

**Morgan Full Service Community School Local Stakeholder Group
Recommendations to the Commissioner
Submitted January 6, 2014**

Morgan Full Service Community School was designated by Commissioner Chester as chronically underperforming (“Level 5”) on October 30, 2013. Massachusetts law indicates that within 30 days of a school being designated as chronically underperforming, the Commissioner shall convene a local stakeholder group to solicit the group’s recommendations for the Commissioner’s Level 5 School Turnaround Plan.

The Morgan School’s Local Stakeholder Group was convened on Thursday, November 21, 2013. The statute allowed 45 days for the local stakeholder group to complete its work. The Local Stakeholder Group met four times during this period, on the following dates and times:

- Meeting #1: Thursday, November 21st, 3:30-5:30 pm
- Meeting #2: Wednesday, December 4th, 3:45-5:45 pm
- Meeting #3: Wednesday, December 11th, 3:45-5:45 pm
- Meeting #4: Wednesday, December 18th, 3:45-5:45 pm

All of the meetings were held at The Picknelly Adult and Family Education Center in Holyoke. All of the meetings were open to the public. All meetings were facilitated by an ESE staff member or a consultant hired for this purpose. All meetings were also observed by at least one ESE staff member.

The membership of the Morgan Full Service Community School Local Stakeholder Group is listed below. The committee’s membership meets the requirements of the statute as outlined in M.G.L. Chapter 69, Section 1J, subsection m.

Position, per statute	Designee
The superintendent or designee	Sergio Paez, designed alternated Paul Hyry-Dermith
School committee chair or designee	Alex Morse
Local teachers’ union president or designee	Peter McAndrew
Administrator from the school, who may be the principal, chosen by the superintendent	Karyn McDermott
Teacher from the school, chosen by the faculty of the school	Molly Pinkney
Parent from the school, chosen by the local parent organization. (Note: If school or district doesn’t have a parent organization, the Commissioner shall select a volunteer parent of a student at the school.)	Mary Jo Mazzu
Representatives of applicable state and local social service, health and child welfare agencies, chosen by the Commissioner	Ed Caisse, South Holyoke Safe Neighborhoods Initiative

Representatives of applicable state and local social service, health and child welfare agencies, chosen by the Commissioner	Julia Guazzo, Coordinated Family and Community Engagement Program
For elementary schools, a representative of an early education and care provider, chosen by the Commissioner of the Department of Early Education and Care	Joan Kagan, President and CEO, Square One
For middle or high schools, a representative of the higher education community, chosen by the Secretary of Education	April Graziano, Chair, Education Department, Holyoke Community College
Community member, chosen by the chief executive of the city or town	Aaron Vega
Total number of members allowed by statute: Not more than 13 individuals	Total number of members on the Local Stakeholder Group: 11

The Morgan School Local Stakeholder Group (LSG) worked diligently to execute its charge to provide recommendations to the Commissioner as he creates his turnaround plan for the school; these recommendations are designed to maximize the rapid academic achievement of students.

The Local Stakeholder Group offers the following recommendations for the Commissioner’s consideration.

Recommendations: Use of Time

In order to close significant achievement and opportunity gaps, it is imperative that Morgan has increased time available for teaching and learning. Consequently, we put forth the following recommendations:

1. Embed a full day year-round pre-school program staffed by Massachusetts certified teachers within the Morgan School in order to achieve 100% of students attending a preschool. While attendance would be helpful, it is necessary but not sufficient. It is essential that all preschool providers have a shared understanding of school readiness and that their programs embody preschool standards for learning that synchronize with the best preparation for early elementary education. Rationale:
 - The number of Kindergarten, 1st, and 2nd grade students in warning is extraordinarily high; LSG members did not think it would be possible to shrink this achievement gap in time for grade 3 MCAS without quality preschool.
 - Only three students entered Kindergarten this year knowing all of their letters.
 - Assessment tools for K-2 are GOLD and BAS. Preschool needs to align and be consistent starting with Head Start, private providers, and public preschools.
2. Establish a mandatory Morgan-based summer enhancement opportunity that engages students recreationally and academically to mitigate summer learning loss.
3. Further strengthen the school’s efforts to improve attendance by strengthened family outreach, including ways to engage students in after school activities such as South Holyoke Safe Neighborhood Initiative.
4. Extend professional development time, including adding time during the summer for accelerating new teacher development and extending the capacities of experienced teachers.

