

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

I.S. 061 William A. Morris

Middle School R061

**445 Castleton Avenue
Staten Island
NY 10301**

Principal: Susan Tronolone

**Date of review: May 1, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Cynthia Dickman**

The School Context

I.S. 061 William A Morris is a Middle school with 1131 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 34% Black, 45% Hispanic, 17% White, and 4% Asian students. The student body includes 7% English language learners and 26% special education students. Boys account for 47% of the students enrolled and girls account for 53%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 90.8%.

School Quality Criteria

Instructional Core		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
1.1 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards	Additional Findings	Well Developed
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the instructional shifts and Danielson Framework for Teaching, aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products	Focus	Proficient
2.2 Align assessments to curricula, use on-going assessment and grading practices, and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom levels	Additional Findings	Well Developed
School Culture		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations	Additional Findings	Well Developed
Systems for Improvement		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning	Celebration	Well Developed

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

All teachers are engaged in professional collaborations and vested in increasing school-wide coherence and student achievement. Teachers take on leadership roles and are integral in key decisions that affect student learning.

Impact

As a result, there is an increase in teacher capacity and teachers take ownership towards improved achievement for all learners.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal created a schedule where teacher teams meet in a variety of team configurations including inquiry team meetings, team meetings and department meetings. In addition, there is an instructional team and a professional development team. During these team meetings, teachers are collaboratively planning, reviewing lessons and unit plans, and analyzing data and reviewing student work and portfolios. As the teams work toward their school goal of knowing students well, they identify what the students have done successfully, what the students still need to learn, and what the implications are for teachers' planning and preparation. As observed during the inquiry team meeting, this work is enabling the teachers to identify school-wide common trends, collaborate on specific teaching strategies needed to address students' needs and create tailored instructional plans that are moving student achievement.
- The school's twenty-one member inquiry team has been conducting a book study of the text, *Thinking Through Quality Questioning, Deepening Student Engagement*, by Jackie Acree Walsh and Beth Dankert Sattes. The inquiry team designed and conducted professional development on how teachers, students and administrators can improve their use of quality questioning to deepen the thinking and learning of all members of the school community. Teachers were provided with strategies to enable students to make their thinking visible. As a result, students school-wide are using their individual white boards allowing them to write down their ideas before sharing aloud with the class to make their thinking visible.
- Distributive leadership practices are evident in the work of the various smaller teams that were created to increase effective practices school-wide. Several teachers formed the positive behavior intervention and support program core team. This team met in July and August and created sub committees to form the action plans for next steps in rolling out the positive behavior intervention and support program. Sub-committees include: student government committee, reward store committee, behavior specialist/teach like a champion committee, donation committee, parent outreach committee, grant writing committee, high risk behavior committee, data/discipline specialist committee and teaching expectations committee. These sub-committees members have played an integral role in all aspects of the school's full implementation of the positive behavior intervention and supports program that was rolled out this year and it has resulted in a decrease in the number of incidents school-wide.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Across classrooms, teaching strategies provide multiple entry points for students to ensure access into the curriculum. The inclusion of strategic high-quality extensions varied across classrooms.

Impact

All learners, including students with disabilities (SWD) and English language learners (ELLs) are engaged in appropriately challenging tasks. Student work products and discussions reflect high levels of student thinking and participation with inconsistent evidence of student ownership of learning.

Supporting Evidence

- Teaching strategies observed included grouping students, lesson differentiation utilizing tiered assignments, chunking texts, and providing sentence starters or focusing prompts to support students. Activities were differentiated based on levels of struggling, emerging and challenging students. In grade eight, students were reading *To Kill a Mockingbird*, and to assist the students with understanding difficult vocabulary, the audio version of the book was used as an entry point for some students.
- The school's expectation is that teachers plan lessons in accordance with their weekly findings regarding students' academic strengths and weaknesses as gathered by observing student performance, conducting conferences, and analyzing formative and summative data. Lessons reviewed included differentiation, student groupings and vocabulary words to appropriately challenge all learners, including students with disabilities and English language learners. Evidence of high-quality extensions were inconsistent as one sixth grade math lesson on statistics included three options for students who had mastered the objective, to choose from, and a seventh grade math lesson on proportional relationships did not include any high-level extensions.
- In four classrooms visited, students were engaged in their home and expert group rotations. Students were expected to discuss and share evidence with their expert group that they would return and share with their home group. In some of these classrooms, students were able to work both together and independently to accomplish the task but in other classrooms, not all students had the opportunity to take ownership of their learning as the teacher posed questions, the responses were made to the teacher limiting student-to-student discussions. For example, during a social studies lesson in an Integrated Co-Teaching class (ICT) students received supports from the special education teacher, their peers and various texts to ensure their understanding of the major components of Ancient Egyptian civilization. However, students did not have the opportunity to take ownership of their learning as the teacher dominated the lesson by asking whole class questions, which were all answered student-to-teacher with no extensions for student-to-student discussions. Conversely, students in a self-contained English language arts class led the lesson on taking a stand to support a claim with the teacher facilitating and had full ownership of their learning.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:

1.1 Curriculum

Rating:

Well Developed

Findings

School leaders and teachers collaboratively ensure curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and the instructional shifts across all grade levels. The school developed curricula units with embedded rigorous tasks to engage and challenge all students to think critically.

Impact

The school's curricula decisions create coherency across all grades. As a result, all students demonstrate their thinking and are on a path of college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- Accelerated Regents' classes are being offered to students to ensure that they all have access to higher expectations. The Algebra I Regents is offered to students in the integrated co-teaching classrooms for the first time this year. A layered curriculum was put in place for math because the school determined that the math scores were not increasing at the level expected. The math department created a plan and provided teachers with supports that included adjustments focused on conferencing, group work and differentiation. This is the also the first time the school is offering students the opportunity to take the Living Environment Regents. Teachers created the eighth grade Regents curriculum by combining the New York State Living Environment Regents' standards with the current eighth grade Common Core curriculum learning standards.
- The school identified a disconnect between their pedagogical practices and student data, so customized support was requested from Scantron to analyze the data, specifically in vocabulary. The principal attended a four day advanced literacy series at Harvard and it produced ideas as to the adjustments that might be made to the school's vocabulary work with regards to word and code meaning. As a result, four sessions of professional development with the entire staff were done on vocabulary support. The result has been the focus by teachers on academic vocabulary across all content areas and the use of the academic vocabulary tool kit. There was evidence of the vocabulary word walls in all classrooms visited, and all students, including English language learners and students with disabilities were observed using their white boards to answer a prompt with relevant evidence from the text, using at least one vocabulary word.
- A lesson study observed focused on students being able to use multiplication, subtraction and addition to simplify radical expressions. After the lesson study the team met and completed a reflection and debrief. The classroom teacher had the opportunity to comment on her reaction to the lesson and her colleagues provided feedback using a noticings/wonderings protocol. Together they discussed whether the teaching objective was accomplished, what the next steps would be, and how the results of this specific lesson study will drive the planning of their instruction. The lesson study practices enable teachers to revise their planning and instruction as a result of observing student mastery and the level of engagement during the delivery of a collaboratively planned lesson.

Findings

All teachers utilize assessments and grading policies to track progress and identify students' successes and next steps.

Impact

Teachers' assessment practices measure student progress through the use of rubrics, conferences, and common assessments to adjust instruction, which leads to increased achievement.

Supporting Evidence

- The inquiry team analyzed the students' June promotional portfolios and discovered a disconnect between the course grades students had received and the performance in the students' class portfolios for the year. This resulted in refining the school wide grading policy for this year. Every teacher explained to students orally and in writing the grading criteria that would be used in evaluating their performance. The expectations for students are also clearly posted in each classroom indicating that sixty percent of the grade is based on tests, quizzes and projects, thirty percent is based on classwork and ten percent is based on homework. Rubrics specifically for homework and classwork are also posted in each classroom. A student stated, "We are well aware of the expectations and the teachers go over the rubrics and explain how not to get a zero or one. They also give us feedback so we know what to do."
- As a result of thorough data analysis of their Fall ELA Scantron benchmark, a deficiency was uncovered in grade level vocabulary used in context and isolation school-wide. As a result, professional development was focused on supporting staff members with academic vocabulary strategies as well as providing research-based programs, such as Wilson, for academic intervention services in order to increase student outcomes.
- A review of the second round of Scantron results, showed school-wide growth. In eighth grade, one hundred and ninety-one students were unable to identify the meaning of vocabulary words presented in context and when assessed in April, the number of students had dropped to 155, showing that 36 students had improved. Two hundred and seventy-eight students were unable to identify the meaning of vocabulary words presented in isolation in November and by April the number of students had dropped to two hundred and fifty-five, showing that 23 students had improved. School-wide, sixty-eight students were identified as not making significant progress and are participating in the Wilson after school program, meeting three times a week for an hour and a half each day, for eight weeks.
- Students indicated that there are rubrics for English language arts, math, social studies and science and teachers provide them with feedback. A review of student work included actionable feedback and next steps such as, "Excellent introduction and summary sentences. Next time add details that explain how each character is unique and show how they differ with an example."

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders and teachers engage in high-quality collaborative learning opportunities establishing a culture of professionalism. The school effectively partners with families, fostering their participation in the balance of academic and performing arts education, with ongoing feedback.

Impact

The entire staff takes ownership of their professional growth and there is a culture of mutual accountability. In addition, students successfully achieve high expectations and are prepared for the next level on a path to college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- A faculty handbook is distributed on the first day of school to every staff member, and a parent guide is sent home to each family and is given to any newly admitted students throughout the year, with a signature required by the parent. Each booklet describes in detail the expectations that the school clearly and consistently communicates and requires everyone to be accountable for. Within each booklet is the school wide calendar that indicates the deadlines for activities, assessments and schedules.
- To provide a physically and emotionally secure environment for all of the students where everyone can focus on learning, the school implemented a school-wide positive behavior intervention and supports (PBIS) system for rewarding positive behavior. Personal and academic behaviors are clearly outlined and promoted through PBIS and the strategic programming of key staff members such as the deans, guidance counselors and team leaders. There is a Morris money reward system where specific reward amounts have been identified for specific expectations listed on a school-wide matrix to create a uniform code of conduct. The school-wide matrix was created by a core team that identified expectations for behavior in all areas of the school building: cafeteria, classroom, hallway, auditorium, perimeter, bus and schoolyard.
- Through the observation process, administrators provide teachers with timely feedback that provides them with recognition of effective teaching practices and suggestions for improvement. In addition, walkthroughs, inter-visitations, and follow-up conversations provide suggestions to improve teacher practice and increase student learning. Further, teachers meet every Monday and Tuesday and lead professional development aligned with the 2014-2015 Citywide Instructional Expectations and the school's identified areas for growth.
- During the parent meeting, parents stated that the school has high expectations and regularly communicates with them through the use of Skedula/Pupil Path, the online student monitoring system, during Tuesday parent engagement time, through school messenger, through quarterly progress reports, report cards, parent teacher conferences, meetings with teachers as needed, curriculum night, and emails. The parents said, "The school has high expectations of the children, and they do not allow excuses. The discipline is done in a way that is respectful. More is expected from the students. The different courses the school offers such as the arts, musical theatre and band provide extra curricula programs make our children more well-rounded."