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September 15, 2009

Ms. Patricia Mulvaney
Board Chair
Mott Haven Academy Charter School
165 Brown place
Bronx, NY 10454

Dear Ms. Mulvaney,

On behalf of the New York City Department of Education's (NYCDOE) Charter Schools Office (CSO), we would like to thank you and the staff of the Mott Haven Academy Charter School for your cooperation and cordiality during our Annual Site Visit on May 14, 2009.

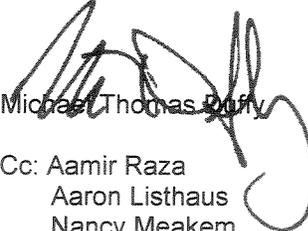
Our oversight framework is set up to ensure that we provide clear accountability and feedback to help the board and school leadership to be successful in achieving the goals of the charter. Prior to the visit, we shared our Annual Site Visit protocol documents and the Performance and Compliance standards. These standards serve as benchmarks through which the NYCDOE views the performance of all the NYCDOE authorized charter schools. The Standards are not a replacement of your individual school's goals; they encompass your charter agreement goals as one component of a detailed, rigorous, renewal-focused framework.

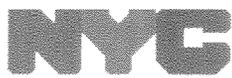
The purpose of our Annual Site Visit is to assess compliance with applicable law, determine organizational strengths and areas for development, and to make an on-site assessment of the learning environment in order to steer a direct course toward charter renewal. It is important to emphasize that the standards are rigorous, and are intended as leading indicators towards charter renewal, when the school must demonstrate not only that it has met the specific goals of the charter, but also that the school operates in an educationally and fiscally sound manner, and meets the requirements set forth in all applicable laws and regulations. We hope that you find the feedback helpful in setting the school's priorities and fulfilling the goals outlined in the charter.

Attached to this letter you will find a comprehensive report of our findings. Should you have any additional comments, or if you would like to submit factual corrections or a formal response to the findings presented in this report, please respond to our office by **September 30, 2009**.

Our office can be reached at 212.374.6904 for further assistance in this matter.

Sincerely,


Michael Thomas Duffy
Cc: Aamir Raza
Aaron Listhaus
Nancy Meakem



Department of
Education

Joel I. Klein, Chancellor

Charter School Office
Quality Review Report

Quality Review Report

2008-2009

Mott Haven Academy Charter School

Elementary Charter School 394

**165 Brown Place
Bronx
NY 10454**

Board Chair: Ms. Patricia Mulvaney

Dates of review: May 14, 2009

**Lead Reviewer(s): Aamir Raza, Chris Hawkins, Fred
Lisker
&
Bruce Berry (Cambridge Education)**

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Mott Haven Academy Charter School ("MHACS") is an elementary charter school with 91 students from kindergarten through grade 1. The school population comprises 31% Black, 60% Hispanic, 2% White and 7% other students. The student body includes 18% English language learners and 18% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 91%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 95% eligibility.

The school will grow in size over the next few years to become a kindergarten through grade 8 school.

Overall Evaluation

The principal's vision and drive is providing high quality leadership that is generating a positive learning environment and is resulting in good progress in students' academic and social development. She is ably supported by an enthusiastic group of teachers and staff who work collaboratively to provide a safe and stimulating environment for student learning. There are effective routines in place to create high behavioral and academic expectations. The instruction provides good, differentiated learning opportunities for students matched to their achievement levels. Student work is celebrated in colourful displays in classrooms and hallways.

There are good data systems to monitor student progress, with benchmarks to check progress throughout the year. As a result, the school has demonstrated very good progress for the students in reading, writing and math. The school has not yet developed a systematic approach for regularly reviewing progress of all the relevant sub-groups in the school. The school provides regular information to keep families updated on student progress. The school does not yet however, have a formalized system for regularly informing students of their next steps of learning and sharing them with families to engage them as partners in their child's learning.

