

Level 5 Schools 2015–16 Quarter 3 Report: Morgan Full Service Community School

School Information		Student Enrollment and Demographics	
Location	Holyoke, Massachusetts	Total SY 2015–16 Enrollment	382
Current Status	Level 5	Percentage SWDs	18%
Receiver Name	Dr. Stephen Zrike	Percentage ELLs	39%
Year Designated Level 5	2013	Percentage Black	3%
Year Designated Level 4	2010	Percentage Latino/Hispanic	93%
Grade Span	PK–8	Percentage Asian	0%
Number of Full-Time Staff in SY 2015–16	58	Percentage White	3%
		Percentage Multirace	1%
Priority Areas			
<p>Priority Area 1: Recruitment and development of professional talent.</p> <p>Priority Area 2: Systems to support professional learning and responsiveness in practice.</p> <p>Priority Area 3: Creating a Center of Excellence for science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM).</p> <p>Priority Area 4: Targeted and aligned resources.</p> <p>Priority Area 5: Enhancing and sustaining family and community engagement.</p>			

Content provided by Receiver Stephen Zrike.

Executive Summary

A brief summary of the turnaround efforts that have taken place in the third quarter, from January 2016 through March 2016.

Talent Development: In order to continually improve the professionalism of the Morgan faculty, the Morgan Full Service Community School (Morgan) leadership team is developing plans for peer observations of classroom instruction. The instructional leadership team (ILT) will oversee this process to embed it as a professional system for instructional improvement. In addition, all Morgan staff members continue to receive frequent feedback and coaching to improve teaching practice as it affects student outcomes.

Core Instruction and Intervention: Morgan leadership has increased and tweaked teachers' daily professional development time to leverage standards-based planning using core instructional resources. There has been a particular emphasis on backward planning and developing lessons in a logical sequence because this was a need for the teachers identified in classroom observations and lesson plan review. In addition, the ILT and teachers have continued to refine the intervention block to identify and plan for specific instructional needs to advance student learning.

Enrichment and Targeted Resources: Principal Lingsch and her leadership team are working with district office staff to expand their arsenal of specialized resources and interventions to better address the needs of students with disabilities. In addition, they have chosen a small set of high-leverage sheltered English instruction (SEI) strategies, aligned to their instructional focus,

to use as a focus for classroom observations and feedback. Morgan has developed a weekly enrichment block for students to diversify their educational experience through offerings such as crochet, filmmaking, storytelling, American Sign Language, and recycled art. It is currently taking place on Fridays, with plans to expand and integrate enrichment more broadly next year.

Updates on Priority Areas

Priority Area 1: Recruitment and development of professional talent.

Highlight: Morgan’s Panorama Climate and Culture Survey collects anonymous data from students, teachers, school staff, and parents about perceptions of school safety, school climate, student support, and cultural competence. These data have been analyzed by the Morgan Culture and Climate Leadership Team in collaboration with the full faculty. The data indicate that the school made significant progress on all indicators in the “capable and collaborative teaching” domain during the last three administrations of the survey. From a review of these data, the leadership team determined a need to begin a strategy of peer classroom observations to share instructional strategies and develop instructional improvement throughout the school. The three content planning teams (English language arts PK–4, English language arts/SS 5–8, and mathematics and science 3–8) have scheduled time for teams to participate in monthly peer observations. Next steps include ILT members calibrating a protocol and reporting on the peer observations in order to create an embedded system for instructional improvement. The areas of strength identified on the survey include adequate time for teachers to examine student work, professional development with opportunities to try new ideas, implementation of instructional strategies that meet diverse needs, administrator feedback on teaching, and teachers feeling prepared for the age level and subject they teach.

Highlight: Ongoing observation and feedback continues through various modes:

Principal and assistant principal use formal observations as a way to provide ongoing feedback to improve instructional practice.

