



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Morris Heights Elementary School

Public School 204

**108-110 West 174 Street
Bronx
NY 10453**

Principal: Marcy Glattstein

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Reviewer: Mary Ayala

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Morris Heights Elementary School, PS 204, is a neighborhood school in the Morris Heights section of the Bronx, serving 369 students in kindergarten through grade 5. The student population consists of 61% Hispanic students and 39% Black students. The percentage of newly arrived students, mostly from the Caribbean, is about one-half that of City and similar schools.

At 3%, there is a small proportion of special education students. English language learners account for 24% of the student body, a much larger proportion than typically found in similar and City schools. The school is Title I eligible. Attendance is 92%, which is around the City average.

The school has been recognized as one of New York State's 272 Title I 'high performing/gap closing' schools.

The school faces challenges related to its leased facilities in that the main building is a former synagogue and there is no gym, library, auditorium, or computer lab. An annex is located one quarter of a mile away in the Graham Windham building.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school's culture of trust and collaboration supports frequent conversations regarding improved student outcomes.
- The school has successfully developed its own tool for gathering and organizing a wide range of information to better understand student performance.
- Teachers meet regularly in teams and share information to plan for improved student outcomes.
- High expectations on behalf of improved student outcomes are communicated successfully throughout the school community.
- The school is well run with clearly defined policies and procedures that are communicated effectively to all members of the school.
- Classrooms are well resourced to support improved student achievement.
- Parent involvement is leveraged on behalf of academic achievement leading to motivated students.
- Staff development occurs on a frequent basis and supports improved teaching and learning.
- The principal is well respected and effects change on behalf of improved student outcomes.

What the school needs to improve

- Refine school improvement planning so that all goals have measurable outcomes that can be tracked and used for comparative analyses.
- Analyze data about the comparative achievement of gender and ethnic groups within the school, and in comparison with similar schools, to identify emerging trends and patterns in student performance and progress and rectify any underachievement.
- Ensure that all partnerships align strategically with school plans to achieve academic goals.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

Morris Heights Elementary School provides a solid educational foundation for its students and is well regarded by parents for its efforts in developing “the whole child”. It has succeeded in creating a warm, welcoming environment that highlights student work and celebrates success. Students and parents alike appreciate the staff’s effort to advance the achievement of every child.

The school has developed its own excellent tool for gathering and organizing a wide range of information about student performance. This data is used well to plan lessons that challenge all students and to identify what supports need to be put in place for struggling students. In addition to its use as a planning tool, the data is used to monitor the progress of individual students, classes, and grades. However, insufficient attention is given to considering the progress of ethnic groups and to comparing standardized test performance to that of similar schools or City schools in general.

Staff set high expectations for themselves and for students and these efforts have resulted in steadily increasing student achievement, especially in mathematics.

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 has designed its own database called the ‘Student Assessment Management System’ that processes a wide range of data to develop comprehensive student profiles. Information is drawn from standardized tests and numerous formative and summative assessments and analyzed well to determine what students know and are able to do. As a result, teachers have a substantial evidence base on which to make their decisions about student placement, and lesson content and delivery. Student profiles are updated regularly and the information about the progress of individual students, classes, and grades is discussed at grade level meetings and at teacher/principal conferences. The high quality of the information provided makes it possible to make well-informed decisions about how best to accelerate individual student learning, as evidenced by steadily increasing standardized test scores in mathematics.

The school analyzes and compares the progress of individual students well, including special education students and English language learners, by class and grade in tested subjects. It does not yet analyze closely enough the comparative achievement of other subgroups, particularly boys and girls, and Black and Hispanic students, to identify emerging trends and patterns in performance and progress. The school uses the school report card to compare trends in performance and progress with similar schools and City schools in English language arts, mathematics and science, but has not yet sought ways

to establish ways of determining whether subgroups relating to gender and ethnicity are doing as well as they should.

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.

The school gathers a considerable amount of data and uses it to set both general and specific goals for improving teaching and learning. Achievement data from standardized tests is used to establish a generalized school improvement goal. This measure is threaded throughout the aims of the Comprehensive Education Plan related to the core subjects, arts programs and the physical education/health program. A variety of interim, formative assessments are used to measure progress against the broad goal and are used to determine what instructional adjustments should be made to sufficiently secure accelerated learning. Some goals, however, such as improving the communication skills of English language learners and increasing parental involvement, do not have measurable outcomes connected to them or established timescales as to when they are expected to be achieved.

Good attention is given to improving the performance and progress of individual students in greatest need. All level 1 students receive support from academic intervention services and a number of teachers are trained in a program that specifically addresses the needs of emergent yet struggling readers. Bilingual classes in kindergarten through second grade, the services of an English as a Second Language teacher and an after school program support accelerated learning of all English language learners.

