

Quality Review Report 2010-2011

Morris Academy For Collaborative Studies

**High School 297
1100 Boston Road
Bronx
NY 10456**

Principal: Charles Osewalt

Dates of review: November 30 -December 1, 2010

Lead Reviewer: Evelyn Terrell

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Morris Academy for Collaborative Studies is high school with 432 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 32% Black, 65% Hispanic, and 1% Native American students. The student body includes 19% English language learners and 25% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2009 - 2010 was 76.8%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school maintains a culture of respect where the social-emotional and academic needs of students are met, thereby encouraging them to succeed.
 - The tone of the school is friendly and warm as the principal and teachers greet students by name as they pass in the hallways. Students readily approach the principal and engage in discussions about their family as well as their schoolwork and parents state that they can reach the principal at any time by phone if they have a problem. In addition, students state that they feel supported and can go to a teacher or guidance counselor to discuss their problems confidentially.
 - The school provides a range of after school programs and activities such as JROTC, a program to provide leadership training, Spanish, Japanese, art club, and book club, to support the social and academic needs of the students. These programs allow students to pursue their interests and develop their talents, thus enhancing their school experience and motivating them to want to succeed.
- A projects-based curriculum, aligned to the State standards, pushes students to increase their academic performance.
 - Each subject area department's use of a template helps students plan projects that are evaluated by a roundtable committee. Students in the United States history class work on designing a project stating why people should support their political candidate. This results in students having a better understanding of how candidates develop their political agendas and increases students' comprehension of the political process.
 - School leaders and faculty make purposeful decisions to align roundtable projects to the State curriculum. Teachers provide individual support and suitable feedback to students during the planning and preparation stages of their projects to ensure the work is suitably aligned to the curriculum. As result, there is an increase in student performance across all grades in meeting State standards.
- The principal makes key organizational decisions aligned to instructional goals to support student achievement.
 - The principal's allocation of funds supports the implementation of the school-wide goal to improve student achievement. Four teachers, assigned as Lead Instructional Teachers (LIT), provide direct classroom support by designing effective classroom practices. They also coach teachers on creating project-based templates in order to support an increase in student achievement.
 - A consultant from Teachers' College supports the school's targeting of improving student performance and teaching practices in math and literacy. She works with teacher teams on evaluating student data across all grades and focuses on designing differentiated tasks to support a diversity of students. In addition, a part time math teacher pushes into the classroom to support at-risk students thus allowing teachers to share in the responsibility for moving students to the next step to raise student achievement.

- The school provides a range of support for staff aligned to the observation of classroom practices and student products, which enhances student engagement.
 - The principal and assistant principals conduct informal walkthroughs to review instructional practices and student work in various classes, thus allowing them to provide ongoing feedback to teachers on a daily basis. Teachers' receipt of immediate oral feedback, followed up with an informal written report, supports the school's goal around implementing effective differentiated instructional practices in all classrooms.
 - Teachers are provided with differentiated opportunities to improve their teaching craft by selecting a professional development option around content, process, product, or rigor, and attending a focus group led by one of the LIT's. Discussions center on specific strategies that are then implemented by teachers during a two weeks period. Feedback to the teachers from the LIT's, and the Lead Instructional Support Team, (LIST), whose members include administrators and the Teachers' College consultant, is supportive of helping staff improve their practice around providing differentiated instruction in the classroom to improve student outcomes.
- Teams of teachers create design your own, (DYO), assessments to help in identifying trends in work products of targeted groups, leading to improved differentiated instructional strategies to support student success.
 - Teacher teams meet weekly to analyze data from DYO assessments to establish areas where students need to improve, with a focus in math and English language arts, (ELA). The team identified that many students across the grades need support in vocabulary development in ELA and math word problems. As a result, strategies to support vocabulary development are being implemented as an intervention for struggling students, as well as targeted English language learners.
- The school has structures in place to evaluate how instructional decisions and the use of resources support capacity building for improved student learning.
 - Each marking period the principal meets with teachers to evaluate instructional coherence. Teachers bring their "Straight A's" binder which includes student data results, professional development selection, student grades, student goals, student projects, and teacher goals, as a means to monitor coherence to the curriculum and instructional practices. This process allows the principal and the LIST team to identify capacity building and adjust instructional decisions. Thus, school-wide coherence to instructional goals and State curriculum to meet students' needs is maintained.
 - The principal and assistant principals visit classrooms and co-teach with teachers to model effective instructional practices. The principal engaged in the co-teaching of an elective class for twelfth graders in an SAT college prep class. As a result, the administration is able to model and monitor adjustments to instructional practices.

What the school needs to improve

- Enhance the level of rigor in differentiated tasks to support increased student performance for college readiness skills and challenge higher-level thinking.

- In some classrooms, teachers use differentiated strategies to support student engagement in selected tasks. However, the rigor of the tasks does not support higher level thinking skills and differentiated strategies are not evident in all classrooms. Consequently, the opportunities for students to engage in activities that challenge higher order thinking to prepare for college level work are limited.
- Teaching strategies do not yet consistently support high levels of student engagement. The school has identified vocabulary as an area of improvement; however, teachers do not regularly require students to use the text to decipher the meaning of unknown words. As a result, students do not acquire the skills to unlock word meaning independently, thus limiting comprehension of text that support high levels of performance for accelerated learning.
- Develop goals for students that are aligned to data in order to advance higher learning outcomes.
 - Although teacher teams have set goals for targeted students, many students do not know what their goals are. One student stated that her goal is to do better in her work. This limits students' ability to participate in identifying what they need to do to improve.
 - Datacation, a software program, is used by Individual teachers and teacher teams on the ninth grade to identify which students need additional support. However, there is no evidence that this information is translated into measurable goals for individuals or groups of students across all grades. This limits the school's ability to measure growth and mastery toward students' goals.
- Communicate high expectations to students and families to improve attendance and decrease lateness for improved achievement.
 - The school has identified improving attendance as one of their goals to further student achievement. The school makes phone calls to parents to inform them of student absences and lateness; however, the impact of this work is not yet evident. Thus, poor attendance and lateness limits students' ability in meeting college readiness skills.
 - The school does not consistently engage families in the use of technology tools to support their understanding of high student progress and expectations. Some parents are unfamiliar with the ARIS parent link to access information on their children. This lack of engagement stifles the ability of parents to know how to help push their children to higher levels of achievement.
- Develop assessment protocols aligned to data reports, to support a consistent picture of evolving student growth.
 - Teacher teams consistently use the inquiry approach as they meet to analyze student assessment data; however, the language on rubrics used to measure student work products is not aligned to the assessment metrics. Therefore, a consistent picture of student growth in is not clear. As a result, adjustments to instructional decisions at the classroom level do not consistently support student improvement.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2010-2011

School name: Morris Academy for Collaborative Studies	UD	D	P	WD
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>	UD	D	P	WD
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
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>	UD	D	P	WD
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 Align assessments to curriculum and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom level?			X	
2.3 Use or develop tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize, aggregate, 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	

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>	UD	D	P	WD			
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					
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>	UD	D	P	WD			
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				
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>	UD	D	P	WD			
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				
Quality Review Scoring Key							
UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed