



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Quality Review
Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning
2013-2014

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

Mott Hall IV

**Middle School K522
1137 Herkimer Street
Brooklyn
NY 11212**

Principal: Dr. Thomas McBryde

**Dates of review: March 18-19, 2014
Lead Reviewer: Mauricière de Govia**

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Mott Hall IV is a middle school with 199 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 89% Black, 10% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 3% English language learners and 13% special education students. Boys account for 55% of the students enrolled and girls account for 45%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 91.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- School leaders and faculty have effectively refined the curricula to align with key standards, the instructional shifts, and to emphasize rigorous tasks promoting high-level thinking across grades and subjects. (1.1)
 - The principal shared that he believes that curriculum should be accessible to students and meet their learning needs. In conjunction with this belief, the school leaders and teachers selected the Connected Mathematics Project 3 curriculum for math instruction and the Codex curriculum for English language arts instruction as they felt they were closely aligned to the needs of Mott Hall IV students. The implementation of both programs has been supported via professional development from the Children First Network and with the guidance of an outside consultant. From the onset of implementation, teachers recognized the difficulty and the challenge of the curriculum. A review of student performance data revealed the need for additional supports for students regarding key standards aligned to developing vocabulary, navigating the text complexity of non-fiction and fiction texts, and engaging in higher order questioning and discussions. Therefore, teachers used their team meetings to develop necessary strategies that became essential elements infused into the curriculum, aligned with the standards and differentiated to meet the needs of the learners in their classrooms. Both the principal and teachers confirmed that the Depth of Knowledge (DOK) wheel is the tool that they use to plan for rigor in lessons. In lesson plans, teachers explicitly write their questions and the level of DOK they are operating on at respective moments in the lesson. For example, a math lesson plan contained the following, “Does the table represent a linear relationship? How did you decide? (DOK2)” An English language arts lesson plan cited “DOK3: Did Vaughters write the introduction? Identify clues that indicate whether Vaughters is the author.” This type of lesson design was also evident in science, the college and career readiness class, and writing class. Opportunities for re-teaching, scaffolding, and explicit teaching of the instructional shifts, especially building vocabulary and citing textual evidence, are evident across many parts of the curriculum. These attributes are visible in the structures that support curriculum planning and revisions such as a school-wide lesson plan template that considers essential questions, a lesson agenda, a “Do Now”, activities, key teaching points, teacher actions versus student actions, higher order questions, independent practice, and differentiation strategies where teachers listed student groupings and modifications that were inclusive of all learners, including English language learners and students with disabilities. All teachers observed in grades 6-8 across disciplines submitted this template as the format for their plan. Another structure used by the school is *Rubicon Atlas*. This online program manages the entire curriculum in the school. Every faculty member “logs-on” with an assigned user identification name. The program fosters communication between the administration and the teachers and from teachers to teachers. It allows users to upload their curriculum maps and track which standards have been taught, how many times, and what revisions were made as a result of

student performance and success. As a result of these practices, students have access to curricula that are rigorous and accessible to a variety of learners and are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS).

- School leaders and faculty enact a short list of clear goals that are informed by analyzed data, tracked for progress, and adjusted to drive efforts to accelerate student learning and foster social-emotional growth. (3.1)
 - The development of the school goals was a collaborative effort set forth by the administration, School Leadership Team (SLT), and stakeholders in the school community. The constituents considered student performance data, school culture data such as the School Survey, school climate patterns and trends, and desired outcomes to achieve the vision of all students meeting the demands of the CCLS and developing healthy habits that nurture social-emotional growth. The goals established were (1) Increase the percentage of students who demonstrate academic progress in English language arts and math on the New York State exam, (2) Improve teacher effectiveness by clarifying expectations, while developing and monitoring a shared understanding of instructional excellence, (3) To align teacher practice with the CCLS, (4) Increase academic performance of students receiving Response to Intervention services, (5) To continue to foster a stronger relationship with the community. The principal shared tracking systems that align and assess these goals as they relate to professional development and the benchmarks that specify where the school community is in relation to achieving the goals overall. The tracking systems consider the goals as it relates to “strategies”, “participants”, “the professional development provider”, “the timeline”, “the midyear benchmark”, and “the evidence of impact”. Furthermore, it contained information about how those pieces have evolved over the course of the school year. In the evidence of impact column, the tracker cites what is to happen as a result of implementing the goals. Statements such as “Improvement in student work...Improvements in course grades...Completion of performance tasks...Reduction of suspensions” are evident throughout the “professional development tracker” and then aligned to the “Goals Monitoring” tracker’s expectations for “benchmarks”, “professional develop and finances”, and “evaluations”. As a result of the goal monitoring process, student learning is anchored in a set of goals that are monitored and tracked for progress to foster academic achievement and social-emotional development.
- School leaders embed high expectations in all aspects of school culture in alignment with the citywide instructional expectations (CIE), in order to raise levels of success for all constituents. (3.4)
 - The principal believes that the goals that the school community set forth are a concrete example of the school possessing high expectations. Teachers have been engaged in professional development that aligns to the Citywide Instructional Expectations concentrating on the Danielson Framework as an assessment of their performance and the improvement of student achievement in the areas of ELA and math anchored by the CCLS. This belief becomes actualized via two specified forums that exist in the school. Firstly, parents have access to their child’s performance

via the Datacation system that provides alerts, performance and achievement notifications, grade updates, completion of assignment statuses, and student progress. This system creates clear expectations and a communication pathway between families and teachers. Secondly, a College and Career Readiness class taught by the school's guidance counselor to grades 6-8. The curriculum was developed with input from the guidance counselor and principal, and was informed by data that indicated areas of focus, which are primarily to prepare students for: the high school selection and admissions process, the SATs, college selection and admission, and career opportunities in the community and beyond. A 7th grade class was observed reviewing the contents of the High School Admissions Book with the guidance counselor, who asked the students to find key supports and information using one of the schools as a sample. He asked the students questions such as, "Why is 7th grade so important?" and "What are the admission criteria for this school?" The latter yielded a conversation about zoned programs versus specialized programs and who is able to attend. Additional questions were "What is this school's graduation rate? What does that say about how students perform at that school?" Students engaged in a discussion with each other about what the data set meant and why it is important to look at it. Parents were very excited that this class exists for the all the students. A parent said, "The fact that they have that class really shows they are getting our kids ready." Students also spoke about the benefits of the class. An 8th grade student shared, "It really helped me make an informed decision about which high school to choose." As a result of these practices, students and families are positioned to engage in embedded structures and values that support high expectations as aligned to the CIE.

- Teachers are engaged in professional collaborations that build their capacity in making decisions related to curriculum development, the integration of the CCLS, and analyzing student work, resulting in improved student learning. (4.2)
 - The principal expects that teacher teams meet two to four times a week for grade, content and informal meetings and that scheduled meetings have set agendas and group roles that the teachers enact to review data, student work products, curriculum, or school wide concerns. The team meetings observed demonstrated these expected practices. In one team meeting teachers sought ways in which to create more interdisciplinary approaches to integrate the standards across a grade. The teachers debated about the use of graphic organizers, vocabulary teaching, and CCLS alignment that would provide significant movement for students based on data. During another content area team meeting, teachers referred to using the *Data Analysis Protocol* as "an opportunity to look at data, make adjustments, and align student performance to teaching specific standards." The team was seen reviewing student work products via a protocol. The facilitator reminded the teachers to "focus the conversation about what is in our control and to follow the protocol as closely as possible." A teacher then shared student work products that he wanted feedback on and the supporting teachers used a *Student Work Discussion Organizer* to capture their thoughts on the work products being presented. In response to the request for feedback, teachers commented on the work with statements such as, "They understood they were supposed to look back in the text for answers," and, "They don't explicitly state the evidence, and they don't really go on

