

**NEW YORK STATE EDUCATION DEPARTMENT
Office of Accountability**

Differentiated Accountability - School Quality Review (SQR)

SCHOOL QUALITY REVIEW REPORT

DBN:	31R061
District Name:	District 31
School Name:	IS 61 William A. Morris
School Address:	445 Castleton Avenue, Staten Island, NY 10301
Principal:	Susan Tronolone
Accountability Phase/Category:	Improvement (year 1)- Comprehensive
Area of Identification:	English Language Arts - All Students; African American Students; Hispanic Students; Students with Disabilities; English Language Learners and Economically Disadvantaged Students
Dates of On-site Review:	January 31- February 1, 2012

PART 1: MISSION STATEMENT

“The Morris Middle School community is committed to middle level reform that is responsive to the developmental needs of adolescents. We are dedicated to affirming the importance of school, parent and community to enhance our learning environment. Our school population closely reflects the rich cultural diversity of New York City as a whole. With a student population that is racially, ethnically and socio-economically diverse, we seek to engage students actively in their learning and promote respect for differences. Our instructional focus sets as a high priority the ability of students to achieve the goals of New Standards in all curricula areas. Instructional strategies will stress effective and meaningful improvement in the areas of reading, writing and math literacy. Students will be engaged in activities that promote the role of technology as a learning and resource tool. We are dedicated to creating a learning environment that develops the whole child, including his or her self-esteem and sense of personal worth.”

PART 2: SCHOOL STRENGTHS

- The Interim Acting Principal has instituted new policies and procedures for creating a flexible schedule that promote opportunities for common planning time/team meetings for teachers. Protocols and expectations for the use of this time have also been established by the Principal.
- The school is organized into three academies: Academy of Community and Environmental Studies, Academy of Invention and Exploration and Academy of Media and Broadcasting. The Principal reorganized the support services for each Academy by assigning the Assistant Principals (APs), guidance counselors and deans within each Academy.

- The school's extended day program consists of before school and after school activities. The Cooperative, Healthy, Active, Motivated, Positive Students (CHAMPS) program offers sports and fitness activities and starts at 6:15 a.m. An afterschool program is conducted by the Children's Aid Society and provides services until 5:30 p.m.
- The school's Visual and Performing Arts Program offers a variety of activities to encourage school and family engagement. All students have the opportunity to participate in these activities, i.e., spring concerts, yearly plays, dinner theater night, and monthly family fun night.

PART 3: FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I. COLLECTION, ANALYSIS, AND UTILIZATION OF DATA

FINDINGS:

- Although there is evidence of multiple data sources available at the school, the collected data is not analyzed in a rigorous manner. The analysis of data is not focused adequately to identify the key changes required in programs and delivery to bring about improvement in student performance.
- Teachers do not use data to inform their instructional planning or to modify instruction. The curriculum is implemented without addressing the needs of the students as identified by the summative and formative data.
- School administrators do not effectively monitor the use of data to inform instruction.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- Administrators should seek professional development (PD) support from the Network in developing the essential teacher skills needed to implement a more rigorous and systematic analysis of data. Instructional staff should develop skills to identify the aspects of English Language Arts (ELA) that are causing the greatest concern. School administrators should monitor the use of data in teaching practices and hold staff accountable to ensure that student improvements are made.
- Teachers should use student performance data, both summative and formative, to create instructional groups, design skill-based activities for small groups of students with similar needs and adjust the planned curriculum, with a special focus on at-risk students and identified subgroups. This data should be used to plan lessons, with particular attention to student grouping and differentiation
- School leaders should ensure that informal and formal observations include feedback for teachers on the effectiveness of their use of data to inform instruction and implement grouping.

II. TEACHING AND LEARNING

FINDINGS:

- Few examples of differentiated instruction were observed in classrooms. There was little evidence that

data was used to group students or to match tasks to the differing ability levels of the students.

