



**NYCDOE**

**Quality Review: Final Report**

# **The New York City Department of Education**



# **Quality Review Report**

**Mott Hall School**

**Intermediate School 223**

**71 Convent Avenue  
New York  
NY 10027**

**Principal: Cynthia Arndt**

**Dates of review: January 31 – February 1, 2007**

**Reviewer: Georgie Beasley**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Mott Hall School is a school for gifted and talented students from ethnic minorities. Most students come from homes across the City. About 420 students are enrolled, from grade 4 through grade 8. The school's population comprises 86% Hispanic students, which is much higher than typically found in City schools. In addition, there are 5% White students, 3% Black students and 6% students from Asian and other backgrounds. The proportion of English language learners and special education students is very low and much lower than typically found in other City schools. Nearly all students speak another language in addition to English, mostly Spanish. In total eight languages are spoken in school. The school receives Title 1 funding. At 96.5%, attendance is much higher than similar and City schools, although lateness has started to become an issue since school buses were rerouted.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The school nurtures personal development alongside academic performance, so students have excellent attitudes and behavior and very good manners.
- The varied range of enrichment activities and interesting curriculum engage students' attention and challenge thinking.
- Clear leadership from the principal and cabinet has established a shared vision for the school's success.
- A committed and dedicated staff team strives for all students to do well and achieve excellence.
- The mutual respect with which all adults and students treat each other has established a family atmosphere in school.
- The strong partnership with parents results in supportive parents who are keen to learn more about the school's work.
- The school links learning in a number of different subjects and gives added interest and relevance to lessons.
- Students use technology as an effective tool for learning and so have advanced knowledge and skills in the subject.
- Strong relationships result in students being confident to ask for help and guidance.
- A good team structure enables the school to evaluate regularly all aspects of its work.

### What the school needs to improve

- Use the analysis of data more rigorously to pinpoint the reasons why more students reach level 4 in mathematics than they do in English in the upper grades.
- Translate goals for grade 6, 7 and 8 students' expected performance at the end of each year in English, mathematics and science to class and grade performance goals.
- Refocus discussions in grade and department meetings on whether students are on track to reach their end of year goals and so inform decisions about any adjustments required to the school's goals and action plans.
- Develop assessment data and use this to extend current planning for differentiated instruction to include a systematic and progressive development of skills for each grade and subject.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Overall Evaluation

#### **This is a proficient school.**

Mott Hall School has high expectations of its students and families and delivers its programs in an atmosphere of challenge and support. As a result, students are confident to try out new challenges by themselves first before asking for additional guidance. Parents are expected and welcomed to play a full role in their children's education and so feel able to ask the school for clarification or to raise any concerns. These strong relationships and mutual respect result in a purposeful, family atmosphere in the school.

The curriculum is varied and so responds well to the wide range of students' interests. Teachers effectively plan what knowledge they want students to learn. The skills planned for students to develop are not so well planned. Data is used well to plan differentiated instruction in most classes and so meets the majority of students' needs. The school has not used its analysis of data so rigorously to pinpoint the reasons why some students attain higher results in mathematics than they do in English in the upper grades. Consequently, discussions in grade and department meetings are not always sufficiently focused on student progress.

### 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 collects a wide range of data about each individual student's performance. It uses the data well to identify the proportion of students attaining at each level and so has a clear picture of what each student knows and is able to do. Test results are looked at closely to identify students who have just reached a particular level or who are close to reaching the next level. The principal keeps this information on a spreadsheet so is able to see at a glance which students need more challenging work and who needs help to consolidate their position and make their attainment at the level more secure. The information is used to look at classes, grades and subject performance.

Teachers keep a range of their own assessments which they use well to identify any gaps in knowledge, to organize group learning and to target their conferencing activities. The Princeton Review is used when available to help track progress and identify weaknesses in curriculum coverage. Each student has a portfolio of work which helps teachers identify target areas and skills for development on an individual basis. As a result of its analysis, the school targets students who are close to achieving the next level and their progress is discussed during relevant team meetings. It knows that in some years Black American boys do less well than other ethnic groups and that students in grades 6 through 8 do not perform so well at level 4 in English than they do in mathematics and science. However, the progress of these groups of students has not been targeted for particular discussion in grade and departmental team meetings to identify whether this is due to weaknesses in the school's programs and instruction or due to the individual students' achievement.

The school looks closely at students who are struggling to meet the expected standards, including special education students and English language learners, and puts suitable intervention programs in place to help accelerate their 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 uses its data sufficiently well to set measurable goals for its overall performance at the end of the year and individual student goals each semester. The goals are challenging and based securely in data about what individual students know and can do in all subjects, for example, focusing goals on increasing the number of students reaching level 4 in tested subjects. However, it has not translated the overall goals into targets for each class and grade to achieve. As a result, discussions in team meetings focus on process and programs rather than on whether students are making the progress they should to reach their individual or group goals.

The school compares its performance against other City schools and constantly strives to make sure its high expectations and goals of what students can do are being met. Close attention is given to students with special educational needs and to English language learners to ensure they make expected progress towards their individual interim and long-term goals. Teachers conference regularly with students to share goals and explain reasons for the tasks to give students a deeper understanding of the work. The school shares the students’ goals with parents through formal and informal meetings and discussions with teachers about their children’s progress. Workshops at grade and whole school levels give parents good information about testing requirements and about aspects of the school’s work relevant to their children. These help them to gain a deeper understanding of instruction in English and mathematics and enable them to support their children’s achievements at school and at home.

