



Charter School Annual Site Visit Report  
Charter Schools Office  
2010-2011

**MOTT HAVEN ACADEMY CHARTER SCHOOL**  
ANNUAL SITE VISIT REPORT

JUNE 2011

# Part 1: Executive Summary

## **School Overview and History:**

Mott Haven Academy Charter School is an elementary/middle school serving approximately 175 students from grade kindergarten through grade three in the 2010-2011 school year.<sup>1</sup> The school opened in 2008 with grades kindergarten through one. It has plans to grow to serve students grades kindergarten through eight.<sup>2</sup> It is currently housed in private space in District 7.<sup>3</sup>

The school population comprises 36.4% Black, 59.0% Hispanic, 1.7% White, and 0% Asian students. 93.6% of students currently receive Free or Reduced Price Lunch, compared to 87.9% for the district.<sup>4</sup> The student body includes 13.9% English language learners (ELL) and 20.9% special education (SPED) students, compared to 19.1% ELL in the district and 20.7% SPED.<sup>5</sup>

The school has not yet received a Progress Report grade. The average attendance rate for the school year 2009-2010 was 91.0%.<sup>6</sup> ATS reports for the 2010-2011 school year show an average attendance rate of 93.0%.<sup>7</sup> The school is in good standing with state and federal accountability.<sup>8</sup>

## **Annual Review Process Overview:**

The NYC DOE Charter Schools Office (CSO) 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 Schools Office 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 on June 6, 2011:

- Rick Larios, Senior Director, NYC DOE CSO
- Jessica Fredston-Hermann, Analyst, NYC DOE CSO
- Simeon Stolzberg, Consultant

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<sup>1</sup> NYC DOE ATS system

<sup>2</sup> NYC DOE ATS system and charter agreement

<sup>3</sup> NYC DOE Location Code Generating System database

<sup>4</sup> Demographic Data drawn from NYC DOE ATS System on June 30, 2011

<sup>5</sup> Demographic Data drawn from NYC DOE ATS System on June 30, 2011

<sup>6</sup> NYC DOE School Progress Report

<sup>7</sup> NYC DOE ATS system

<sup>8</sup> New York State Education Department - [www.nysed.gov](http://www.nysed.gov)

## Part 2: Findings

### Areas of Strength

- The school has developed a comprehensive curriculum and is continuing to refine instructional materials.
  - Interviewed teachers reported having adequate resources such as curriculum maps, pacing guides and literacy targets, which are used to guide instructional planning.
  - The school has developed a process for reviewing and refining curriculum, and has begun aligning its existing curriculum to the Common Core standards.
  - The school has supplemented its initial curriculum to meet the needs of students. For example, a math consultant provides units to supplement the TERC program and test preparation has been introduced as the school adds state testing grades.
- The school has developed a strong professional learning community and provides teachers with ongoing support and professional development.
  - Pre-service training is provided in the summer with a week for new teachers followed by another week for all teachers.
  - Instructional leadership includes the principal, an instructional specialist, a student specialist and a student achievement specialist, all of whom observe instruction and provide feedback.
  - The school has hired a number of external coaches to assist teachers with planning and to model effective instruction.
  - The school has experienced low teacher attrition; fifteen founding teachers remain at the school.
  - Teachers interviewed described leadership as “responsive,” and noted examples of how school leaders changed professional development timing and implemented pilot study groups (math, reading, and class culture) based on teacher feedback.
- The school has established a positive, mission-driven school culture focused on learning and on meeting the social/emotional needs of students.
  - On the day of the visit students were generally well-behaved and respectful in classrooms and other spaces throughout the school.
  - Classrooms observed were safe, orderly, and print-rich, with many photos of students and examples of student work displayed.
  - The school has implemented a number of programs to support the social and emotional development of students, including Responsive Classroom, Love and Logic, and Competent Kids, Caring Community. Moreover, these have been effectively integrated into the academic program rather than used as stand-alone curricula. For example, after a pairing activity in a mathematics lesson, the teacher debriefed the students on the process, asking students to answer the question: “What did your partner do that was kind?”
  - All classes begin with a Morning Meeting intended to set the tone for the day and help foster a sense of community.
  - The use of “accountable talk” was evident in observed classrooms and protocols were posted on the walls. Leadership stated that the development of “accountable talk” for teachers and for students is an ongoing goal for the school.
  - Teachers’ professional development included training on social/emotional development and understanding the child welfare system.
- The school provides a range of supports for at-risk students.