- There was limited evidence of the development of higher order thinking skills in instructional practices. Questioning skills varied greatly among teachers, with a majority of questions requiring factual recall and one-word answers.
- Student engagement in meaningful instructional activities was often limited. Lessons lacked challenge and did little to attract the interest of students. These same lessons did not provide students with opportunities to interact or work collaboratively. During some lessons, students were not active participants in the learning process.
- Although the school is committed to the use of SMART Boards and laptops in the classroom, a number of teachers were not taking advantage of the technology, and it was not effectively integrated into instruction.
- Student work posted in classrooms and in hallways appeared to be draft work rather than the final product. Teacher comments did not include specific feedback and did not clearly indicate what each student needed to do to improve and reach the next level.
- ELA curriculum maps and a curriculum guide have been developed across the grades; however, the curriculum guide does not provide a list of specific instructional materials or titles aligned to the curriculum. Moreover, the school has not adapted the ELA curriculum for subgroups, especially for students with disabilities and English language learners (ELLs).
- It was observed that rather than adapting the schoolwide ELA curriculum teachers of students with disabilities and ELLs were using two intervention programs, READ 180 and the Voyager program, as the main literacy curriculum for these subgroups.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The school leader should seek PD opportunities for teachers on a variety of instructional strategies to promote differentiation of instruction. Strategies should focus on ensuring that tasks match the academic needs of identified subgroups. School leaders should regularly monitor teacher planning and instructional practice in the classroom to ensure that differentiated activities are in place throughout the school. Ongoing PD should be provided for teachers who need continued support with using data to match assignments to address the individual needs of students.
- PD should be considered in supporting teachers to develop a variety of questioning techniques aimed at critical thinking and using problem solving skills appropriate to student development. These skills would specifically support teacher effectiveness for teachers of students with disabilities and ELLs with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs). Teachers should ensure that strategies identified in training are implemented in their daily instruction. School leaders should make questioning techniques a focus of teaching and learning observations and walkthroughs.
- School leaders should encourage teachers to pose questions that require students to support answers by citing text, elaborating on the answers of other students, or summarizing and rephrasing new information. Teacher lesson plans should include pre-created questions that require critical thinking and discussion. Teachers should use wait time and not allow students to opt-out of class discussions.

Teachers should use random selection and/or avoid calling exclusively on willing student volunteers. Teachers should require students to answer in complete sentences. Opportunities for students to work cooperatively and to engage in academic discussions so that they become more proactive learners should be regularly provided. Teachers should use common planning time to develop lessons that contain activities that encourage challenging and supportive student to student interaction. The administrative team should carry out formal and informal observations of lessons to monitor that this is consistently occurring.

- School leaders should consider conducting a survey to determine the computer competency skills and interests of staff. The school leadership, with Network support, should provide skills training in the effective use and integration of technology, including laptop computers and SMART Boards, into the academic curriculum. Additionally, the coaches and lead teacher should provide professional training in how to use technology as a tool to improve learning and increase student engagement. School leaders should ensure that strategies learned in PD are fully implemented in the classroom so that technology is routinely integrated into teaching and learning. The school leaders should assess the condition, placement, and use of the school's technology inventory to maximize the ready accessibility of the school's equipment.
- Rubrics should be used as an integral tool in planning and assessing assignments. Teachers should participate in PD activities that model the use of rubrics to provide teacher feedback, peer feedback and student self assessment. School leaders should monitor student work in portfolios and on display and evaluate the quality of feedback that is provided to ensure that it helps students improve and move to the next level.
- The school leadership should ensure that a uniform curriculum is taught and tested by teachers in all grades, including teachers of students with disabilities and ELLs. Supporting materials should be included as part of the curriculum guide and differentiated by grade and skill levels, including scaffolds and supports for students with disabilities and ELLs. Beginning in the 2012-13 school year, the curriculum should be aligned to the P-12 Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS).
- School leadership should ensure that students with disabilities and ELLs are exposed to the general curriculum. The school leadership should work with the Special Education School Improvement Specialist (SEIS) or other special education and English as a Second Language (ESL) experts to ensure programming meets the needs of students with disabilities and ELLs and that instruction leads to mastery of the CCLS.

III. SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

FINDINGS:

- A review of the available documentation and staff interviews indicate that few teachers and APs participate in Network sponsored PD workshops. Meeting agendas and interviews with faculty indicate that school leaders do not ensure that the available PD is planned and effectively used to bring about improvement in student achievement in literacy.
- A review of formal observation documents and interviews indicate that while school administrators make regular classroom visits and engage in informal instructional walkthroughs, some teachers are not

provided with specific written feedback and next steps for improving instructional practice and student learning.

