Department of Education
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Mott Hall High School

05M304

6 Edgecombe Avenue
Manhattan, NY 10030

Principal: Altagracia Villalona

Date of review: November 12, 2014

Lead Reviewer: Musa Ali Shama

The School Context

Mott Hall High School is a high school with 435 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 39% Black, 58% Hispanic, .5% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 11% English language learners and 2.5% special education students. Boys account for 58% of the students enrolled and girls account for 42%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 87%.

School Quality Criteria

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

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient

Findings
The principal communicates high expectations and provides supports to the staff, students and families to meet those expectations, as well as putting systems in place to offer ongoing feedback to help families understand student progress towards those expectations.

Impact
School leadership actively coordinates workshops for the whole school community and provides ongoing feedback to families regarding college and career readiness that has led to an increased percentage of students taking college and career prepartory courses. Teachers' ongoing professional development is aligned to the school's instructional goals, thereby providing continuous communication regarding school expectations and resulting in teachers improving pedagocial practice.

Supporting Evidence

- School leadership coordinates various workshops for families and students about the college application process, and provides ongoing feedback to help families understand student progress towards being college and career ready leading to an 83% Graduation rate in 6 years.

- The professional development plan reflected training on the Danielson Framework for Teaching and the principal provides teachers feedback in observations that support the instructional expectations for staff. The principal has a calendar of observations and follows up with faculty to ensure that feedback is being implemented.

- Parents are consistently provided with their child's progress utilizing the Jupiter Grades online grading system, and parents affirmed that teachers provide ongoing feedback to them regarding student progress, as evidenced, through interim progress reports, report cards and via phone calls or through the online system.

- The school partners with several outside agencies to promote college awareness and readiness including College for Every Student (CFES), Monroe College's Urban Scholars Program and City College's Engineering program. Through these partnerships, students take classes for college level credit as well as get targeted support for the college application process and students stated that they started talking about college with the CFES mentors in the 9th grade.

- Students stated that they meet with guidance counselors routinely to review their transcripts and their classes. In addition, they stated that they were pushed by the principal and teachers to retake their English and Algebra Regents exams to meet the college readiness metric to obtain scores of 75 and 80 respectively to be college ready and received targeted tutoring after school and Saturdays in order to be prepared.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:	1.2 Pedagogy	Rating:	Developing

Findings
The school is in the process of deepening teacher pedagogy across grades and subjects to build consistent alignment of practice informed by the Danielson Framework for Teaching and instructional shifts, to promote high levels of student thinking and participation.

Impact
Although a focus on questioning strategies was evident, across classrooms student particpation in student-to-student discourse and challenging tasks was inconsistent, resulting in uneven levels of student participation and thinking, as demonstrated by meaningful student work products.

Supporting Evidence

- The principal stated that it is a school goal to increase student engagement in each class through discussions, sharing ideas and thoughts, and to encourage students to elaborate on each other's thinking. Although we did observe students engaged in student-to-student discussion with the teacher facilitating the conversation, this practice was inconsistent across classrooms. In a 12th grade social studies class, we observed students craft arguments to either support or oppose "Inter(NET) Neutrality". Students worked in groups, filling out the pros and cons around the topic and collaboratively developed an argument on their position. The teacher facilitated the discussion by having students share out with students agreeing or disagreeing with their peers, and defending their position using evidence. Students respectfully engaged in this topic with the teacher redirecting student responses to classmates to further deepen student interaction. However, in a 9th grade Living Environment class, students were going to engage in a laboratory experiment to develop an understanding of diffusion and osmosis in cell membranes. Although the teacher did ask questions such as "What is Diffusion?", the lesson was teacher centered, with responses going from student to teacher, often with students calling out answers without impunity.

- Across classrooms, student engagement inconsistently reflected high levels of student thinking and participation leading to missed opportunities for all students to produce meaningful work products. Although we did observe students demonstrating high levels of thinking, for example in a Trigonometry class, students were working in groups solving equations. Students with disabilities were strategically paired with their peers, and all students grappled with challenging problems, discussing their process and their answers that deepen student understanding of the material. However, in an Earth Science class, students were prompted with the question "What does it mean to journey to the center of the earth?" Few students participated in the class discussion or raised their hands, with some answers called out. Students were then prompted to review a diagram with the earth's crust and a reference table. We observed several students off task, confused as to the development of the lesson.

- Although the principal stated that a core belief on how students learn best required that teachers use varied strategies and resources for differentiation to promote participation from all learners, this was not seen consistently across classrooms. Some teachers employed graphic organizers, incorporated strategic grouping, encouraged strategies to promote close reading. However, these practices have yet to become embedded into teaching repertoire across classrooms to effectively meet the needs of all learners.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Proficient

Findings
Teacher teams engage in structured professional collaborations that promote a culture of data-driven inquiry and expand teaching strategies to foster shared leadership and enhances their voice in key decisions affecting student learning.

