



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Mott Hall IV

Intermediate School 522

**1137 Herkimer Street
Brooklyn
NY 11233**

Principal: LaJuan White

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Reviewer: Chip Morrison

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Mott Hall IV, a small middle school in its third year of existence, is located in the Brownsville neighborhood of Brooklyn. The school currently serves 179 students in grades 6 through 8. Eighty-six percent of students are Black, 12% Hispanic, and 3% Asian and other ethnicities. Eleven percent are identified as special education students and less than 2% as English language learners. The school receives Title 1 funding, with 69% percent of eligible students, compared to 57% for similar schools and a City average of 72%. Last year average daily attendance was 94%, equivalent to that for similar schools and slightly better than the City average for schools at this grade level (93%). With some exceptions, students are selected into the school based on previous academic performance.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal is a strong instructional leader who, with able support from her assistant principal, has created an environment that is conducive to learning.
- The school makes effective use of a good range of assessments to gather data on student needs and monitor progress.
- Instructional leaders and teachers make good use of school and student performance data to guide instruction and planning.
- The principal has made good use of a limited budget to staff the school appropriately and provide necessary resources.
- Teachers demonstrate solid content and pedagogical expertise, skillful classroom management, and pay careful attention to the needs of individual students.
- Students are for the most part well-behaved and consistently follow well-established routines in the classrooms and hallways.
- School staff have been effective at making parents feel welcome and are responsive to issues they raise.
- The school benefits from a supportive and active core-group of parents who advocate effectively for their children and the school as a whole.
- The school pays good attention to the needs of students at risk of failing to meet academic expectations, while at the same time providing enrichment opportunities for those who are already meeting or exceeding expectations.

What the school needs to improve

- Continue work on establishing and monitoring specific long-term and interim goals for progress that are consistent across classrooms and grade levels.
- Make better use of teachers' classroom assessments to create a more detailed picture of schoolwide strengths and challenges.
- Extend opportunities for teachers to design, observe, and critique lessons together, with a particular focus on tightening the relationship between teaching and learning by efficiently assessing what students are actually learning during each lesson.
- Continue to explore ways of differentiating classroom instruction to the needs of students in all content areas, based on ongoing classroom assessments.
- Use available rubrics to generate quantitative data on the quality of student writing across classrooms, subject areas, and grade levels.
- Explore opportunities to better articulate the curriculum across subject areas.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

Since founding the school just three years ago, the principal, with multi-faceted support from her capable assistant principal, has succeeded in creating a school community that is effectively focused on helping all students make annual progress toward mastering challenging academic standards. Data is used effectively to monitor student progress and to secure teacher accountability, with an emphasis on academic rigor. There is a positive, no-nonsense approach to student discipline and good parent engagement. Careful selection of staff has produced a capable faculty with a good combination of veterans and newer teachers, all of whom are committed to helping students succeed at a high level.

Areas that have been identified for improvement include the establishment and monitoring of specific interim goals for progress that are consistent across grade levels and better use of classroom assessment data to clarify schoolwide trends. There is limited systematic evaluation of student writing across grade levels and subject areas and insufficient curriculum articulation across academic disciplines. Additionally, too few opportunities are provided for teachers to design, observe, and critique lessons together.

How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor student progress over time.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The school makes effective use of a good range of assessment data to understand individual student needs and to monitor progress toward their goals. The school uses information collected from students' previous schools, the school's own entrance exams and schoolwide practice tests in mathematics and English language arts. This is supplemented by teachers' classroom assessments and running records of individual student progress, in addition to the results of mandated State assessments and the Princeton Review interim assessments. Methods of documenting progress, however, are not consistent. For example, some teachers use technology, others do not, making it difficult to get a consistent grade-level view.

Data provided to the school is studied for trends and patterns. Instructional leaders look carefully at the reports provided by the State, which disaggregate results by ethnicity, gender, English language learners, and special education students. Appropriately, the school pays particular attention to the latter group, as these students constitute a significant proportion of the student population. Instructional leaders monitor results of the schoolwide assessments on a regular basis, comparing the school's progress with that of similar schools and also comparing progress for individual students, classrooms, subject areas, and grade levels during the course of the year. They also look at the progress of individual students from one year to the next, and have begun to compare the year-to-year growth on State tests by classroom as a way of holding individual teachers accountable for individual student progress.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student’s next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student’s learning.

This area of the school’s work is proficient.

The school’s Comprehensive Education Plan, which has been collaboratively developed, identifies incremental goals for improving student achievement from one year to the next. In addition, teachers in all subject areas have created curriculum maps that are aligned with State standards. In this way, annual schoolwide goals for progress are indirectly linked to goals for individual progress. Objectively measurable classroom goals tend to focus on progress of individual students within each subject area. Leaders do not yet set specific interim goals for classrooms or for subgroups of students.

Teachers and leaders pay particular attention to the needs and progress of individuals in greatest need of improvement. Students at the lowest performance levels are mandated to receive academic intervention services at the beginning of the day. Other students in need are encouraged, but not required, to receive the same services. Also, students who are identified as already meeting or exceeding expectations are offered enrichment activities during these times. However, the school does not as yet have a robust means of assessing the effectiveness of these support services.