- The school management of the organizational structures, operations and resources does not translate into an effective and efficient learning environment. This is evidenced by older materials and resources, underutilized technology, lack of an effective schoolwide PD plan and appropriate monitoring and evaluation systems.
- Although weekly teacher meetings are held, the outcomes of these meetings are not monitored by school leaders.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The school leaders, with the support of the Network should design a comprehensive PD plan to address the needs of teachers to improve their delivery of instruction. School leaders should monitor the delivery of instruction and conduct informal and formal observations with written feedback and recommendations for improvement.
- The school's administrative team should establish a timeline for formal observations and develop a plan for regular, frequent informal walkthroughs that result in data to drive instructional practices.
- The school's administrative team should review the organization, operations and resources of the school to address areas of need that limit the effectiveness of the learning environment. There should be increased accountability by all staff for continuous improvement.
- The APs should guide teacher efforts in the implementation of the content area skills and strategies that are identified in the weekly planning meetings.

IV. INFRASTRUCTURE FOR STUDENT SUCCESS

FINDINGS:

- Although the Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP) indicates that the school has three academies, no signage or displayed student work indicated the focus of the academies.
- The school does not have a full-time licensed librarian, as required in middle schools.
- Although most classroom environments are conducive to learning the one ELA classroom next to the band room is interrupted with constant loud music.
- Support for ELLs is provided through a push-in/pull-out model. The school does not have a dedicated classroom for pull-out ESL classes. Pull-out support is provided to students in the back of a science classroom that is shared with two other groups.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The school leadership should establish an academic environment that reflects a welcoming culture and

showcases students' work and achievement.

- The school leadership should seek to hire a licensed librarian/library media specialist to encourage and reinforce reading and research skills for all students.
- The school leadership should review the management and design of classroom environments to ensure that all classrooms are conducive to learning.
- The school leadership should consider having a dedicated classroom for ESL instruction and provide the necessary instructional support and materials, i.e., computers, equipment and books that reflect the student's cultural background.

V. PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

FINDINGS:

- The school has not developed and implemented a comprehensive PD plan that is aligned to the school's CCEP goals.
- Teachers' common planning time is not consistently used as a PD opportunity to bring about student improvement.
- Teachers are not held accountable for incorporating PD practices into their instruction. PD was not mentioned in any of the observation reports reviewed.
- The school's inquiry team was established in the fall of 2011 and has just started to analyze data to inform instruction.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- School leaders should develop and implement a PD plan designed to improve the quality of teaching and learning, and ensure that teachers participate in PD in order to meet the learning needs of their students. The PD plan should be aligned with the school's CEP goals and take into account the differentiated needs of the staff and the students.
- School leaders should consider developing a schedule to observe common planning meetings and ensure that the strategies discussed at the meetings have the potential for improving student achievement and are consistently implemented in classrooms.
- School leaders should incorporate into their schedule follow-up observations after PD sessions to ensure that teachers implement the strategies learned into the classroom instructional program. The school leaders should develop detailed recommendations and specific next steps in their observation reports and focus on these in their next observation.
- The work of the inquiry team should be monitored and school leaders should consider having their work focus on student needs, outcomes and development of effective instructional practices.

VI. FACILITIES AND RESOURCES

FINDINGS:

- The use of technology was limited in observed classes.
- Overall the hallways, stairwells, cafeteria and auditorium were clean, safe environments. However, student bathrooms throughout the school lack soap and paper products.
- The library is not well-organized, e.g., books are not classified in specific labeled sections.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- School leaders should investigate the use of appropriate technology that can be integrated into the curriculum and develop a comprehensive technology plan for implementation.
- School leaders should ensure that the custodial staff monitors and stocks student bathrooms with adequate supplies throughout the school day.
- The school leader should seek the support of the Network in finding grants and supplemental funding to evaluate and upgrade the collection of resources including technology and magazine subscriptions to support the learning needs of all students. Access to computers should be available to all students. Open access periods should be provided. Grade level literature should be available to meet the needs of all students. Inventories should be kept, and school leaders should oversee and monitor library resources through observations and walkthroughs.

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 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 CCLSs, Data Driven Instruction and the Annual Professional Performance Reviews for teacher effectiveness.