5. Extend the day to gain extra instructional/professional development time for students (8:00 to 3:30).

Recommendations: Leadership

1. We recommend that the superintendent become the receiver of Morgan so that his knowledge of the community and the strategic work he has just begun will be integrated into this important work. We believe this would provide a seamless transition and save valuable time and resources. If this is not the case, it will be critical that the receiver meet with this LSG to learn about the community and the context for these recommendations.
2. We recommend that LSG continue to be used as resource and a think tank for school progress and that the community clearly understands the criteria required to exit level 5.

Recommendations: Talent Management

Current systems are not maximized to ensure that Morgan uses skilled staff effectively. For instance, new Holyoke Public Schools teachers have mentors, but not necessarily in the same building. Currently, a number of brand new teachers are hired late in the summer. Morgan has two brand new teachers in grade 3; one was hired at the end of September, and the other was hired in December. Morgan has 11 new teachers this year.

In order to ensure that the most skilled staff are retained, hired, and supported, we recommend:

1. Develop a comprehensive recruitment and staff development plan to attract and retain skilled teachers who can thrive within an urban environment. This plan calls for early and broad outreach to skilled educators who want to work in a challenging environment and receive the necessary support to gain and strengthen the pedagogical and content skills necessary to serve Morgan students' needs. A critical element of this outreach should include recruiting and providing incentives for dual licensed teachers in either SPED and ESL. The goal would be to have staff hiring completed by July 1st.
2. Develop a comprehensive professional development program to accelerate new teacher development and extend current teacher capacity where appropriate to meet the needs of Morgan students.
 - Currently there are 75 hours of extended time for teachers that are not comprehensive or optimized; every Monday teachers work an extra 2.5 hours.
 - We need high quality coaching and targeted professional development. Currently Morgan has an ELL coach only – dedicated building ELA and Math coaches were cut.
3. Re-establish dedicated math and ELA coaches at Morgan to support delivery of content-based professional development, embedded coaching and support for effective implementation of a data cycle that impacts student outcomes.
4. Develop a school-based management committee to expand leadership opportunities for teachers and staff.
5. Increase the number of staff who are bilingual and who understand that Spanish language is an important tool to engage students and parents. This should be implemented by both hiring new staff that are bilingual, and offering opportunities and incentives for current staff to become bilingual. The school would also benefit from a translator who did not have another teaching responsibility.

Recommendation: Trained Math and Literacy Tutors

End of October benchmark data indicate that 103 Morgan students fall dramatically below grade level targets, yet are currently not receiving appropriate interventions. There is a significant need for further intervention and support. In order to address the learning needs of each and every Morgan student, resources are needed to supplement current staffing.

1. We recommend the use of college partners and other community resources to provide high dosage math and literacy tutoring during the day. This would allow teachers to focus on high-quality, effective guided reading and numeracy activities.

The tutors would work strategically to:

- Target interventions based on current student data
- Prioritize those students with a two year or greater deficit
- Use appropriate technology and accelerators like Fast ForWord
- Significantly increase academic time on learning ensuring that all students are engaged in targeted, rigorous, standards-based tasks designed to close learning gaps and will allow teachers to focus on high quality, effective guided reading and numeracy activities

Recommendations: School Structure/Organization

1. We recommend moving 7th and 8th grade out of Morgan and into Dean Technical High School.
2. In tandem with this recommendation, we also recommend that the district develop a separate STEM Academy at Dean (part of a district wide magnet plan) that would include the Morgan 7th and 8th graders. The STEM Academy would need to include a dedicated space in the building for grades 7 and 8 apart from the high schoolers.

This shift would create and provide increased opportunities for middle school learners while making room for embedded preschool at Morgan. Additionally, it would support a narrow focus at Morgan on closing the literacy and numeracy gaps in the elementary grades.

Recommendations: Curriculum/Core Instruction

There is a significant need to strengthen the core instruction at Morgan. Consequently, we support the following recommendations:

1. Focus professional development efforts on strengthening lesson plans and increasing observational feedback to design and implement differentiated instruction that better meets the varied needs of Morgan students.
2. Reduce time out of mainstream classrooms for traditional intervention “pull out” model and balance that with strengthened core instruction.
3. Develop a coordinated school wide reading program in order to optimize resources and professional development work.
4. Strengthen literacy support by adding a highly qualified librarian that is a teacher who can teach literacy, integrate content areas, and provide PD.
5. Reduce class size in order to better meet student needs.
6. Continue and further strengthen Data Cycle and Progress Monitoring.