to analyze or explain the evidence.” The presenting teacher asked his colleagues “What curricular adjustments or assessment revisions are needed?” The supporting teachers discussed trends and patterns exhibited in the student work and offered feedback to the presenting teacher such as, “Use exemplars to demonstrate the responses you want to see...Dig deeper on making inferences. Apply the inference strategies taught to the exemplar to raise students’ awareness...They used the word serious 3 times. Review synonyms and introduce alternatives for the students to use in their writing.” Lastly, to close out the protocol the teacher shared how his team’s feedback would affect his next steps in planning where he discussed considerations for vocabulary development, inference strategies, and re-teaching to ensure that students are explaining in detail and answering the questions presented. The presenting teacher’s support of this process was confirmed by him sharing the benefits of looking at student work as a team stating, “It gives meaning to the numbers and it provides an opportunity to hear someone else’s opinion.” As a result of these teacher team practices, teachers are able to collaborate in content and grade teams to decipher the nuances of student work products and align students’ needs to the CCLS and the curriculum.

What the school needs to improve

- Improve teacher pedagogy to provide multiple entry points into the curricula with challenging tasks to engage all students in higher-order thinking and discussion. (1.2)
 - Lesson plan templates indicated planning for student groupings, differentiated graphic organizers, and varying levels of Depth of Knowledge questions. However, across classrooms, teaching strategies inconsistently provided multiple entry points into the curricula. This practice led to uneven student participation in tasks with reduced opportunities for high-order thinking to be demonstrated by the students. Depending on the classroom, the range of rigor and access varied. Students were seen engaged in rigorous activities that yielded challenge but granted access toward achieving positive outcomes such as reading a student-friendly version of *Macbeth* that contained translation and literary supports in an 8th grade English language arts class, or engaging in tasks and questions that did not grant accessibility as the teacher may have given too many directions at one time, or there was no differentiation evident in the materials that would grant the students access toward achieving the standard. Consequently, across the classrooms there are pedagogical gaps in what lesson plans consider versus what is available to students as they engaged in tasks, questions, and discussions in the classroom. These limitations reduce opportunities for students to have access to the curricula via multiple entry points that engage students in higher-order thinking and discussions.
- Strengthen teacher assessment practices to include meaningful feedback and reflect varied use of ongoing checks for understanding during lesson delivery so that all students demonstrate increased mastery. (2.2)
 - The school employs multiple school-wide assessments such as unit assessments and CCLS-aligned baselines for English language arts and

math. The principal voiced that grade level and inquiry teams use the results of these assessments to discuss students and planning for teaching and learning. In addition, school leaders and teachers review assessments to track their students' progress on a regular basis. These assessments tracked student progress and informed teachers of their students who were not meeting their benchmarks, who were in need of intense intervention services, and who was in good standing academically and meeting the standard. While the school-wide assessment cycle is evident, ongoing checks for understanding during the delivery of instruction needs to be further enhanced. The principal shared that he expects assessments to be an inherent part of planning and lesson design via the use rubrics, exit slips and reflection sheets at the end of tasks or units of study. While there was evidence of the impact of school-wide assessments being employed in the classrooms via student groupings, differentiated graphic organizers, and supportive text for challenging narratives, there was limited evidence of meaningful feedback and ongoing checks for understanding during the delivery of lessons that would provide students with a roadmap towards mastery. Students shared that their teachers told them of their success on tasks and most students shared how they use rubrics to gauge their performance on summative tasks. However, in the majority classrooms there was more teacher led task completion than students being given an opportunity to assess their own performance against an assessment tool. As a result of these assessment practices, student mastery is limited by inconsistent meaningful feedback and ongoing checks for understanding that foster opportunities for self-reflection on performance tasks.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: Mott Hall IV	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 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards?			X				
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the instructional shifts and Danielson Framework for Teaching, aligned to the 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 supports 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 those expectations?			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 student 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 Observe teachers using the Danielson Framework for Teaching along with the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection?			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