



**NYCDOE**

**Quality Review: Final Report**

# **The New York City Department of Education**



# **Quality Review Report**

**William A Morris School**

**Intermediate School 61**

**445 Castleton Avenue  
Staten Island  
NY 10301**

**Principal: Richard Gallo**

**Dates of review: January 9 - 11, 2007**

**Reviewer: Jean Mackie**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The school is located in the new Brighton area of Staten Island. It has 1300 students enrolled, covering grades 6 through to 8. The school has a diverse ethnic mix, with 40% of Black students, 27% each of Hispanic and White students and 5% Asian/Pacific students. Approximately 10% of the population are special education students and a further 5% are English language learners. The proportion of students who have recently arrived in the country is in line with that of similar schools and below that of City schools. Most of the recent arrivals have come from Mexico. At 91.4%, the attendance figure in 2005 was below both similar and City schools. It has improved and is now running at 93%. The school has been in receipt of Title 1 funding for the last three years.

The school has been designated as a Magnet School of the Arts by New York State and was identified by New York City as a centre of exemplary practice for the arts. The Staten Island Community Education Council also identified William Morris as the most improved school in the locality for the period 2002 – 2006.

The school has recently reorganized the student population into three academies, each comprising students from grades 6, 7 and 8. Each academy has a specific theme, one of which is environmental sciences, the second is museums and urban studies and the third is careers and business.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The highly respected principal provides clear and purposeful leadership to the school.
- The school collects a good range of data and uses it well to track and monitor progress.
- There is a strong team culture within the school which underpins effective communication and the sharing of good practice.
- Staff have high expectations of the students in terms of both work and behavior.
- The strong emphasis on arts ensures that the students experience a broad and balanced curriculum.
- There is some very effective instructional practice which both challenges and engages the students, who respond well.
- Common planning time facilitates both professional development and opportunities to evaluate instructional programs.
- Recent steps taken to tackle absenteeism and tardiness have resulted in improved attendance and punctuality.
- Relationships within the school are positive with mutual respect shown between adults and students.
- The school building is well cared for and enlivened by stimulating displays of students' work.

### What the school needs to improve

- Strengthen the procedures for interim evaluation of the impact of new initiatives on outcomes for students.
- Build on the steps being taken to tackle the different achievement of boys and girls to explore possible strategies for addressing the relative performance of the different ethnic groups within the school.
- Sustain efforts to increase the engagement of those parents who have not yet become fully invested in their children's education.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Overall Evaluation

#### **This is a well developed school.**

The clearly articulated aim of William Morris as a school which endeavors to develop both the academic and personal qualities of the students is reflected in the broad curriculum on offer and the high expectations of the staff. The well respected principal, who is recognized as the key driver behind this vision, is constantly striving to secure further improvement. He has established a strong and highly professional team of staff who all share his commitment to the students and who also embrace new initiatives with enthusiasm.

There is a strong sense of community within the school, with students confident that the staff are doing their very best for them. In return, the students focus well on their studies and want to do well. They also appreciate the extensive opportunities to develop their artistic talents. Instructional practice is well informed by performance data and is often lively and challenging. The staff use team meetings very appropriately to both evaluate and share good practice. Professional development programs are sharply focused and underpin this process effectively.

The vast majority of parents are highly supportive of the work of the school but there remains a small group who do not fully engage with their children's education. The close links with a whole range of external partners help to enrich the experiences of the students.

#### **How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria**

**Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor student progress over time.**

#### **This area of the school's work is well developed.**

The school collects a comprehensive range of data which it uses well to both track overall achievement and trends in performance. Systematic analysis is undertaken at whole school, subject, grade, and individual student level. The principal and his administration also scrutinize results in similar schools to monitor how well William Morris is doing by comparison. Careful evaluation of the relative performance of different sub groups such as boys and girls and the range of ethnic groups within the school is also undertaken. The school has noted, for example, that boys are not performing as well as girls in English language arts and is taking steps to tackle this through a review of reading resources.

The teachers in all subject areas supplement the data provided by statutory tests with additional interim assessments such as unit and quarterly tests, the scrutiny of notebooks, quizzes, and reviews of projects. In this way staff have a very good overview of both the standards that students are achieving and the progress that they are making. The mathematics and literacy coaches have recently undertaken further analysis of progress data and reproduced it in a form which is easily accessible to teachers, who have found it very valuable as an additional tool for informing planning. Regular and well organized

team meetings within the school ensure that the different sources and uses of performance data are shared widely across the staff.

Data is used well to both identify and plan suitable programs for special education students and English language learners. Attendance and punctuality of all students are carefully monitored so that the school is well aware of and pursues those who are regularly tardy or absent.

**Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student’s next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student’s learning.**

**This area of the school’s work is well developed.**

The high expectations that the principal and his staff have for the students underpin the challenging but realistic goals that are set. Trend, grade, and subject specific data is used well to set school-wide targets. The process is undertaken collaboratively through, for example, cabinet, departmental, and team meetings. The collective planning that subsequently takes place to meet the goals is based on a shared awareness of what the school is aiming to achieve for its students. Teachers use the full range of assessment data available to them to set challenging targets for their students in class and to group them according to specific learning needs. In some instances, this results in students at the same level working together so that they can receive focused support and on other occasions the groups are heterogeneous so that mutual support can be provided. Teachers and support staff work closely together to set targets and next learning steps for special education students and English language learners. These two groups of students have been identified as in particular need of additional support and a recently purchased computer based program to enhance their learning is proving successful in engaging them more proactively in their studies. In its drive to raise boys’ achievement in English language arts, the school is purchasing more books that have proved to be particularly appealing to males. The variation in the performance of the different ethnic groups, however, is yet to result in a similarly focused intervention program.

Students and parents are well aware of the high expectations that the school has of both work and behavior. Parents are kept well informed about the curriculum on offer and the progress that their children are making. Most are highly supportive of the school’s work but there is a small minority who remain reluctant to get closely involved with their children’s education, despite the many efforts taken to engage them. Students themselves are keen to do well and be successful. The many external partners linked to the school understand its aims and goals and work collectively to achieve them.

**Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.**

**This area of the school’s work is well developed.**

The school provides a broad and balanced curriculum which follows statutory requirements. The strong commitment to the impressive arts program has been sustained at a time when the school has reinforced its focus on developing the basic skills of literacy and mathematics. Both magnet and non-magnet students have access to a broad range

of performing and visual arts, which is effective in developing the talents of, for example, young artists, musicians, and dancers. The students are also given good opportunities to pursue their interests through the different themes of the three newly established academies. Initial feedback from them regarding this development is positive.

Teachers are fully aware that they are responsible for the achievements of the students in their care. They use data well to group students in their classes according to need and to determine specific areas of learning that require further reinforcement. In one class, for example, interim assessment data was used to identify that students had weaknesses in their ability to distinguish facts from opinions. The instructional program was amended as a result and students were grouped so that those with a good grasp of the concept were able to support those with less confidence. Teachers and support staff use a good range of strategies to enable special education students and English language learners to meet the targets set for them. Good opportunities are provided for accountable talk which not only allows the students to take more responsibility for their learning, but also enables the teachers to assess how well key concepts have been understood. Students respond well to these challenges and show real engagement in their studies. The positive relationships and mutual respect that exists amongst the staff and students means that students are very comfortable about approaching adults if they have concerns or worries.

The principal has made good use of the budget, grants that have been secured, staff, and resources to ensure that the programs on offer are well focused on the needs of the students within the school. Although actions taken to improve attendance and punctuality have resulted in improved figures, they remain a high priority for the school. Rigorous systems are in place to tackle tardiness and absenteeism.

**Quality Statement 4 - Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.**

**This area of the school's work is well developed.**

The principal's vision for the school has underpinned his approach to both the selection of new staff and the development of well established faculty members. As a result, there is a common sense of purpose amongst the staff, with all fully committed to the students within the school. Professional development programs are carefully aligned to the priorities identified through the analysis of performance data and to individual teacher needs. Assistant principals, the mathematics and literacy coaches, and the team leaders play an important role in leading much of the professional development that happens within the school. There is a strong focus on the use of data to inform planning in most of the meetings that take place. The literacy and mathematics coaches, for example, have been supporting staff in using a more sophisticated analysis of progress data to help them strengthen differentiation in class. The trust and openness amongst staff means that there are regular constructive professional discussions about the curriculum and instructional practice. Common planning time and intervisitations facilitate this important process. Teachers also value and act upon the feedback from the classroom observations undertaken by the principal and assistant principals.

It is widely acknowledged that the principal is the key driver for change. He is not complacent and is determined to build on the recent improvements shown in student outcomes. The school has well understood systems and procedures to ensure that it runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis. The general office team plays an important role in this

respect. The extensive range of partners is fully committed to ensuring that the goals and aspirations of the school for its students are reached.

**Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerated learning.**

**This area of the school's work is proficient.**

The Comprehensive Education Plan is used well as a tool for recording trends in performance and any differences in outcomes between either subjects or sub groups of students. The targets set for the end of the year are challenging and clear actions to achieve them are identified. Procedures for evaluating the impact of recently implemented initiatives, such as the Read 180 program and the new academy structure, are, however, less clearly defined. This means that, although the school is able to acquire informal feedback on the success of these ventures, more formal interim evaluation systems to track the overall impact on student outcomes have not been fully considered. The school is aware of this and is currently considering strategies that would support this process.

At classroom level, the increasing wealth of data about individual students and groups of students is being used well to measure progress on a regular basis and to adjust programs in the light of interim assessments. Teachers also encourage peer assessment and peer tutoring in class which help students to reflect on their achievements and progress towards targets set.

