



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

**Office of School Quality  
Division of Teaching and Learning**

# **Quality Review Report**

## **2015-2016**

**Mott Hall II**

**Middle School M862**

**234 West 109 Street  
Manhattan  
NY 10025**

**Principal: Marlon Lowe**

**Date of review: April 21, 2016  
Lead Reviewer: Tracie Benjamin-Van Lierop**

## The School Context

Mott Hall II is a middle school with 345 students from grade 6 through grade 8. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 6% Asian, 26% Black, 37% Hispanic, and 26% White students. The student body includes 2% English Language Learners and 19% students with disabilities. Boys account for 46% of the students enrolled and girls account for 54%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 95.9%.

## 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>Well Developed</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 <i>Framework for Teaching</i> , aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products	<b>Focus</b>	<b>Proficient</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>Well Developed</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>Well Developed</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>Well Developed</b>

## Area of Celebration

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

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the entire staff and provide training. School leaders and staff effectively communicate expectations connected to a path to college and career readiness and create successful partnerships with parents.

### Impact

A culture of mutual accountability exists for achieving set expectations. Students have the support of the school and their families to support their progress.

### Supporting Evidence

- The principal communicates expectations through teacher newsletters, the faculty handbook, and memos. Based on the collective reading of *Teach Like a Champion*, one memo included helpful instructional strategies that focused on application of skills in different settings, textual evidence to support answers, and ensuring that all student-learning objectives are manageable and measurable. All teachers attending professional learning sessions bring a best practice related to each session topic and if they do not have a best practice to share, they come to the session with a problem of practice so their colleagues can offer support, answers, and ensure that all student-learning objectives are manageable and measurable.
- Parent communication includes a newsletter which when instituted, was distributed weekly but is now distributed bi-weekly based on parents' requests in order to better assist them with the flow of information. Parents also receive letters from the principal, automated phone calls, and monitor their children's progress using *Engrade Pro*. A sixth grade family newsletter included a note to parents stating, "We will be starting one of our most popular units, our non-fiction food study. We will be reading *Chew on This* and the young adult version of *The Omnivore's Dilemma*, as well as many New York Times articles. An eighth grade newsletter to families included, "Please read below to keep up to speed on what your scholar is doing in school as we move into November! Pay special attention to the High School Guidance News section this month as deadlines are coming up! Also remember that homework for core classes is posted on the Mott Hall II homepage each night: please utilize this resource."
- Students are exposed to college settings and expectations at every grade level, which parents believe has had a positive impact on student learning. "Every year there is a college and career week. Sixth graders travel to Columbia University, seventh graders travel to Yale, and eighth graders experience Princeton University," stated a parent. Another parent commented, "We are involved at every level in the school. For example, we support the school's college fair and career fair." Parents also reported their collaboration with the guidance counselor has made the high school application process very streamlined.
- In an effort to partner with parents to support writing at home and school, a parent workshop on the essentials of writing was offered to parents where they learned how to support students with identifying relevant information from text, efficiently organize information to create strong paragraphs, and clearly articulate ideas and details in sentences.

## Area of Focus

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>1.2 Pedagogy</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Proficient</b>
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### Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are aligned to the curricula and reflect an articulated set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. However, some classes are teacher directed.

### Impact

Across classrooms, student work products and discussions reflect high levels of student thinking and participation but student ownership is not fully established across all classrooms.

### Supporting Evidence

- School leadership and faculty believe that students learn best when they are working collaboratively, have the opportunities to apply their learning to real-world situations, and when their instruction is student-centered. The principal commented, “Our classrooms should not be dominated by the teacher. Students should be driving the conversation.” As evidenced during an Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) social studies class on westward expansion and reform movements, students discussed the question, “Was Nat Turner a hero or a madman?” Students worked in groups and referred to primary source documents to support their answers. A student response included, “I actually think according to documents A and B, he could be considered both a madman and a hero.” The same student then encouraged the group to move forward with their discussion by asking, “Can we move onto document C to continue the conversation so we can complete the chart?”
- In an English Language Arts (ELA) lesson on advocating a position through resolution writing and caucusing, the length of the mini-lesson was long and student participation began to decrease as the lesson progressed. The students were expected to work in groups and persuade the class to endorse their resolution based on the issue of child soldiers and whether or not they should be prosecuted. During the warm-up activity students were asked to list three words they use when either asking for something they want, get their way, or win an argument and to explain why they use the selected words. A few students dominated the discussion based on teacher-directed questions, limiting opportunities for high levels of thinking and participation.
- During a math lesson on linear and non-linear patterns, students worked in groups while the teacher circulated the room checking-in with students. Students were paired heterogeneously to complete their choice of tasks, which included writing a linear equation to model a linear pattern, graphing data sets and justifying whether given sets are linear or non-linear. Students also evaluated each other’s mathematical claims using a peer-edit form.

## Additional Findings

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

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and strategically integrate the instructional shifts. Rigorous habits and higher-order skills are emphasized in curricula and academic tasks and are embedded in a coherent way across grades and subject.

### Impact

Curricular coherence across grades and subject areas promotes college and career readiness for all students. All learners, including English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities demonstrate higher-order thinking within rigorous tasks.

