



**Department of  
Education**  
*Carmen Fariña, Chancellor*

Office of School Quality  
Division of Teaching and Learning

# Quality Review Report

## 2014-2015

**The Mott Hall School**

**Middle M223**

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

**Principal: Marva Picou**

**Date of review: March 16, 2015  
Lead Reviewer: Manuel Ramirez**

## The School Context

The Mott Hall School is a middle school with 283 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 8% Black, 83% Hispanic, 6% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 4% English language learners and 13% special education students. Boys account for 48% of the students enrolled and girls account for 52%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 95.0%.

## School Quality Criteria

<b>Instructional Core</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
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	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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	<b>Focus</b>	<b>Developing</b>
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	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Developing</b>
<b>School Culture</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations	<b>Celebration</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
<b>Systems for Improvement</b>		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>Area of:</b>	<b>Rating:</b>
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning	<b>Additional Findings</b>	<b>Developing</b>

## Area of Celebration

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>3.4 High Expectations</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### Findings

The school has systems and structures to communicate high expectations about student learning and provide feedback to families regarding student's progress in meeting the expectations. Strategies for ensuring accurate and detailed feedback about learning and guidance to students are evident across the school.

### Impact

The school has established a culture for learning that communicates high expectations for staff, students and families that promotes mutual accountability and provides students with a clear path to college and career readiness.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school has implemented a weekly college and career readiness class that supports student understanding of the requirements and the expectations of the work needed to achieve their individual goals. Teachers developed the curriculum for this class with a focus on improving student's skills in writing a cohesive, persuasive essay and to support their arguments with text based evidence.
- Parents report that they receive phone messages and e-mails via Pupil Path, an on line system used by the school to communicate progress of students. This system affords parents with timely and accurate information on the academic progress of students and on attendance. In addition, the leadership sends monthly bulletins to all families to keep them informed of current events at the school level.
- School leaders and staff embed high expectations in all aspects of school culture, focusing on college and career readiness, in alignment with the citywide expectations, to raise levels of success for all constituents. Teachers provide students with rubrics to self-evaluate their work and to provide them with clarity on the expectations to complete the tasks successfully. The rubrics align with the Common Core Standards and teachers use the rubric's indicators on the students' progress tracker sheet that every teacher in the school uses to monitor student progress.

## Area of Focus

**Quality Indicator:**

**1.2 Pedagogy**

**Rating:**

**Developing**

### Findings

Across classrooms, pedagogical practices inconsistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula and student work products and discussions reflect uneven levels of student thinking and participation.

### Impact

In some classrooms, students were not consistently engaged in appropriately challenging tasks or discussions requiring high levels of thinking and participation.

### Supporting Evidence

- During a grade 8 science class, the teacher discussed how life on earth continues to adapt to environmental changes. During this lesson, the teacher did not provide the students with the opportunity to demonstrate, justify or explain their thinking. Accommodations for the different learning needs of the students were not evident.
- School leadership stated that the instructional focus for the year was on academic rigor, differentiation of instruction and questioning and discussion techniques. In three out of seven classrooms, observed lessons were teacher dominated with minimal student-to-student discussions. The tasks given to students did not require them to construct meaning for themselves or to think critically about the task. In a grade 7 math lesson, the teacher gave students four worksheets to complete 25 problems on statistics and probability. The teacher assigned the same task to all students, with no evidence of differentiation for this activity. The task did not require students to reason with numbers, construct strategies, or deepen their thinking of the content.
- In a grade 8 integrated collaborative team teaching class, students worked on responding to questions using evidence from a play that they had previously read. Students had to use the Socratic Seminar protocol to engage in the discussion. There were 11 students seated in the inner circle and only seven of the students participated in the discussion. At the beginning of the class, the teacher visually reminded the students of the Socratic Seminar through the use of the Smart Board as well as verbalizing it. For example, the teacher reminded the inner circle to use the dialogue starters to ensure academic, respectful discussion, reference the text/use textual evidence to support their claims, ask open-ended, thought provoking questions, and for the students to encourage others to participate. As for the outer circle, the teacher reminded them to listen to the whole discussion, paying particular attention to their partner's comments, and to complete the Outer Circle Form.