The strong determination on the part of the principal and his team to do the very best for the students and the high level of collaboration through the team structures means that the school is well placed to undertake its next stage development.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: William A Morris Intermediate School (IS061)</b>	∅	✓	+
<b>Quality Score</b>			<b>X</b>

<b>Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor student progress over time.</b>	∅	✓	+
1.1 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• each student, classroom, grade level,</li> </ul>			<b>X</b>
1.2 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ethnic groups, English Language Learners, special education students*</li> </ul>			<b>X</b>
1.3 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• all other categories of interest to the school*</li> </ul>			<b>X</b>
1.4 Performance and progress are measured based on comparisons with similar schools, with the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grade levels, academic subject areas, ethnic groups, and other groupings of interest within the school.			<b>X</b>
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>			<b>X</b>

\* These criteria are partially aspirational as of now because schools do not have routine access to all of this data. The NYC DOE plans to provide schools with enhanced access to the necessary data in 2007.

<b>Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student's next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student's learning.</b>	∅	✓	+
2.1 Using data, school leaders and faculty engage in a collaborative process to set demanding, objectively measurable goals for immediate and long-range improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals.			<b>X</b>
2.2 Goals and plans focus on the school as a whole and on each student, classroom, grade level, academic subject, and group of students whose performance or progress has been identified by the school as a particular focus area.			<b>X</b>
2.3 Particular attention is given to improving the performance and progress of students in greatest need of improvement.		<b>X</b>	
2.4 High expectations are conveyed to students and parents/caregivers. Students and their parents/caregivers are regularly invited to provide information about each student's performance and how to improve. This information is central to setting challenging goals and developing, evaluating, and revising plans.			<b>X</b>
2.5 Goals and plans for improving student performance and progress drive the activity of all members of the school community: leaders, staff, students, parents, and other partners.		<b>X</b>	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>			<b>X</b>

<b>Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity, resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.</b>	Ø	✓	+
3.1 The school selects the curriculum based on how well it aligns with or implements the mandated curriculum and on the curriculum's capacity to generate meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and to support the school's high expectations and improvement plans.			X
3.2 Teachers are accountable for improving instruction and student outcomes. They plan and differentiate their instruction based on the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.			X
3.3 Budgeting decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.			X
3.4 Staffing decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.			X
3.5 Scheduling decisions about the use of teacher and student time are guided by the needs that emerge from examining student data and by the focused plan the school develops to improve student outcomes.			X
3.6 Instructional programs actively engage students.			X
3.7 Staff know and respect students and respond to their academic needs, as well as their personal needs that affect academic performance. Each student knows and trusts an adult on the staff who is concerned about him or her.			X
3.8 Student attendance and engagement are high priorities. High rates and patterns of absences trigger immediate intervention.			X
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>			X
<b>Quality Statement 4 – Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.</b>	Ø	✓	+
4.1 Leaders, faculty, and staff are selected based on their high expectations for student performance and progress and based on their commitment and capacity to use data, compare outcomes within and across classrooms and schools and develop and revise plans and methods to improve performance and progress.			X
4.2 Professional development decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes. Professional development is designed to help leaders, faculty, and staff use data, self- and peer-assessments, and collaboration with peers to achieve goals for improved school and student outcomes. Professional development and self- and peer-evaluation are aligned and overlap.			X
4.3 The principal frequently observes classroom teaching and has a considered strategy for improving the quality of each teacher's instruction. Teachers frequently observe and support each other's classroom instruction with the goal of improving student outcomes.			X
4.4 Planning, evaluation of results, and revision of plans takes place in teams. Leaders and faculty inform each other of their goals and results, candidly evaluate themselves and each other, and use what is learned to drive improvement.			X
4.5 The principal is respected and has capacity to effect change.			X
4.6 The school runs smoothly. Procedures are clear, communicated to all, and are generally followed.			X
4.7 The school aligns youth development and support services around stated academic goals. Partnerships with outside bodies are routinely used to achieve academic goals.			X
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>			X
<b>Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.</b>	Ø	✓	+
5.1 All school plans and other interventions include frequent interim goals and diagnostic assessments of progress designed to reveal in objectively measurable ways whether the plan is being effectively implemented and reaching stated goals.		X	
5.2 Comparisons of student progress within and across classrooms and schools are used in making interim diagnostic assessments and measuring the progress of plans and interventions.		X	
5.3 Information generated by periodic assessments and diagnostic measures of progress and comparisons is used to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals. Interim and final goals are modified when data objectively demonstrate that revision is required.			X
5.4 Each plan's interim and final outcomes drive successive phases of goal setting and improvement planning, and each successive phase is characterized by agile and flexible realignment of practices and resources to improve student academic outcomes.		X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>		X	