

**U.S. Department of Education**  
**2016 National Blue Ribbon Schools Program**

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[X] Public or [ ] Non-public

For Public Schools only: (Check all that apply) [X] Title I    [ ] Charter    [ ] Magnet    [ ] Choice

Name of Principal Ms. Carolyn Boyce

(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., etc.) (As it should appear in the official records)

Official School Name Morris Elementary School

(As it should appear in the official records)

School Mailing Address 129 West Street

(If address is P.O. Box, also include street address.)

City Lenox                      State MA                      Zip Code+4 (9 digits total) 01240-2420

County Berkshire County

Telephone (413) 637-5570                      Fax (413) 637-5511

Web site/URL  
http://www.lenoxpublicschools.org/morris/index.php    E-mail cboyce@lenoxps.org

Twitter Handle \_\_\_\_\_ Facebook Page \_\_\_\_\_ Google+ \_\_\_\_\_

YouTube/URL \_\_\_\_\_ Blog \_\_\_\_\_ Other Social Media Link \_\_\_\_\_

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_  
(Principal's Signature)

Name of Superintendent\*Mr. Timothy Lee                      E-mail tlee@lenoxps.org  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

District Name Lenox Public Schools                      Tel. (413) 637-5550

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_  
(Superintendent's Signature)

Name of School Board  
President/Chairperson Mr. Robert Vaughan  
(Specify: Ms., Miss, Mrs., Dr., Mr., Other)

I have reviewed the information in this application, including the eligibility requirements on page 2 (Part I-Eligibility Certification), and certify, to the best of my knowledge, that it is accurate.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_  
(School Board President's/Chairperson's Signature)

The original signed cover sheet only should be converted to a PDF file and uploaded via the online portal.

*\*Non-public Schools: If the information requested is not applicable, write N/A in the space.*

## Part I – Eligibility Certification

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The signatures on the first page of this application (cover page) certify that each of the statements below, concerning the school's eligibility and compliance with U.S. Department of Education and National Blue Ribbon Schools requirements, are true and correct.

1. The school configuration includes one or more of grades K-12. (Schools on the same campus with one principal, even a K-12 school, must apply as an entire school.)
2. The public school has met their state's accountability requirements (i.e., avoided sanctions) in participation, performance in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics, and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate) using the most recent accountability results available for the year prior to nomination.
3. To meet final eligibility, a public school must meet the state's accountability requirements (i.e., avoided sanctions) in participation, performance in reading (or English language arts) and mathematics, and other academic indicators (i.e., attendance rate and graduation rate) for the year in which they are nominated (2015-2016) and be certified by the state representative. Any status appeals must be resolved at least two weeks before the awards ceremony for the school to receive the award.
4. If the school includes grades 7 or higher, the school must have foreign language as a part of its curriculum.
5. The school has been in existence for five full years, that is, from at least September 2010 and each tested grade must have been part of the school for the past three years.
6. The nominated school has not received the National Blue Ribbon Schools award in the past five years: 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, or 2015.
7. The nominated school has no history of testing irregularities, nor have charges of irregularities been brought against the school at the time of nomination. The U.S. Department of Education reserves the right to disqualify a school's application and/or rescind a school's award if irregularities are later discovered and proven by the state.
8. The nominated school or district is not refusing Office of Civil Rights (OCR) access to information necessary to investigate a civil rights complaint or to conduct a district-wide compliance review.
9. The OCR has not issued a violation letter of findings to the school district concluding that the nominated school or the district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes. A violation letter of findings will not be considered outstanding if OCR has accepted a corrective action plan from the district to remedy the violation.
10. The U.S. Department of Justice does not have a pending suit alleging that the nominated school or the school district as a whole has violated one or more of the civil rights statutes or the Constitution's equal protection clause.
11. There are no findings of violations of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act in a U.S. Department of Education monitoring report that apply to the school or school district in question; or if there are such findings, the state or district has corrected, or agreed to correct, the findings.

## PART II - DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

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Data should be provided for the most recent school year (2015-2016) unless otherwise stated.

