

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

Mott Hall Bridges Academy

Middle School K671

**210 Chester Street
Brooklyn
NY 11212**

Principal: Nadia Lopez

Dates of review: January 15 – 16, 2013

Lead Reviewer: Ainslie Cumberbatch

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Mott Hall Bridges Academy is a middle school with 191 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 83% Black, 15% Hispanic and less than 2% other students. The student body includes 1% English language learners and 25% special education students. Boys account for 48% of the students enrolled and girls account for 52%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 92.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal makes informed and strategic organizational decisions that support the school's goals and positively impact student learning. (1.3)
 - In order to address literacy concerns, the principal hired a part-time coach who teaches students, models lessons for teachers and supports the school's instructional goals in a classroom that serves as a lab site. In addition, a math consultant and instructional specialists from the school's network team provide support around data analysis, and assist with curriculum modifications, equipping staff with resources needed towards the attainment of the school's instructional goals. Professional organizations such as the Network for Teaching Entrepreneurship support the school in grooming students to make presentations, mold ideas into action plans, work effectively in teams and create business schemes as part of their college and career readiness regimen. These efforts have led to incremental progress in student performance as noted in formative assessments and samples of student work that demonstrate improvement from their September baseline products.
 - This year the school expanded to 8th grade. Cohorts of teachers work with the same students on a grade and engage in discussions at collaborative team meetings once a week for sixty minutes to discuss student work, share instructional practices, and gain a common language around the curriculum. These opportunities foster a horizontal and vertical collaboration across content areas with an emphasis on reading and writing; create a venue for discussions relative to the curriculum and instruction and a forum for the refinement of academic tasks that present a challenge in daily instruction. Observation reports detail growth in teacher practice in key competencies based on a common teaching framework and student portfolios in some classes demonstrate movement towards proficiency in assigned tasks stemming from this work.
- The school leader communicates high expectations to students, parents and staff and supports students to reach their goals which leads to improved family involvement in the academic achievement of their children. (3.4)
 - Parents applaud the student progress updates available through the school's online reporting system and the accessibility of teachers to engage in dialogue related to daily assignments and student progress. They report that they participate in workshops which include guidance on interpreting the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) to assist them in understanding expected student growth and to inform their dialogue with teachers. They also report that they greatly appreciate receiving ongoing texts, emails, phone calls, and letters from school staff and faculty, informing them about the school's high expectations around student attendance, behavior and academics. Students state that they value their relationships with teachers, the monthly community meeting and report that teachers make themselves available to tutor small groups during their lunch and preparation periods. School staff and support organizations provide enriched activities such as an accelerated integrated algebra class for grade 8 students, mechanical and sea-

robotics for groups of students, arts programs and monthly activities such as “Bridges Got Talent”, “She is me”, “Be Cool Be Kind” and “Wellness and Wisdom”. The guidance counselor also provides social-emotional support to students and provides resources and materials for high school and college awareness. Because of the school’s demonstrated high expectations, students are motivated about attending school as reflected in a year to date attendance of over 92%, all grade 8 students are preparing for the algebra Regents exams and roughly one third of grade 8 students took the entry exam for specialized high schools.

- The school uses a research-based rubric as a formative evaluation tool with a clear focus on deepening adult learning to improve teaching practices. (4.1)
 - The principal has embraced the use of a research-based common framework to provide targeted feedback on formal and informal classroom observations and identify individual professional development needs. She realized that feedback and prior professional development did not always translate into change of practice and improved student outcomes. To that end, all teachers receive on-going written feedback on teaching competencies identified as a school wide focus and work to implement recommendations noted as next steps. Scheduled inter-visitations enable teachers to view the implementation of effective practices by colleagues. Teacher teams are asked to reflect on how their work, including student outcomes as evidenced by report card grades, aligns to the identified teaching components on the framework and engage in a midyear review of their performance with the principal. Teachers receive detailed feedback on observation reports about specific areas of need such as designing coherent instruction, using assessments to drive instruction, and engaging in higher-order questioning and discussions. Because of the school’s focused feedback in these areas, across classrooms there is a concentrated effort on articulating clear expectations on “closing the achievement gap”. In addition, feedback on observation reports reflect that teachers are progressing in the implementation of a coherent curriculum and thoughtful grouping of students based on student work.