District directors (English language learners [ELL], English language arts and humanities, early childhood, and STEM) use a combination of formal feedback and coaching cycles to target specific cohorts of teachers in their designated content areas in order to provide feedback aimed at improving instructional practice. There are regular check-ins with administration to coordinate and communicate the work of the district directors.

Administrators, district directors, coaches, and outside partners conduct monthly learning walks to identify schoolwide trends across content areas and inform next steps for data analysis, professional development, and coaching.

Highlight: The school’s mathematics coach is working collaboratively with the district STEM director to provide coaching to one of Morgan’s new mathematics teachers that is struggling. This cycle includes a detailed six-week plan that has a slow gradual release of mathematics instruction from the coach to the teacher. The school’s mathematics coach is providing guidance to the teacher, and the district director is providing feedback to the coach. The coach and STEM director then debrief with the administration.

Challenge: Although Morgan has many systems in place to provide teachers with

feedback and support for improving instruction, as well as a system to analyze data regularly, further refinements are needed to elevate instruction to close the gap in students' performance levels as rapidly as possible. Morgan will continue to monitor its their work with partners and district directors to make revisions, midcourse corrections, and adjustments to improve instructional delivery and outcomes for students.

Priority Area 2: Systems to support professional learning and responsiveness in practice.

Highlight: Morgan staff and leadership have increased and tweaked the daily morning professional development time to focus time on standards-based instructional planning. Coaches are coplanning with teams throughout the week. The coaches are meeting with teams on Wednesdays to determine the standard and objective for the following week using their core instructional resources (Reach for Reading, Envisions, Glencoe, and Expeditionary Learning). Planning continues on Thursdays and Fridays in small content-area teams. This work is led by ILT members, including coaches and administrators. As part of this process, teachers are continuing to drill down to planning for rigorous student tasks and instructional supports to address students' needs.

Highlight: Significant progress has been made on improving the structure of the school's intervention block. Middle school completed its fourth set of data analyses in February. Data has informed the fifth round of middle-school interventions to include the following instructional foci: Algebra 1 course, debate, Lexia Strategies, Focused Mathematics Readers, JogNog for Science, close reading strategies to identify author's purpose, compare and contrast texts, and explain reasoning on text-based evidence.

In addition, in Grades K–5, teachers and staff continue to implement and improve the use of Lexia Core 5. Using initial data, they identified inconsistent use of program components by teachers, which negatively affected some of the growth. In order to improve consistency, building leaders developed an intentional tracking tool for teachers to use to maximize the use of the program for all students. Morgan has seen an increase in February's Lexia data, indicating an increase in the percentage of students that will meet the end-of-the-year benchmark, an increase in the percentage of students identified as at low risk for failure, and a decrease in the percentage of students at high risk for failure. A small cohort of students in Grades 3–5 has gained maximum fluency in addition and subtraction in the Reflex program. They have advanced to the multiplication/division fluency unit within the program.

Highlight: ILT planning revealed that new teachers had difficulty utilizing the many English language arts resources (English language arts scope and sequence, pacing guides, unit assessments, formative assessment guides) to explicitly backward-plan all identified standards in a logical sequence. As a result, leaders have adjusted the monthly planning meetings to include an in-depth session for explicit backward planning in both the PK–4 and 5–8 English language arts cohorts.

Challenge: In January, leaders and teachers identified three critical areas of weakness or need among students from the ANet2 mathematics data in Grades 5–7: (1) number systems (14 percent below the network), (2) fractions (10 percent below the network), and (3) ratios and proportions (10 percent below the network). Morgan partnered with Blueprint Math Fellows to set up tutoring for these targeted grades and areas. Tutoring was delayed, however, by challenges in tutor recruitment, and the services began on

March 9.

Priority Area 3: Creating a Center of Excellence for science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM).

Highlight: As part of a new partnership with the National Science in Education Association, Scientist Evan Palmer-Young from UMASS Amherst will be a science ambassador to Morgan classrooms. He is working with Grades 6 and 8 on invasive species and their evolution tied to climate change and the environment.