The school is successful in conveying high expectations to students and parents/caregivers. Students feel that their work is challenging and are able to make the connection between hard work and results. They appreciate the advice given for the promotion of these values.

School leaders, staff and parents share a common aim in achieving the best performance of students. At Parent/Teacher Association workshops, the school report card is shared as well as information on how parents can help their children at home.

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 school has responded well to the needs of emergent, struggling readers by investing in programs that supplement the mandated balanced literacy curriculum. These programs provide precise data that allows for targeted interventions to improve reading skills. In addition, a commercial mathematics program is under consideration to as a source for homework assignments intended to strengthen the skills currently presented in the mandated mathematics program. A varied range of after school programs supplements and enriches the children’s education. These programs include art, music, dance and science and compensate for the absence of a gymnasium.

The school designs good systems to hold teachers accountable for ensuring teaching is focused on improving student outcomes. Comprehensive student profiles, based on a wide range of data, are used to good effect to plan customized units of study. Both the principal and assistant principal have been trained in the balanced literacy curriculum and provide support for its implementation. As a result of these efforts, instructional programs engage students and provide a variety of ways for students to demonstrate their competence.

The principal has made good decisions with regard to staffing, budgeting and scheduling to support improved academic achievement across the school. Classrooms are especially well resourced with print materials, computers and Internet access. A good feature is the design of the daily schedule to ensure that two teachers are present for guided reading instruction, thereby increasing the amount of time one instructor can spend with individual students. In addition, the budget is used particularly well to secure sufficient coaches, consultants and counselors to accelerate student learning.

The school does a good job addressing the personal needs of students. Students note that the mantra of teachers is, "If you have a problem, come to me." A variety of after school programs align nicely with student interests, thereby strengthening the student to school connection.

The school does well in promoting student attendance and routinely meets the Department of Education's goal of 92% average daily attendance. A variety of staff are involved with telephone calls and home visits to secure this level of engagement. Students appreciate the efforts of teachers to help them catch up on missed work and parents appreciate the helpful, non-judgmental approach of the school.

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 school is successful in selecting and developing staff who are a good match with its expectations for high performance and have a commitment and skills to use data to inform instructional planning. Potential teachers are interviewed by the principal and assistant principal and are also expected to teach a literacy lesson.

Teachers are well supported in this school with regard to their professional development. They are provided a wide range of data and are given the opportunity to discuss the implications of the data with the leadership team and their peers. As a result, good decisions are made regarding teaching and learning and student placement. A variety of professional development opportunities are used well to build capacity to meet the school's goals. They include classroom observations, on-site work with coaches and consultants, and networking with peers.

Scrutinizing data to revise instructional plans is used to good effect in this school. Teachers frequently use their common planning time to discuss and align their work with colleagues who teach the same grade. In addition, teachers discuss how what they teach builds on the work of the previous grade while preparing students for the next grade. The principal regularly visits classes and provides good support for class inter-visitations so that best teaching practices are observed and disseminated quickly.

The principal is well regarded and is credited with making many of the changes that support improved student performance. Students, staff and parents appreciate how focused she is on improvement for all and how she seeks input from all members of the school community on how best to accelerate student progress.

The school is well run with clearly defined policies and procedures. There is good communication throughout and staff has responded creatively to the challenge of working with limited space. Parents appreciate the absence of disorder and the fact that “problems are quickly fixed”.

The school has developed effective partnerships to support its Arts curriculum and to extend its work in literacy, all of which support the school in achieving its stated goals. After-school programs, while enriching and expanding the children’s education, do not appear to be aligned with the school’s academic goals to the same extent.

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 manages the monitoring of the progress of individual students well through the Student Assessment Management System. When new data becomes available, it is analyzed to determine and make what adjustments to teaching and learning need to be made. The school leadership team reviews the goals of the Comprehensive Education Plan periodically and identifies any trends that may need to be addressed to improve student achievement.

The Student Assessment Management System also makes it possible for the school to efficiently compare student progress within and across classrooms. The progress of students is measured and discussed regularly along with a review of the Student Assessment Management System performance data. The breadth of the data on the student profiles makes it possible to identify learning gaps and to adjust practice quickly. Because this system is managed by the school, there is little delay in getting assessment results. As a result, staff is able to adjust practices quickly in order to improve academic outcomes. Similarly, the school makes good use of intervention support for its struggling students. More importantly, they use the information to design individual plans to accelerate each student’s progress.

The school does not monitor the performance of ethnic groups within the school as well as it monitors individual students and classes. As a result, there is currently no way to identify issues, plan for improvement and adjust instructional practices and programs that could arise out of data disaggregated by group performance.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Morris Heights Elementary School (PS 204)	∅	✓	+
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	