



**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 Haven Village Preparatory High School**

**07X473**

**701 St. Anns Avenue  
Bronx, NY 10455**

**Principal: Melanie Williams**

**Dates of review: March 24-25, 2014**

**Lead reviewer: Mimi Fortunato**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Mott Haven Village Preparatory High School is a high school with 344 students from 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 23.0% Black, 75.6% Hispanic, 0.6% White, and 0.3% Asian students. The student body includes 8.1% English language learners and 21.2% special education students. Boys account for 55.8% of the students enrolled and girls account for 44.2%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 83.6%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is developing.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal's targeted decisions regarding the use of budget, resources, student programming, and partnership development support the school's instructional goals and provide students with increased learning opportunities. (1.3)
  - Budgetary allocations are used to provide teachers with technology in classrooms such as laptops and desktop computers for students, SMARTboards and access to the Jupiter online grading program and the Study Island online instructional program for the instructional team, students, and families. A partnership with the East Side Settlement House College Preparation and Leadership Program (CPLP) supports the College Office where full-time CPLP college advisors facilitate lessons in college preparedness for students beginning in grade 9, organize college trips, tours, fairs, community service projects and internships, and provide students and their families with individualized support in the college search as well as the college and financial aid application (FAFSA) process. This strategic use of resources and effective partnership development are in alignment with the school's instructional goals, thus providing students with increased opportunities for post secondary readiness skills.
  - Strategic hiring practices include the assignment of a lead literacy teacher, two additional special education teachers, a special education coordinator, data specialist, and a dean. A part-time assistant principal conducts teacher evaluations and facilitates a weekly pupil personnel team meeting where teachers develop and plan interventions and instructional supports to more successfully engage targeted students in rigorous tasks. Class size is strategically capped at twenty-five in most classes, and all teachers identify targeted students and provide small group instruction in English language arts or math during extended day academic intervention services periods each week. Students are provided with individualized programs that ensure opportunities for increased credit accumulation and advanced placement courses in English and US history, as well as Regents preparation and enrichment and athletic programs after-school and on Saturdays. These practices and programs provide all students with access to interventions and learning opportunities that strengthen college and career readiness for all students.
- School leaders and the instructional team have created a safe and inclusive culture and climate that is beneficial to student learning, nurturing students' personal development and promoting their academic progress. (1.4)
  - Students have an opportunity to participate in the student government, and two student representatives are members of the school leadership team (SLT) that meets monthly and offers students a voice in decision-making. Grade level and full-school community town halls provide opportunities to celebrate students' academic improvement and achievement. The Youth Assisting Youth (YAY) mentoring program, where selected juniors and seniors mentor their younger peers, is designed to give freshman the tools to be successful in their transition to high school. Extra-curricular activities that support social/emotional development include the Sisters to Hermanas, an after-school support group for female

students, and Building Better Men, a young men's empowerment group where students focus on the development of leadership and critical thinking skills. Students, parents and teachers affirmed the school's intentional efforts to maintain a positive school culture that has reinforced students' sense of safety and membership within a small community that is committed to their success.