### DISTRICT

1. Number of schools in the district (per district designation):
- 1 Elementary schools (includes K-8)
  - 1 Middle/Junior high schools
  - 1 High schools
  - 0 K-12 schools
- 3 TOTAL

### SCHOOL (To be completed by all schools)

2. Category that best describes the area where the school is located:
- Urban or large central city
  - Suburban with characteristics typical of an urban area
  - Suburban
  - Small city or town in a rural area
  - Rural
3. Number of students as of October 1, 2015 enrolled at each grade level or its equivalent in applying school:

Grade	# of Males	# of Females	Grade Total
PreK	6	8	14
K	23	31	54
1	21	20	41
2	29	19	48
3	30	21	51
4	35	23	58
5	30	29	59
6	0	0	0
7	0	0	0
8	0	0	0
9	0	0	0
10	0	0	0
11	0	0	0
12 or higher	0	0	0
<b>Total Students</b>	174	151	325

4. Racial/ethnic composition of the school:
- 0 % American Indian or Alaska Native
  - 2 % Asian
  - 1 % Black or African American
  - 7 % Hispanic or Latino
  - 0 % Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
  - 88 % White
  - 2 % Two or more races
  - 100 % Total**

(Only these seven standard categories should be used to report the racial/ethnic composition of your school. The Final Guidance on Maintaining, Collecting, and Reporting Racial and Ethnic Data to the U.S. Department of Education published in the October 19, 2007 *Federal Register* provides definitions for each of the seven categories.)

5. Student turnover, or mobility rate, during the 2014 – 2015 school year: 5%

This rate should be calculated using the grid below. The answer to (6) is the mobility rate.

Steps For Determining Mobility Rate	Answer
(1) Number of students who transferred <i>to</i> the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	9
(2) Number of students who transferred <i>from</i> the school after October 1, 2014 until the end of the 2014-2015 school year	5
(3) Total of all transferred students [sum of rows (1) and (2)]	14
(4) Total number of students in the school as of October 1, 2014	311
(5) Total transferred students in row (3) divided by total students in row (4)	0.045
(6) Amount in row (5) multiplied by 100	5

6. English Language Learners (ELL) in the school: 1 %  
19 Total number ELL

Specify each non-English language represented in the school (separate languages by commas):  
Chinese, French, Spanish, Urdu, Vietnamese

7. Students eligible for free/reduced-priced meals: 27 %  
Total number students who qualify: 86

8. Students receiving special education services: 10 %  
31 Total number of students served

Indicate below the number of students with disabilities according to conditions designated in the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Do not add additional conditions. It is possible that students may be classified in more than one condition.

- 3 Autism
- 0 Deafness
- 0 Deaf-Blindness
- 2 Emotional Disturbance
- 0 Hearing Impairment
- 0 Mental Retardation
- 0 Multiple Disabilities
- 0 Orthopedic Impairment
- 3 Other Health Impaired
- 13 Specific Learning Disability
- 4 Speech or Language Impairment
- 0 Traumatic Brain Injury
- 1 Visual Impairment Including Blindness
- 5 Developmentally Delayed

9. Number of years the principal has been in her/his position at this school: 2
10. Use Full-Time Equivalents (FTEs), rounded to nearest whole numeral, to indicate the number of school staff in each of the categories below:

	<b>Number of Staff</b>
Administrators	1
Classroom teachers	19
Resource teachers/specialists e.g., reading, math, science, special education, enrichment, technology, art, music, physical education, etc.	12
Paraprofessionals	18
Student support personnel e.g., guidance counselors, behavior interventionists, mental/physical health service providers, psychologists, family engagement liaisons, career/college attainment coaches, etc.	2

11. Average student-classroom teacher ratio, that is, the number of students in the school divided by the FTE of classroom teachers, e.g., 22:1 16:1
12. Show daily student attendance rates. Only high schools need to supply yearly graduation rates.

<b>Required Information</b>	2014-2015	2013-2014	2012-2013	2011-2012	2010-2011
Daily student attendance	96%	95%	96%	96%	95%
High school graduation rate	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%

13. **For high schools only, that is, schools ending in grade 12 or higher.**  
Show percentages to indicate the post-secondary status of students who graduated in Spring 2015.

<b>Post-Secondary Status</b>	
Graduating class size	0
Enrolled in a 4-year college or university	0%
Enrolled in a community college	0%
Enrolled in career/technical training program	0%
Found employment	0%
Joined the military or other public service	0%
Other	0%

14. Indicate whether your school has previously received a National Blue Ribbon Schools award.  
Yes  No

If yes, select the year in which your school received the award.

15. In a couple of sentences, provide the school's mission or vision statement.

Morris School exists to support the academic development and nurture the social and emotional growth of each child in a respectful environment that encourages lifelong learning and responsible citizenship.

16. **For public schools only**, if the school is a magnet, charter, or choice school, explain how students are chosen to attend.