The school curriculum and the effective partnerships the school has developed provide a range of stimulating and interesting learning opportunities for the students, including a wide variety of arts and sports within and beyond the school day. High-quality professional learning opportunities exist for teachers to develop their own skills and knowledge to improve their instructional practice. The school's planning and goals are established in the five year charter that was created to define the vision, mission and operational activities of the school. It has not yet created plans and goals that define the short-term and medium-term priorities, with interim checkpoints and success criteria to monitor the progress made in reaching long-term goals. The school has quickly established a well-ordered, caring and vibrant school environment with very high expectations in respect of behavior and academic rigor. It is well placed and has the capacity to successfully continue to grow as an organization as it expands over the next few years.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal's high-quality leadership is providing a vision and drive that is having a positive impact on the school culture and the academic progress of students.
- Teachers work collaboratively to provide a vibrant and supportive environment for student learning.
- Well-established routines create a positive classroom culture and high behavioral and academic expectations.
- The development of effective partnerships is supporting the students' academic and personal growth.
- The school has good data systems for supporting instructional and intervention strategies.
- Good quality professional development is providing valuable opportunities for teachers to enhance their knowledge and skills, and to set goals for further improvement.

Areas of Concern

- Further improve strategic planning of whole school priorities and goals, to include interim checkpoints to measure the school's progress in reaching its long-term targets.
- Formalize a systematic approach to the setting of short-term learning goals for students so that they understand their next steps of learning and how to achieve them.
- Further develop systems to review the progress of all sub-groups of students within the school.

Part 3: Main Findings

How well the school meets Charter School Office's (CSO) evaluation criteria

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do and to monitor the student's progress over time.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The school has established good data systems to monitor the progress of students, support instructional planning and identify intervention strategies for individual students. Benchmark assessments in reading at the start of the school year indicated that only 22% of grade 1 students had on-grade pre-reading skills. Ongoing assessments demonstrate high levels of progress for students in their reading levels and 85% are expected to be on grade level when they move to grade 2. The remaining students are receiving individualized support with a goal to be on grade level by the end of grade 3. In math, the school-developed assessment tool provides useful data to determine whether students have mastery of content. The assessments include questions on content not yet taught in order to test the students' problem-solving and higher-order thinking skills. Results of class averages of between 70% and 85% demonstrate significant progress for the students. Special education students are fully included in general education classes and are making good progress, with some exceeding expectations. English language learners also make very good progress, with most students exceeding grade level expectations in reading, with others in line with expected progress.

The school has many children who live in foster homes and other children from the child welfare population. They closely monitor the academic and social progress of these sub-groups of students, who are making good progress in improving their learning and behavior. The school does not, at present, have systems in place to review the progress of all the different sub-groups of students in the school. The ongoing progress monitoring demonstrates average improvement of six reading levels in grade 1, which is more than one academic year of progress. In kindergarten, all but five students recognize letters and sounds and 70% are already meeting end of year reading benchmarks. Teachers receive valuable professional development in the use of data to inform their instructional planning and are well supported by the school's data team.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each student's learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

Although the school has not set measurable annual goals for improving student achievement, they have established very sophisticated systems for benchmarking reading levels four times a year to monitor student progress and demonstrate their achievement in line with expected grade benchmarks. A similar progress monitoring system is also used in writing and math. Before the school opened in September, the staff took part in a two week founding team summer orientation program to establish a

unified vision and define the major focus for their early work with students. They have established behavioral and instructional practices that have been successfully applied in all classrooms and are having a significant impact on improving student achievement. The school is using its Charter as its guide to planning for priority areas. It has not yet established short and medium term plans to identify future whole school priorities and measurable goals, to include interim checkpoints in order to monitor the progress made in reaching long-term targets.

Families are informed four times a year of students' individual goals in the progress reports and report cards that provide detailed narrative to inform them of their child's achievement and improvement areas. The school does not yet have a systematic approach to set short-term learning goals to more regularly inform the students and their families of their next steps for learning and how to achieve them. The structured organization and routines create clearly defined high expectations for students. These are articulated to families through regular communications. There are many opportunities for families to be involved in the school in an active capacity, as leaders among the family community or by attending workshops available to parents. The workshops include literacy, English language improvement, parenting classes and other activities to support and help families.

Quality Statement 3 – Develop Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: The school uses rigorous curricula, teaching and organizational decision making to engage students and faculty in meeting all students' learning goals.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The school curriculum and schedules maximize instructional time and create good opportunities for providing data to monitor the progress of students and teachers. With the low levels of reading and literacy skills identified in the initial benchmark assessments, the school has rightly prioritized improving all aspects of literacy for the students. The Turk math program has opportunities for students to undertake investigations to provide them with a deeper understanding of numeracy concepts. Social studies is delivered through thematic units, with teachers making connections to other curriculum areas. The hands-on science program has opportunities for students to learn through experimentation and teachers link the learning to real life situations. For example, the study unit on the habitats of animals is effectively reinforced by observing the habitat of the pet animal in each classroom. The school curriculum is enhanced by a wide range of learning opportunities within and beyond the school day. These include music, dance, violin, guitar, hip-hop, arts and crafts, sports, character education and a full range of academic programs. The school has a strong curriculum that successfully promotes the social and emotional well-being of the students. The effective and consistent academic and social behavior routines generate a positive, safe and exciting learning environment for the students. The responsive classroom program sets high expectations for student-to-teacher and student-to-student social interactions.

Teachers use data effectively to create differentiated instruction and learning activities to match the students' identified achievement levels. Instruction is well planned and creates good levels of interest, engagement and challenge for students at all achievement levels. The school is constantly looking for ways to improve the present school attendance of 91%. They have analyzed the attendance data and identified that the child welfare population sub-group presents the biggest challenge in terms of maintaining high attendance levels.

Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school's goals for accelerating student learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The principal undertakes observations and daily walkthroughs to monitor the impact and effectiveness of instruction on student learning. She focuses on the professional, instructional and leadership competencies that are demonstrated by the teachers, and provides effective feedback on a weekly basis. This is followed by further visits to the classrooms to ensure that all areas identified as in need of improvement become embedded in instructional practice. These also provide the focus for individualized professional development to support teachers' growth of their knowledge and skills. Weekly professional development targets instructional effectiveness. In particular, it focuses on 'what students know and can do', 'how will we know?', 'what will be our response if they do not get there?' and 'what will be our response if they do get there?'. Teachers receive good support from the instructional coaches, who also provide an induction program for new teachers. Teachers work collaboratively in grade level meetings to plan their instruction and to design activities that result in the creation of a vibrant and supportive environment for student learning. The student support team reviews the progress of struggling students, referred by classroom teachers, and creates learning plans and interventions to assist these students in improving their achievement levels.

The school has highly effective programs for developing the students academically and socially. A full time social worker, English language coordinator, behavior modification therapist and all of the school staff work diligently and effectively to meet the complex academic, social and emotional needs of the students. The Founding partnership provides an exciting after-school program that is offered to all students. It provides academic support and enhancement, enrichment activities and character building education. The morning meeting in every classroom provides 'fun' activities for students and teachers to reinforce basic routines, behaviors and relationships with one another. These constantly reinforced routines and behavioral expectations enable the school to run smoothly and create a climate where students feel supported and cared for.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and evaluating each student's progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The school's Charter plan provides the priorities and goals for the school as it expands from its present size of kindergarten through grade 1 to kindergarten through grade 8 over the coming years. The school has not yet created an annualized plan to determine short- and medium-term goals. However, the creation of benchmarks for improving student outcomes in core subjects has enabled teachers to accelerate student progress and significantly improve achievement levels. Teacher outcomes are regularly monitored to ensure that students are making good progress in all classrooms. This is reinforced by regular classroom walkthroughs to ensure that the instruction and activities are enabling students to learn effectively in line with their identified achievement levels.

Data is used well to identify areas for improvement for individual students through skills analysis from assessments and tests. These are used to plan small group and

individualized instruction and to design intervention strategies for students in greatest need of improvement. School leaders and teachers regularly monitor and reflect on the progress of their plans and activities and make appropriate adjustments whenever the need arises. For example, a mid-year review revealed that the students in the lowest one third were making good progress and that more differentiated activities were needed to challenge the higher achieving students. As a result, differentiated practices were enhanced to provide more stimuli for those students. The principal and teachers share a strong vision for improving the achievement and life chances of the many students in the school who face high levels of challenge in their personal lives. The school has made a good start in realizing that vision and has the capacity to continue to improve further in the future.

Quality Statement 6 - Monitor Effectiveness: The Charter School Board is proactive and diligent in monitoring its effectiveness and in undertaking its administrative responsibilities.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The MHACS board is providing adequate oversight to the school and plans to evaluate the school leader at the end of the school year. The board receives regular updates from the school leader and by requesting financial (YTD Expenses, Cash Flow, Budget, Variance Analysis) and other data driven (attendance, student assessment, dashboard) information as it relates to the educational programs offered by the school. The school board represents two educators (including current school leader), business, two members affiliated with New York Foundling, and accounting and finance expertise. The board identified several goals including: to continue and sustain the culture and foundation of the school, strengthen financial stability by drawing a fundraising plan, continue develop the school board, and develop a successful model that enhances academic achievement by having access to social services. The budget preparation process is holistic and involves board members, administrators, staff inputs, and school leader.