7. Add trained tutors (see recommendation above).
8. Continue to develop and enhance the monthly data dashboard for benchmarking that has been developed and instituted this year to impact systems and practice. This monthly dashboard includes ongoing data in the following areas: instructional leadership (walkthroughs, observations, feedback, lesson plan review and feedback); student support (attendance, suspensions, SPED referrals, interventions); academic achievement (interim assessments); teacher support (attendance, observation ratings); progress monitoring (green, yellow, red kids). Principals and leadership teams use these data to make proactive midstream corrections.
9. Target core curriculum planning to improvements for ELL students at Levels 3, 4 and 5. These students' progress on standardized student achievement tests lags behind their peers; this is an area of identified need.
10. Add instructional coaches, particularly in mathematics (see above).

Recommendations: School Culture

1. We recommend strengthening the gains made from the Positive Behavioral Intervention and Support (PBIS) initiative by capitalizing on the power and impact of shared expectations, common techniques and shared responsibility within the staff. Consider replicating the success of other turnaround schools that have used Lemov's work or other common programs for this purpose. Below we have documented those PBIS gains and believe that this same kind of effort needs to extend to developing a shared understanding and shared expectations around effective instruction.

We note that the Positive Behavioral Intervention and Support (PBIS) initiative:

- Started halfway through 12-13 year and full implementation this year. To date, disciplinary referrals have gone from 603 to 309.
 - Program consists of: School-wide consistent expectations and interventions; school wide cool down areas; all staff, students and families on board and consistent; tickets/reward for being "caught being good"; Student of the Week.
 - 2013 Monitoring Site Visit (MSV) noted the improved and safe school culture.
 - Interventions are being developed and intervention staff is working with students to reduce time out of class and suspensions. For example, students who would previously have been sent home/suspended and lost multiple days of instruction are now re-entering classrooms ready to learn in as little as an hour.
 - Guidance counselors support this work with Second Steps.
2. We further recommend professional development work around cultural proficiency.
 - So much of the language describing a Level 5 school represents a deficit model. While significant progress needs to be achieved, we believe this will not occur unless the strengths and uniqueness of the community and its members are valued and respected. Consequently, we recommend that communication that frames the work at Morgan must build upon the strengths of the families of Morgan.

Recommendations: Partners

1. We recommend that Morgan further strengthen its partner work by clarifying and communicating:

- What does it mean to be a partner at Morgan? What are the expectations and responsibilities of both the partner organization and the educators?
- Additionally, effective partners must offer services and supports that synchronize with the strategic initiatives of the Morgan School. Consequently, we recommend that a Partner Advisory Council meet regularly with school leaders for alignment to goals, progress monitoring, and ongoing adjustments.

Recommendations: Parents

1. We recommend that community events be used strategically to not only build relationships and trust but to also link school goals to these important opportunities. Offering child care at community events is highly recommended.
2. Community and parent outreach needs to become a priority so that parent involvement is seen as essential and invaluable to the well being and growth of Morgan students. We recommend reaching out to the business community in a systematic way so that business leaders can be tapped to provide financial and other kinds of support to help achieve school goals.

Appendix: Purpose, Intended Outcomes, and Discussion Topics for Morgan LSG Meetings

Upon designation as a Level 5 school, state law requires that the Commissioner develop a Turnaround Plan for accelerated improvement and outlines a timeline and process accordingly. The first step in this process is for the Commissioner to convene a local stakeholder group. The guidance below is designed to help Local Stakeholder Group members understand that process.

Purpose of the Level 5 School LSG

- To engage in an evidence-based conversation regarding the core issues and challenges facing Morgan Full Service Community School and identify what the school community believes are the key challenges creating barriers to its students' academic progress.
- To make recommendations to the Commissioner about the key components of his turnaround plan for Morgan, "in order to maximize the rapid academic achievement of students."

The Commissioner has chosen to increase the intensity to a Level 5 intervention for Morgan because he believes that despite the efforts taken during the first three years of turnaround, a different mix of interventions and practices are required to put the conditions in place for an educational experience that prepares all of Morgan's students to succeed. He looks forward to the LSG's ideas for how to create substantial change at the school – change that will secure rapid improvement in the academic achievement of students.