Morris School is a public elementary school serving resident children of Lenox, MA. Lenox Public Schools participates in school choice and has a sizable percentage of students coming from the surrounding towns of Pittsfield, Lee, Stockbridge, Richmond, and beyond. Parents wishing to enroll their child in LPS via school choice submit an application with a Spring deadline. The Principal and Superintendent annually assess class sizes at each grade level and determine how many choice slots are available. If there are more applications than slots for a particular grade, the process goes to a lottery.

## PART III – SUMMARY

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Morris School is located in Lenox, Massachusetts – a vibrant town in the beautiful Berkshire region of New England. During the "Guilded Age" at the turn of the 20th century, Lenox became a summer haven for wealthy vacationers coming to the mountains from New York City. Many of the summer "cottages," which are more aptly described as mansions, remain around the community and are either preserved as historic sites for public touring or converted into inns or other hospitality and community venues. Tanglewood, Shakespeare and Company, The Audubon Nature Reserve, the Berkshire Theater Group, Kripalu yoga and meditation center, and many other cultural and historic sites are a short distance from our school. Many of these world-class cultural venues offer in-school residency programs and/or performances that enrich the lives of Morris students.

Named after a local modern artist, George L.K. Morris, who donated the land for the school, Morris School is the sole public elementary school in Lenox-enrolling about 325 students. The school serves students aged 3 to 11 in a PK to grade 5 program. Students completing grade 5 at Morris typically attend Lenox Memorial Middle and High School.

Morris School aligns its curriculum with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks in all subject areas. In 2011, the state incorporated the Common Core State Standards in both English Language Arts and Mathematics into its Frameworks. Teachers use GoMath! as their primary math program, a balanced literacy approach that incorporates both whole-language strategies as well as explicit instruction in foundational skills, and teacher-created curriculum units in science and social studies that are designed around the Frameworks. Students in grades K-5 attend special classes each week in the areas of art, music, physical education, technology, and foreign language. Students attend these classes one time per week for 45 minutes with the exception of physical education which they attend twice per week. In addition, our specialists offer a wide variety of clubs and activities before or after school. We have an art club, chorus, intramural sports, a services club, and several technology clubs that meet throughout the school year as extra-curricular activities.

In addition to our core instruction, Morris School has a robust "Response to Intervention" process made possible largely through the use of Title I funds. We have one full-time certified Title I teacher and three full-time Title I paraprofessionals who provide academic intervention in the areas of English Language Arts and Mathematics. Students are screened three times per year in ELA and Mathematics using a combination of nationally-normed assessments and curriculum-based assessments. Based on this data, students are prioritized for intervention. It is with great pride that Morris School is able to offer Tier 2 intervention to almost all students who need it. Due in large part to this responsive system of support, Morris School has a much lower percentage of students on IEP's than the state average (Morris- 10%, Massachusetts- 17%). If a student continues to struggle despite Tier 2 support, the Morris Support Team meets to discuss additional possible supports and whether or not the student should be evaluated to determine eligibility for Special Education services. Morris School has three full-time Special Educators, Speech and Language Pathologists, an Occupation Therapist, a School Adjustment Counselor, and a Physical Therapist who provide services for students with identified disabilities.

Social and emotional learning at Morris School currently takes place in authentic moments throughout the school day as issues come to the forefront. The counseling staff work with students as needed and employ a social problem-solving approach in conjunction with concrete strategies students can employ when issues arise. Additionally teachers at Morris School work diligently at creating a sense of community within their classrooms and throughout the school through the use of effective management strategies, explicit expectations for routines and procedures, collaborative and cooperative learning, and team-building activities. The school also comes together on a monthly basis for All-School Meetings which focus on different topics related to community, school spirit, academics, and social emotional learning. As Morris School moves into next year, we will be exploring ways to unify our approach to social emotional learning so students have a consistent and cohesive experience throughout their elementary school years.

Parents play an important role in the life of our school. Parent volunteers, chaperones, readers, and PTO

event coordinators work with staff to meet the ever-evolving needs of the school community. Additionally, parents serve on the School Council, an advisory body that assists the principal in identifying school priorities. A monthly newsletter and periodic family curriculum events keep parents tuned in to the educational lives of their children. Seasonal performances of our performance ensembles and an annual Art Show allow parents and the community to enjoy the talents of our students.

At Morris we strive to prepare children with the skills and knowledge they will need as they move towards young adulthood. At the same time, we recognize that childhood is a magical time of life, worthy of being lived to its fullest.

