

# Quality Review Report

## 2008-2009

**Mott Hall IV School**

**Middle School 522**

**1137 Herkimer Street  
Brooklyn  
NY 11233**

**Principal: Lajuan White**

**Dates of review: April 29-30, 2009**

**Lead Reviewer: Donald Conyers**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Mott Hall IV is a middle school with 169 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 86% Black, 10% Hispanic, 1% White, and 3% Asian students. The student body includes 1% English language learners and 11% special education students. Boys account for 47% of the students enrolled and girls account for 53%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007-2008 was 94.1%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 69% eligibility.

### Overall Evaluation

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

Mott Hall IV is a small and vibrant school community swelling with high expectations and positive energy. Its focus is clearly on learning and the progress of students and adults. In the past months, the school has lost staff and this has affected certain curricula areas and activities. Nonetheless, the school has devoted many hours to acknowledging their challenges, creating meaningful solutions and putting them in motion. This has resulted in magnified efforts to improve student social and academic progress.

The school actively ensures that parents receive useful information about learning across the four core subjects of English language arts, math, social studies and science. Parents access the school's website, receive messages from the automated messaging center and take advantage of the principal's open-door policy in order to support their children's learning. The school has not yet informed parents of their children's short-term learning goals or the school-wide goals.

School leaders and teachers make effective use of the data to develop plans that help students participate more decisively in their learning. Teachers adequately provide timely feedback to students. Due to teachers' timely intervention, students understand their mistakes, and are able make the necessary adjustments. Some teachers use pre-assessment information to introduce the appropriate levels of challenge for each student. However, this is not common practice, so the activities for many students lack challenge and do not match their identified learning needs. .

The principal has been thoughtful to share leadership roles. Accordingly, many teachers have been effective in producing positive experiences and learning results for students. The principal ensures that all members of staff have input to school wide decisions, even involving them in consultation around budgetary decisions. Thus, the school expertly relies on data and long-term goals to allocate resources needed to increase achievement. The Inquiry Teams work persistently to improve the achievement for identified students. Because of their work, the special education students have made exceptional gains in English language arts. However, the teams have not taken the next step of highlighting effective teaching strategies and extending them school wide.

Professional growth plans are in place and reflect the intended outcomes for teachers. These growth plans do not have interim goals and benchmarks needed to evaluate the achievement of long-term goals. All members of the community support the school's vision for success and clearly express what they need to do to realize the vision.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal is supportive of students, staff and families, has a sound understanding of the school's strengths and areas for development and effectively implements plans to promote future growth.
- Teachers work effectively in collaborative teams to plan their curriculum and instruction and monitor student progress.
- Teachers have good opportunities to develop their leadership qualities within a reflective school where all constituents have a voice.
- The school leaders allocate human and financial resources efficiently to ensure positive learning experiences and results.
- Teachers give detailed feedback across core subjects along with clear next steps for further improvement, enabling students to set precise goals and monitor their own learning.
- The school community is rigorous in gathering a range of relevant data across all subjects to understand student performance, and collaborates regularly to monitor progress and modify practice.

### What the school needs to improve

- Improve differentiated instruction to provide all students in each classroom with challenging activities matched to their identified learning needs.
- Refine all school plans to include interim benchmarks for all actions, enabling the modification of goals in a timely manner to optimize the impact of actions and provide opportunities to celebrate success along the way.
- Increase communication efforts with parents in order to help them understand the school goals and the short-term goals of their children as they support the learning process.
- Extend and refine opportunities for teachers to examine student learning conditions, student work and effective teaching strategies, supporting improved learning for students.

## Part 3: Main Findings

### How well the school meets New York City's 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.**

Extensive use of data is an integral part of the school's effective practice. The principal and teachers collect, analyze and share data from Acuity, unit tests, conference notes, oral presentations and running records in order to prepare and deliver information that is consistent with student readiness and content standards. This has led to critical examination of student accomplishments and the demonstrated desire by students to improve their results. Teachers across each discipline post updated charts indicating student-learning results from unit exams, topics or skill areas. Students are accustomed to reading the charts, setting short-term goals based on the data and working with classroom teachers to address areas of need. This has resulted in improved class grades and test scores. The principal uses the school-level assessment cycle to monitor and understand student progress in the areas of math, English language arts and social studies. Teachers analyze 'datafolios' to gain a thorough understanding of student progress. Analysis of the results enables teachers to guide their planning and monitoring of long-term goals. The school has focused its data analysis on subgroups and has concentrated its efforts on improving the learning outcomes of each group. An example of this is teachers' conscientious collection and use of special education data to clarify and respond to student learning issues.

Parents are aware of their children's results and indicate that they receive informative progress reports from the school concerning attendance and academic test results. The school is moving toward creating additional ways to communicate information to parents via reciprocal and ongoing discussions about student progress. Due to the effective feedback measures taken by teachers through written comments, specific rubrics and suitable models, students are able to understand their mistakes and challenges. They have the confidence necessary to take appropriate corrective steps and can readily explain these steps to others.

