



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



# **Quality Review Report**

**Mott Hall III**

**Middle School 128  
450 St. Paul's Place  
Bronx  
NY 10456**

**Principal: Jorisis Stupart**

**Dates of review: March 8 - 9, 2007**

**Reviewer: Jill Bavin**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Mott Hall III is a middle school providing education for students in grades 6, 7 and 8. It was founded in fall 2002, replicated from Mott Hall School in Harlem, and since then has grown significantly in size. Originally it was entirely selective, but it has evolved into a more inclusive school, supporting students with a wide range of achievement. There are currently approximately 240 students and 14 teachers. Because it is a small school teachers must be prepared to teach more than one subject and scheduling is flexible in response to student needs. 61% of the school population is Hispanic, of whom 43% speak Spanish at home, and 37% are of African American heritage. The vast majority of students are Title 1 eligible. There are very few special education students.

The school is located on the 5<sup>th</sup> floor above an elementary school, Public School 55. Positive co-operation between the principals means that facilities, such as cafeteria, gym and school yard are shared. Attendance is above the City average as a consequence of the good systems that have been established.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- School leadership empowers teachers to develop the curriculum and initiate instruction improvements.
- High expectations apply to students, to the hiring of teachers and their accountability, and are communicated clearly to the entire school community.
- The well developed curriculum is highly successful in interesting and motivating students, and contributing to their learning.
- The school has begun to analyze test results according to ethnicity and gender.
- The principal is respected by staff, students, parents and colleagues outside school.
- Class teachers keep close checks on how well students are doing and make good use of the information.
- All members of the school community share a commitment to improving student performance and school development.
- This is a very collegiate and collaborative school, reflecting the principal's vision.
- Parents are very well informed about their child's progress.
- Students enjoy school and their attendance is good.

### What the school needs to improve

- Develop interim action plans to guide school priorities in the short term and monitor their progress.
- Extend links with schools that share similar characteristics, to make more detailed comparisons regarding student progress.
- Increase class teachers' skills in evaluating each other objectively.
- Develop strategies for identifying students with learning difficulties sooner.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Overall Evaluation

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

The principal has established and guided this relatively new school since its inception. She has faced many challenges along the way and won the trust of staff and parents with her steadfast and calm perseverance. Under her leadership the school maintains its commitment to high expectations and achievement. Standards of student behavior are mostly very good; there is an established culture of focusing on learning throughout the school, and a well developed curriculum.

The school makes good use of an abundance of available data from teachers and students to track students' progress as they move through the school. The leadership team is developing effective procedures to compare students' progress in different subjects, and compare the progress of different groups of students. Consequently they know that math results are not as strong as English language arts and have begun to address this by funding an extra mathematics teacher. As a result of new and more detailed analysis, the principal and assistant principal have recently identified that while all students achieve equally well in English language arts, African / American students do not achieve as well in mathematics as Hispanic students. They are currently seeking ways to address this fully. Parents and students appreciate the work of the principal and her staff. Students wear their uniform with justifiable pride in their school and achievements.

### 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 gathers an extremely comprehensive range of information about each student when they join the school. This is the beginning of an ongoing process, whereby the school makes good use of a range of assessment data to gain a clear picture of the relative strengths and weaknesses in the academic and social development of each student. Achievement is analyzed between classes and grades and for different groups. These are strengths in the school's procedures, and support the vast majority of students effectively. The school recognizes that difficulties are sometimes missed for longer than it would wish should the neediest students begin to struggle. The school has yet to establish particular expertise in helping this very small group of students who do, nevertheless make good progress in reaching Level 2, as compared with other City schools. The school has not yet forged links with a school or schools that share similar characteristics in order to develop their comparison of different groups of students.

Teachers make good use of their observations on a day to day basis to group students according to their skill or understanding and offer extra help, either in class or through after school programs. The leadership team is increasingly analyzing data to determine trends in achievement for groups of students. Together with teaching staff they are developing systems for monitoring progress over time, such as compiling portfolios of samples of

work. Effective staff team meetings focus primarily on students who are not making the progress they should from their individual starting points. On these occasions, using samples of work to exemplify strengths and weaknesses in student progress, and determine action to be taken, the level of analysis is impressive. Students report that staff are constantly encouraging them to do better, wanting them to, as one student said, “improve, improve, improve” and another, to “go above and beyond”.