## PART IV – CURRICULUM AND INSTRUCTION

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### 1. Core Curriculum:

Morris School utilizes a balanced literacy approach in which whole-language techniques are blended with explicit phonics instruction. Foundational skills in reading are developed by implementing the Wilson Foundations program in grades K-2. Working within the scope and sequence of this program, students gain knowledge of sound/symbol relationships, rules for decoding, sight word recognition skills, and knowledge of basic grammar. In grades 3-5 students continue to build word knowledge through word study with the "Words Their Way" program.

The highly qualified staff at Morris School differentiate reading instruction to address the needs of individual learners by planning for and implementing flexible guided reading groups. Teachers develop lessons in line with the Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks which incorporates the Common Core State Standards (CCSS). They select leveled texts of various genres and provide targeted, differentiated instruction to ensure that students are exposed to tiered vocabulary, comprehension strategies, and guided practice for written response to text. In addition to flexible guided reading groups students also practice reading and writing in the content areas at various other times of the day. Whether reading silently, collaboratively with peers, or by participating in a teacher-led read aloud, students at Morris school are afforded many opportunities to grow into fluent, confident, independent readers.

Writing instruction at Morris school is taught using the Empowering Writers program for grades K-5. Teachers use the common vocabulary and graphic organizers from this program along with selected lessons to teach students about the various phases of the writing process. Students are carefully guided through writing personal narrative, creative narrative, expository, and opinion pieces of writing. Many teachers use this program in conjunction with a Writer's Workshop model. During Writer's Workshop students have the opportunity to confer with an adult and make improvements to their writing.

The mathematics curriculum at Morris School is rooted in the 2011 Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks which incorporate the CCSS. The math program at Morris School (HMH's Go Math!) is fully aligned to the CCSS with supplements for the Massachusetts additions from the 2011 Frameworks. The curriculum builds understanding of a concept, eventually bringing the students to the applicable algorithm. This process of building understanding of mathematical concepts is essential for students to become mathematical thinkers and problem solvers as opposed to merely calculators. The eight standards for mathematical practice are integrated into the lessons so that students regularly: make sense of problems and persevere in solving them; reason abstractly and quantitatively; construct viable arguments and critique the reasoning of others; model with mathematics; use appropriate tools strategically; attend to precision; look for and make use of structure; look for and express regularity in repeated reasoning.

In addition to our math program, students build number sense and math fact fluency using a variety of methods. Two years ago, the math specialist introduced a fluency program in the lower elementary schools using Cuisenaire Rods. The teachers have observed in students a significant increase in math fact fluency as well as a better understanding of place value and quantity as a result. These two approaches – the math program and Cuisenaire Rods – have complemented each other, reinforcing the part-part-whole model in mathematics.

The content areas of Science and Social Studies are taught in alignment with the MA Curriculum Frameworks in these subject areas. Students in grades K-3 receive instruction in one subject or the other for 30 minutes per day. In grades 4-5, Science, Social Studies, and Writing are integrated into longer blocks of time with 5th grade using a departmentalized model in which students "switch classes" for these three subject areas with each teacher specializing in one area. Teachers in all grades design and implement units of instruction in Science and Social Studies using the Frameworks as their guide. Additionally, content area reading is incorporated into English Language Arts in all grades with students in grades 3-5 having increasing opportunities to "read to learn" within content areas. Massachusetts just adopted new Science, Technology, and Engineering Frameworks (January 2016) which Morris teachers are "unpacking" and

making preparations to start designing new curriculum units of instruction.

The Morris Integrated Preschool Program is designed to provide developmentally age-appropriate experiences in a safe and nurturing environment. The curriculum for the preschool is aligned with the Massachusetts Learning Standards. The goals of the program are to provide experiences that meet each child's needs and stimulate learning in all developmental areas: physical, emotional, social, cognitive, and aesthetic awareness, and curricular areas: speech, language arts, social studies, mathematics, physical education, health, nutrition, science, and fine arts. The preschool program draws upon Teaching Strategies Gold (TSG) for its curriculum and assessment. This program provides a comprehensive curriculum in all domains and allows the teacher to track progress throughout the child's preschool experience. While it is difficult to quantify the impact the preschool program has on K-3 instruction due to the small number of students who attend our preschool as compared to Kindergarten, TSG has demonstrated that students who attend the preschool for one or more years are well-prepared for Kindergarten and beyond at Morris School.

## 2. Other Curriculum Areas:

At Morris Elementary School students in grades K-5 have classroom music once a week for 45 minutes. The classroom music program is standards-based utilizing two main approaches, the Orff Schulwerk and Kodaly. Students receive instruction and are able to practice singing, alone and with others, reading and writing standard notation, playing instruments, improvisation and composition, critical response, and making connections between music and the greater community. The music program also offers five elective performing groups. These include Grade 2/3 Chorus, Grade 4/5 Chorus, Fourth Grade Band, Fifth Grade Band and the Morris "Orffestra". These groups meet once a week. Fifth grade band also has group lessons. Students work on a varied repertoire of pieces receiving further instruction in singing, reading, playing and other basic music skills.

The Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks and its guiding principles are at the core of the art program at Morris Elementary School. While the art teacher delivers a cohesive and in-depth program, she consistently strives to work in an interdisciplinary manner. Most art projects are created to support the classroom curriculum and use rich academic language. The art program routinely integrates English language arts, math concepts, science and social studies. Teachers access the art teacher to collaborate on projects that will help children learn an academic problem in a visual, hands-on way. Each child in grades 1-5 has a 45 minute art class once a week, while kindergarteners receive two classes a week. This enables the youngest learners to receive a solid foundation in exploration, materials and their grade level skills.

The K-5 Physical Education program is designed to help students develop the knowledge, attitudes, skills, behaviors, and confidence needed to be physically active for life, while providing an opportunity for the students to be active during the school day. This is accomplished through four fundamental goals: learning the concepts of fitness including cardio-vascular endurance; developing cooperation and the enjoyment of participation in physical activities; enhancing students' social skills; and developing the fundamental skills needed in sports and recreational activities. Our Physical Education schedule consists of two 45 minute sessions each week across all grade levels. Units of focus in grades K-2 consist of parachute; manipulatives; balance, stunts, and tumbling; catching and throwing; jumping; kicking and trapping; dance; and dribbling, volleying and striking. While units of focus in grades 3-5 consist of Fitnessgram testing; cooperatives; Frisbees; dance; volleyball; stunts and tumbling; basketball; hockey; soccer; and football. An additional focus on Fitness is introduced into each unit throughout these years.

Morris School offers a rich technology program taught by a dedicated technology professional for all students K - 5. Students in the lower grades explore technology fundamentals via Purple Mash, an online suite of technology tools that includes a kid friendly word processor, graphing, drawing, animation, a presentation app, and more. Young students also investigate engineering, robotics, and computer programming via Bee Bots and Code Studio. Students in the upper grades explore core applications such as word processing, spreadsheets, presentations, and databases including Google Docs. Students also investigate computer programming via Code.org plus engineering and robotics utilizing Lego Education's "We Do Robots" and "Mindstorms". Morris School also offers approximately 45 iPads for classroom use plus a new 20 capacity laptop cart. Students may also participate in various robotics and technology clubs.

At Morris School Spanish instruction is provided to all grades once per week for approximately 30 minutes. The intention of the Spanish program is to expose children to a second language in weekly, short sessions with consistency from Kindergarten through Grade 5. In grades K-3 a program called Sonrisas Spanish School is utilized. The fourth and fifth graders use a different program, Spanish for Chicos and Grandes. Choosing to introduce a second language creates an environment where students' minds are opened to the diversity that exists both within and outside the immediate community. This is a positive way for young people to begin to experience the bigger world within the safety of their own classroom. Morris Elementary School is preparing its students to grow into global citizens.

### 3. Instructional Methods and Interventions:

Morris School approaches instruction in English Language Arts in a variety of ways. Students receive whole group standards-based instruction in writing, reading mini-lessons, and phonics. They also have opportunities to develop literacy skills in the content areas. In addition to whole group instruction students acquire new learning through differentiated instruction designed to meet the diverse needs of all students. For example, students explore a variety of literary genres in guided reading groups. These groups ensure that students are working with material appropriate for their reading level as determined by the BAS or the QRI-5. These groups are essential to the development of literacy skills. They are part of a carefully scaffolded model of instruction which allows students to remediate skills not yet mastered, master skills defined by the CCSS both at grade level and above grade level for advanced learners. Students not meeting the targets defined on data benchmarks are given additional support in Title I ELA groups (Tier 2). Additionally, specialized instruction is provided by a special education teacher to students with specific learning disabilities in ELA (Tier 3).

At Morris School individualized instruction is also available in word study and writing. In addition to word work done as part of a guided reading lesson, students work in differentiated groups for spelling and word study with the Words Their Way program. In writing, students confer with teachers and paraprofessionals to expand their craft and tackle specific writing problems.

Teachers deliver mathematics instruction by building mathematical understanding using concrete examples often incorporating manipulatives first. Once the understanding is developed in the concrete, the students are guided to the pictorial representation of the concrete manipulatives used and ultimately are able to move into the abstract and the traditional algorithm. An example of this is double digit addition with regrouping in grade 2. Students use the base ten blocks to demonstrate addition and make "fair trades" of the ten ones for a ten stick. Next, students draw "quick pictures" of the base ten blocks as they solve addition problems. Finally the student is able to use the standard algorithm of regrouping a ten in the tens place of the vertical addition problem.

