Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Mott Haven Community High School
Transfer High School X557
455 Southern Boulevard
Bronx
NY 10455

Principal: Helene Spadaccini

Date of review: December 8, 2014
Lead Reviewer: LaShawn Robinson
The School Context

Mott Haven Community is a transfer school with 251 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 32% Black, 65% Hispanic, 2% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 6% English language learners and 10% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 66.5%.

School Quality Criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Core</th>
<th>Area of:</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>To what extent does the school...</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Findings</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Focus</td>
<td>Developing</td>
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<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Findings</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Culture</th>
<th>Area of:</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
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<td><strong>To what extent does the school...</strong></td>
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<td>3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations</td>
<td>Celebration</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
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<tr>
<th>Systems for Improvement</th>
<th>Area of:</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
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<td><strong>To what extent does the school...</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning</td>
<td>Additional Findings</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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</table>
Findings
School leaders articulate high expectations to students, families, and staff, through teacher professional development, continuous family outreach, and course offerings focused on college readiness.

Impact
The structures and supports available for teachers and students support student progress towards college and career readiness and teacher development.

Supporting Evidence

- During staff development, the school reviewed expectations for college entry courses and ensured that high school course offerings exposed students to writing and research aligned to college expectations, as well as, proving multiple opportunities for argumentative essay writing. As a result of these expectations, students and families articulate that the school community expects students to attend college upon graduation. Parents applaud the school’s efforts and explained that the school has turned students’ expectations around and now they see college as a realistic goal.

- The Danielson framework has been the basis for walkthroughs done by the administrative team and teacher leaders. Feedback from these visits is used to develop actionable steps and teacher support plans to continue improving instruction and pedagogy. Additionally, the principal has facilitated staff PD on college and career readiness skills and tracks college level assignments in curricula. As a result of these efforts, the school has seen improvement in regents pass rates across all content areas.

- The school supports college and career readiness by preparing students to retake Regents examinations so they can achieve higher scores and meet City University of New York college readiness benchmarks. Parents express that they are very satisfied with the support provided by the school and that because of the work they do college is now a reality for their sons/daughters. In addition, through the Learning to Work program, students participate in paid internships at various community sites, including after school programs, retail stores, senior citizens centers, and others, thus exposing students to job related experiences.

- Students indicated that they are motivated to learn based on the support they are receiving from the adults in the school, particularly their advisors. They explained that receiving progress reports biweekly allows them to stay on track and helps them to focus on areas for improvement. Similarly, the students articulated that receiving rubrics prior to submitting their assignments and projects allow them to better understand the expectations for the task.
Area of Focus

| Quality Indicator: | 1.2 Pedagogy | Rating: | Developing |

Findings
The school believes that students learn best through collaborative learning, multiple entry points, and assessment to inform their next learning steps. However, there were inconsistencies across the school in checks for understanding and questioning.

Impact
Inconsistencies across classrooms limit opportunities for high level of students thinking and discussion thus hindering opportunities to appropriately challenge students and to increase student achievement.

Supporting Evidence
- Throughout the school, there is a focus on meeting the needs of all students and differentiating instruction for English language learners and students with disabilities. Teachers are asked to incorporate differentiated strategies to help struggling students master core concepts. For instance, during the social studies class, students had an opportunity to select activities from a choice board to demonstrate their knowledge about global changes that occurred after the Cold War. The teacher ensured that students attempted at least three higher level activities. In addition, to differentiate instruction and support struggling learners, teachers incorporate literacy strategies across content areas, align instructional tasks across the English department, and develop Regents preparation courses focused on skill development. The principal has also asked teachers to use the Depth of Knowledge matrix to plan questions at various levels to promote higher order thinking skills.

- The school is actively working to improve student critical thinking skills through questioning and discussion and academic tasks. However, in-class questioning, and discussion demonstrate varying levels of rigor and participation. Most classroom discussions observed were between teacher and student and text based discussions were limited and only observed in one classroom. For instance, in one of the classes observed, students were provided with two articles related to the Ray Rice and Adrian Petersen cases and were asked to annotate text and engage in a discussion citing textual evidence. Although a few students were able to cite information, most of the conversation that took place was between teacher and student, which resulted in missed opportunities for students to engage in discourse at a high level.

- While the school ascribes to the practice of differentiating instruction in lesson planning, classroom instruction is inconsistently aligned with this focus. Most student work products and activities show uniform tasks, purposeful grouping was only observed in one classroom, and differentiation of tasks in two out of the seven classrooms visited, thereby reducing the range of entry points and inhibiting advancement for all learners.

- School leaders and teachers assess progress by analyzing teacher practice and student outcomes to ensure alignment of school resources. However, teacher checks for understanding are inconsistent, most checks for understanding observed during classroom visits were in the form of teacher canvassing of the classroom and there was limited evidence that teachers were using this information to adjust instruction or provide additional support for students to meet the lesson objectives.
**Additional Findings**

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<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.1 Curriculum</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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**Findings**
The school utilizes Common Core aligned curricula and academic tasks from Engage NY that integrate the instructional shifts. Lessons are planned and adjusted using student work and data.

**Impact**
Across classrooms curricula and tasks are planned to provide relevant learning experiences and support all learners, including English Language Learners and students with disabilities, through the use of scaffolds, chunking, and multiple entry points.

**Supporting Evidence**

- The school community conducts baseline assessments and analyzes student data such as mock Regents to tailor curricula based on student’s needs. The school leader surveyed teachers and conducted an assessment of college and career readiness skills to ensure that instruction supports college and career readiness. As a result of this assessment, the school has worked to align their writing expectations and increase opportunities for students to engage in argumentative writing, problem solving, and extended responses.

- The principal reviews curriculum maps at the beginning of each trimester to determine if college skills are embedded in curriculum tasks. A review of sample unit plans artifacts shows that the school has developed units aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards. In addition, lesson plans include differentiation strategies that provide multiple entry points for students to access the rigorous instructional tasks.

- As part of the Transfer School Common Core Institute, the school identified and prioritized learning standards that guide curricular decision and address student needs. In addition, the school works with consultants from Redesign that meet with teachers bi-weekly help to elevate the rigor of instructional tasks through frequent PD and by modeling strategies. These practices result in consistent engagement of students.

- Teachers articulated that they review student work during team meetings and support each other in making appropriate curricula adjustments. The instructional leads conduct weekly inter-visitation and provide feedback to teachers on their lessons by assessing teacher practice utilizing the Danielson rubric and evaluating rigor of instructional tasks. This leads to focused lesson development and helps to increase the infusion of literacy strategies across content areas. Consequently, the school revises instructional plans regularly based on student progress.

- The school implemented writing across content areas to support students who struggle in extended response and higher order thinking questions. The principal explained that they decided to use Engage NY curricula because the materials provide resources to support literacy across content areas, which is aligned to the school’s instructional focus.
Findings
Across classrooms, formative and summative assessments are aligned to the curricula and provide the school community with actionable feedback regarding student achievement.

Impact
Current systems for tracking and monitoring student performance on formative assessments allow teachers to enhance curriculum and target students’ instructional needs. These practices are leading to increased student achievement.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and teachers diligently track progress and have clear methods of aligning data outcomes to instructional practices and curriculum. The school uses a 6 week interim assessment cycle and three step assessment, analysis and action, thus promoting student success.

- The school uses baseline assessments, interim assessment, and Mock Regents exams that are aligned to the curricula to track and monitor student progress throughout the year and to develop corrective action plans for learners. Some of the action plans reviewed were based on students’ mock Regents results. Through these plans, teachers developed targets such as focusing on short- response questions 26 and 27 of the English Regents and working with students on inferencing.

- Teachers analyze student work and make curricula and instructional adjustments to support learners. The school has a “Looking at Student Work” cycle for each trimester by department. Teachers explained that they had been working on analyzing student data both from mock Regents and formative assessments. Teachers developed a data binder based on Mock Regents data and use this information to develop instructional tasks. As a result of the data driven instruction, the English team increased Regents pass rate to 75%.

- Students receive biweekly progress reports from their advisors. Families are also informed of student outcomes and areas of progress or supports needed. The students explained that the advisors meet with them individually and help them to develop a plan to improve their grades for courses where they are struggling. Students were clear about the school’s grading policy and could articulate what they needed to do in order to complete their courses and Regents successfully. Student ownership of their own learning progress resulted in active student engagement in reaching self-identified goals and progress toward their own learning.
Quality Indicator: 4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development
Rating: Proficient

Findings
Teachers are engaged in structured professional collaborations focused on looking at student work, data analysis, curricula development and sharing best practices.

Impact
As a result of structured teacher teams, teachers are empowered to take leadership roles in the school community and are supporting the professional learning of their colleagues and accelerating academic growth for students.

Supporting Evidence

- There are six teacher teams that meet for approximately one hour each week. All teachers engage in collaborative inquiry groups focused on data analysis and looking at student work. The work of the teacher teams are aligned with the school goals, particularly around improving Regents pass rates across all content areas.

- During the teacher meeting observed, teachers reviewed student assessment data to identify learning gaps. The teachers articulated that some students were struggling with context clues and reasoning for some of their multiple choice questions. They also discussed strategies and shared resources to support students’ instructional needs such as developing common tasks that specifically targets areas of deficiencies and developing more opportunities to engage students with the text and argumentative writing.

- The principal described that in addition to targeting and supporting the attainment of school goals, the teacher team foci are to look at student work and to support the development of teaching practice across departments. Teachers support each other through teacher led inter-visitations cycle. During these visits, teachers make sure that instructional practices observed support the school’s instructional foci of using evidence in arguments and multiple points of entry. In addition, teacher teams use the school’s protocol for looking at student work during their meetings and ensure that teachers provide each other with feedback around next instructional steps.

- Teachers are empowered to take leadership roles and support the professional development of their colleagues. The lead teachers develop agendas for teacher team meetings and share meeting notes and next steps with the school leaders. The principal explained that teacher leads share their focus across departments to ensure that all teachers benefit from common best practices, such as the literacy strategies, scaffolds, and differentiation strategies that are shared expectations across the school.