- To ensure that each student feels known, school leaders, social workers, and the guidance counselor meet with students individually on each marking period to complete transcript audits and develop plans for next steps. The attendance team meets weekly, and staff members reach out daily to the families of students who are absent or late via phone text, email, and home visits. An on-site health clinic through Montefiore Hospital provides mental and physical health care to students, and the Learning for the Young for the Family through Education (LYFE) Center provides full-time child-care to students who are parents. As a result of the school's response to students' social and emotional, students interviewed shared that they feel cared for and supported by adults in the school community.
- The principal has implemented a program of professional development for staff and college and career learning opportunities for students, fostering a culture of high expectations for all members of the school community. (3.4)
  - School leaders communicate high expectations for professionalism aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching through a weekly memo titled, "Mondays with Melanie", and through feedback to teachers and learning opportunities that emphasize the importance of establishing a respectful classroom environment, planning coherent instruction, and the effective use of questioning and discussion techniques. A system of accountability includes weekly memos and ongoing communication to staff, a schedule of frequent classroom observations, peer visitation, and occasions for lesson videotaping and peer feedback from classroom visits in the "Video Club". Teachers participate in off-site class visitations through school participation in a network grant, and have opportunities to participate in off-site professional development such as a social studies teacher's recent two week trip to Morocco in which she travelled with a group of New York State global studies educators to visit schools in Morocco and share best practice. School leaders facilitate data accountability meetings each marking period to review scholarship reports and monitor teachers' growth towards goals identified in individual professional growth plans. Consequently, a culture of high expectations for professional learning has been established, and teachers are supported and held accountable in their professional growth as measured by the Danielson Framework for Teaching and city-wide instructional expectations.
  - A school-funded partnership with East Side House Settlement and CPLP provides the school with a fully-staffed college office that houses a program director, outreach worker, college counselor, career counselor, youth development specialist, and an event specialist who facilitate a series of college and career readiness workshops to students in their freshman and sophomore years, and who provide individualized college counseling to all juniors and seniors. Workshops are designed for both students and their families, and include a range of focus areas, including: meeting the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) classroom and CCLS aligned Regents exam expectations, choosing where to apply for college, developing college and career goals, completing the college essay and application, and navigating the financial aid process. Students have an

opportunity to participate in local and national college trips and tours, and families and students are provided with extensive support in the college and financial aid application process through workshops and college counseling sessions. In addition, CPLP provides students with internship and community service opportunities through a partnership with New York Cares and local service organizations. The Youth Action Community Leadership (YACL) course provides students with an opportunity to research and practice fact-based advocacy on issues affecting New York City youth. Members, through a youth-led process, build consensus around an issue, execute advocacy campaigns, and meet with elected and appointed officials at city hall and in Albany, engaging in critical thinking and leadership training. Students and their families have access to the Jupiter on-demand online grading system where they can review student attendance and academic progress, and the parent coordinator facilitates workshops for parents on how to access and interpret the information available on the Jupiter system. These supports and programs reinforce the school's expectations that students be engaged with their community, in career preparedness, and in the college search and application process.

### **What the school needs to improve**

- Ensure that curricula and tasks consistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills, are planned and refined to provide access and engage all learners, including English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities (SWDs). (1.1)
  - The instructional team uses tools such as Study Island and EngageNY in ongoing curricula development. However, planned tasks do not always incorporate higher order thinking questions and skills. For example, a grade 10 English lesson plan stated a high level aim of, “How can we use evidence from a non-fiction video to help us support or disprove the statement, “Immigration is worth the struggle”, with the expectation that students would support their position with evidence from the video. However, a grade 9 living environment science lesson observed stated a low-level lesson aim of, “How do we use appropriate language during a Socratic seminar” and the topic of discussion noted as, “Cheating/Adultery”, with discussion questions noted as, “Is cheating bad?” and “What counts as cheating?”. Students engaged in this class discussion were not asked to provide evidence or refer to a text, resulting in a heated conversation that centered on students’ emotional responses to the topic of cheating. As a result, there is a lack of coherence in providing access to the rigorous academic tasks that promote the development of higher order skills for all students.
  - Teacher content teams meet bi-monthly to revise curricula maps and plan units of study, lesson plans, tasks, summative assignments, and tasks aligned to the CCLS. However, a review of curricula maps, unit plans, and lesson plans provided evidence of inconsistent planning for scaffolds or multiple entry points for English language learners and students with disabilities. For example, a Global Studies lesson plan on the Crusades provided targeted students with an annotated reading of the text, while a grade 12 integrated co-teaching English lesson assigned text on the McCarthyism/House Un-American Activities Committee without scaffolds or alternate tasks, in order to provide access for all learners, including students with individual educational plans (IEP’s). In the majority of the classes visited, students were assigned an identical task and homework assignment, providing evidence that planning does not consistently

offer access to rigorous tasks for all learners, thus impacting the school's capacity to close the achievement gap for English language learners and students with disabilities.

