level when they enter high school. There are many challenges ahead for our current 9th grade students in order to graduate on time. We would like to partner with Willamette students in order to help tutor and mentor our 9th grade students in Algebra I classes. This is a great chance to volunteer and give back to the Salem community.