Staff keep individual students’ next learning steps in mind when planning suitable programs and instruction. Collaborative grade and department meetings focus well on making sure programs are interesting and engaging and that activities are organized so that all students can benefit. Group goals are not such a focused feature of their discussions.

**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 with some well developed aspects.**

Most teachers use data well to identify precisely what they want students to learn in class. However, some planning for instruction focuses too often on the activities students are expected to do rather than on what they are to learn. The skills students are expected to develop in particular lessons and themes are identified on most curriculum maps. However, they are not sufficiently differentiated and so it is not clear how the same skill can be developed at a higher level for students in the upper grades. Written notes clearly

identify what students are able to do and most often what students need to do next to improve. The recording sheets do not separate these comments and so it makes it more difficult for teachers to translate students' next steps to learning intentions in future lessons. Teachers are accountable for improving instruction and plan activities that support students' academic and personal development. They plan instruction that helps them gain knowledge and skills that will help them in later life.

The program of enrichment activities is well developed. Activities are organized in grades and rotated so that every student can attend each in turn. Students enjoy the many varied opportunities to take their learning in other directions. For example, boys and girls were fully engrossed in working out the best next move to make in chess and were made to think hard about the reasons why. This interest has led to the school winning many chess competitions in recent years. The building limits some curriculum activities. It is only because the school makes creative use of the cramped rooms and space for physical activity that the full curriculum is offered. The effective use of computers contributes significantly to students' good engagement in lessons. Students have advanced technology skills for their age.

In response to its analysis of data, the school adjusted its daily schedule to include an additional period of English. Through well-organized scheduling of enrichment activities, teachers in the same grade have common planning time. This enables them to plan meaningful links across a range of subjects to add relevance to learning and to develop common rubrics, linked to the City and State performance indicators that help students assess their own learning. Budget and staffing decisions are based on data to make sure the resources the school needs to successfully meet its goals are available.

The school puts equal emphasis on students' personal development and so they grow into confident and well-mannered young people. Rigorous procedures are in place to follow up all absence and lateness. Perfect attendance is rewarded every month and celebrated in class and by the whole school.

**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 school selects its staff based on their commitment to students' learning and an ability to use data to plan instruction. Many teachers give up their own time to tutor students at lunchtimes and after school to help them overcome any difficulties. Some staff bring particular individual expertise and this helps the school provide a wide range of learning activities, for example studying how the stock market works.

Professional development activities respond to individual teacher and school needs, as based on data. Teachers attend conferences, complete research projects and develop particular skills which they bring back into school to share with other teachers. An effective team structure enables leaders, teachers and other staff to meet regularly to plan suitable instructional programs with the aim of 'making learning fun'. Teachers share and use ideas to evaluate and improve their practice. The parent coordinator joins in with some training events to pass the knowledge on to parents at the varied workshops.

The principal visits classes to check how well the curriculum, enrichment activities and intervention programs are being implemented. She recognizes the need to do this more

often and to give developmental feedback to improve instruction further. Teachers share good practice through open and honest discussions and visits to each other's classes. Systems are clear and known by all staff and students so the school runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis. The principal is respected by staff, students and parents and so her vision for the success of the school is clearly communicated and shared.

Partnership with other institutions and organizations gives the school good support for curriculum enrichment and contexts for real learning. For example, students' science projects are advanced for their age due to links with a local University and high school. Students join in enthusiastically in the workshops led by the National Dance Institute teachers, working with a partner to get their steps accurate and to build variation into their dance routines.

**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 constantly reviews all aspects of its performance through regular team meetings made up of representatives from all sections of the school community. Teams discuss organizational matters and how well they think programs and instruction are being implemented during the year. At the end of each year, the teams review and evaluate what has and has not gone well and use the outcomes from discussions to set goals for the following year.

Goals in the school's Comprehensive Education Plan detail precisely what the school aims to achieve at the end of each year in all subjects. Each goal has clear performance indicators and the school monitors the performance of individual students closely through its own assessment data to help monitor progress towards its goals during the year. Some plans are modified during the year in response to data and interim goals but others are not. Two key goals have been agreed in response to data and focus on the need to improve the performance of Black American boys and increasing the number of students in grades 6 through 8 performing at level 4 in English. These goals have not yet been translated into goals for each grade and class and so grade and departmental meetings tend to focus on organizational matters and programs rather than on the progress of these targeted groups. This is in contrast to the other team meetings, such as in the assessment intervention team meetings, when interim assessments are used well to identify students' particular needs, to review and evaluate how well different programs and intervention strategies are raising attainment, and to make adjustments when necessary.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: Mott Hall School (IS 223)</b>	∅	✓	+
<b>Quality Score</b>		X	

<b>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.</b>	∅	✓	+
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"> <li>• each student, classroom, grade level,</li> </ul>		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"> <li>• ethnic groups, English language learners, special education students*</li> </ul>		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"> <li>• all other categories of interest to the school*</li> </ul>		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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>		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.

<b>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.</b>	∅	✓	+
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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>		X	

<b>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.</b>	Ø	✓	+
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
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>		X	
<b>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.</b>	Ø	✓	+
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
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>		X	
<b>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.</b>	Ø	✓	+
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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>		X	