

Quality Review Report 2009-2010

William A. Morris

Middle School 61

**445 Castleton Avenue
Staten Island
NY 10301**

Principal: Richard Gallo

Dates of review: May 10 - 11, 2010

Lead Reviewer: Margaret Schultz

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

William A. Morris is a middle school with 1,363 students from sixth through eighth grade. The school population comprises 39.0% Black, 33.0% Hispanic, 23.0% White, and 5.0% Asian students. The student body includes 6.0% English language learners and 10.0% special education students. Boys account for 45.0% of the students enrolled and girls account for 55.0%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2008 - 2009 was 93.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is well developed.

The principal of the William A Morris Middle School, a magnet school of Arts & Letters through Museum Studies, creates a learning environment where the improvement of student performance is paramount. The school is divided into three academies to meet the learning interests of each child. At all meetings of the school community, the goals of the school are discussed, progress analyzed, and next steps are planned. Through the school's self-evaluation, and an extensive analysis and tracking of a large array of data, informed instructional and effective organizational decisions have been made. The school's administration and instructional team has created a clear focus on the student population's areas of strength and needs.

The school administration has developed an extensive culture of professional collaboration with all of the staff. Teachers facilitate team meetings and distributive leadership is encouraged. The staff is enthusiastic and eager to deepen their own professional opportunities for growth. They collectively plan, identify and develop instructional strategies and share best practices. As a result, there is an excitement throughout the school. Student interaction and engagement is contagious and higher order thinking is a common practice in classrooms, as evidenced by work products and processes. School leaders and staff have improved the monitoring and analysis of data in English language arts to raise achievement, especially for the English language learner and special education subgroups. They have incorporated new assessments and programs into the curriculum to support the differentiation of instruction and enhance student learning. In addition to the internal supports available in-house, the school has developed extensive partnerships with outside community-based and inner city agencies that have positively affected the academic and social growth of students. This school's strong collaborative culture and sense of community offer continuous support and have created a strong foundation to continue to accelerate current achievement.

Although the school communicates through PTA newsletters, online record books and the school websites, the school continues to monitor and look for ways to ensure communication with families is effective and demonstrates a positive impact on student performance. While classrooms provide rich learning environments and experiences for students, most currently displayed samples of student work are in the hallways. There is little evidence of student work consistently referenced to standards, rubrics and next steps. The school continually researches ways to best communicate with families.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal has created a learning community that is well focused on student outcomes with a vision to accelerate learning.
 - The principal effectively involves and communicates with the school community during school-level planning processes that generate a broad base of support for the school's direction. The principal is transparent and shares his Principal's Performance Review goals with the entire school community. All goals, including principal's goals, the Comprehensive Educational Plan, teacher, grade, class, and student goals are aligned. At all meetings, the newest data from the periodic assessments, as well as student work, is shared and analyzed, resulting in the formation of next steps. If children have achieved their benchmarks, new benchmarks are established always keeping in mind the long term goal.
 - The school instituted the "Go visual with our data" campaign and created data walls in all core classes. Periodic assessment results are posted on these data walls. Students are able to continually view their achievements on a daily basis which fosters an eagerness to continually improve. Students are extremely enthusiastic about sharing their information and, as a result, their performance is increasing.
- The principal and his instructional team cohesively and consistently review and analyze a wide range of relevant data to evaluate the effectiveness of decisions and guide the school forward.
 - The school uses an extensive array of data such as state exams, periodic assessments, as well as customized Acuity assessments, Read 180, Voyager, students' work and ARIS to track the progress of students across academies and across grades. This enables the school to reflect on school-wide trends and needs and monitor and revise curriculum, as well as adjust teaching strategies, which successfully improve student outcomes.
- The school provides very effective support for special education students and English language learners, who make good progress in their achievement levels.
 - Analyzing and tracking the progress from the most current data of its special education and English language learner students, the school is providing excellent programs, such as Read 180 for the special education population and Voyager for the English language learners to specifically target their needs. As a result, there has been significant increase in student outcomes for these subgroups that the school's State accountability has changed significantly from a school in need of improvement to a school in good standing.

- The school leaders and faculty have established very effective systems for school self-evaluation, review and modification of practice with a clear focus on improving student outcomes.
 - After a careful self-evaluation and review of data, the school adjusted their instructional practice and organizational resources for their English language learners from a push-in/pull-out model to a co-teaching model, improving on what is taught and how it is taught. One English- language-learner teacher is co-teaching with a general education teacher and another is co-teaching with a special education teacher. As a result, the students in these classes have shown significant increase in performance and teachers are developing greater instructional skill.
 - The school's consistent collection and analysis of data, on a regular basis, is responsible for changing the use of Read 180 Program to the Voyager Program for their English language learner students that has also resulted in positive outcomes.
- Subject and grade professional learning communities consistently provide all teachers with more structured opportunities to regularly gather, plan, analyze, discuss data, and change teaching practice to increase student performance.
 - The school is divided into three academies. There are three inquiry teams on every grade level for each academy and although the special education teachers are included in these teams, the school has created three additional special education teams, one for each grade level to address the specific needs of their targeted population.
 - The seventh grade team from The Academy of Community and Environmental Studies, two of the academies, meets on a regular basis to analyze formative and summative data of their targeted students, including low inference transcripts. Teachers develop and share strategies to support student skill development in the area of compare and contrast to improve reading comprehension. Teachers are expanding this skill into their students' extended responses. As a result, there has been an increase in lower performing students' outcomes as evidenced by an increase in the quality of students' work and results on formative and summative assessments.
- Students demonstrate excellent behavior, high levels of engagement in well matched lessons, and enthusiasm for learning as a means of reaching their potential.
 - There is differentiation in all classroom lessons to meet the needs of all students. The school groups students according to their achievement levels based on data, resulting in students mastering the teaching objectives. Using the Renzulli model of instruction, they also group students according to their learning styles. As one enthusiastic student states about his class instruction, "School is a lot of fun; it is energetic and there are a lot of activities in our lessons." As a result, student performance is increasing.
- The school has established very extensive partnerships with community-based and city organizations in order to integrate youth services and provide ongoing learning to accelerate students' academic and personal growth.

- Guidance counselors, along with the New York City Police Department, develop and deliver lessons and assemblies for students to prevent bullying and encourage the positive social behavior of students. Consequently, all students are aware of whom they can go to if they have a problem. This has resulted in a decrease of bullying incidents in the school.
- As a federal magnet school, the school has developed extensive external partnerships in each academy to enhance the already existing challenging programs that the school offers to their students. One such partner gives the students the opportunity to draw on their artistic talents. One activity led to a tabletop designed and painted by students to be displayed in a local park for the community. As a result, the school is supported in assisting students' academic success, raising self-esteem and enhancing social/emotional development.

What the school needs to improve

- Formalize structures for monitoring the sharing of information of performance data with families in order for parents to assist their children in the home environment.
 - Although the school shares performance data with families through its online program, it is not consistently monitored as to how usefully it is shared. The school does not have a structure in place to regularly evaluate and adjust the process for sharing information, resulting in a limited understanding of what parents actually understand about student progress and next steps.
- Extend communication of high expectations to keep families informed and promote active involvement in the school community.
 - Although the school uses various ways to communicate with families, parents state that the school does not send information in a timely manner. As a result, this reduces the opportunities for parents to assist in their children's learning.
- Strengthen engagement of students and families with an open exchange of information regarding students' learning needs and outcomes in order for parents to assist their children in a timely manner.
 - All teachers use rubrics to evaluate student work, notate performance level, and give positive feedback on what students do well. However, teachers do not identify clear next steps on written work that is on display in the hallways and classrooms. As a result, students have the impression that their work is not in need of revision; thus, impeding progress for some students.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2009-2010

School name: William A. Morris Middle School	Δ	➤	✓	+
Overall QR Score				X
Quality Statement 1 – Instructional and Organizational Coherence: The school has a coherent strategy to support student learning that aligns curriculum, instruction and organizational decisions.				
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous and coherent curricula, including the Arts, for a variety of learners and aligned to key State standards?				X
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best, and ensure that it is: aligned to the curriculum, engaging, and differentiated to enable all students to produce meaningful work products?				X
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs?				X
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?				X
Overall score for Quality Statement 1				X
Quality Statement 2 – Gather and Analyze Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, analyze and share information on student learning outcomes to understand school and student progress over time.				
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+
2.1 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the school level?				X
2.2 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the team and classroom level?				X
2.3 Use or develop tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize and analyze student performance trends?				X
2.4 Engage in an open exchange of information with students and families regarding students' learning needs and outcomes?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 2				X

Quality Statement 3 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently engage the school community and use data to set and track suitably high goals for accelerating student learning.							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
3.1 Establish a coherent vision of future development that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are understood and supported by the entire school community?				X			
3.2 Use collaborative and data informed processes to set measurable and differentiated learning goals for student subgroups, and students in need of additional support?				X			
3.3 Ensure the achievement of learning goals by tracking progress at the school, teacher team and classroom level?				X			
3.4 Communicate high expectations to students and families, engage them in decision-making, and promote active involvement in the school community?			X				
Overall score for Quality Statement 3				X			
Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals and student learning and emotional needs.							
<i>To what extent does the school..</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
4.1 Use the observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection, with a special focus on new teachers?				X			
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?				X			
4.3 Provide professional development that promotes independent and shared reflection, opportunities for leadership growth, and enables teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve learning outcomes?				X			
4.4 Integrate child/youth development, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations with the school-wide goals to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students?				X			
Overall score for Quality Statement 4				X			
Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and evaluating progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.							
<i>To what extent does the school..</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
5.1 Evaluate the quality of curricular, instructional and organizational decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?				X			
5.2 Evaluate systems for assessing students, organizing data, and sharing information with student and families, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?			X				
5.3 Establish and sustain a transparent, collaborative system for measuring progress towards interim and long term goals and making adjustments during the year and over time?				X			
5.4 Use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of structured professional collaboration, capacity building and leadership development strategies?				X			
Overall score for Quality Statement 5				X			
Quality Review Scoring Key							
△	Underdeveloped	➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed