

NEW YORK STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
Office of Accountability

Differentiated Accountability - School Quality Review (SQR)

SCHOOL QUALITY REVIEW REPORT

DBN:	09X297
District Name:	District 9
School Name:	Morris Academy for Collaborative Studies
School Address:	1110 Boston Road, Bronx, NY 10456
Principal:	Charles Osewalt
Accountability Phase/Category:	Improvement (year-1) - Comprehensive
Areas of Identification:	English Language Arts - All Students; Hispanic Students; and Economically Disadvantaged Students Mathematics - All Students; Hispanic Students; and Economically Disadvantaged Students
Dates of On-site Review:	May 1-2, 2012

PART 1: MISSION STATEMENT:

“It is our mission at Morris Academy for Collaborative Studies to build student leaders who serve their community with character. Our small inclusive classes and advisory program are designed to help all students navigate their way through the many academic and social challenges before them. Morris Academy for Collaborative Studies focuses on collaborative team work. We have two overarching sets of expectations for our students. The first involves a set of rubrics for our school-wide, project-based student work. These rubrics encompass as a foundation New York State’s ELA standards (common core standards). Each academic discipline is encompassing speaking, reporting, writing for analysis and persuasion. The second set of expectations for our students involves the school-wide objective of an 80% passing rate in all regents and RCT exams. These expectations can be summed up in the 3 R’s: academic Rigor, relevant student inquiry based project learning, and authentic school-wide community based relationships. For the past three years our instruction foci has been: differentiating, alignment, and literacy.”

PART 2: SCHOOL STRENGTHS

- Students and parents agree that the school provides a welcoming, supportive environment. The principal and staff nurture relationships between the school and students’ parents and extended families in an effort to involve them in the school community.
- The principal empowers assistant principals and teachers and consistently communicates the mission of the school. All school leaders teach classes on a regular basis and serve as instructional coaches.

- Students in need of additional academic support participate in Saturday instruction. A mentor program matches 30 students with volunteers every other week, providing access to a range of activities and supports.

PART 3: FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I. COLLECTION, ANALYSIS, AND UTILIZATION OF DATA

FINDINGS:

- Although assessment data is collected, the review team's classroom observations and document analysis provide limited evidence that data is analyzed and interpreted consistently to identify the academic needs of individual students for the purpose of modifying instruction in targeted skill areas.
- Although in-school professional development (PD) has been provided to teachers on data analysis, there is limited evidence that school leaders monitor the implementation of this training to determine if teachers are using it to group students strategically and to differentiate instruction.
- Interviews conducted by the review team with the school principal reveal that a recently instituted school initiative for data collection analysis includes the establishment of data binders (Straight A Inquiry Binders). The review team's classroom observations and examination of these binders indicate that the content, analysis and use of data are not consistently used to inform instruction and track student progress.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- School leaders should establish clear expectations and protocols for the collection, analysis, and use of data to identify the academic needs of individual students in all sub-groups and to provide differentiated classroom instruction based on the individual needs of students. School leaders should supplement the current PD offerings to provide PD on data, which should include the collection, analysis, and use of data to inform and modify instruction.
- School leaders should develop a comprehensive system for the planning and implementation of differentiated instruction. Focused walkthroughs and formal observations should be conducted by school leaders to monitor, assess and evaluate teacher progress and the impact of the training on improving differentiated instruction.
- The school leadership should review and assess the Straight A Inquiry binders both before and during targeted walkthroughs and provide teachers with written feedback regarding their use as data sources to inform and improve instruction. Formal observations should also include a review of Straight A Inquiry binders on an ongoing basis to ensure there is continuity among the data that is collected. Continuity within the compiled data sources should allow the school to analyze schoolwide, grade level, class, and individual student performance and progress trends.

II. TEACHING AND LEARNING

FINDINGS:

- Based on classroom observations by the review team, the team found that most teachers used direct instruction and few teachers engaged students in tasks that incorporated higher order thinking skills. Additionally, there was limited evidence that discussion strategies to increase student engagement were consistently implemented. Teacher questioning in classes observed by the review team was low level and required retelling or factual responses. As a result, the development of students' critical analysis skills was limited.
- Classroom observations and document reviews conducted by the review team provided limited evidence that learning goals based on performance data and formative student assessments were established for individual students. Additionally, there was limited evidence that students were consistently asked to use self-reflection strategies or conduct self-assessments of their own work.
- In classrooms visited by the review team, word walls and study hints were in evidence and school rules were posted. Although some student work was displayed, there was limited evidence that teachers consistently used rubrics and included next steps for improvement to provide students with feedback.
- SMART Boards were present in most observed classrooms and were primarily used by teachers as projection screens. There was limited evidence of this technology being used interactively to supplement and enhance classroom instruction.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- School leaders should provide teachers with PD in effective ways to infuse higher-order thinking and questioning into classroom instruction and increase student engagement. School leaders should develop monitoring protocols to ensure that teachers consistently implement these methodologies.
- School leaders should provide PD for teachers on how to use formative, interim, and summative assessments to guide students in developing personal academic goals. In addition, students' self-assessments should be regularly incorporated into classroom instruction. School leaders should monitor the implementation of these PD strategies and provide additional support to teachers as needed.
- School leaders and the Learning and Instructional Support Team (LIST) team should collaboratively review student assignments for alignment to the new P-12 Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and to existing Design-Your-Own (DYO) assessments. School leaders should also establish guidelines to ensure that assignments include clear criteria and rubrics; work is graded using the rubric and feedback is specific and provides next steps for improvement.
- School leaders should provide additional PD to teachers on SMART Board capabilities to enhance and supplement instruction, including focusing on students as users of existing technology. The implementation of this PD should be monitored on an ongoing basis through formal and informal classroom observations as part of an overall schoolwide technology integration plan.

III. SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

FINDINGS:

- The Principal uses a distributed leadership model. However, the various leadership roles, such as department point people, team leader, leader of team leaders, and LIST result in some lack of clarity in defined responsibility areas and lines of communication.
- The Principal indicated that approximately 50 percent of all teachers should be differentiating instruction as part of a schoolwide improvement plan. However, classroom observations by the review team found that most teachers were not implementing these strategies. Additionally there was limited evidence of an effective assessment in place to measure progress towards this goal.
- The school is identified in the areas of English language arts (ELA) and mathematics. However, based on document review conducted by the review team, there was no direct reference to a measurable goal that addressed these identified subject areas and sub-groups in the Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP).
- Based on a document review of recommendations from formal and informal observations, the review team found that teacher evaluations do not consistently address instructional improvement issues such as differentiation, the consistent use of student discussion strategies, the use of culturally appropriate instructional materials, the effective integration of technology, and other strategies for sub-groups in targeted areas.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- School Leaders should review the current organizational structures and lines of responsibilities to evaluate the distribution of leadership to ensure that leadership roles and responsibilities are clearly delineated. The impact of the organizational teams on student achievement should be monitored.
- The LIST should collaborate with teachers to identify indicators of effective differentiation, with particular attention to specific academic needs of students in the identified subgroups. This information should be disseminated, and PD, including modeling, should be provided for all teachers.
- The School Leadership Team (SLT) should conduct a comprehensive needs assessment and data review and use this information to develop specific, measurable, attainable, researched, and timely (SMART) goals that address the underperformance in the identified areas and for the identified sub-groups. If needed, PD should be provided for the SLT concerning the use of data analysis in connection with developing, implementing, and evaluating SMART goals.
- School leaders should provide verbal and written feedback from formal and informal observations that focuses on designing and implementing lessons to build in strategies such as differentiation and technology integration as well as the integration of CCLS with project based activities. Observations should also include feedback regarding the use of student engagement strategies, including the use of evidence by students, to support students' higher order thinking during classroom conversation.

IV. INFRASTRUCTURE FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

FINDINGS:

- Classroom observations, interviews, and the review of documents conducted by the review team provided limited evidence that students were given instructional opportunities to support post-secondary readiness.
- The Principal indicated, and classroom observations and interviews by the review team corroborated, that student lateness is an ongoing problem that has a negative impact on attendance and learning.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The school leaders should review the current academic programs and existing supplementary resources to find ways to increase course offerings that support post-secondary preparedness. School leaders should consider partnering with local institutions of higher learning to include the addition of advanced coursework such as College Now or Advanced Placement (AP) courses.
- School leaders should work with the guidance and support services team, in conjunction with the SLT, to continue to develop interventions to reduce the number and frequency of students being late to school. This group should investigate successes experienced in other schools and speak with groups of chronically late students to determine ways the school can provide support.

V. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

FINDINGS:

- Interviews and a review of documentation by the review team indicated that PD has been offered on differentiation and that the school leaders expect teachers to use differentiated instruction. In the classrooms observed by the review team however, few instances of differentiated instruction were noted. Additionally, there was limited evidence that the impact of PD activities in these areas is evaluated and monitored on an ongoing basis.
- References to PD activities are evident in teachers' individual goals and in PD agendas. However, there was limited evidence of a fully articulated, annual or long-term PD plan based on results from schoolwide formative and summative evaluations that are linked to CEP goals, individual teacher goals, or a strategic plan for school improvement.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The school leaders and LIST should determine specific PD needs by involving teachers in a self-assessment about the extent to which they differentiate in the classroom. Teachers should also indicate how previous PD has been utilized and indicate areas for additional support. This baseline data should then be used with information gathered by school leaders during the observation process to inform a revised, PD plan for differentiation. School leaders should continue to monitor classroom implementation of the strategies taught and provide PD and individual coaching, as needed.

- The school leaders should develop a long-term PD plan that addresses the areas listed in this report, incorporates individual teacher goals, and continues to reinforce previously offered PD. This plan should reflect needs indicated in evaluations, observations, peer inter-visitations, and self-assessments. The PD plan should also be closely linked to CEP SMART goals that focus on school improvement. School leaders should establish guidelines for evaluating the PD and use these evaluations to monitor and adjust the plan, as indicated.

VI. FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

FINDINGS:

- The school shares space with schools in the Morris Complex, including a library on the third floor. The Principal related that the library is currently closed and that he has drafted a proposal to fund its renovation. The existing library is a large, multi-room space that is partially stocked with books and resources; however, there is limited evidence of an orderly system of accessing books and resources. There is no librarian assigned to the complex, and students do not have access to this resource, limiting their ability to conduct independent research and complete projects.
- Many ELA classrooms observed by the review team had classroom libraries that contained class sets of texts. However, the team found the classroom libraries contained limited independent reading books.
- Based on observations, the review team found that many of the building's halls and stairwells contained trash, and many classroom and workroom floors were dirty. Interviews conducted by the review team also indicated that the student washrooms frequently lack paper supplies. These conditions result in an environment that undermines a positive school environment.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The school leader should collaborate with the campus principals to provide staffing for the library. The building council should reevaluate the use of the available library space. The library should be accessible both during and after the school day to use as part of a class or for students to conduct independent research.
- The school leaders should complete an inventory of available books in classroom libraries and make purchases to expand the resources for students. Classroom libraries should support a range of genres, including nonfiction offerings and multicultural texts to increase the opportunities for independent reading of quality literature.
- The school leaders should join with other school leaders in the Complex to hold custodial staff accountable for maintaining cleanliness throughout the building. The school leaders should consider implementing a schoolwide initiative to establish expectations for students to improve the school environment. School leaders should seek out similar schools that have integrated student groups such as service squads, Student Government Associations (SGA) and student leaders to support these initiatives and increase student responsibilities for the maintenance of the environment.

PART 4: CONCLUDING STATEMENT

The findings and recommendations noted in the report are intended to guide the school's inquiry, planning, and the development of the Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP) for school year 2012-13. The school should also continue its efforts in the implementation of the following Regents Reform Agenda initiatives: P-12 Common Core Learning Standards, Data Driven Instruction and the Annual Professional Performance Reviews for teacher effectiveness.