Classroom math time is split into three main parts – whole class instruction (20-30 minutes), independent differentiated practice (20-30 minutes), and problem solving (10-20 minutes). After the classroom teacher delivers the lesson of the day, homogenous groups are practicing and/or extending the lesson with the classroom teacher, special education teacher, or Title 1 interventionist. Math fact fluency practice is also incorporated into their lessons. At the end of the class, all students work in heterogeneous groups on problem solving that incorporates the lesson or spirals back to previous lessons.

### 4. Assessment for Instruction and Learning and Sharing Assessment Results:

A variety of assessments are used in both Mathematics and English Language Arts that inform instruction and learning. In Mathematics the AIMSweb nationally normed assessments TEN (Test of Early Numeracy in grades K and 1) and MComp (Computation in grades 1 and 2) are administered three times a year. Grades 2-5 take benchmark assessments in the fall and spring to measure growth within the standards. Additionally in grades 1-5 curriculum based assessments, including practice open response, and fluency tests for math fact fluency are given throughout the year.

In kindergarten and first grade reading foundational skills are assessed with the AIMSweb nationally

normed probes. Reading levels in these grades are determined three times a year using the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System. Acquired skills in our phonics program are assessed with Foundations unit tests in grades K-2. In second grade foundational skills are measured with the DIBELS Next and the AIMSweb MAZE. Reading levels are determined through level M with the Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment System (BAS). Guided reading levels greater than level M are obtained using the Qualitative Reading Inventory 5 (QRI-5). In grades 3-5 fluency levels are measured with the DIBELS Next as needed. Common writing samples measuring student response to text are given three times a year. Students in these grade levels are also given curriculum based benchmark exams.

The results of these assessments are analyzed and discussed at data teams held three times a year. Data teams consist of classroom and special education teachers, content specialists, Title 1 interventionists, and the principal. Whole grade data is examined at data team to determine strengths and weaknesses in instruction. This is done by looking at the data disaggregated by content standard and test item number. Should the team notice, for instance, that a grade is struggling with multi-step word problems or response to reading, the team will discuss how to address this weakness in instruction and make a plan to reassess after re-teaching is complete. Individual student results are reported on the standards based report cards three times each year. Parent teacher conferences offer an opportunity for teachers to explain the meaning of the standards and how their children are performing relative to the grade level expectation.

Standardized testing in 2015 (MCAS) indicates that Morris School has closed the gap between its high-needs and non-high-needs subgroups. Students also scored above state averages in all standards in Mathematics and ELA with the exception of open response in 3rd grade which was 4 percentage points below state average (just one point below the margin of error). It is the job of Morris staff to maintain this high level of success and strive for continued gains. Teachers do so by following core programming with fidelity, differentiating instruction for process, product, and content, offering Tier 2 and Tier 3 intervention for all students who need it, and collaborating with one another around effective practices proven to show results in internal data.

## **PART V – SCHOOL SUPPORTS**

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### 1. School Climate/Culture:

Morris School has a staff of highly qualified educators who are extremely dedicated to their work. They are adept at engaging students in academic and social and emotional learning through the use of positive teacher language, social problem solving, academic choice, and real-world learning experiences. Teachers are recognized in small private ways by the building principal through positive feedback. Efforts are also made to share positive moments and accomplishments in the Morris Memo- a daily memo that goes out to Morris staff. Additionally the building principal promotes collaborative leadership through a Principal's Advisory Committee allowing teachers to have a voice in important issues relevant to the work of educating students. Teacher expertise and experience is greatly valued by staff and the building principal.

This year at Morris School there is a focus on school spirit through the adoption of a tiger mascot. The school principal, with support of the Morris PTO, purchased a tiger costume and this new mascot was introduced to the school at an All-School Meeting. The students agreed to give the tiger a home at Morris School and launched a school-wide vote to name the tiger. Thus, "Stripes" was born and became a positive force in the school! Stripes visits the school frequently for morning drop off, All-School Meetings, and special events. The students love when he visits and give lots of hugs and high-fives. During All-School Meetings, students have explored the positive traits of tigers and how they, as learners, can embody those traits: fierceness, perseverance, bravery, strength, pride, etc.

School-wide activities are organized to promote academic growth and a sense of community. For example, this year a Principal's Writing Contest was crafted which allowed any student Preschool-5 to draw and/or write an expository piece on tiger conservation. Students researched the plight of the wild tiger and wrote about the reasons wild tigers are endangered and what they can do to help. Winners of the contest received a gift card to the World Wildlife Federation to symbolically adopt a tiger and their essays were published in the April edition of Lenox Living Magazine. In addition to promoting school-wide writing, Morris School promotes student reading at home through an annual reading incentive program. This year the reading incentive program also ties in with the tiger theme. Students were presented with the challenge: "Earn Your Reading Stripes." For every 10,000 pages students read collectively as a school, a stripe is added to a tiger on the reading bulletin board. So far the Morris Tigers have earned 50 stripes as students have read over 500,000 pages. Staff and students are roaring with tiger pride!

### 2. Engaging Families and Community:

Morris School seeks to involve families in school life in several ways. Morris teachers frequently communicate with families of the students they teach through newsletters and curriculum updates, which often include strategies for supporting learning and development at home. Additionally all teachers, administrators, and specialists are available via email, phone, and face-to-face conferences scheduled both by the school as well as conferences requested by parents/caregivers. The Title I parent liaison provides parents and the community with information about the Title I program on a regular basis. The principal, in conjunction with other contributors, creates a monthly newsletter which is sent electronically to all parents and is available on the school website. Families and the community are invited to the school for band and chorus concerts and family nights for technology clubs. The annual Morris Art Show is displayed at a local assisted living facility and includes an art opening during which families and community members are able to view and celebrate the student artwork.

The Morris literacy coach offers "Raising Readers" workshops at individual grade levels that consist of a parent information session on supporting literacy at home and a session in which parents enjoy a teacher read-aloud and work on a craft with their child focusing on a specific comprehension skill (i.e. retelling, story sequencing, etc.). The math coach takes advantage of family nights such as Open House and parent/teacher conferences by setting up an area where parents can visit and learn more about math fact fluency and inquire about other mathematical skills.

The Morris Parent Teacher Organization (PTO) is very active in supporting the staff and students at Morris School. Their fundraising efforts make it possible for students to benefit from special programming that comes to the school. Given that Morris School is situated in the town of Lenox, a community bursting with cultural venues, students get to engage in programs such as a Shakespeare residency provided by the world-class Shakespeare and Company, a yoga residency with a yoga teacher from Kripalu, and performances from the Berkshire Theater Group. The PTO also supports programs that enrich academic learning such as the Star Lab and local Audubon nature programs.

Morris School has a School Council comprised of parents, staff, and community members. The School Council is an advisory group which supports the building principal with the development and monitoring of an annual School Improvement Plan, budget decisions, and a variety of issues relevant to the lives of both students and families.

It is through communication with and contributions from families and the Lenox community that Morris School embraces the adage that "It takes a village to raise [and educate!] a child."

### 3. Professional Development:

The Morris principal and district administrators solicit input from multiple stakeholders and sources to determine the professional development needs of the staff. A new principal was hired in the summer of 2014 and during her first year she worked with staff to identify areas of strength and weakness in the professional school culture. Through this work emerged a desire on the part of the staff to have more time to collaborate with one another. A plethora of research supports that teachers who collaborate effectively continually grow and refine their practice ultimately leading to positive student outcomes. Thus, the principal coordinated a professional development focus for the current school year on effective strategies for collaboration within a Professional Learning Community structure. In the years prior to the current principal's hire, the past principal brought in professional development to explicitly support curriculum, instruction, and assessment. For several years a successful effort was made to horizontally and vertically align curriculum and instruction for students through faithful implementation of research-based, high-quality common instructional programs. Each of these programs required professional development to ensure effective implementation. Additionally the tiered system of support developed at Morris school required teachers to receive professional development in administering, and in some cases developing, common assessments and analyzing student data. In addition to in-district professional development, teachers are also allowed a certain amount of funding to support graduate-level coursework. Finally, Morris School complies with requirements from the state Department of Elementary and Secondary Education for mandatory training on various topics such as Sheltered English Instruction and the Massachusetts Educator Evaluation System.

There are some inherent challenges in providing relevant professional development for all staff within a small school district such as the Lenox Public Schools. Coordinated efforts are made with the surrounding districts in Berkshire County to provide appropriate professional development for specialists such as teachers of art, music, physical education, speech and language pathology, ESL, etc. Additionally, specialists are allowed to attend conferences and workshops out-of-district which focus on content relevant to their fields. Similarly the Morris principal attends professional development conferences and workshops provided by the Massachusetts Elementary School Principal's Association (MESPA) and other educational leadership workshops. She also participates in professional learning networks through email and social media and develops leadership skills in collaboration with the district administrative team.