**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.**

The staff project high standards and expectations for each student. Displays of annotated student work, associations with universities, career days and the daily, positive, reinforced care signify the determination of students and staff to do their personal best. Students speak knowledgeably of their college plans and articulate their adult career goals. The principal attends every parent meeting to ensure that parents understand the services provided to students and to support parents' needs. While parents receive progress sheets every four weeks and know their children's long-term

career goals, the school has not broadened parental contact to explain school-wide goals and their children's personal short-term goals.

Whole-school goals, identified clearly in the Comprehensive Educational Plan, arise from data sources. Most action plans have interim benchmarks that enable the school to track progress during the year, or evaluate the impact of actions. The school is aware that the setting of benchmarks is not consistent for all action plans. Teachers do curricula mapping for the core subjects and plan their units together. After setting long-term goals, each teacher sets short-term goals and creates learning objectives for each lesson. The principal and staff have weekly meetings by content area to set goals for each class. Teachers depend on pre-assessment and benchmark assessment to pace the lessons within the unit and to differentiate the lessons for student groups or individual students. To assist students, teachers display the long- and short-term goals and learning objectives clearly in each classroom. Students are aware of the teacher's expectations and speak about the progress they are making within the topic. They also use the assessment results to develop their own short-term goals along with an action plan. This system is effective because teachers are aware of their content and student understanding within the unit or lessons. Students use conference time with teachers to gain more clarity and confidence about how to improve learning results. In addition, teachers take advantage of lunchtime, morning sessions and after school to work with students in order to help them in their academic areas. This has been beneficial in raising achievement and improving student-teacher relationships.

**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.**

Teachers show great interest in one another and respect for each other's contribution. The students feel that the adults care about them and want them to be successful. Students report that there are very few problems with other students because they do not have time to waste. The school has done a commendable job responding to student academic and personal needs by offering interesting and accelerated courses in order to motivate students and cultivate achievement potential. In addition to the multi-modal experiences that teachers provide in science, math and social studies, the school offers high school courses for selected students in Integrated-algebra and living environment. The school utilizes an array of instructional materials that support the interest and curriculum frameworks set by New York State

The school richly supports and exposes students to a variety of experiences that allow individual expression and personal satisfaction due to evident growth or meaningful contribution. Students are passionate about the crisis in Northern Uganda where children are being involved in war. In response, they studied the culture, raised funds to help the children and held awareness sessions. Students participate in architectural designing, oratory competition, active science exploration and the college-connect initiative, Jump Nation. There is focused classroom instruction and teachers across the school differentiate lessons. However, differentiated lessons are not consistent for all students in each classroom. This means that activities for some students lack challenge and do not match their identified learning needs.

The school is judicious in deploying its budget efficiently to support the needs of students and staff. Leaders designate funds strategically to support goals and activities

across a range of teaching and learning opportunities. Smaller class sizes, SMART boards, consultants to address student academic challenges and teacher professional growth all demonstrate this commitment to supportive resources. Astute expenditure has resulted in raising student achievement and providing specifically targeted professional support for teachers, especially those new to the profession. The school has also wisely invested in a voice message system to improve communications with families, as well as student attendance. This purchase has resulted in a consistent rise in student attendance and greater parental awareness. Funds set aside for after school and Saturday enrichment activities enable students to participate in a wealth of academic, recreational and cultural activities that increase student knowledge and exposure.

**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 professional support of teachers remains one of the most important and improving activities for school leaders. New and seasoned teachers receive support from administrators, consultants and from one another. Professional development foci cover aspects of pedagogy and content in order to improve the quality of instruction from classroom to classroom. However, professional development efforts have not yet improved the academic rigor in all classrooms. The principal uses observations and achievement results to construct and monitor the goals set in individual teacher growth plans. This has led to more discussion and modeling of appropriate teaching. Teachers participate in the 'professional conference' with the principal in order to review goals and talk about how well their teaching experiences are going. Teachers gain valuable insights through visits to each other and to teachers from other schools. Teachers benefit further from common planning time where they examine student work to evaluate the quality of teaching.

Teachers are encouraged to lead or initiate important events that affect student learning and experiences. The principal explained that all key decisions are made with the input of staff. As a result, staff has championed the school's behavioral management program, the college-bound connections, advisory system, penny harvest, career day and the organization and oversight of common planning times.

The school's two Inquiry Teams inform their practice through analyzing student data, and consulting research to inform their practice. The greater school community is aware of the inquiry work within the school, but the teams have not taken the next step of highlighting effective teaching strategies and extending it to the larger school community.

The school excels in bridging relationships with community providers that service the school. The principal, guidance counselor and other school representatives have coordinated with several agencies to ensure the effectiveness of support services during the day and after school. Involvement and partnership with these agencies have spawned a cascade of services to include, student counseling, college engagement, track, chess, archery, dance, basketball, academic help, debates and civic responsibility. The school has been innovative in developing a guidance plan with monthly tasks across eight areas of focus: planning/administration, collaboration, staff development, parental involvement, counseling, orientation and articulation, public relations and career

development. The plan has succeeded in identifying necessary activities and has already benefited the school community, as confirmed by parents and students.

