

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

**The Science and Technology Mott Hall School
Middle School 454X
250 East 164th Street
Bronx, NY 10456**

Principal: Dr. Patrick Awosogba

Dates of review: January 25-26, 2012

Lead Reviewer: Dolores Esposito

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Science and Technology Mott Hall School is a middle school with 248 students from 6th through grade 7th. The school population comprises 27% Black, 71% Hispanic, 0% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 29% English language learners and 42% special education students. Boys account for 55% of the students enrolled and girls account for 45%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 90.6%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school makes effective organizational decisions that align well with school goals, leading to improved student work. (1.3)
 - The principal carefully reviews data to target support for English language learners in the school. For example, these students utilize the Read 180 web based program and the Milestone series to address language development skills. As a result, the data from these programs shows that students are making progress and have improved their writing skills. Since feedback for this program is immediate, it also enables students to monitor their learning to improve reading comprehension skills observed during classroom visits.
 - All staff members meet weekly during grade meetings to review student data, critique lesson plans and improve their teaching practices using protocols that foster collaboration across content areas. As a result, during teacher meetings, teachers refine their academic plans for students at risk and make adjustments in their units and plans based on feedback from their peers. Consequently, teachers incorporate higher order thinking questions in their lessons to promote critical thinking skills. Student engagement is evident in classrooms during lessons, leading to improved student writing, as evidenced in findings from a common rubric.
- The leadership and faculty create a safe and inclusive environment to effectively support the academic and social-emotional learning of students, leading to personal and academic growth. (1.4)
 - Staff, students and parents benefit from a well organized and nurturing school that works together to ensure student success. The functioning school leadership team meets regularly to review academic, attendance and data from school incidents to target areas of concern and revise policies and procedures. Students receive grades for academics and conduct. As a result, they have created a very safe and respectful culture that sets high standards for learning and discipline. Parents report: “This is a very good school,” and “My children do their own work independently because their teachers are well prepared.” During the student meetings, students were very enthusiastic about the after-school sports club that promotes wellness. The principal is very visible with parents, students and staff at all times. The collaborative environment supports the academic and social emotional learning goals set for students as evidenced in the attendance rate, which remains high at 90.6%, and in positive comments in the School Survey.
 - The school has a daily town hall meeting with all staff and students. This is an opportunity to keep the vision and mission of the school alive and supports the cohesive culture in the school. The school schedules advisory periods so that there is an opportunity for individualization and support with the social emotional needs of students. Students report feeling very comfortable with their teachers to discuss academics and other issues of concern during advisory and any other time as well. Social

workers are also available to provide guidance and prevention strategies in school. As a result, there is a genuine focus on individualization that enables students to strive with their academics with many opportunities to show their understanding in a risk free environment. This is evident especially in the area of mathematics, where student proficiency for third and fourth grades is 47.9%; a 21.9% increase from the previous year.

- The school collects a range of data to identify the gaps in academic achievement, resulting in clearer, more targeted school-wide goals. (3.1)
 - The principal is very passionate about the work in the school around data collection and analysis. He has led many of the sessions and motivates his staff to continuously analyze data to effectively set goals to improve student learning. Staff reviews state data, school based assessments, Gates- MacGinite results, quizzes, running records, Read 180 data, student work, and other attendance and incident reports to set school goals and priorities. Building academic rigor and enabling students to think critically is a key goal for the school. These goals are well aligned to the school's comprehensive educational plan and other planning documents, and communicated to all members during grade meetings, faculty conferences and daily town hall meetings. As a result, there is a shared commitment that supports the school's academic and social emotional goals. This is evidenced in how the leadership and staff collaboratively review goals and develop action plans to meet the needs of students. For example, after each cycle of assessments, teachers develop plans to address the academic gaps identified in reading, writing, mathematics and other content areas. The principal also reviews these and provides specific feedback to improve student learning. Students also participate in the goal setting process during advisory sessions.

- Teachers and teacher teams align assessments to curriculum to improve teaching practices across classrooms. (2.2)
 - The school looks deeply at the results of the assessments and curriculum tasks to ensure alignment with the school's goals and priorities. The periodic assessments are given four times a year and provide critical information regarding student gaps in learning. Some of these include the use of more details to support argumentative writing and mathematical concepts that students are learning. During grade meetings, teachers incorporate the findings from quizzes and Apangea reports to adjust the curriculum tasks and identify the gaps with subgroups. They also make adjustments in the curriculum in terms of prioritizing key ideas and extending the time for units of study, based on data. As a result, teachers develop a comprehensive re-teach plan that targets skills for subgroups and informs the after school academic intervention programs. Consequently, there are well organized tasks with clear teaching points across classrooms and improvement in student learning, based on teacher feedback and assessment charts.

- School leaders engage families in key decision making to foster a culture of shared accountability and responsibility. (2.4)
 - The school's leadership team includes very active and committed parents who support the vision of the school. Parents are empowered to share

their ideas and provide input around student academics, attendance, behavior and performance on Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) tasks. As a result, parents are well informed and receive current information about their children's progress regularly through letters, class notes, emails and phone calls. Parents report that they are very pleased with the dedication and commitment that teachers show to their children and consequently have a positive connection to the school.

- The school provides support for families in using tools that inform their children's learning during and after school. For example, the school uses the Engrade system that allows parents to review student information on tests, quizzes, attendance and homework. Parents feel very comfortable with using this tool and frequently reach out to the parent coordinator or teachers for guidance, or to the approximately 15 parent learning leaders and volunteers that assist parents in the school with any concern or query. Parents also attend parent meetings and curriculum nights in high numbers. This additional support results in better discipline in the hallways and greater parental involvement in the school.
- Teacher teams engage in professional collaborations using an inquiry approach with a shared goal to improve student outcomes. (4.2)
 - Teachers and teacher teams are actively engaged in weekly meetings that focus on student learning. Every teacher selects a core team in one of the following areas: periodic assessment and data analysis, student support, curriculum and standards. This enables teachers to select an area of interest that supports their professional development and empowers them to take ownership of their learning. In these meetings teachers use protocols to review lessons and case studies. For example, teachers on the same grade level meet to critique lesson plans, such as English language arts, using a "Slice Protocol." As a result, teachers provide specific feedback to assist their colleagues in lesson design. This promotes collaboration and fosters a risk free culture for learning. In addition, it reinforces the school's goals to integrate reading and writing skills across all content areas as referenced in the CCLS. It also results in the refinement of tasks, units of study and instructional strategies that target student gaps. Consequently, teachers feel empowered to make decisions about curriculum and instruction that improve student learning as evident on teacher data reports and summaries.

What the school needs to improve

- Further develop curricula to ensure that academic tasks consistently emphasize rigorous habits and skills across grade levels. (1.1)
 - The school has made adjustments in the curriculum to include key ideas from the CCLS that include a focus on informational texts and critical thinking skills across the content areas. They have also strengthened their writing program through a "Step up to Writing " initiative in the context of the Understanding by Design framework. This ensures better alignment with standards. However, there is not a consistent emphasis on rigorous tasks that encourage student thinking during lessons. Tasks currently lack rigor and do not always provide multiple points of entry for the various learning styles. As a result, students are not sufficiently

challenged, based on their needs, interests or abilities. In addition, a review of the data and student folders reveals that the English language arts curriculum needs further revisions, as indicated by teachers and the principal. Therefore, the needs of students with disabilities and English language learners are not being met effectively across classrooms.