### Supporting Evidence

- To support an instructional focus on extending basic writing across classrooms and building student's writing capacity, the decision was made to bring the Judith Hochman writing curriculum into the school. The impact on student achievement in writing arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence increased from a school-wide average 2.3 at the beginning of the year to 3.0 at the mid-year point in grade six. Grade seven increased from 2.4 to 2.6, and grade eight, 1.2 to 2.1 based on performance task data. Social studies had similar growth increases, specifically in writing standards focused on writing arguments focused on discipline specific content.
- Tasks across content include learning objectives that support the school's approach in ensuring that students have access to real-world application curricula. For example, a math task titled "Dream Bedroom Project" charged students with managing a budget, measuring square footage, creating a blueprint, and using proportions to solve multi-step ratio problems. A review of an art unit on the Jacob Lawrence migration paintings series, connected to a social studies unit on The Great Migration. One of the tasks included creating a triptych, a three-panel drawing, to represent a visual narrative of the migration of an assigned character from the migration social studies unit.
- Teachers use a yearlong curriculum map by grade and content area, which includes ELA, social studies, science, math, basic writing, and reading skills. The maps integrate the academic vocabulary needed for each unit with activities and learning objectives, which incorporate different levels of the Webb's *Depth of Knowledge* matrix.
- Teachers ensure all students have choice in their task selection with the appropriate supports for ELLs and students with disabilities. School leadership ensures teachers are providing students with options and resources by reviewing lesson and unit plans, with teacher guidance. A unit on elements of an introduction, connected to the Holocaust, included different packets, some of which contained graphic organizers and a transition outline for those students who needed extra support.

<b>Quality Indicator:</b>	<b>2.2 Assessment</b>	<b>Rating:</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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### Findings

Across the vast majority of classrooms, teachers use or create assessments, and rubrics that are aligned with the school's curricula and offer a clear portrait of student mastery. The school uses common assessments to create a clear picture of student progress toward goals across grades and subjects, track progress, and adjust curricular and instructional decisions.

### Impact

Students and teachers have actionable and meaningful feedback regarding student achievement. All students, including English Language Learners and students with disabilities demonstrate increased mastery.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teachers provide feedback to students via Google Drive and on hard copy student work. A review of student work posted on Google Docs evidenced teacher and student communication. A science project on "What is the effect of the fulcrum on how much force is used to lift the textbook?", included feedback from the teacher stating, "Try to use more of the academic vocabulary definitions. Also, re-read your work to decrease the level of repetition." Additional feedback to another student included, "Where are your real world examples, future research, and limitations to be included in the essay?" Students also receive feedback from peer-to-peer assessments. The school uses a common rubric that includes the content standard being assessed and criteria for each of the different levels, which are titled, "Super Scholar, Scholar, Student, Needs Improvement, and Incomplete."
- The school's assessment plan, which is distributed at the beginning of the school year, allows teachers to gather data in their cohort and monitor their progress throughout the year. Teachers use their beginning, mid, and end-of-year student data to make curricular revisions, guide instructional decisions and action plans for their professional learning teams. The teachers use Google Sheets to monitor student progress for each instructional trait, which is then reviewed by the school leadership team. According to the School Quality Guide, in the Closing Achievement Gap metrics for 2014-2105, students in Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) classes exceeded growth targets for Level 3 & 4 performance in both ELA and math. For English language learners, 47.8% and 45% of students for ELA and math respectively exceeded targets sets for achievement at 75<sup>th</sup>+ Growth Percentile.
- Teachers use *Schoolnet* assessments for beginning, mid-year, and end-of-year assessments and have the option to create their own assessment per content area or administer the same test given in the fall as a post-test assessment. Cohort data is used to look at longitudinal growth in ELA and math proficiency levels. Based on formative assessment analysis of data from 2014-2015 to 2015-2016, students are progressing in citing evidence across content areas. The principal produced data showing that the school outperformed the district in science performance task achievement, for percent correct averages, for every one of seven traits tested in grades 6, 7, and 8. The school has increased its instructional focus on academic vocabulary to provide more in-depth access to the content in social studies, counterclaim in ELA, ratios and proportion in math.

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

The vast majority of teachers are engaged in inquiry-based, structured professional collaborations that have strengthened their instructional capacity and promoted the implementation of Common Core Learning Standards. Teacher teams systematically analyze key elements of teacher work including classroom practice, assessment data, and student work for students they share or on whom they are focused.

**Impact**

As a result of effective team collaboration, there is school-wide curricula and increased achievement for all learners. Shared improvements in teacher practice foster mastery of goals for groups of students.

**Supporting Evidence**

- During the teacher team meeting, faculty members attributed the student achievement growth to increased teacher-to-student feedback. A grade eight teacher commented, “We’ve seen a huge improvement in writing and reading because students are coming to us better prepared which speaks to the work happening in sixth and seventh grade.” According to the school’s mid-year data, eighth graders increased in all six reading and writing traits, seventh graders increased in five out of six traits, and sixth graders increased in all traits.
- The sixth grade team focused on 10 students who regularly failed to produce or submit classwork, homework, and projects, struggled to stay on task during class, and were at risk of failing two or more classes with grades less than 65. Teachers collaborated with paraprofessionals and the leadership team to finalize a plan to support students, some of who were students with disabilities. Subsequently, teachers took turns working individually with students to support and encourage them with current and past due assignments. A student reported via reflection document, “This program has helped me, and my grades have gone up, and now I don’t have to be ashamed.” In the course of two months based on report card grades, the majority of students increased their overall average by at least seven percentage points during the third marking period.
- The science team has noted their collective instructional capacity has improved in terms of more accurate and strategic grouping of students. They note that this has become increasingly important in their work and attribute a 95-97% student pass rate on the Living Environment Regents exam over the last three school years as the result. One teacher reported, “We went from 50% of our students taking the exam to 100% of our students taking the exam.”