



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Morris Academy for Collaborative Studies

**High School 297
1100 Boston Road
East 166th Street
Bronx
NY 10456**

Principal: Charles Osewalt

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Reviewer: Bruce Berry

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Morris Academy for Collaborative Studies is an empowerment high school with an enrollment of 394 students, covering grade 9 to grade 12. The population has an ethnic breakdown of 50% Hispanic and 50% Black students. There are 11% English language learners and 21% special education students.

The school, which is in receipt of Title 1 funding, was only opened in July 2003 and has built up student numbers gradually since that time. There is, therefore, very little in the way of historic test data. The attendance figure in 2005 was 87.2%, above that for similar and City schools. The attendance figure for this academic year is 85.8% to date.

The school shares a building with four other schools. Its main teaching area is also the entrance thoroughfare for the other four schools.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal's strong leadership and management are focused on raising achievement at all levels and for all students.
- The leadership team and teachers form a corporate team who share a vision of continuous improvement.
- The school uses data and goals effectively and is beginning to have success in graduation rates and external test results.
- The school has good procedures for serving the needs of English language learners and special education students.
- The school operates well on a day-to-day basis, has good procedures for improving attendance and has a caring culture.
- The parents and students have a high regard for the work of the staff and the caring family culture they generate in the school.
- The students have high praise for the range of opportunities made available to them by the school.
- Staff work well in teams across the school and have an impact on achievement improvements.
- The project based round table activities provide good cross curricula opportunities for staff to plan together and for students to explore real life education based situations.
- The school has many partnerships with external organizations which provide good opportunities for students to widen their academic and social experiences.

What the school needs to improve

- Review instruction practices to ensure they engage all students.
- Review differentiation practices to provide challenge and engagement for all students at all times.
- Review goal setting procedures for individual students, with short term goals within marking periods.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

The school has been open for three and a half years and has just become an empowerment school. Regular periodic assessments and goal setting are used well to generate data which are used to track progress of individual students, classes, grades and subjects. These data are also used to plan interventions when appropriate. The principal's good leadership and management are driving the school improvement agenda and success has already been achieved in graduation rates and Regents test results in some subjects. Differentiation and some instructional practice are undeveloped and so the pace, structure and differentiation of instruction is inconsistent across subjects.

Parents and students have high regard for the work of the school and the caring culture generated by the principal and the teachers. There are very good opportunities for youth development in the school and the range of activities available to students provide enrichment to their academic and social development. The principal's review of the school gives an accurate summary of the school's progress to date, the future objectives and the goals to improve achievement further.

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 its own data and external data to systematically track the progress of each student, class, grade and the whole school. Credit accumulation for graduation is analyzed for each student and intervention strategies are formulated for students at risk. At classroom level teachers assess and use the data outcomes to plan interventions. Grade and subject teams gather and analyze student data and plan future curriculum activities based on the outcomes. Students' Regents test outcomes are also monitored carefully.

Data is used well to identify and provide for the needs of English language learners and special education students. English language learners are supported by two specialist teachers who provide intervention on literacy and language skills. These students make good progress and by grade 12 they are integrated into general education classes without the need for additional support. Special education students are fully integrated into general education classes and special education teachers provide support in class. A mathematics teacher works two days a week to provide subject specific support to students. The school uses project based learning, with round table presentation as the final outcome. The projects are designed to engage students of all ethnic groups, nationalities and abilities. The data outcomes from the projects are analyzed by different groupings.

The school uses data to track and initiate interventions for other groups in the school. There is an English honors course for gifted and talented, Spanish classes, robotics, with

links to university, and marine biology, with college credits, for those already achieving advanced grades in other subject areas.

Comparisons are made with other schools, but there is no historical data for the school to compare with. The school's use of data has produced some successes with the good graduation rates already achieved with a higher predicted rate by the end of the school year. U.S. history Regents had a high pass rate in January 2007, but the impact on achievement levels in other subjects is not happening at the same rate.

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 Comprehensive Education Plan sets out clear measurable goals at whole school level and teachers collaborate in subject and grade teams to transform the goals into meaningful and measurable goals across their grade and subject areas. The school uses graduation credit accumulation and Regents test scores and also utilizes Princeton outcomes to set individual goals for students. The school sets social goals using a five point measure for areas such as attendance and behavior.

The project based learning, which is part of the round table activities, creates student, grade level and school goals as an integral part of the project. There is cross curricular planning and goal setting built into project design and teachers meet regularly to review impact and progress. Graduation credit accumulation and Regents test outcomes also form a major part in the goal setting strategy.

Students in greatest need of improvement are targeted through intervention strategies. The strategies used at classroom level, lead to individualized or group intervention. Grade level meetings initiate the involvement of intervention services, such as one-to-one, small group work, after school and Saturday classes. The pupil personnel team regularly monitors intervention requirements and progress made by students. They can initiate external support services when required.