- Strengthen teacher pedagogy in providing effective instructional supports, extensions and questioning and discussion techniques so that all learners are engaged in rigorous tasks and high-level discussions. (1.2)
  - Although teachers plan lessons with outcomes where students are expected to think critically and demonstrate their high-level thinking, teaching strategies and practices in implementing lessons with access and instructional supports to ensure that all students demonstrate mastery of these outcomes was inconsistent across classrooms. For example, a Chemistry lesson asking students to define the difference between potential and kinetic energy provided students with an opportunity to rotate through four work stations where scaffolded assignments ranged from identifying key elements such as time and temperature in a heating curve diagram to creating a presentation to be used in teaching middle school students the key concepts of potential and kinetic energy. In this class, the teacher's lesson plan stated that the groupings were developed based on identified student need and attendance. However, an algebra lesson plan with a learning objective of using mathematical understandings to solve systems of equations graphically asked all students to complete an identical worksheet that required them to label four different graphs as either "quadratic", linear, "absolute value", or "exponential". Although the teacher's lesson plan stated that student grouping was developed to "optimize student-centered support", this did not effectively meet the needs of the diverse learners in the class as students were overheard stating that they did not know the answer to the problems, with one student stating, "I am lost", and the majority of the students in the class unable to complete the worksheet in the allotted time. While teachers were observed checking in with students during independent or group practice, there was uneven use of effective grouping or scaffolds to ensure access for the diverse learners in the school. This resulted in inconsistent teaching strategies to allow for student engagement, with a number of students observed not being able to demonstrate mastery of learning objectives.
  - In classroom observations, student participation in rigorous discussion was inconsistent, and student work products did not always demonstrate mastery of learning objectives. An advanced placement US history class asked students to participate in a Socratic seminar discussion on the US government's decision to drop the atomic bomb on Japan, with the teacher providing students with a graphic organizer in the "Do Now" pre-discussion development stage of the lesson. However, an introduction to an English lesson on "The Crucible" asked students to define vocabulary words such as "heathen" and "propriety" out of context, and develop sentences using those words, although most students were unclear as to the expectations of the task and the connection of the words to the text. In most classrooms, full-class discussion was limited to call and response, with a limited number of students responding to teacher-generated questions. Resulting in students not being consistently engaged in tasks across classrooms and subject areas that provide opportunities for higher-level thinking and meaningful levels of participation in rich discussion.

- Deepen teacher skill in the use of formative and summative assessment data, ongoing checks for understanding, and adjustment to instruction to ensure that students are progressing towards mastery of learning objectives. (2.2)
  - School leaders provide professional development to support teachers in creating assessments, analyzing results, and developing instructional plans for re-teaching skills that were not mastered, although the use of assessment data to adjust curricula and instruction is not consistent across disciplines. The English language arts team was observed reviewing a piece of student work and collaboratively identifying strategies to support student mastery of the assigned task. However, teachers participating in a math team meeting in which the group was analyzing the January 2014 Regents exam results were unable to share an understanding of where individual student performance was on the continuum of skill development, and they could not articulate next instructional steps that might move large groups of students to mastery. Throughout classes visited, rubrics that were used for task analysis varied in grading structure, content, and expectations, and the use of common assessment to measure students' progress towards goals across subject areas was inconsistent. As a result, opportunities to make curricula and instructional revisions to support targeted students' academic growth across all disciplines are limited.
  - School leaders expect that teachers plan for and check for students' understanding during a lesson, and this planning was evident in a review of most lesson plans. For example, a lesson plan for English language learners noted that the teacher would identify which students had not yet mastered the expected skill, and which were able to think critically about the use of pre-fixes and suffixes and synthesize the information to show how word meaning changes with the addition of a pre-fix or a suffix. However, across classrooms visited, teacher practice did not consistently include checks for understanding, and few teachers were observed noting formative assessment data or making real-time effective instructional adjustments. In addition, students shared that they are not always clear regarding task expectations, outcomes or next steps needed for improvement. As a result of the inconsistent teacher assessment practices to check for ongoing understanding and to provide students with opportunities for self-assessment, student progress towards mastery of learning objectives is impeded.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: Mott Haven Village Preparatory High School	UD	D	P	WD			
Overall QR Score		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>