Highlight: The STEM director and ILT members are currently participating in the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education Massachusetts Focus Academy course Learner Variability Through Universal Design (variability and how it applies in content areas) and will lead professional development for the ILT once the course is finished.

Highlight: Initial STEM fair planning began with all Grades K–8. Teachers and leaders updated the STEM handbook with a timeline for all teachers in Grades 3–8. All students in Grades 3–8 have chosen their topics. Topics had to be real-world problems in one of the four main science domains: earth, life, physical, and technology/engineering.

Challenge: Core instruction for English language arts and mathematics continue to be a major area of focus for school leaders and the ILT. The STEM key strategies are not a current schoolwide priority; all grade levels are, however, integrating STEM challenges weekly, biweekly, or monthly into classroom practice and showing improvement in the design process. Between 67 and 90 percent of students across all grades have scored either a 3 or a 4 on the last STEM challenge rubric.

Priority Area 4: Targeted and aligned resources.

Highlight: The ELL director and administrators are conducting weekly classroom observations and holding debriefing sessions with the staff using a small set of focus elements from the SEI smartcard that are aligned to the school’s instructional focus. This has both provided teachers with focused feedback on high leverage SEI strategies and informed the ongoing professional development for all English as a second language and special education teachers.

Highlight: As a result of participating in the district’s full-school-day training, the Morgan team identified the lack of enrichment opportunities for students as an area of need. As a first step for this year, Morgan has instituted Enrichment Fridays during which teachers use the intervention block for the following activities led by Morgan teachers: crochet, Amherst Cinema filmmaking, storytelling/story acting, American Sign Language, no-bake recipes, and recycled art projects. The plan is to improve and expand this learning experience with the goal of increasing student voice and choice in enrichment activities.

Highlight: As part of problem solving to meet the individual needs of students, Morgan leaders worked with the district to provide specialized training opportunities for special education teachers. Morgan began using the Souday System guides for beginning reading, writing, and spelling instruction and reading intervention. The system is being used for small-group special education intervention in Grades 6 and 7. Morgan will

continue to integrate resources that address specialized instructional targets as needed.

Challenge: Although Morgan teachers have the foundations for specialized training, there is a gap in the staff's knowledge base and repertoire to close the gaps of both the ELL and special education students. Morgan staff will continue to work with the appropriate district directors and coaches to improve the staff's knowledge base and repertoire.

Priority Area 5: Enhancing and sustaining family and community engagement.

Highlight: The Parent–Child Home Program is a 23-week program in a two-year cycle that services low-income families. It targets the young children in these homes, as early as 16 months to 3.6 years of age, before the children enter prekindergarten. Home visitors visit the families twice a week and provide educational toys, books, and resources to build school readiness through playing and reading. Morgan is currently serving 10 families of students who will eventually attend Morgan's PK program.

Highlight: An English for Speakers of Other Languages class has been offered to all Morgan families. The course is run by the Valley Opportunity Council as an extension of their partnership with Morgan. The course is designed to teach the ELL families the necessary English language skills so they are able to support their child's academics and further their own education. Currently there are six families participating in this cohort.

Highlight: The Parent Volunteer Program is part of Morgan's family engagement efforts to increase and sustain family involvement at the school. The goal of the program is to recruit parent leaders to become active participants in the school's family engagement work. This creates opportunities for parents to be part of the daily culture of the school, because they are given roles and responsibilities, trainings to develop new skills, and resources to be able to support learning at school and at home. There are currently five active parents in Morgan's volunteer program.

Challenge: Morgan offers various programs and opportunities for families to participate in the school regularly. It is evident that attendance is higher for the activities that focus on building school culture and lower for the academically focused events. The school continues to attract the same small group of parents for the academically focused opportunities. Staff will continue to work through the Full Service Community School model to increase parent participation in the academic arena.