Intended Outcomes

Through the LSG's discussion and exploration of the data, to generate a set of rigorous, evidence-based recommendations that will provide the Commissioner with input directly from the Morgan community and advise him as he creates his Level 5 Turnaround Plan.

The Local Stakeholder Group will consider

- The key **issues and challenges** facing the school, and the district's support of the school;
- The impact and sufficiency of the **strategies and supports** employed by the school to date – what has worked, what has not worked;
- The **school's and district's capacity**—including its systems, polices, and use of resources—to fully implement proposed strategies; and
- The **interventions and practices** that are most likely to promote rapid improvement of student achievement.

Within 45 days of its initial meeting, the stakeholder group shall make its recommendations to the Commissioner. Meetings of the local stakeholder group shall be open to the public and the recommendations submitted to the Commissioner shall be publicly available upon submission.

Meeting focus areas and discussion questions are described below.

Meeting #1: What does the evidence tell us about the key issues and challenges facing Morgan?

Data will be presented regarding the school and its performance.

Questions for discussion:

- What do the data tell us about where the school is now? What do we know about changes to the data over the past three years?
- What do the data tell us about the school's core assets and strengths?
- What do the data tell us about the school's core challenge areas?
- How is Morgan using data now to inform instruction? How does the school select the most relevant data to use? What are Morgan's greatest strengths in using data? Greatest challenges?
- What data tools, skills would the school need to push the school to the next level?
- What does the LSG recommend to the Commissioner about how the school can better use data tools, skills, and resources to improve instruction?

Meeting #2: How can Morgan support all students to learn at the highest levels?

Information will be presented regarding the school's existing structures and supports that facilitate all students' learning.

Questions for discussion:

- What do LSG members believe to be the most significant academic challenges at the school?
- What strategies has the school already tried to overcome these academic challenges? What worked? What didn't work?
- What specific supports has the school tried to facilitate English Language Learners' (ELLs') learning? Are they working? How do you know?
- What specific supports has the school tried to facilitate the learning of students with special needs? Are they working? How do you know?
- Is the school currently challenging all students to work to their highest potential? If not, what specific actions can be taken to increase the level of rigor in Morgan's instruction?
- What does the LSG recommend to the Commissioner about how the school can support all students to learn at the highest levels?

Meeting #3: How can Morgan maximize the assets and talents of partners to improve students' learning?

Information will be presented regarding existing partnerships with the school.

Questions for discussion:

- What partners currently work at the school? In what academic and non-academic areas do they provide support?
- What areas do you believe need partner support?
- How can partners help address Morgan's high rates of student absenteeism and out-of-school suspensions?
- What structures are in place to align partner efforts with school goals?
- What structures are in place to coordinate efforts between partners?
- If you had to pick just three of the school's current partner initiatives to continue, which would you select? Why? Is there evidence to show how these partners are being effective in the school?

- Does the school have an unaddressed (or under-addressed) challenge area that you believe could benefit by a partner's support? Which one, and why?
- What does the LSG recommend to the Commissioner about how the school can maximize the assets and talents of partners to improve students' learning?

Meeting #4: How can Morgan maximize the engagement and support of family and community members for students' learning?

Information will be presented regarding existing family (family members of students at the school) and community (other community members or organizations unrelated to students at the school) engagement efforts at the school.

Questions for discussion:

- While engagement varies by individual, how would you rate the overall level of family member engagement at the school (low/medium/high)? What evidence supports this rating?
- While engagement varies by individual, how would you rate the overall level of community engagement at the school (low/medium/high)? What evidence supports this rating?
- What structures are in place to encourage family member and community engagement at the school? (e.g. regular, frequent schedule of calls to students' families; annual community open house, etc.) Are they working? How do you know?
Note: Please identify school-wide efforts, not unique efforts by individual teachers or staff members.
- How do school leaders and/or the school's partners bolster the school's structures to encourage family member and community engagement? What has worked? What else could school leadership and/or partners do to facilitate engagement?
- How can family and community members' talents be incorporated into the strategy to improve the school's academic performance?
- How can family and community members help address the issues leading to high rates of student absenteeism and out-of-school suspensions?
- What does the LSG recommend to the Commissioner about how the school can maximize family and community members' support to maximize students' learning?

Note: A portion of this meeting will be used to finalize the recommendations made across all meetings.