The school effectively communicates high expectations to parents and enlists the active support of many of them. A curriculum night is held at the beginning of each year during which parents have an opportunity to learn from their child’s teacher what will be covered during the year and what will be expected of students. Later, parents are invited to spend a day in the school, going from classroom to classroom, just as their children do. This gives additional information about what students experience in school. Teachers are quick to call parents at home if there are issues. Parents find that the school welcomes their input, and that an attempt is made to quickly resolve issues that may arise.

High expectations for student achievement, and plans to help students meet these expectations drive the efforts of the entire community, including leaders, teachers, parents, and students. Students are especially keen to succeed, expect much of their teachers, and readily voice concerns when they feel these expectations are not being met.

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.

This area of the school’s work is proficient.

The school has made considerable progress in aligning the curriculum, instruction and internal assessments with State standards. Teachers have collaborated on developing curriculum maps in each subject, including art and technology, that specify the sequence in which skills will be taught. The mathematics curriculum has built-in assessments. In other subject areas, teachers develop their own classroom assessments to measure progress. The school has identified the need to improve articulation across subject areas as a means of ensuring effective curriculum coverage, with linkages across subject areas. While there is a special focus on writing in all subject areas, there is as yet no systematic way to use student writing as an overall source of data on student learning and progress.

The primary mechanisms for teacher accountability are the results of State assessments, the school's own practice tests and frequent walkthroughs. Teachers hold themselves accountable through documentation of student progress on unit tests, student written work, and, in some cases, running records. Teachers use various mechanisms to differentiate instruction. This includes, through individual attention in class, and some use of texts at different reading levels to cover the same topic. However, the range of strategies used is not consistently targeted at enabling more advanced students to progress at their own pace. Thus, although students engage well in classroom activities, it is not consistently at the most appropriate and challenging level.

The principal has made good use of the available budget, especially as the size of school limits the financial resources available. For example, she has hired staff, notably the assistant principal and guidance counselor, who have multiple skill sets and can therefore undertake multiple roles. She has also managed to keep classes small, thus maximizing opportunities for individual attention for students. The schedule has been optimized to provide common preparation periods for subject-area teachers, thus supporting common planning.

Some teachers are especially skillful in connecting lessons to students' own experiences, such as through creative writing on topics that are of special interest to students or selection of reading passages that students can easily relate to. This results in high levels of student attentiveness. A greater sense of ownership and involvement is also achieved when students design their own scientific experiments. Students and adults in the building know each other especially well. Rather than having specific staff members look after the needs of specific students, there is a family-like, school-wide attention to student needs. Students know who to go to when they have personal problems. Further, students say that even if they try to keep a problem to themselves, someone will notice and attempt to help. Although a small number of students are chronically tardy, overall student attendance is satisfactory and systems to maintain this are appropriate. Extended absences receive immediate follow-up.

Quality Statement 4 - Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The principal has recruited and retained a skillful group of teachers, with a good mix of experience and youthful enthusiasm. Teachers are hired more for their subject-area competence and teaching expertise than for their data analysis skills. Professional learning experiences are tailored to the needs and interests of individual teachers. For example, the principal has arranged for individual teachers to visit classrooms in other schools where the principal has identified exemplary teaching practices. Apart from regionally mandated workshops, however, there is relatively little formal professional development. Internal professional development tends to focus on clarifying roles and responsibilities rather than on how to teach specific content, limiting potential growth in teachers' pedagogical content knowledge.

The principal and, especially, the assistant principal are in classrooms on a regular basis and are well aware of teachers' individual strengths and challenges. The principal has identified the need to increase the opportunities for teachers to design, observe, and critique lessons together as a way of continuously improving instructional quality in all classrooms. Teachers have common preparation periods during which they plan instruction, share ideas, and discuss the needs of students. The principal and assistant principal also work well together, evaluating the progress of students in each classroom,

and making and revising plans based on data from practice tests and other sources. However, while there is good communication between faculty and administration regarding student issues, faculty members are not especially active in setting interim goals and long-term planning.

The principal has a successful track record as a change agent and the capacity to sustain continued improvement. Her support for teachers, especially her flexibility, is widely appreciated by the faculty. As a result of a strong focus on discipline and positive behavior, the school runs very smoothly. Teachers pay careful attention to transitions, and are out on the street at the beginning and end of the day to ensure an orderly and safe arrival and departure. Students all wear uniform, and this contributes to the good student behavior and positive school climate.

The school makes good use of outside organizations to extend and enrich its academic and non-academic programs. The role of Replications, the organization that helped found the school, has been especially important. There are visits from health organizations, gang awareness speakers and authors. The principal has recognized the need to provide additional clubs and extracurricular activities to enrich learning opportunities, and to restore an after-school program for students who are struggling.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerated learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The school's procedures for monitoring and review are proficient, so that the principal has a good understanding of its strengths and development areas. Through the annual Comprehensive Education Plan process the school leadership team, consisting of parents and school staff, reviews progress toward annual goals and revises annual plans accordingly. Consequently successive phases of planning and goal setting are securely based upon an appropriate evaluation of the preceding plan.

