



# **Quality Review Report 2013-2014**

**Mother Hale Academy**

**07X065**

**677 East 141<sup>st</sup> Street  
Bronx  
NY 10454**

**Principal: Jasmine Gonzalez**

**Dates of review: October 29-30, 2013**

**Lead Reviewer: Yolanda Torres**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Mother Hale Academy is an elementary school with 456 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 5. The school population comprises 30% Black, 68% Hispanic, 0.22% White, 0.22% Multi Racial, 1.32% Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander and 0.22% Asian students. The student body includes 15% English language learners and 21% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 89.8%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is developing.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The school climate is a nurturing environment where students' academic and social emotional needs are targeted via multiple support structures that positively impact student learning outcomes. (1.4)
  - School leaders, in collaboration with the community, ensure that the learning environment is one that is student-centered and focused on the social emotional needs for students' academic growth. The core values on student learning stem from tapping into their academic and social emotional strengths as well as paying tribute to their individuality in order to help them feel successful. Students feel safe and cared for in spite of a myriad of societal issues, such as temporary housing, drug runs and arrests that they face on a daily basis. Mother Hale Academy is an oasis where students and families appreciate the caring individuals who, day-in and day-out, courageously reach out to organizations, seeking support and service programs to help them through their daily challenges. School administration and staff proactively plan creative ways to motivate student participation in daily activities. Monthly Spirit Days which have been strategically scheduled on documented low attendance days, encourage whole community participation in dressing up in the color of the month, leading to improved student attendance. Students engage in a variety of activities that incentivize and motivate them towards self-improvement. Students' good deeds and appropriate behaviors are also acknowledged by out-of-classroom personnel, thus sending a cohesive message of community pride and teamwork. The creation of a Peer Mediation Team gives students a voice as they learn how to diffuse situations and help and respect each other. As a result, the implementation of the Positive Behavior Intervention System (PBIS) is contributing to students' social emotional growth, where their adherence to expected behaviors is promoted through the motto: 'being responsible, being a problem solver and being respectful.' The school leader is a role model students much appreciate, due to her guidance and advisement as she takes time to speak with them individually. By listening and holding them accountable, she has created a sense of trust and self-confidence, thus resulting in a close-knit, familial feeling of community where students come first and learning prevails. Mother Hale Academy is a co-located building where all students feel welcomed. The systems and structures in place allow school personnel and students to get to know each other. Students are known well by a variety of adults, from pedagogues to service providers to office personnel. Staff members greet students by their names throughout the building and students feel comfortable sharing their concerns with the adults, for they know that immediate support will be provided. They appreciate adults lending an ear when they need to vent or, when in crisis, there are reliable individuals who are there to help them. Parents also voice their appreciation towards the caring staff and assurance that their children are safe in these individuals' hands. This structure has led to the decrease of disruptive behaviors and less Online Occurrence reports, resulting in more instructionally focused classrooms.

- Leaders and faculty have made thoughtful decisions to ensure that Common Core-aligned curricula meet the instructional needs of students. (1.1)
  - The school's curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS), with a focus on purposeful groupings for the movement of students towards fluency. The implementation of the CCLS-aligned curricula such as Ready Gen and Go Math! serves as additional support in the integration of standards and instructional shifts, therefore, contributing to a school-wide understanding of grade-to-grade scaffolded learning. The baseline materials provide teachers with an initial snapshot of students' needs, as they plan together and de-construct lessons, resulting in a shift in their instructional approach and teaching practice. As teachers refine their lessons to provide instructional access to students, they make thoughtful decisions to ensure that the grade-wide delivery of instruction leads to coherent and cohesive teaching and learning, grounded in curricula that reflect applicable standards for all content areas.
  - Teachers and coaches engage in joint planning, as they use student work and data to refine their lessons, in order to meet the diverse needs of students. As teachers look at student work, they make low-inference observations to identify the common threads in grade-wide strengths and areas in need of focus. In addition, at grade meetings they engage in discussions around their ratings, citing evidence from student work in order to proceed with agreed-upon next steps for student progress. Teachers leave these meetings with specific strategies for immediate implementation, resulting in consistent delivery of instruction from classroom to classroom. Protocols on non-fiction, narratives and responses to literature, as well as rubrics, facilitate the conversations and planning sessions so that differentiated tasks afford students multiple opportunities to experience cognitively engaging instruction that results in intellectual challenges that support independent learning by all students.
- School leaders support teacher development through a systematic use of the Danielson Framework, leading to self-reflective conversations and next steps for the improvement of instruction. (4.1)
  - The use of the Danielson Framework informs regular cycles of formal and informal observations and provides school leaders and teachers, via a low inference approach, opportunities to norm their understanding around effective teaching as well next steps for improvement. This process generates feedback on teacher practice and establishes open communication on goals and expected outcomes, to ensure that there is clarity and support for overall professional growth. School leaders share their low inference notes with teachers, including new teachers, so that all teachers can reflect on their own teaching vis-à-vis the Danielson rubric, resulting in reciprocal conversations on effective practices. Their data analysis and ongoing examination of student work lend another tier of support to teachers, as these conversations lead to the identification of teacher strengths in particular Domains of the Danielson Framework. This contributes to teacher capacity and team building, which results in teacher buy-in and the “unification of the thought and likeness of mind”, as the principal indicates.