- Consistently use data to differentiate instruction and effectively meet the learning needs of all students and subgroups. (1.2)
 - The school is committed to expanding their professional knowledge to effectively meet the diverse needs of all learners. They use Socratic Seminars to engage students in discussions using a protocol to confirm, extend and challenge student thinking. However, since the design of the curriculum tasks are not well developed, teachers are not able to effectively engage all students to extend their learning, based on data and identified gaps. Most classrooms still focus on teacher directed lessons with minimal opportunity to provide support for students who are struggling. As a result, all students are not able to actively participate in the learning process. Consequently, student folders reveal a lack of rigor in tasks in terms of content and volume. Many of the folders in classrooms have a limited amount of student work revealing missed opportunities for differentiated teaching strategies that improve learning.
- Expand teacher development with frequent cycles of observation to strengthen student learning. (4.1)
 - The principal is very visible throughout the school and in classrooms. Teachers receive frequent informal feedback based on a research-based framework to guide their practice and mentors and consultants support new teachers. However, because most of the feedback is informal or verbal, there is little systematic opportunity to review the quality of the feedback and its impact on student learning. Written observations are also not happening as frequently as they could be. As a result, teachers are not receiving enough information to help them to refine their teaching practices around the school's stated goals, including those related to differentiation. Hence, there are currently limited opportunities for students to experience differentiation of tasks based on choice, content or process.
- Establish a coherent process for providing student feedback across the grades in order to monitor progress towards interim and long term goals. (5.3)
 - Even though there is alignment of school plans to student performance, teacher development and the CCLS, there are limited systems that effectively measure progress towards school goals. Student information is gathered but not always effectively triangulated. For example, classroom visits revealed mostly lessons to a whole group with limited opportunities for teachers to provide specific feedback to students through conferences. As a result, teachers are not able to effectively gauge progress on learning goals for students, based on informal student observations. This leads to missed opportunities to make informed adjustments to instructional plans that effectively impact student performance, which is currently low based on reading assessments. Consequently, opportunities for the leadership to effectively and

systemically monitor progress towards meeting interim goals for students are limited.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name:	UD	D	P	WD
Overall QR Score			X	
Quality Statement 1 – Instructional and Organizational Coherence: The school has a coherent strategy to support student learning that aligns curriculum, instruction and organizational decisions.				
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	UD	D	P	WD
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous and coherent curricula, including the Arts, for a variety of learners and aligned to key State standards?			X	
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best, and ensure that it is: aligned to the curriculum, engaging, and differentiated to enable all students to produce meaningful work products?		X		
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs as evidenced by meaningful student work products?			X	
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?				X
Quality Statement 2 – Gather and Analyze Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, analyze and share information on student learning outcomes to understand school and student progress over time.				
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD
2.1 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the school level?			X	
2.2 Align assessments to curriculum, use on-going assessment practices and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom level?			X	
2.3 Use grading policies and tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize, aggregate, and analyze student performance trends to inform instruction and curriculum?			X	
2.4 Engage families in school decision-making, activities and an open exchange of information regarding students progress toward school and class expectations?				X
Quality Statement 3 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently engage the school community and use data to set and track suitably high goals for accelerating student learning.				
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD
3.1 Establish a coherent vision of future development that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are understood and supported by the entire school community?			X	
3.2 Use collaborative and data informed processes to set measurable and differentiated learning goals for student subgroups, and students in need of additional support?			X	
3.3 Ensure the achievement of learning goals by tracking progress at the school, teacher team and classroom level?			X	

3.4 Communicate high expectations to staff, students and families, and support students and families to achieve them?			X	
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Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals and student learning and emotional needs.

<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	UD	D	P	WD
4.1 Use the observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection, with a special focus on new teachers?		X		
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?			X	
4.3 Provide professional development that promotes independent and shared reflection, opportunities for leadership growth, and enables teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve learning outcomes?			X	
4.4 Integrate child/youth development, guidance/advisement support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations with the school-wide goals to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students?			X	

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

<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	UD	D	P	WD
5.1 Evaluate the quality of curricular, instructional and organizational decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school, with particular attention to the CCLS?			X	
5.2 Evaluate systems for assessing students, organizing data, and sharing information with student and families, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?			X	
5.3 Establish and sustain a transparent, collaborative system for measuring progress towards interim and long term goals and making adjustments during the year and over time?		X		
5.4 Use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of structured professional collaboration, capacity building and leadership development strategies?			X	

Quality Review Scoring Key							
UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed