*****Massachusetts Department of***

***Elementary and Secondary Education***

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| Jeffrey C. Riley  *Commissioner* |  |

# MEMORANDUM

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| **To:** | Stephen K. Zrike, Receiver, Holyoke School Committee |
| **From:** | Jeffrey C. Riley, Commissioner |
| **Date:** | April 3, 2020 |
| **Subject:** | Quarter 3 Update on Chronically Underperforming Schools |

The following is the third of four quarterly progress updates to be produced this year on Morgan Full Service Community School, as one of the four chronically underperforming schools, and that school’s implementation of its turnaround plan. The update in this report is focused on activities from January and February 2020. The narrative for this progress update has been provided by the School Empowerment Network, based on classroom observations (the second in the series of three) led by that group during January and describes progress made since the first set of observations in late October. The focus of this update is the instructional core (curriculum, pedagogy and assessments). A final annual review is due in June 2020, pending status of COVID-19.

Please share this report with the other members of the Holyoke School Committee.

**Chronically Underperforming Schools**

In the fall of 2013, four schools were designated as chronically underperforming schools in response to their low performance and lack of improvement while in underperforming status: John P. Holland Elementary School (UP Academy Holland) and Paul A. Dever Elementary School (Dever) in Boston, Morgan Full Service Community School (Morgan) in Holyoke, and John Avery Parker Elementary School (Parker) in New Bedford.

**Morgan Full Service Community School, Holyoke, MA**

Narrative Prepared by School Empowerment Network

**School Strength**

Area of Strength

Curriculum

*Description:*

Morgan leaders have identified standards-aligned curriculum for each grade level and content area. Selected curriculum includes: Engage NY for mathematics (in grades PreK to 4), Making Meaning for ELA (in grades K to 2), and Reach for ELA (in grades 3 and 4). Structures for teachers to collaboratively review curriculum and prepare lessons have been established. These structures are more developed and more consistently utilized in relation to mathematics than ELA. Consequently, across classrooms, mathematics lessons are more consistent and more effective than are ELA lessons.

Moving forward, school leaders should continue to develop the capacity of individual teachers and teacher teams to analyze standards, identify the highest-level thinking embedded in standards, and consistently plan lessons that emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills among all students. As part of this work, school leaders should more consistently review lesson plans to ensure that learning tasks are refined using student work, student data, and a shared understanding of cognitive rigor.

**Areas of Focus**

Area of Focus # 1

Pedagogy

*Description:*

As was the case in October, clear objectives and grade-level content are evident in most classrooms. However, instructional planning and pedagogy are not driven by a coherent or well-communicated vision for instruction, a shared and articulated set of beliefs about how students learn best, nor a normed, schoolwide definition of academic rigor. School leaders state several beliefs about how students learn best but specific instructional strategies aligned to those beliefs are not established. Teachers are able to infer some of the school leaders’ beliefs about how students learn best, but these have not been explicitly communicated.

Area of Focus #2Assessment

*Description:*

Morgan teachers are analyzing student data from grade-level assessments, which include ANet and STAR, in collaborative groups. However, these data are not impacting daily lesson planning or longer-term instructional planning.

Aside from increased use of intentional student groupings, there was no evidence of consistent, daily assessment for learning practices across classrooms. Teachers identified in-class assessment practices they individually utilize, such as exit tickets, but could not identify any expectations which have been communicated to them for the use of Assessment for Learning (AFL) strategies, CFUs, student self-assessment, or feedback to students.