What the school needs to improve

- Expand coherence and alignment in the school’s curricula across the grades and subject areas, to meet the instructional needs of students. (1.1)
 - The school uses curricula that aligns to State standards, embeds the school’s instructional priorities and cognitive thinking strategies as a core element for success. However, tasks and questioning are not always rigorous, for instance, asking students in some classes to restate facts learned. As a result, students, including English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities (SWD), are not consistently provided with opportunities to deeply explore topics in order to increase their knowledge base and accelerate academic progress.
 - School personnel clearly map out the outcomes they expect for students, including those in greatest need, and incorporate critical reading strategies, high levels of discussion and questioning, focused aims, use of rubrics, as well as real-life connections, to develop plans that reflect opportunities to stretch and engage students in their learning. However,

not all teachers have begun to use student work to inform refinement of the unit and learning tasks to ensure that there is a clear understanding of where students are and what they need so that all students are aptly engaged. As a result, sub-groups of students, such as those in the school's lowest third struggle to reach their learning goals and do not yet generate significant extra credit on the school's Progress Report as a reflection of exceptional gains.

- Further develop the consistency of differentiated instruction, so that all students are appropriately challenged to demonstrate higher levels of thinking and produce meaningful work products. (1.2)
 - Throughout the school, there is a focus on meeting the needs of students with disabilities, English language learners and students in the lowest third. Teachers are asked to incorporate strategies to help subgroups of students master core concepts. This has led to the inclusion of prompts to aid student discussions, clear objectives, explicit charts and modeling into teacher lesson plans. The school has also asked teachers to use the Depth of Knowledge matrix to plan questions at various levels to promote higher-order thinking skills. Still, across classrooms these strategies are not consistently implemented in order to provide support and challenge all students to fully engage in classroom lessons. For instance, in some classes uneven levels of student participation and engagement are the result of low level teaching strategies such as questions that elicit minimal levels of student discourse and thinking. In other classrooms, there are extended assignments for advanced students, but they are not rigorous or do not provide tasks that engage students in higher-order thinking resulting in lost opportunities for further academic growth for high achievers. Thus, the inconsistency in instructional practices that match students' identified needs, and limited rigor of tasks, impedes the learning process for all students, as evidenced in student work products and specific scaffolds that are not fully embedded to push their thinking and broaden learning experiences so that they meet their full potential.
- Refine assessment practices so that teachers use data to enhance the curriculum and target students' instructional needs to increase student achievement. (2.2)
 - The school uses formative assessments across grades to determine student mastery of key standards. Nonetheless, the ability to apply this information to plan effective lessons and the use of ongoing assessments during classroom instruction to modify the curriculum and pedagogy is inconsistent across teachers. In some classrooms, teachers assess students via conferencing, class work, tests and the use of "exit slips", where students leave notes with their ideas or questions regarding a lesson. For example, during a literacy lesson, the teacher often checked in with students through verbal prompts and purposefully chose students to answer specific questions to assess the need for timely instructional adjustments to ensure all students were meeting the objective and understood the concept. However, in other classrooms ongoing checks for understanding, or student self-assessment, to enable teachers to make classroom adjustments in their questioning, assignments and directions in order to meet the learning needs for a wide variety of learners were not sufficiently evident. Thus, minimizing opportunities to challenge students to increase their level of thinking.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: Mott Hall Bridges Academy	UD	D	P	WD			
Overall QR Score		X					
Instructional Core							
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula, including the arts, physical and health education, 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 that is informed by a research-based, common teaching framework and is aligned to curricula, engaging and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products?		X					
2.2 Align assessments to curricula, use on-going assessment and grading practices, and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom levels?		X					
School Culture							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?			X				
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve them?				X			
Systems for Improvement							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet students' learning needs as evidenced by meaningful student work products?			X				
3.1 Establish a coherent vision of school improvement that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are tracked for progress and are understood and supported by the entire school community?			X				
4.1 Use the observation of classroom teaching with a research-based, common teaching framework 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				
5.1 Evaluate the quality of school- level decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school, with particular attention to the CCLS?		X					
Quality Review Scoring Key							
UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed