

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

The Mott Hall School

Junior High-Intermediate-Middle M223

**71-111 Convent Avenue
Manhattan
NY 10027**

Principal: Marva Picou

Dates of review: May 13 - 14, 2014

Lead Reviewer: Elsa Nunez

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Mott Hall School is a Junior High-Intermediate-Middle school with 283 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 9% Black, 83% Hispanic, 6% White, and 3% Asian students. The student body includes 4% English language learners and 12% special education students. Boys account for 48% of the students enrolled and girls account for 52%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 96.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

What the school does well

- Across classrooms, teachers implement Common Core Learning Standards aligned curricula in order to engage students in rigorous tasks and promote higher order thinking skills to increase academic outcomes. (1.1)
 - In previous years, the school has been part of the Department of Education's Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) pilot program to assure that teacher-developed units are fully aligned to standards. Teacher teams closely analyzed Expeditionary Learning curricula and concluded that the units are not sufficiently rigorous for the school's population and, as a result, teachers developed units are supplemented with units and resources from Expeditionary Learning program to assure that students have opportunities to engage in a variety of challenging tasks. The school adopted the Connected Mathematics Project (CMP3) to assure that the math curriculum supports the development skills that are aligned to grade level standards. Teacher teams review curriculum plans to assure that students have ample opportunities to develop skills using non-fiction and fiction texts to meet grade level expectations. For example, instructional plans require students to engage in text-based debates, develop persuasive essays and read increasing difficult texts to ensure alignment to citywide instructional expectations. In math, the school integrates concepts such as pre-algebra in grade 7 and integrated algebra in grade 8 to augment rigor of instructional units. Tasks require students to analyze the role of that gender plays in Macbeth, analyze the interaction of matter and energy, and develop claims based on the analysis of opposing articles on the authenticity of Shakespeare documents. Curriculum plans and pacing calendars are shared on Atlas to build coherence across grades and consistency from year to year. Lesson plans indicate that teachers plan strategies such as explicit teaching of vocabulary, differentiated tasks based on ability levels, and auditory and visual support in the form of videos, pictures and recordings to meet the needs of struggling learners. As a result, students have multiple opportunities to engage in rigorous tasks that promote critical thinking and discussion in order that challenge and engage students.
- School leaders provide teachers with effective feedback, connected to the Danielson Framework, in order to establish coherent instructional practices and improve teacher pedagogy. (4.1)
 - School administrators have established cycles of observations that include discussing feedback as a result of observations, providing a time frame for implementation of recommendations, and providing follow up feedback on implementation to improve teacher pedagogy. Teachers report that feedback is received soon after the actual observations and they feel they can engage in open discussions with administrators regarding findings in order to deepen practice. Review of feedback provided to teachers indicates that it is clear, explicit and includes actionable next steps for improvement. Review of observation reports demonstrate that teachers are provided with next steps such as, in order to further develop student conversation, teachers are encouraged to establish protocols for group and whole group conversation and create focus questions that are specific to lesson outcomes. Feedback also demonstrates that administrators monitor the implementation of previous recommendations to assure growth

in identified areas. Professional development has focused aligning instruction to the Danielson Framework by providing an all-day session at the beginning of the school year and subsequent sessions during faculty conferences and monthly professional development to align instructional strategies to the framework. Administrators analyze feedback provided to teachers and student work products to identify areas that need further development. For example, analysis of feedback and student work has surfaced the need to continue to support teachers in order to augment the rigor of instruction as well as to improve questioning and discussion techniques to assure consistent implementation across classrooms. Administrators also use observation data to plan intervisitations with a specific focus-based need. For example, teachers who need to improve questioning and discussion techniques or scaffolding of instruction are paired with teachers who are effective in implementing these strategies in order to provide support. Teachers also give each other feedback regarding observed practices in order to develop coherent instructional practices across classrooms. Consequently, teachers have shown improvement in their ability to ask higher order questions and engage students in discussion as evidenced by observation reports and classroom visits.

- Teachers regularly engage in the review of student work in order to adjust curriculum and develop instructional strategies to address student needs. (4.2)
 - Teacher teams are scheduled to meet two times per week, once in grade level teams and another on content area teams, to develop horizontally and vertically coherent instructional plans. As a result of various sessions with teachers regarding expectations for the work of teacher teams and support from the network, some teachers use the Collaborative Assessment Conference Protocol for the review of student work and to develop common expectations regarding the evaluation of student work across grades and content areas. During teacher teams, some teachers effectively use student work to identify skills that students have mastered such as using text based evidence to support claims as well as areas that students need to develop like understanding content area vocabulary and use of proper grammar. Teachers are expected to follow established protocol and have assigned roles to facilitate the development of strategies to address skills that need further development. In addition to attending teacher team meetings, administrators collect and review minutes and agendas to assure that the next steps agreed upon during teacher team meetings are reflected in the classrooms. Teachers and administrators report that as a result of the work on teacher teams, there is greater consistency in the implementation of instructional shifts that require students to cite textual evidence both orally and in writing, demonstrate mastery of skills and content area vocabulary across classrooms.