### 4. School Leadership:

The hallmarks of the leadership philosophy at Morris School are a focus on student growth and development, distributive leadership, the principal as instructional leader, and teacher-collaboration leading to shared decision-making. The Morris School principal is the primary building leader and is supported by a small team of district administrators who meet on a regular basis to make decisions that ultimately support the academic and social/emotional growth and development of the students of Lenox.

Within Morris School there are several staff members who take on administrative tasks that may more typically fall under the purview of a principal. For example, there is a full-time interventionist who helps students problem-solve social conflicts and handles all minor discipline issues. She also investigates issues that are more serious in nature and reports her findings to the principal. There is also a Head Teacher who supports the principal in identifying staff needs, organizing school-wide meetings, and assists with the smooth operation of student dismissal. The distribution of these duties allows the principal to focus on instructional leadership and maintaining a positive school climate and culture.

Morris School saw a change in leadership in the summer of 2014. The past principal was at Morris for 6 years and during his time brought on many new curriculum initiatives that moved the school from good to great. Staff adopted a new math curriculum, a new phonics curriculum, and a new writing curriculum in his time as principal. He created curriculum/data coach positions in both English Language Arts and Mathematics. He also worked with staff to develop the Response to Intervention structure that remains in place today. As a result, student assessment data has continued to see a trend of improvement over the past several years. 2015 assessment data demonstrates Morris School has eliminated its proficiency gap for its high-needs subgroup and seen student growth percentiles that are higher than state averages across the board.

The new principal was hired in the summer of 2014. She learned quickly that the staff was in a strong position regarding curriculum and instruction. In an effort to promote a culture of collaboration and shared leadership, she created a Principal's Advisory Committee with the purpose of gaining input on decisions related to the work of educating children. This committee has addressed issues such as creating a master instructional schedule, deciding whether to adopt a new math program, and developing consistency in addressing student social and emotional learning needs. To further promote a culture of collaboration, the principal created a Professional Learning Community (PLC) structure for professional staff. Grade level teams and the Title 1 team meet weekly for one hour in PLC's to discuss curriculum, instruction, and assessment. This work was supported by a year-long professional development focus on strategies for effective collaboration.

## Part VI – INDICATORS OF ACADEMIC SUCCESS

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The most influential practice at Morris School contributing to its success is the implementation of a tiered system of support. Full implementation of this model began five years ago. The cornerstone of this model is grounded in the work of data teams. Collaborating to analyze data is the driving force that determines which students will benefit from targeted instruction in both Mathematics and ELA.

Students who begin the school year receiving a Title I intervention in either Mathematics or ELA are identified, based on data from May testing, at the data team/transition meetings held in June of the previous year. The grade level teams (classroom teachers, special educators, math and ELA specialists, interventionists, and principal) meet to discuss the results of the testing, current intervention groups, and classroom performance of all students. From those meetings students are identified as needing to begin the year with an intervention. Students not recommended for this Tier 2 support but demonstrate a weakness on a specific data point may be placed on a Tier 1 "watch" meaning the classroom teacher employs strategies designed to remediate the identified skill deficits. Title I groups are formed based on common student need. Students in grades 1-5 who enter Morris in the Fall from a different school are assessed and evaluated either in the summer, when possible, or in September. If these students demonstrate a need for intervention, they are also placed into a group.

At each data team during the school year, data from testing is used to determine the status of students in existing Title I interventions and those placed on a Tier 1 watch from the previous data team meeting. The process described above is employed at these meetings as well. From these meetings students are identified as needing to continue an intervention or moving back onto a classroom watch. Additional students may be added to an intervention if they were on the classroom watch and are still not performing at grade level. Tier 2 interventions also exist for related services at Morris School. If a student has a weakness in articulation or motor skills that doesn't rise to the level of a disability, he/she may receive services under a Tier 2 related service plan.

Tier 3 support is also provided at Morris School. This tier is provided to students with identified disabilities. Tier 3 encompasses all of the services and/or accommodations available to a student on an IEP or Section 504 plan. These services include specialized instruction in academics areas, speech and language services, occupational therapy, physical therapy, counseling, behavior intervention and other supports as needed.

With the implementation of this tiered system of support, Morris School has moved from a Level 2 school in the first year of Massachusetts reporting to three consecutive Level 1 ratings. Additionally, the percentile of Morris School as compared to other Massachusetts schools has climbed from an initial 60th percentile to its current 83rd percentile.