Impact
The time structured for teachers to meet regularly is fostering teacher leadership and strengthening their instructional capacity by incorporating teacher voice in key school decisions that is leading to increased student achievement across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers are scheduled to meet daily in teacher teams, both on grade level and content teams to conduct inquiry based on targeted students, as well as analyzing student work and data. On the day of the review, all teachers reviewed their Regents exams from their respective departments, coming up with hypotheses to explain student success or failures, then analyzing data to see how it supports or challenges their hypotheses. Teachers used a graphic organizer to document the data trend, possible reasons, and instructional strategies to address those trends.

- Teachers articulated strategies that were outcomes of team meetings in order to meet the needs of students based aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts. They highlighted the development of academic vocabulary packets for students based on grade level and content areas, development of strategies to support students with disabilities, such identifying context clues, and discussed strategies to increase writing across the curricula with an emphasis on argumentative essays.

- The principal has identified teachers as department heads and meets with them regularly for their input in professional development, agendas and topics for team meetings, as well as technology purchasing decisions. Agendas reviewed identified participants of meetings, meeting focus, high expectations, and next steps. As a result, department heads meet with their respective teams and turn key information and work with their peers, as well relay the challenges teachers are facing to the principal to develop supports for their colleagues.

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Developing

Findings
Curricula development reflected the process of teachers aligning to Common Core Learning Standards and incorporating the instructional shifts. The school is beginning to make purposeful decisions that leads to coherence and promotes college and career readiness through academic tasks for all students, including English language learners and students with disabilities.

Impact
The lack of coherence in curricula across grades and subject areas that consistently promotes college and career readiness for all students including students with disabilites and English language learners impedes increasing the percentage of students meeting the 4 year college readiness index. There is an inconsistent emphasis on rigorous habits and higher order thinking skills across grades and subject areas hindering cognitive engagement for all learners.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers are required to submit two units of instruction, identifying the Common Core Learning Standards and content standards incorporated into the unit per semester. The principal stated that they give feedback to teachers on units developed. A teacher stated that he had to develop a new curriculum this year. In addition, teachers were not able to identify key skills or standards to build coherence that reinforced college and career readiness for all students across grades or subject areas,.

- Although teachers had scripted questions identifying Webb's Depths of Knowledge in their lesson plans, planning did not consistently reflect an approach to provide access to curricula and tasks for a diversity of leaners. For example, in a 12th grade English language arts class, students were given an image to analyze and asked to identify the possible message of the image. Students were asked to formulate arguments that might be used to support the practice of mercy killings for animals and not humans. Students used a graphic organizer to create an essay in questions related to a text that they were reading, through the process of identifying the "Assertion, Reasoning, Evidence, Counter-argument, Rebuttal". However, in a US History class focusing on how the Mexican American War begin, the task for all students was scripted as "students read the text book and answer guiding questions based on the war started by the US but blamed on Mexico." The planning across grades and subjects to engage all learners in academic tasks that consistently emphasized rigorous habits and higher order skills was inconsistent.

- The process of curricula and tasks being refined based on the outcome of looking at data and student work for a diversity of learners was inconsistent. Although tasks were being aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and identified Web's Depth of Knowledge, in both lesson plans collected and unit plans reviewed, there was a lack of supports for students with disabilities and English language learners, as well as extensions for high performing students.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient

Findings
Across classrooms, teachers use common assessments to provide students with actionable feedback and determine student progress towards goals across grades and subjects.

Impact
Assessment practices provide an understanding of student progress and result in teachers creating targeted interventions for students in extended day and Saturday school for additional instructional support leading to progress towards student goals.

Supporting Evidence

- The school uses various types of assessments including, New York City performance tasks, unit tests, Regents exams aligned to the school's curricula to determine student progress towards goals across grades and subject areas. The principal shared data binders of student assessment data that she used to track student progress.

- Students articulated the use of rubrics and know what their next steps are for growth are based on the feedback they receive from teachers. They also stated that they often give each other feedback on tasks in their classrooms. In an argumenative essay research paper in a 12th grade Social Studies class, teacher feedback was specific and aligned to the rubric. Students stated that they are given the opportunity to incorporate feedback and resubmit work in order to receive a higher grade.

- School leadership and instructional team conduct reviews of common assessment data after each Regents and benchmark assessment adminsitration. During the team meeting, teachers used assessments to identify trends and incorproate instructional strategies for particular students. Teachers in extended day and Saturday school use assessment data to provide targeted tutoring for students. Students stated that their teachers review Regents exams with them to help them understand their mistakes and what areas they need to focus on.