Quality Statement 7 - Maintain Financial Viability: The Charter School and its Board maintain financial viability and control over the course of the academic year.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The MHACS board plans to contract with an audit firm to produce school's first audited financial statements. The school maintains necessary financial documents to facilitate decision making at all levels. The unaudited balance sheet as of May '09 casts a good financial position with liquid assets totaling \$542,917 and current liabilities of \$160,677. The school is in good position to meet its short-term financial obligations. The statement of activities as of May '09 does not pose any particular concerns. The school provided the annual site visit team with a cash flow analysis projecting a positive balance of \$101,587 for June '09 period.

During the visit, the school officials were interviewed on the procurement process, check signing, randomly selected paid invoices were inspected, and fingerprinting documents were inspected. The school is following its adopted financial policies and has adopted sound internal controls. An appropriate balance of segregation of duties is in place among fiscal and operational staff. Paid invoices demonstrate that staff is following the

process of purchase order approvals, ordering and receiving of goods, presence of packing slips and invoices along with proof of payment. The school has tagged all its assets for inventory purposes.

DRAFT

Charter School Office Quality Criteria 2008-2009

Mott Haven Academy Charter School

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do, and to monitor the student's progress over time.

To what extent do school leaders and faculty have...

	Δ	➤	✓	+
1.1 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of each student, classroom, grade level?			X	
1.2 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of special education students?			X	
1.3 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of English language learners?			X	
1.4 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of ethnic groups, gender groups and all other categories of interest to the school?		X		
1.5 a measurement of performance and progress based on the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grades and subject areas?			X	
1.6 training, management systems and structures that support teachers in the use of school data to inform planning and instruction and to track the progress of students?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 1			X	

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each student's learning.

To what extent do school leaders and faculty...

	Δ	➤	✓	+
2.1 use collaborative and data-informed processes to set measurable, actionable and differentiated learning goals in core subjects for individual students and groupings of students and develop differentiated plans and timeframes for reaching these goals?		X		
2.2 use collaborative and data-informed processes to develop the school's Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP)?		X		
2.3 ensure that the achievement of learning goals, and the implementation of plans and timeframes for reaching these goals, is the central focus of school leaders, faculty, students and families?			X	
2.4 involve students in developing their learning goals and plans and in taking their next learning steps?		X		
2.5 convey consistently high expectations to students and their parents/carers?			X	
2.6 invite and enable parents/caregivers to provide useful information to teachers and the school about the learning needs and capacities of their children?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 2			X	

DEFINITIONS

"Analyze" or "analysis" includes, but is not limited to, comparisons of:

- 2 the current and past outcomes of . . . individual students, administrative groupings and sub-groups of students and the school itself in core subjects;
- 3 the outcomes of different classrooms and sub-groups in the same grades and core subjects; and
- 4 the school's Progress Report and other outcomes to those of peer/other schools

"Assessment results" include student outcomes on summative assessments (e.g., state ELA, math, science and social studies tests, NYSESLAT, Regents Exams, and Performance Based Assessment Tasks) and formative assessments aligned to the school's curriculum (including Periodic, DYO, and teacher-developed Classroom Assessments).

"Data-informed processes" include analysis of Progress Report, Quality Review, Learning Environment Survey, Inquiry Team findings, assessment results and attendance data

"Organizational decisions or strategies" refer to a school's use of budget and resources, staffing, planning, scheduling, grade structure, departments and teacher teams and other aspects of the school's structure and organization that can affect student outcomes.

"Sub-groups of students" include special education students, English Language Learners, the other NCLB sub-groups, boys, girls, and other groups significant to the school.