What the school needs to improve

- Increase teacher capacity to deliver instruction that promotes access to cognitively rigorous tasks, so that all learners can actively participate in classroom discussions and tasks. (1.2)
 - The school believes that students learn best when they are allowed to construct meaning for themselves, think critically and are able to explain their thinking. Lessons observed demonstrate that teachers generally ask open ended questions and push students to explain thinking by asking students to provide text based evidence, defend the opposing points of

view and elaborate responses. Although the principal promotes a more child centered instructional approach and has engaged teachers in discussions regarding this topic individually and during faculty conferences, not all teachers have been able to effectively make this shift. This is evidenced by analysis of lessons viewed, which indicate that almost half of all lessons were predominantly teacher directed. The school has devoted all day professional development sessions on aligning instruction to the Danielson Framework as well as faculty conferences and monthly sessions in order to improve instruction. Coherence of instruction is promoted by having teachers visit each other in order to further develop best practices across grades and content areas. For example, after visiting English language arts classrooms to view students engaged in a Socratic seminar, the science teacher also began implementing Socratic seminars. Lessons observed require students to demonstrate deep understanding of mathematical concepts such as algebraic expressions, using evidence from various sources to develop argumentative essays with claims and counterclaims in order to align instruction to the instructional shifts. Teachers plan for scaffolds and supports for struggling students in the form of differentiated tasks, strategically grouping struggling students with higher achieving students and visual support. Evidence that teachers use strategies such as small group instruction, differentiated tasks and strategically pairing of students was observed in some classes to offer differentiated support to students. However, these strategies were not consistently implemented across classrooms, and as a result, not all lessons provide entry points for students at varying levels.

- Further cultivate an inclusive culture to promote the academic and social-emotional development of students and adults in a safe and respectful environment. (1.4)
 - The principal wants to establish a collaborative culture so that students, teachers and parents contribute to the educational journey experienced by all. The principal's open door policy provides an opportunity for all to voice opinions or concerns regarding school policies. Furthermore, the school's staff and student handbooks outline behavior expectations in order to develop clear expectations and a school culture where everyone is accountable for their actions. Students who violate the school's discipline policy or who need additional support are discussed by administrators and the guidance counselor to develop plans to support the social-emotional needs of students. Teachers also refer behavior incidents to the school's dean, who then works with the teacher to develop plans to improve their behavior. Students offer suggestions for school improvement and enrichment programs through the school's student council that meets on a weekly basis. However, students indicate that they want the student council to further engage the general student body when making decisions to allow for increased student voice when developing school policy. The school schedule allows for two periods per week for teachers to work with students on topics that are relevant to students and to develop skills necessary for success beyond middle school. For example, sixth grade students work on how to effectively complete applications for high school and interviewing skills, exploring possible career paths and supporting students in dealing with school-wide issues such as adjusting to change and bullying. The principal is exploring how to further develop structures to assure that each grade builds on skills taught throughout previous years. However, student interviews indicate that some advisories have been helpful in supporting students with the social-emotional issues encountered by middle school students in an effort to develop a school culture focused

on meeting the academic and social-emotional needs of students, while other students could not articulate the purpose of advisories. As a result, not all students are supported in developing necessary skills for academic success.

- Early in the school year, network staff provided professional development on how to develop behavior intervention plans to support the social-emotional needs of students. Teachers who attend professional development sessions on how to support the social-emotional needs of students, turn-key information to colleagues during faculty conferences and grade level team meetings to build capacity. The school schedules curriculum nights by grade to inform parent regarding grade level expectations. Parents were also asked to complete a survey to ascertain in what areas they want additional information and support. As a result, the parent coordinator has provided workshops on the promotional policy, cyberbullying and the CCLS. In addition to report cards, parents have access to Pupil Path, the schools on-line grading system, which allows parents and students to view grades. This promotes on-going communication between teachers and parents regarding student progress. However, parents surfaced that not all grades are posted in a timely manner and ambiguity regarding the school's grading policy and that, consequently, this inhibits their ability to provide their children with appropriate support.
- Deepen the use of common assessments to identify trends in student achievement and to provide teachers and students with meaningful feedback regarding student outcomes. (2.2)
 - Teachers use baseline assessments, unit tests, midterms and teacher made exams, to assess student progress toward grade level standards. The school also reviews performance data resulting from standardized assessments, Measures of Student Learning (MOSL) assessments and class reports resulting from Achieve 3000 assessment of reading levels to identify trends in student achievement and inform intervention plans. Teachers and administrators analyze results of assessment to modify plans for individual students, whole classes and the lowest one third performing students in literacy and math. For example, analysis of mid-term data surfaced that the eighth grade as a whole was weak in number sense and geometry. Analysis of writing data indicates that students can cite information from texts read, however work is still needed so that students are able to analyze and synthesis various sources of information to adequately support claims. The school has established a grading policy that is evident across classrooms. However, review of student portfolios demonstrate that teachers grade student work using a variety of different measures. For example, some student work was graded using a one through four scale and other work using percentages from one to one hundred. As a result, students indicate that the definition of work that meets grade level standards varies from teacher to teacher. Teachers use a variety of rubrics to grade student work, however feedback provided is not yet aligned to rubrics, explicitly indicating what skills students need to further develop. For example, student work reviewed contained comments such as "nice graph" or "we need to work on grammar." As a result, students indicate that feedback is not a primary source used to improve work products, limiting student's ability to use teacher feedback as a guide in helping them to meet grade level standards.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

| School name: The Mott Hall School | 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 |