High expectations are conveyed to the parents and students by all staff. Parents receive progress reports at the end of each marking period and are invited to round table events when their child is presenting the outcomes of their project. Parents meet with teachers after each marking period and are free to come into school an any time to discuss their child's progress. Teachers are proactive in contacting parents whenever necessary.

The school is driven by goals and plans to improve student achievement. There has been success in achieving high graduation rates, with even higher challenging rates set for the summer. A high pass rate in the January 2007 U.S. history Regents is another indication of progress. That impact has not, as yet, been realized in some subjects and grades and goal setting procedures for individual students do not have short term goals within marking periods.

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 aligns the curriculum to the State requirements and the need for students to accumulate credits for graduation. The school has major project based schemes and all the curriculum activities have data generated assessment and goal setting as the drivers to monitor progress.

Teachers are fully accountable for improving achievement and progress is monitored at grade, subject and school level. Teachers plan and differentiate activities based upon the progress revealed by data outcomes. Differentiation is not consistent across the school, however. In some cases, differentiation is undertaken at individual and group level, but in other cases there is no evidence of differentiation, with some class based activities having no challenge for the most gifted and no support for the most needy.

Budget decisions are driven appropriately by the identified needs based on the outcomes of data. Empowerment status provided the opportunity to re-evaluate the use of resources to support school improvement. The school stayed with Princeton as the vendor for assessment and skills analysis of student data. Two instructional specialists and a special needs teacher were hired to support particular curriculum areas. Support has been targeted at grade 11 to focus on interventions on graduation credits and Regents scores.

Some instructional activities fully engage the students. In these classes students are involved in a variety of structured activities matched to their prior achievements. This allows students more opportunity to be fully involved in their learning. In other situations, however, students are not fully engaged and the instruction practice does not have clear planning, differentiation, pace or energy to sustain student engagement.

There is a culture of respect throughout the school and teachers respond to students' social and academic needs. Students are able to approach any adult about any issue at any time. Teachers contact parents about any issue, academic or social, which is having an impact on their child's academic progress and the principal is also involved with parents with particular difficult issues. Student attendance procedures are well structured and focus on student engagement in their own progress and success. First day calling to parents keeps the focus on good attendance and Spanish speakers are used when needed. The parent coordinator is also fully involved in attendance issues.

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.

Teachers are selected based on the identified skills they bring to complement the team with which they will work. The selection process includes teaching a model lesson, sitting in on team meetings and interview, which explores knowledge of planning, measuring progress, and other areas required by the school. The school also attends teaching fellow fairs to attract interest in teaching at the school.

A professional development committee analyzes the data outcomes and plans associated development activities. Instruction teachers facilitate the committee which plans a full year ahead, but reviews changing needs at regular intervals based on the outcomes of data.

The focus for this year is cross curricular literacy through the round table project work. Teachers College provides an instructional specialist for three days a week.

The principal observes classroom instruction on a regular basis. The school adopts the 'learning walks' approach and targets different subjects each semester. Teachers are given constructive feedback and instructional support where a need is identified. There are planning teams at subject, grade and cabinet levels. They plan curriculum, goals and instruction and fully integrate their activities, many of which are driven by the round table cross curricular project approach to instruction. Teams receive a budget to plan celebration activities for the students and their parents. The school based support team and the attendance team support students academically and socially.

The principal is highly respected by all sections of the school community. He is accessible to parents and students, who have confidence in approaching him about academic and social issues. He has begun the process of continuous improvement, with some successes to date, and has the capacity to continue the change process.

The school is an orderly environment with a caring family culture. Procedures are understood and followed by all sections of the school community. There are many partnerships with professional and community-based organizations which contribute well to the academic and social development of the students. There is an arts club, robotics team linked to a university, chess club, mentor program, reserve army training core and many other activities which broaden the experience of the students.

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 has appropriate plans and goals, with associated activities, for raising achievement of students. Goals are aligned to graduation rates and success in Regents tests. The school regularly reviews the plans and goals based on the outcomes of data analysis and makes adjustments where appropriate. There are good graduation rates at present, with a higher rate predicted by August.

As an empowerment school, periodic assessment student data is used to drive the school improvement agenda and goals and plans are reviewed based on the data outcomes. Interventions at student, classroom, grade and subject level are actioned where appropriate. The periodic assessments provide data about success rate in graduation and Regents tests and plans and goals are adjusted to project more challenging outcomes for the end of the academic year. Plans and goals are monitored, evaluated and reviewed on a regular basis. The planning cycle begins with a review of the previous year's outcomes from the data analysis. The new planning cycle involves all staff determining plans and goals at all levels for the following year, with the associated resource, staffing and scheduling implications of delivering the plans.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Morris Academy for Collaborative Studies (HS 297)	∅	✓	+
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	