Quality Statement 3 – Develop Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: The school uses rigorous curricula, teaching and organizational decision making to engage students and faculty in meeting all students' learning goals.				
<i>To what extent do school leaders...</i>	Δ	>	✓	+
3.1 select core curricular approaches that facilitate and provide meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and focus on raising the achievement of students?			X	
3.2 provide a broad and engaging curriculum, including the arts, to enhance learning both within and outside the school day?			X	
3.3 hold teachers accountable for the progress and learning of the students in their charge, for making instruction interesting and compelling, and for creating a positive, safe and inclusive learning environment?			X	
3.4 ensure that teachers use school, classroom and student data to plan for and provide differentiated instruction that meets the specific needs of all the students in their charge?			X	
3.5 ensure that there is an environment of mutual trust and respect between all staff and students to support personal and academic development?				X
3.6 ensure that there are effective and consistently applied procedures to encourage and monitor student attendance and tardiness and report actual attendance data?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 3			X	
Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school's goals for accelerating student learning.				
<i>To what extent do school leaders...</i>	Δ	>	✓	+
4.1 use frequent observations of classroom teaching by the principal and other available information to develop a differentiated strategy for improving the quality of each teacher's instruction?			X	
4.2 make professional development decisions strategically, based on data, to help meet the improvement goals of students and teachers?			X	
4.3 provide frequent opportunities for teachers to observe each other's classroom instruction and to meet together in teams to plan, share effective practices, and evaluate one another's instruction in an open and reflective professional environment?			X	
4.4 develop effective procedures for the induction and support of teachers who are new to the profession or the school?			X	
4.5 align youth development, guidance/advising, other student support services and partnerships with outside entities around stated academic and personal development goals?				X
4.6 consistently implement clear procedures that enable the school to run smoothly, encourage effective learning and effectively address discipline-related incidents?				X
Overall score for Quality Statement 4			X	
Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and evaluating each student's progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.				
<i>To what extent do...</i>	Δ	>	✓	+
5.1 the school's plans for improving student outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?		X		
5.2 the school's plans for improving teacher outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?			X	
5.3 teachers and faculty use periodic assessments and other diagnostic tools to measure the effectiveness of plans and interventions for individual and groups of students in key areas?			X	
5.4 teachers and school leaders use the information generated by periodic assessments and other progress measures to revise plans immediately and make strategic decisions to modify practices in order to reach stated goals?			X	
5.5 school leaders and staff use each plan's interim and final outcomes to drive the next stage of goal setting and improvement planning?			X	
5.6 the principal and school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to effect change?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 5			X	

Quality Statement 6 – Monitor Effectiveness: The Charter School Board is proactive and diligent in monitoring its effectiveness and in undertaking its administrative responsibilities.

To what extent does the Board.....	Δ	➤	✓	+
6.1 ensure effective, broad outreach to create a student body that is representative of the school's Community School District?			X	
6.2 manage any conflict of interest within the governing body and throughout the school?		X		
6.3 hold EMOs, CMOs and school leadership accountable in their positions?			X	
6.4 ensure that teachers are provided with high quality professional development opportunities to further build on their professional expertise?			X	
6.5 respond to parent, staff and student concerns/complaints?			X	
6.6 provide ongoing training for board members so that they are able to fulfill the duties of their positions?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 6				X

Quality Statement 7 – Maintain Financial Viability: The Charter School and its Board maintain financial viability and control over the course of the academic year.

To what extent do the school and its Board.....	Δ	➤	✓	+
7.1 ensure that an independent auditor is appointed to undertake an annual financial audit, which is submitted to the OCS along with any other relevant documentation?			X	
7.2 comply with the adoption of an annual budget for the upcoming school year, which is submitted to the OCS for review?			X	
7.3 maintain an accurate balance sheet, statement of activities, year-to-date expense report and statement of cash flow?			X	
7.4 implement procedures that provide adequate internal control measures to detect and prevent financial fraud, such as bank reconciliation, revenue recognition and travel reimbursement?			X	
7.5 align financial decision making to analysis and evaluation of student achievement data?			X	
7.6 focus budget decisions on the priorities for school development and improvement?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 7				X

Quality Review Scoring Key

Δ	Underdeveloped	➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed
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Charter School Compliance Checklist			
Does the Board and the school . . .	YES	NO	In process
1. have a documented policy for suspensions and expulsions?	X		
2. maintain up to date and compliant with IDEA Regulations for IEPs?	X		
3. send newsletters and other parent communications home in the predominant languages of the school community?	X		
4. implement a comprehensive special education program that complies with applicable governing laws?	X		
5. implement a comprehensive program for English Language Learners that complies with federal law?	X		
6. publish a schedule of regular board meetings that is easily accessible to the general public?	X		
7. ensure that accurate minutes from Board meetings are maintained and published?	X		
8. ensure that proposed contracts with EMOs and CMOs are submitted punctually to the OCS for review?	X		
9. maintain a functioning parent organization?	X		
10. ensure that parents are informed of the time and location of Board meetings that are open to the public?	X		

DRAFT