**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.**

Teachers are vigilant in assessing students and setting goals for them across the core subjects. Their timely response to students via written comments and posted assessment results drive student goal setting and set in motion decisions to extend lessons or ideas about going deeper to ensure student comprehension. The school sets school-wide interim checkpoints to ensure that student learning across the subject areas is improving for all students. The principal is thorough in analyzing and sharing grade level, sub-group and individual student data over time to evaluate student outcomes and to make necessary adjustments. One resulting adjustment was the skills reinforcement weekly regimen. The school administers this in-house assessment weekly to monitor and evaluate teachers' work and student learning. The principal draws upon the information gathered to work with each teacher within his professional growth goal. This practice has also improved considerably teacher planning and student goal setting.

School improvement includes professional support of teachers. Leaders structure the school professional development plan in consonance with the goals of the Comprehensive Educational Plan. Teachers have individual professional development plans that support content and pedagogy. Currently, professional development plans do not include interim goals or benchmarks and this means that outcomes for indicated areas of concern lack essential refinement, monitoring and the evaluation of effectiveness. Thus, the school is not in a position to know whether its plans are on target or whether to celebrate its successes

The ongoing evaluation and changes to the Comprehensive Educational Plan represent the school's commitment to ensuring that they monitor progress continually toward whole-school goals and to providing needed adjustments. The principal is prepared and able to respond to the different concerns within the school community. All members of the school community support the vision for future success.

# School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

<b>School name: Mott Hall IV Middle School</b>	△	➤	✓	+
<b>Overall QR Score</b>			<b>X</b>	
<b>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.</b>				
<i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty regularly...</i>	△	➤	✓	+
1.1 collect and analyze actionable information, including assessment results and attendance data, to provide a complete view of the learning outcomes and needs of individual students and groupings of students?				<b>X</b>
1.2 focus analysis on the learning outcomes and needs of all sub-groups of students?			<b>X</b>	
1.3 engage in an open exchange of information with students and families about students’ learning needs and outcomes, including assessment results and attendance data?			<b>X</b>	
1.4 design or adapt tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize and analyze student performance, identify trends and inform instructional and organizational decisions, and to enable students and their families to assess and track each student’s progress?			<b>X</b>	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>			<b>X</b>	
<b>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.</b>				
<i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty...</i>	△	➤	✓	+
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?			<b>X</b>	
2.2 use collaborative and data-informed processes to develop the school’s Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP)?			<b>X</b>	
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?			<b>X</b>	
2.4 communicate high expectations to all students and families, and involve students in developing their learning goals and plans and in taking their next learning steps?			<b>X</b>	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>			<b>X</b>	

## DEFINITIONS

“**Analyze**” or “**analysis**” includes, but is not limited to, comparisons of:

- the current and past outcomes of . . . individual students, administrative groupings and sub-groups of students and the school itself in core subjects;
- the outcomes of different classrooms and sub-groups in the same grades and core subjects; and
- 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, DYQ, and teacher-developed Classroom Assessments).

“**Core subjects**” are ELA, math, science, social studies/history, the arts, foreign language, and physical education/health.

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

“**Groupings of students**” include classrooms, grade levels and high school cohorts.

“**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.

<b>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.</b>							
<i>To what extent do ...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
3.1 school leaders and faculty deliver challenging and engaging curricula in core subjects, including the arts, that are aligned to state standards?			X				
3.2 teachers plan and teach lessons that are differentiated to meet the needs of individual students and student groupings and are designed to enable all students to reach their learning goals?			X				
3.3 school leaders make strategic organizational decisions to support a coherent and rigorous instructional approach that enables students to reach their learning goals?				X			
3.4 school leaders maintain a culture of mutual trust and respect and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?			X				
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>			X				
<b>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.</b>							
<i>To what extent do school leaders...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
4.1 use their own observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of student outcomes to implement an explicit, differentiated strategy to improve each teacher’s instruction, with a special focus on new teachers?			X				
4.2 encourage teachers to take part in Inquiry Teams and other structured professional collaborations (informed by the examination of student work, assessment outcomes and their own peer observations) and share in the instructional leadership of the school with the goal of improved student learning?			X				
4.3 provide professional development that encourages teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve student outcomes?			X				
4.4 utilize youth development, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students?				X			
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>			X				
<b>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.</b>							
<i>To what extent do...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
5.1 the school’s plans for improving student outcomes and its strategies for improving each teacher’s instructional practices include measurable interim goals and suitable time frames for evaluating success and making adjustments during the year?		X					
5.2 school leaders and faculty use interim checkpoints and data to inform lessons, improve curriculum, differentiate instruction and revise student learning plans throughout the year?			X				
5.3 school leaders use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of and modify organizational decisions, structured professional collaborations and teacher improvement strategies?			X				
5.4 school leaders and the school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to support academic, personal and professional growth?			X				
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>			X				
<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
△	<b>Underdeveloped</b>	➤	<b>Underdeveloped with Proficient Features</b>	✓	<b>Proficient</b>	+	<b>Well Developed</b>