



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Morrisania School

Public School 002

**1260 Franklin Street
Bronx
NY 10456**

Principal: Alexei Nichols

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Reviewer: William Haft

Content of the report

Part 1: The School Context

Information about the school

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

What the school needs to improve

Part 3: Main Findings

Overall evaluation

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

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Morrisania School is an elementary school with 330 students enrolled in grades kindergarten through 5. The student population has declined more than 40% since 2003. The student population is almost evenly split between Hispanic (49%) and Black (48%). There are small proportions of White, Asian and Native American students. Sixteen percent of the students are English language learners, and the school serves a high special education population (35%). The student population is relatively stable and has few recent arrivals into the country (2%) compared with other schools in the City. Approximately half of the recent immigrants are from the Dominican Republic and one fourth from Ghana. The school's attendance rate has been slightly above 93% in each of the last three years. Those rates have exceeded the district average slightly and are above the rate for similar schools. The school receives Title 1 funding, with more eligible students than similar schools.

At the beginning of the 2005-06 school year, the school moved to a five-story facility that is shared with another school. Each school generally operates vertically on one side of the building. The two schools share common spaces including the lunch room and the auditorium. The principal is in her second year at the school. Following the previous principal's retirement, she assumed leadership the year that the school moved to its current building. The school has an experienced staff with relatively low turnover.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- There is a coherent educational focus on literacy based on clearly identified needs.
- The professional development program has a coherent, consistent structure and effective implementation based on the educational priorities.
- The school uses data effectively to provide an objective, current understanding of student status and development in literacy.
- The administrative staff devotes substantial time to observing classroom instruction and using observations both to improve teacher quality and to inform professional development programs.
- The school has identified students in greatest need of improvement, both individually and in relevant subgroups, and targets resources effectively towards meeting their educational needs.
- The principal has strong capacity to effect change and is viewed throughout the school community as being accessible and responsive.
- The school engages in effective, collaborative instructional planning by grade.
- The fine arts and music programs create meaningful learning opportunities, are highly valued throughout the school community and foster students' intellectual and emotional growth.
- The school's leadership has a cooperative, collaborative relationship with the co-located school and is working to extend that relationship to the students.
- Budgeting decisions align well with educational priorities.

What the school needs to improve

- Translate the rigorous focus on and development of the literacy program to other academic areas, most immediately writing and mathematics.
- Improve teachers' capacity and skill in using differentiated instruction.
- Improve parent engagement and involvement.
- Continue to focus on improving student attendance and develop even more effective strategies for achieving that goal.
- Develop staff leadership in order to effect a more collaborative process for program decision-making, development, and implementation.
- Make the school building a place that the school community perceives as its home.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

Under the guidance of its second-year principal, Morrisania School is systematically reinvigorating its programs and instruction. Literacy is the educational priority, and the school is conducting an effective process of evaluating the curriculum, identifying instructional priorities, aligning resources and training, and evaluating results.

The school relies consistently on student performance data as the touchstone for assessing educational priorities and progress. The principal has an excellent understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. She balances immediate priorities with attention to long-term goals. Parents, teachers, and students appreciate her commitment, professionalism and responsiveness.

The school is orderly, safe and generally conducive to learning. The school holds the arts and music programs in high regard. These two programs engage students, encourage habits of discipline and collaboration and offer new cultural opportunities. The success of the arts and music programs is linked effectively with the success of the academic program. Teachers and administrators are invested in the students, and students are generally engaged in learning. Nevertheless, the school is still finding practices that will engage parents and recover chronically absent students consistently.

The school is still adjusting to being in a different and shared facility. The current building is not as well maintained as the previous site. Nevertheless, the administration has developed an effective working relationship with the co-located school and aims to extend that relationship to 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 proficient.

The school uses several complementary measures to evaluate student performance and progress in literacy. Over the last year, school leaders and faculty have developed a sound understanding of performance by student, classroom and grade level. The school's leadership analyzes data from a variety of perspectives and determines strategic priorities according to the results. Measures include Rigby running records and Princeton Review. Teachers maintain ongoing assessment binders with records of individual student performance.

Performance and progress are evaluated primarily by comparisons within the school including by individual student growth, academic subject area, past school performance, grade level and other relevant groupings such as ethnicity or gender. The school does not emphasize comparisons with other schools. Data analysis has enabled the principal to determine that achievement gaps do not exist between ethnic groups, but that educational goal-setting should aim to address the disparity between boys and girls. The school has

also recognized from the data that its high special education population must be a priority. There is a clear expectation that teachers understand and regularly evaluate student performance beginning with inventories in core subjects at the beginning of each year. Teachers articulate performance in relation to standardized tests as well as growth measured by internal assessments.

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 proficient.

School leaders and faculty routinely plan collaboratively to develop time-specific goals for improving literacy. The goals are designed primarily around individual student growth and, by extension, expectations for classes and grades. The school has identified groups of students for particular focus or attention, but has not yet established goals or developed coherent plans for closing the gap. For example, the school has identified a considerable disparity between boys and girls in reading performance but has not yet implemented a thorough strategy for addressing this difference.

Despite the school’s current efforts, the school-family relationship does not reinforce student learning consistently. Parents feel welcomed at the school. They appreciate the positive school culture, the arts program, and the fact that “teachers have a bond with the kids.” However, they do not, on the whole, recognize educational achievement as a compelling priority. Parent conferences take place twice annually and draw about 50% parent participation. The school is aware of and taking steps to improve parental involvement through frequent opportunities for families to engage around teaching and learning. A recent mathematics night received an extremely positive response and provides a model for engaging families more consistently in the future.