## What the school needs to improve

- Develop further, a shared understanding of the school-wide set of beliefs about how students learn best, so that across classrooms, students are consistently engaged in rigorous tasks. (1.2)
  - Some teaching strategies have begun to show alignment between curricula, school beliefs on how students learn best and the Danielson Framework. For example, some ‘wraparound strategies’ such as one-on-one conferences and/or daily ‘check-ins’ with specific students to help them acquire the ability to self-regulate their learning and emotional behaviors, provide them with an opportunity to grow and mature. These learned skills contribute to improved instructional outcomes where students initially demonstrate academic progress. Student ‘turn-and-talks’ and small group work products aligned to the instructional shifts and specific Domains of the Framework, inform teacher pedagogy for professional growth. Although teacher discussions on the alignment of the teaching practices to the curricula and the Danielson Framework are in place, there is a lack of consistent evidence that this shared understanding of how these beliefs impact student learning, permeates instruction in every classroom setting.
  - As teachers plan and look at student work, they identify common trends that lead to overarching questions to scaffold lessons in order to meet students at their multiple entry points for individual progress. Teachers work with small groups of students to build vocabulary and help them conceptualize mathematical concepts via the use of manipulatives and discussion. The use of technology in the classrooms also enhances student learning by having them demonstrate and communicate their understanding to their peers. Students’ engagement in “turn-and-talks,” as they share their perspectives on a specific topic or collaboratively problem solve, provides them with the opportunity to quickly discuss ideas with their peers. However, although the majority of classes have students involved in these activities, cognitive and thoughtful engagement in challenging tasks is not consistently evident from classroom to classroom, thus hindering students from developing the critical thinking skills needed to produce high quality work products.
- Refine the processes of ongoing assessments to ensure that there is consistency in the use of data and analysis across all classrooms, so that students receive actionable feedback for academic growth. (2.2)
  - The school-wide common assessments and Core Curriculum Interim Progress Reports provide student mastery information so that teachers can develop actionable instructional plans that meet students’ needs. Additional data analysis and collaborative meetings amongst teachers contribute opportunities to tailor instructional practices for targeted instruction. Running Records and Development Reading Assessments (DRAs) are specific formative assessments used to identify students’ instructional levels so teachers can plan accordingly and adjust the work to meet students’ areas of need. During weekly meetings, teachers also discuss student work to assess the content-wide trends and plan lessons in accordance with the findings. Teachers submit their assessment results to the school leadership and are expected to explain how these

results impact on their delivery of instruction. However, while there are some teachers who demonstrate an understanding of how to use these assessment results to inform their practice, the principal reflects and acknowledges that the majority of teachers are developing in this area and that customized professional development is in order. Therefore, not all students benefit from coherent and consistent assessment practices that can result in focused teaching and learning, with effective adjustments that support their academic growth.

- Ensure that instructional practices are consistently monitored and evaluated to ensure that they reflect CCLS expectations and respond to all students' learning needs, thus promoting students' academic success. (5.1)
  - In keeping with CCLS, teachers involve students in a variety of activities and performance tasks that require discovery and discussion. As students collaborate in small groups, work independently and/or turn and talk, teachers walk around to ensure students understand tasks or to lend support. They use graphic organizers, manipulatives and technology, as learning tools that afford students opportunities to inquire and learn. However, there is a lack of evidence that indicates that these “kid-watching” opportunities result in the evaluation and monitoring of curricular, instructional and assessment practices, leading to lesson adjustments. In addition, teachers' inconsistent assessment practices adversely impact opportunities to target students' learning needs and improve academic achievement for all students.
  - Collaborative sessions on calibration, learning and assessment practices take place during teacher team and professional development meetings. Teachers agree that these meetings are helping them understand how to delve deeper to improve their understanding of CCLS expectations and the alignment to their practices, in order to improve their instructional delivery. In addition, during formal and informal observations, school leaders and teachers engage in reciprocal conversations on lesson delivery and instructional impact. However, teachers are still developing their understanding on how to use the results of these observations and practices to inform and evaluate their delivery of instruction in support of student mastery of the CCLS.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: <b>Mother Hale Academy</b>	UD	D	P	WD			
<b>Overall QR Score</b>		X					
<b>Instructional Core</b>							
<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					
<b>School Culture</b>							
<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				
<b>Systems for Improvement</b>							
<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					
<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
<b>UD</b>	<b>Underdeveloped</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>Developing</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>WD</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>