**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 principal and assistant principal work closely together with teachers, the literacy coach and the counselor to make appropriate use of the available data and set realistic, challenging goals for students. There is an expectation of year on year improvement, although students, which is fully shared by staff. The school has a commitment to heterogeneous classes but, at the same time, there are high expectations of teachers to plan work to ensure that every student is challenged. Programs that allow for individual work and progress, such as the ‘school wide enrichment model’ are selected to specifically support teachers in this. Staff know students well, both academically and socially, through both interim assessments and conferencing. Consequently, staff teams are constantly seeking to extend their level 3 and 4 students while supporting and developing the level 1 and 2 students equally.

A key feature of the principal’s success has been the extent to which she has communicated and sustained this strong commitment to high achievement for all across the school community. The process begins with parents during the rigorous induction process, when parents are expected literally and philosophically to ‘sign up’ to the commitment. The school has embraced its developing inclusivity positively. It is rapidly learning how best to improve its support for students with greatest need and firm plans are in place for the appointment of a specialist teacher for next academic year.

**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 well developed.**

The principal has successfully established a strong culture of high expectations and has been very successful in enthusing and empowering her teaching team, including those new to the school, to share her vision. The curriculum is effective in helping teachers to challenge students equally at different levels, which contributes to the high level of student interest and motivation. There is a good emphasis, which continues to be supported through professional development, upon making links between subjects and planning topics with relevance to students’ lives. The deliberate decision to provide open ended project work through the school enrichment program benefits all, and particularly the gifted students. The extremely high science results are a testimony, not only to good teaching, but also to the practical, experiential curriculum.

Because they are fully 'signed up' to the school culture of high expectation, teachers feel very responsible and accept accountability for their students' progress. The collegiate leadership style ensures that they are supported in initiating and creating change and development. The school works effectively within budget constraints, selecting and scheduling programs, purchasing resources and deploying and developing staff carefully and purposefully to suit the school culture and to meet student needs.

Unsurprisingly, students enjoy school, appreciate the efforts of the staff on their behalf, and particularly relish the opportunities they have for selecting an area of interest to research and pursue. Attendance rates are above average as a result of the rigorous procedures for monitoring attendance that have been established.

**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.**

Establishing a new school brought its own staff recruitment challenges, with good and experienced teachers already working under contract to other schools. The leadership team responded creatively and positively by using the 'Teaching Fellow' and 'Teach for America' programs to hire teachers who make up for a lack of experience with smartness, energy, passion and idealism. Teachers have been selected with a strong focus on their readiness to quickly assimilate and use classroom data. Professional development is crucial to this team and takes many forms, including some creative approaches such as the use of a pedagogical book club. Consequently teachers routinely consider how to improve their practice. However, while valuing the support they receive, teachers recognize that they would benefit from more external sources of development. Teachers value the support that they receive from the principal and assistant principal through classroom observations. They are a highly motivated team and acknowledge the benefits that an objective view of their performance can bring.

Team work is strong; policies and routines are developed collaboratively and so understood and implemented by all. This contributes to the school's very smooth management on a day to day basis. Teachers observe each other teach, mostly through using 'lab sites' to share good practice and discuss further improvements. However, the leadership team has identified the need for further development in the rigor with which teachers constructively evaluate each other. Nevertheless shared planning and evaluation of student progress meetings are insightful, detailed and constructive. The school makes good use of several partnerships. For example, it consults with its neighboring elementary school for special needs expertise, and to implement the 'reading buddy' program. Strong links with the elementary schools ensure a comprehensive initial assessment of each student's starting point.

**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 principal sets high expectations of herself as well as others. Staff share a real sense of purpose and pride in the 'Mott Hall culture'. The leadership team work closely and effectively together and make good use of the Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP) to analyze strengths and weaknesses in student performance. However, the school, appropriately, undertakes actions for improvement which are not identified within the mandated format for developing planning. As a result, it is difficult for the school to track its progress towards meeting its goals. The school has initiated developments, such as meeting with a mathematics consultant, without waiting for the completion of the full CEP cycle. While interim goals, such as enhancing the performance of the African / American students in mathematics have been identified and action has just begun, plans and timescales for these are not fully reflected on paper so that systems for monitoring how effectively these goals are being met not sufficiently informative. Although the school has recently begun to compare the performance of some different groups of students, it has not undertaken a close comparison with a school with similar features. Nevertheless, staff work well together to make a rapid response to the majority of needs as they are recognized. The school acknowledges the need to ensure an earlier response to the needs of the lowest attaining students, and has plans in place which have the potential to address this issue.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: Mott Hall 111 (MS 128)</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>	∅	✓	+
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>	∅	✓	+
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>	∅	✓	+
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	