- The school has successfully enrolled a population that is one-third foster children, one-third prevention children, and one-third general students from the Mott Haven community. School leadership spoke articulately about the challenges for students in each of these groups and are dedicated to meeting all students' needs.
  - Collaborative team teaching (CTT) classes are provided in each grade, and most other classes are co-taught as well. Multiple adults in the classrooms provide a variety of opportunities for targeted small group and one-on-one instruction.
  - The school has implemented a number of intervention programs, including Foundations, Leveled Literacy Intervention and Reading Recovery.
  - The school has hired a number of staff to address the social/emotional needs of its students, including a social worker and Crisis Intervention Specialist. The school also benefits from its close ties to the case workers and staff at the New York Foundling.
  - Using a grant the school has hired a full-time pediatric nurse practitioner who will also begin offering families clinical services next year.
  - The school's student support team (SST) and behavior support team (BST) meet regularly to identify students and develop plans for meeting their needs.
  - This year the school will offer a month-long Summer Academy for its lowest-performing students.
  - Sharing a building with the New York Foundling provides convenient resources for families involved in the child welfare system and limits the amount of school their children miss.
- The school is focused on using data to drive instruction and inform intervention decisions for students.
    - Teachers administer a range of academic assessments, including the Terra Nova, Fountas and Pinnell benchmarks, math and writing interim assessments, unit tests, and state assessments.
    - The school also regularly assesses students' social/emotional skills through the use of the DESSA assessment and sets goals for students' growth.
    - Grade teams meet regularly to review and analyze student assessment data. Results are reportedly used to identify topics for re-teaching and students for intervention.
    - Teachers interviewed reported collaborative evaluation of student work using exemplars and rubrics to norm expectations.
    - A data team focuses on researching school-wide issues such as summer learning loss.
    - School leaders reported using data such as attendance, discipline, staff and parent surveys for planning purposes. A wall of student performance data called "Scholars on the Move" is visibly displayed in the Principal's office and regularly updated after each benchmark exam.
- The school reports growing parent engagement and is committed to increasing parent participation in the school.
    - The school has an established Family Council and plans to add a new staff position next year for a Family Advocate to help motivate leadership and participation among families.
    - School leaders reported high family attendance at events, such as celebrations, curriculum nights and parent-teacher conferences.
    - Teachers reported regular communication with parents through calls, conversations at drop-off or pick-up, and parent-teacher conferences.
    - Narrative reports are provided twice per year and standard reports cards another two times per year.
    - Parent training is provided through the school's partnership with the New York Foundling. Topics have included parenting skills, homework help, summer planning and nutrition.

- The school benefits from its partnership with the NY Foundling and other child welfare agencies.
  - NY Foundling provides after-school programs for the school's students. Staff from the program push in to Mott Haven classes in the afternoon and then students participate in extended learning time programs until 5:45 pm.
  - NY Foundling provides busing for students in the child welfare system who live outside the standard DOE radius.
  - The organization provides staff training related to child welfare issues.
  - The Bronx Foundling director meets weekly with the school principal to coordinate programs.

### **Areas of Growth**

- The school is encouraged to continue to develop systems for teacher feedback, teacher evaluations, and targeted goal-setting as it adds staff and grades.
  - School leaders described their clinical supervision as a work in progress and have continued to modify their approach to staff development. For example, teachers will meet one morning per week next year instead of early dismissal. The school is encouraged to continue to refine their approach to supervision and staff development to determine the most effective strategies for their school.
  - While instructional leaders provide significant informal feedback to teachers, a formal evaluation process is not in place. Some teachers interviewed stated a desire for more formal evaluations and differentiated professional development for teachers at different stages of development. The school is encouraged to continue its efforts to formalize systems for teacher evaluation and development.
- The school is encouraged to further deepen its focus on data by considering how data is used on a daily basis in classrooms.
  - While reviewers noted frequent use of interim data, teachers were not observed to be using day-to-day data such as exit tickets or checks for understanding.
  - Several classrooms observed lacked lessons with specific, measurable aims and formal or informal assessments tied to those aims.
- The school should continue its efforts to increase the daily attendance rate.
  - The daily attendance rate has risen this year to approximately 93% from 91% last year. School staff is addressing attendance through home visits and incentives. The school is encouraged to monitor these practices and consider other ways to improve daily attendance rates.

## Part 3: Framing Questions

### FRAMING QUESTIONS:

Throughout the Renewal Process and the life of each school's charter, the NYCDOE Charter Schools 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