



Charter School Annual Site Visit Report
Charter School Office
2009-2010

MOTT HAVEN
CHARTER SCHOOL
ANNUAL SITE VISIT REPORT

MARCH 2010

Part 1: Executive Summary

School Overview and History:

Mott Haven Academy Charter School is an elementary school serving approximately 128 students from grade kindergarten through grade two in the 2009-2010 school year.¹ The school opened in 2008 with grades kindergarten through first. It has plans to grow to serve students grades kindergarten through eight.² It is currently housed in 165 Brown Place in District 7.³

The school population comprises 40.6% Black, 52.3% Hispanic, 2.3% White, and 0.0% Asian students. 92.7% of students are designated at Title I.⁴ The student body includes 9.3% English language learners and 16.1% special education students. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%.⁵

The average attendance rate for the school year 2008 - 2009 was 91%.⁶ The school is in good standing with state and federal accountability.⁷

Annual Review Process Overview:

The NYC DOE Charter School Office conducts an annual site visit of New York City Department of Education authorized charter schools in order to assess three primary questions: is the school an academic success; is the school a viable organization; and is the school in compliance with applicable laws and regulations. The visits are conducted by representatives of the New York City Department of Education Charter School Office Accountability Team and last the duration of one school day. The annual site visit begins with a meeting with the principal and school leadership team. Subsequently, the reviewers visit classrooms and hold brief meetings with available administrators, teachers, and students. Areas of evaluation include, but are not limited to: academic goals and mission; curriculum and instruction; school culture and learning environment; assessment utilization; parent engagement; government structures and organizational design; community support; special populations; and safety and security.

The following experts participated in the review of this school:

- Aaron Listhaus, Chief Academic Officer, Charter School Office
- Aamir Raza, Director of Oversight, Charter School Office
- Marian Mogulescu, Education Consultant, Charter School Office

¹ NYC DOE ATS system

² NYC DOE ATS system and charter agreement

³ NYC DOE Location Code Generating System database

⁴ Demographic Data drawn from NYC DOE ATS System; Title I percentage from 2008 NY State Report Cards

⁵ Student Demographic data is inputted by school staff into the ATS enrollment database and summarized by NYC DOE staff.

⁶ NYC DOE School Progress Report. This document is posted on the NYC DOE website at <http://www.schools.nyc.gov> and is also included in Part 7 of this report.

⁷ New York State Education Department - www.nysed.gov

Part 2: Findings

What the school does well

- The school utilizes differentiated instruction and an integrated curriculum to promote content proficiency and actively engage students.
 - Students were actively engaged in group lessons, class meetings, reading independently, working in station groups on projects, creating art related to class content areas, exploring materials, and discovering the properties in science in a hands-on manner.
 - Students who need extra support receive instruction in small groups or individually in order to accommodate their specific learning needs.
- The school employs a rigorous assessment system and strong data tracking tools to monitor student performance and inform teaching and learning.
 - The “Scholars on the Move” board documents reading, writing and math progress of each student in each grade. Their proficiency levels and improvements are accessible to staff as they regularly review student achievement.
 - The chart of social and emotional competencies (DESSA System), which is on display in the principal’s office, incorporates strategies for teachers to help provide opportunities for students to grow in these areas. This is also connected to teachers’ work in creating activities for students to sharpen their skills in content areas.
 - Teachers know each student well; multiple forms of student work and evidence of learning for each child is readily accessible to classroom visitors and staff.
- The school fosters a safe learning environment that encourages student expression and ensures the security of students and faculty.
 - The respectful and collaborative culture in each classroom is clear in the way staff and students interact, help, and communicate with each other.
 - Guidelines for positive focus on learning are posted in each room in student friendly language and are developed by staff and students.
 - Personalization is implemented in both the classrooms and hallways where student work is displayed along with each student’s picture.
- The school has created a strong culture that encourages academic excellence and allows all students to interact in the supportive learning community.
 - Each class has a morning meeting to welcome the students and begin the day. The morning meeting is connected to the academic agenda for each day.
 - The routines are clear and implemented in each of the classrooms allowing for consistency of expectations throughout the school.
 - Students are encouraged to be accountable for their learning. Students work with each other while adults support and guide activities.
 - Students’ voices, questions and understandings are prominent.
- The school is in good financial condition and maintains appropriate internal controls
 - The school possesses \$707,097 in current assets and \$224,049 in current liabilities at the time of our review.
 - The school has stable enrollment and a positive projected cash flow through June 2010.
 - The school exercises appropriate internal controls on its financial systems.
- The school board is providing adequate and balanced oversight of the school.

- The Board, management, and external partners who were involved in the facilities process have worked seamlessly to resolve the challenges faced in securing facilities.
- The Board gets adequate reporting and data to from school personnel to keep itself focused on critical pieces affecting the school's daily operation.
- The Board is working on recruiting additional board members with real estate expertise.

What the school needs to improve

- The collaboration with the Foundling Hospital is crucial to the success of the model. The schools' goal of stabilizing the educational experience for children with child welfare involvement will be accomplished by continued attention to student and family issues that may interfere with academic progress.
- As the school grows, curriculum planning and the articulation of content standards as well as the social and emotional growth standards the school has created need to be vertically aligned. The school's current method of cross grade conversations supports this goal
- The schools' goal of creating external learning opportunities for students will be accomplished by their continued development of partnerships additional community agencies and institutions.

Part 3: Framing Questions

I. FRAMING QUESTIONS:

Throughout the life of each school's charter, the NYCDOE Charter School Office uses the following framing questions to monitor Charter School success:

1. Has the School Been an Academic Success?
2. Has the School Been a Viable Organization?
3. Has the School Been in Compliance with All Applicable Laws and Regulations?

Annual Site Visit Rubric:

1. Has the School Been an Academic Success?
 - Academic Goals and Mission
 - School components and curriculum align together and holistically support the mission
 - School has high academic expectations and employs strategies for the full range of students served by the school, including those at risk and those with special needs
 - Curriculum and Instruction
 - The educational plan is flexible and is adjusted to meet the performance levels and learning needs of all enrolled students
 - School implements programming to address the needs of students with disabilities and ELLs
 - Teachers demonstrate the use of differentiated instructional techniques to support the varying ways by which students learn
 - School has implemented programming for students who need remediation or acceleration
 - School Culture
 - The culture is strong, intentional, supportive and sustainable and promotes student learning
 - The school motivates all students and respects the diversity of learners and cultures in the community
 - School offers programs, activities or support services beyond academics to address students' social and emotional needs
 - School calendar and day are set to provide extra supports to ensure that students are able to meet and exceed academic goals
 - Schedule for communication to parents/students is timely and allows for due process, includes strategies to prepare students for transitions and strategies for those students who are not on schedule, presents a clear and fair system that complies with students' due process rights
 - Structures that foster the development of authentic, sustained, caring, respectful relationships among all stakeholders within school
 - Behavioral expectations and social supports that reflect the school's mission and comply with all applicable laws and regulations
 - Assessment
 - Establishes a culture of continuous improvement and accountability for student learning
 - Develops assessments that shape and inform instruction on an ongoing basis and develop data that's used to gauge student, teacher and school progress through formative and summative assessment
 - Student learning measured with multiple forms of assessments/metrics
 - Develops educational goals and performance metrics that are SMART – Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Reflect the Mission and Time-Specific
 - Develops assessments that are appropriately aligned with curriculum, instruction, and adopted standards

- Provides evidence of how data will influence instruction, professional development and curricular adjustments
 - Parent Engagement
 - Parent engagement strategies that integrate and mobilize parents within the school community as conduits for student success
 - Capacity to communicate effectively with parents and families
 - Parent engagement strategies that integrate and mobilize parents within the school community as conduits for student success
2. Is the School a Viable Organization
- Governance Structures and Organizational Design
 - School has articulated appropriate roles, responsibilities, and decision-making structure for school community members (including Board of Trustees and school leadership)
 - An accountability structure that provides effective oversight of the educational program and fiscal components of the school is in place and utilized
 - Board regularly reviews a data dashboard of student achievement and fiscal management that forms the basis for Board discussions and decisions
 - Board has diverse skill set that lends itself to strong educational / operational oversight
 - Board has an articulated process for ongoing policy development, Board member development and self-evaluation
 - Organizational charts are aligned with mission; roles and responsibilities are clearly defined
 - Board has developed essential strategic partnerships with organizations that support the mission of the school
 - Community Support
 - School Leadership demonstrated responsiveness to the unique needs and interests of the community to be served
 - School has established a presence in the community and has buy in from community members
3. Is the School in Compliance with Applicable Laws and Regulations
- Special Populations
 - Well-defined plan and sufficient capacity to service the learning needs of Special Education students, English Language Learners
 - School adequately addresses the academic and non academic needs of students in need of remediation, students with disabilities, students with interrupted formal education, and gifted students
 - There is a coherent plan for meeting the non-academic needs of students with disabilities, students with interrupted formal education, and other populations
 - School employs a process to identify students at risk of not meeting expectations and creates intervention plans and follow up
 - School demonstrates a comprehensive recruitment, enrollment and retention approach that is sensitive to the diverse needs of students
 - School admission policy and lottery preferences serve to create a student body that reflects community demographics and give a preference to community school district residents
 - Safety and Security
 - School is well maintained
 - Transitions and student gatherings are orderly and well supervised
 - Expectations for student behavior are well known and are enforced fairly
 - School is current with all safety recruitments and drills.
 - AED machines are in operation and school staff is trained in CPR