Progress toward individual student goals is monitored on a daily basis by classroom teachers using their own classroom assessments. However, this data is not yet used to provide a clear school-wide overview. The limited specific goals for interim progress at a class, grade and school level means that there is as yet no consistent way to know to what extent progress is being made toward annual goals on a school-wide basis. Thus, while plans are evaluated and modified on an on-going basis, this is not fully targeted. Instructional leaders recognize the need for greater articulation of interim goals across classrooms and are making appropriate plans to address this need.

Instructional leaders use the results of school-wide practice tests in mathematics and English language arts to objectively measure progress in individual classrooms. The results are compared across classrooms to identify students in need, and to monitor the impact that individual teachers are having on student outcomes.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Mott Hall IV (IS 522)	∅	✓	+
Quality Score		X	

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor student progress over time.	∅	✓	+
1.1 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • each student, classroom, grade level, 		X	
1.2 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ethnic groups, English language learners, special education students* 		X	
1.3 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all other categories of interest to the school* 		X	
1.4 Performance and progress are measured based on comparisons with similar schools, with the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grade levels, academic subject areas, ethnic groups, and other groupings of interest within the school.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 1		X	

* These criteria are partially aspirational as of now because schools do not have routine access to all of this data. The NYC DOE plans to provide schools with enhanced access to the necessary data in 2007.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student's next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student's learning.	∅	✓	+
2.1 Using data, school leaders and faculty engage in a collaborative process to set demanding, objectively measurable goals for immediate and long-range improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals.		X	
2.2 Goals and plans focus on the school as a whole and on each student, classroom, grade level, academic subject, and group of students whose performance or progress has been identified by the school as a particular focus area.		X	
2.3 Particular attention is given to improving the performance and progress of students in greatest need of improvement.		X	
2.4 High expectations are conveyed to students and parents/caregivers. Students and their parents/caregivers are regularly invited to provide information about each student's performance and how to improve. This information is central to setting challenging goals and developing, evaluating, and revising plans.			X
2.5 Goals and plans for improving student performance and progress drive the activity of all members of the school community: leaders, staff, students, parents, and other partners.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 2		X	

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity, resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.	∅	✓	+
3.1 The school selects the curriculum based on how well it aligns with or implements the mandated curriculum and on the curriculum's capacity to generate meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and to support the school's high expectations and improvement plans.		X	
3.2 Teachers are accountable for improving instruction and student outcomes. They plan and differentiate their instruction based on the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.		X	
3.3 Budgeting decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.			X
3.4 Staffing decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.			X
3.5 Scheduling decisions about the use of teacher and student time are guided by the needs that emerge from examining student data and by the focused plan the school develops to improve student outcomes.			X
3.6 Instructional programs actively engage students.		X	
3.7 Staff know and respect students and respond to their academic needs, as well as their personal needs that affect academic performance. Each student knows and trusts an adult on the staff who is concerned about him or her.			X
3.8 Student attendance and engagement are high priorities. High rates and patterns of absences trigger immediate intervention.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 3		X	
Quality Statement 4 – Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.	∅		+
4.1 Leaders, faculty, and staff are selected based on their high expectations for student performance and progress and based on their commitment and capacity to use data, compare outcomes within and across classrooms and schools and develop and revise plans and methods to improve performance and progress.		X	
4.2 Professional development decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes. Professional development is designed to help leaders, faculty, and staff use data, self- and peer-assessments, and collaboration with peers to achieve goals for improved school and student outcomes. Professional development and self- and peer-evaluation are aligned and overlap.		X	
4.3 The principal frequently observes classroom teaching and has a considered strategy for improving the quality of each teacher's instruction. Teachers frequently observe and support each other's classroom instruction with the goal of improving student outcomes.		X	
4.4 Planning, evaluation of results, and revision of plans takes place in teams. Leaders and faculty inform each other of their goals and results, candidly evaluate themselves and each other, and use what is learned to drive improvement.		X	
4.5 The principal is respected and has capacity to effect change.		X	
4.6 The school runs smoothly. Procedures are clear, communicated to all, and are generally followed.			X
4.7 The school aligns youth development and support services around stated academic goals. Partnerships with outside bodies are routinely used to achieve academic goals.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 4		X	
Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.	∅	✓	+
5.1 All school plans and other interventions include frequent interim goals and diagnostic assessments of progress designed to reveal in objectively measurable ways whether the plan is being effectively implemented and reaching stated goals.		X	
5.2 Comparisons of student progress within and across classrooms and schools are used in making interim diagnostic assessments and measuring the progress of plans and interventions.		X	
5.3 Information generated by periodic assessments and diagnostic measures of progress and comparisons is used to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals. Interim and final goals are modified when data objectively demonstrate that revision is required.		X	
5.4 Each plan's interim and final outcomes drive successive phases of goal setting and improvement planning, and each successive phase is characterized by agile and flexible realignment of practices and resources to improve student academic outcomes.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 5		X	