With the notable exception of the literacy program, the school does not yet have clearly defined goals and plans for improving student performance and progress. The message students receive in other disciplines is more focused on process than results. Students know that they are expected to make a genuine effort. However, they do not generally display a sense of urgency around performance and outcomes. Effective use of data takes place in the literacy program where the school employs specific targets such as moving students to grade level or to exit 1st graders from the Reading Recovery program within six to eight weeks. The school has a good model in the rigorous planning and implementation process that characterized revision of the literacy program. However, it has not yet built on this to develop more clearly defined goals and plans to improve student learning in other disciplines, most immediately writing and mathematics.

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 proficient.

The principal reviewed the literacy curriculum and related programs on her arrival at the school. She identified a curricular focus related to improving literacy and has since driven numerous organizational decisions that precipitated more rigorous implementation of the literacy program. The reading curriculum aligns with State standards and staff conduct

ongoing, objective assessments with increasing consistency and rigor. There is now a clear expectation that teachers will follow an engaging and effective instructional strategy based on a sequence of presentation, modeling, practice and student demonstration. Teachers implement this approach effectively in most, though not all, classrooms. The overall effect is solid student engagement. Other aspects of the core educational program have alignment but not yet the high degree of rigor that has begun to characterize literacy instruction. For example, the school has yet to engage fully in the process of evaluating the mathematics curriculum and aligning instructional content and resources in relation to student performance goals.

The principal has a clear sense of organizational needs in relation to the defined goals and consistently makes budgetary choices designed to help students meet those goals. She has made decisions both to add and to remove staff, based on the school's educational priorities. In addition, the school restructured the schedule to provide for intensive literacy time every morning and to create common planning and professional development time for teachers by grade.

Staff members use common planning time to generate effective lessons and to implement more consistent, rigorous, ongoing, objective student assessment. Teachers are able to identify student needs by reference to those assessments. However, they do not yet demonstrate a consistently highly-effective ability to differentiate instruction in response to identified needs. The principal understands individual staff capacities and recognizes the general need for more extensive differentiation of instruction.

There is a climate of mutual trust, and students know they will get help when they need it. Improving attendance has been identified as a priority. The school has taken affirmative steps but has yet to implement strategies that have proven successful in remedying chronic attendance problems.

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 proficient.

The principal has the respect of the school community, including teachers, students and parents. Teachers report that she is "very open" and "handles every situation". Students say she "helps you out," and parents feel welcomed by her in the school. She has guided the school to a clear educational focus in a relatively short time. She sets high expectations for the development of instructional leadership, staff and capacity. These are reflected in a literacy-focused professional development program that includes frequent review and discussion of student performance. Teachers' assessment binders inform professional development needs and priorities. Weekly team meetings may be led by literacy coaches who conduct professional development around review and discussion of student work.

The principal and school leadership have established a culture of ongoing, data-driven professional development that both derives from and helps to drive the school's educational priorities. The school's conception of teachers as adult learners translates effectively to practice. Administrators are constantly in and out of classrooms. They are always visible and provide useful feedback on visits, whether formal or informal. Supervisors are "great about making [peer] observations happen." Most teachers have observed other classes many times already this school year. Supervision and structured collaboration consistently encourage teachers to develop and improve their instructional

practices. Collaborative meetings are structured and clearly aligned with student performance expectations. Staff members find the professional development valuable and ultimately judge it based on whether it is successful with students. The instructional focus is yielding results. The principal has not yet replicated this level of instructional leadership in other core areas, most notably writing and mathematics.

The school has implemented a schedule and supplemental programs that are clearly aligned with the school's educational philosophy and specific focus on literacy. The schedule was reconfigured to provide literacy blocks and common planning time for teachers by grade. Teachers consistently use this time for collaborative planning and professional development. Despite the good collaboration, staff are not yet fully involved in program decision-making, development, and implementation.

The school has implemented support services like Reading Recovery and established a partnership with Teachers College that has improved instruction. A range of partnerships with community-based organizations add to students' personal and academic development.

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 school uses performance comparisons by individual student and across relevant comparison groups to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching plans and practices. For example, in the course of reviewing reading assessment results, the school has identified the need to develop more effective strategies for working with special education students.

Similarly, the school is adept at identifying areas for organizational improvement, taking defined steps and evaluating the effectiveness of those steps. For example, the school quickly identified several characteristics that made the mathematics night held to inform and encourage parents effective and plans to incorporate those characteristics into other activities for parents.

For longer-term goals related to student achievement, it is too early to assess the effectiveness of the school's monitoring and revision practices. Implementation of the plan for literacy began during this school year and improvement plans for other core subjects are now in development. Under its current leadership, the school has established a literacy program with strong potential to accelerate student learning and has begun to develop comparably promising plans for other core subjects. The school is not yet in a position to monitor and revise implementation of the plans because of their newness.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Morrisania School (PS 002)	∅	✓	+
Quality Score		X	

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.	∅	✓	+
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"> • each student, classroom, grade level, 		X	
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"> • ethnic groups, English language learners, special education students* 		X	
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"> • all other categories of interest to the school* 		X	
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.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 1		X	

* 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.

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.	∅	✓	+
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.		X	
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.		X	
2.3 Particular attention is given to improving the performance and progress of students in greatest need of improvement.		X	
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.	X		
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.	X		
Overall score for Quality Statement 2		X	

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.	∅	✓	+
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	
Overall score for Quality Statement 3		X	
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.	∅	✓	+
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	
Overall score for Quality Statement 4		X	
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.	∅	✓	+
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	
Overall score for Quality Statement 5		X	