## Additional Findings

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.1 Curriculum</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### Findings

School leaders and teachers ensure that curricula align to the Common Core Learning Standards and purposefully integrate the instructional shifts and plan academic tasks that emphasize higher order thinking skills across grades and subjects.

### Impact

The school's alignment of curricula to the Common Core ensures that the curricula are coherent, rigorous and accessible to all learners in all content areas.

### Supporting Evidence

- Conversations with the leadership and with teachers revealed that the school uses resources such as Expeditionary Learning Units and Rubicon Atlas in English language arts (ELA) as a resource to develop and adapt school units of study. Lesson plans include essential questions, Common Core Standards and content standards, differentiation strategies, skills, assessments and domain specific vocabulary.
- The school's decision to use the Engage NY units of study as resources to modify curricula and performance tasks for students supports the efforts of the school to build coherence across grades and content areas. For example, teachers analyze Expeditionary Learning units and in developing their own units, ensure that the curricula is rigorous and promotes higher order thinking skills to increase academic achievement for all students.
- Alignment to the Common Core Standards and content standards was evident in the academic tasks displayed on bulletin boards and student work posted inside and outside of classrooms across all content areas.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>2.2 Assessment</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Developing</b>
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### **Findings**

The school is developing their use of common assessments to measure student progress towards goals across grades and content areas. Across classrooms, teachers' assessment practices inconsistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding.

### **Impact**

The inconsistent use of common assessments and uneven checks for student understanding result in a lack of effective curricular adjustments that hinder meeting the learning needs of all students.

### **Supporting Evidence**

- Although the school has provided the systems and structures for teacher teams to analyze student work and use this data to inform decisions for teaching and learning, evidence of this practice is inconsistent across grades and subject areas.
- The school's expectations are for students to use rubrics to evaluate their work and to provide clarity for the expectations of the tasks. A review of students' portfolios and conversations with the students indicate that this practice is inconsistent across grades and content areas. Some of the students' portfolios did not include rubrics.
- The principal indicated that the use of several methods to check for understanding during instruction. For example, exit tickets, thumbs up-thumbs down, conferencing and summary questions at the end of lessons, which asks students to write three things that they learned and three things they still do not understand; however, this is still a developing practice that the school is working on this year. Across classrooms, teachers' checks for understanding and assessments were uneven. For example, in a grade 6 ELA class, the teacher checked for understanding by asking students questions and students responded to the teacher. In a grade 7 math class, the students worked on a worksheet while the teacher monitored the behavior of each group and their ability to stay on task. The teacher monitored behavior by charting it on the board by using a check to acknowledge a group's time on task. In remaining classes, teachers conducted whole class or on the spot checks for understanding of the content without follow up questions to adjust instruction and support the learning needs of all students.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Developing</b>
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**Findings**

Teacher teams are beginning to analyze assessment data and student work to improve teacher practice and accelerate academic achievement for all students. Distributed leadership structures and inclusion of teachers in key decision making at the school level are developing to support teacher practice and improve student achievement.

**Impact**

Although teachers are engaged in inquiry work and professional collaboration, this work has not yet improved the instructional capacity of teachers in alignment with the school’s goals with the expectations of the Common Core Standards.

**Supporting Evidence**

- All teachers have the opportunity to engage in weekly structured teacher teams and monthly inquiry work; however, protocols to engage effectively in the analysis of student work are in the developing stage. An ELA teacher team meeting started at 2:05 p.m. with five teachers present. At 2:13 p.m., two additional teachers arrived and at 2:20 p.m., one more teacher came. There was no agenda for this meeting and there was no discussion on how the analysis and findings of student work were going to yield improvement in teacher practice and student progress.
- Teachers designed a summary sheet to identify school-wide trends in all content areas. They conduct this analysis three times per year and it indicates areas of strength and areas of focus for the school. They use this information to revise curricula and to inform teaching and learning. In conversation with teacher teams and school leadership, there was some evidence of how the team would use the results of the data analysis to adjust teacher practice to meet identified students’ needs. On the data analysis sheets, teachers provide next steps for student mastery.
- During teacher team meetings, teachers reported that the school provides them with opportunities to engage in inter-visitations with colleagues and to receive feedback from their peers. New teachers meet once a week during fifth period for professional development focused on specific topics and activities, to develop their practice. These practices support increased collaboration among the staff and help to build capacity in data driven inquiry work.