Quality Review Report

2017-2018

Mott Hall IV
Junior High-Intermediate-Middle 23K522

1137 Herkimer Street
Brooklyn
NY 11233

Principal: Dellie Edwards

Dates of Review:
April 26, 2018 - April 27, 2018

Lead Reviewer: Debra Tasioudis
The Quality Review Report

The Quality Review is a two-day school visit by an experienced educator. During the review, the reviewer visits classrooms, talks with parents, students, teachers, and school leaders and uses a rubric to evaluate how well the school is organized to support student achievement.

The Quality Review Report provides a rating for all ten indicators of the Quality Review Rubric in three categories: Instructional Core, School Culture, and Systems for Improvement. One indicator is identified as the **Area of Celebration** to highlight an area in which the school does well to support student learning and achievement. One indicator is identified as the **Area of Focus** to highlight an area the school should work on to support student learning and achievement. The remaining indicators are identified as **Additional Finding**. This report presents written findings, impact, and site-specific supporting evidence for six indicators.

Information about the School

Mott Hall Iv serves students in grade 6 through grade 8. You will find information about this school, including enrollment, attendance, student demographics, and data regarding academic performance, at http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/tools/report/default.htm.

School Quality Ratings

### Instructional Core

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<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 Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<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>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Developing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<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>Area of Focus</td>
<td>Developing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## School Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults</td>
<td>Area of Celebration</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<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>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Systems for Improvement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Developing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Developing</td>
</tr>
<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 Finding</td>
<td>Developing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Developing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Area of Celebration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.4 Positive Learning Environment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Findings

Structures are in place which promote the school’s approach to culture-building, discipline, and social emotional support.

Impact

The school has a safe environment and inclusive culture that is conducive to student and adult learning. Through advisory, each student is known well by at least one adult who helps coordinate attendance, social-emotional learning, and guidance for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- Parents and students overwhelmingly praised the school for being safe and described the school as having a family-like environment. Parents were clear that they have had several principals in the last few years, and that under the new principal's leadership, the school has become a caring and nurturing environment again. As part of the school’s positive behavior intervention and supports (PBIS), the school has created a reward system where students receive bucks for demonstrating the school’s core values of integrity, leadership, and maximum output (effort). There is a school store where classes regularly get the opportunity to shop with earned bucks, and teachers and students alike shared that the ways to earn bucks is clear to students and that there is a system in place to ensure that they are given out with equity. As one student shared, “I feel safe at school because the team makes the expectations clear to us.”

- Staff, parents, and students alike shared that the guidance suite and school leaders have created a nurturing environment, where students can be heard and advisory creates a safe space for students to talk about their problems, both in and out of school. Through a partnership with the school’s community-based organization, there are two additional guidance counselors whose focus is supporting students. Though the school is small, the students, teachers and guidance counselors are organized into three houses, and within each house, students are organized into teams of about thirty. In houses, students meet regularly with advisors about school issues, such as behavior and expectations, as well as what it means to be a leader, and how to get along with peers and adults. Some students also participate in more targeted advisory groups, such as the sixth grade boys advisory group. Through these groups, students receive guidance, and social emotional learning that aligns with student learning needs. Students talked about advisory as a time where they can focus on the future, set goals for themselves, talk about the future they want, and how to reach their goals, both personal and academic.

- The school leader has implemented a morning circle every day for staff and students to ensure that the school has an inclusive culture, and to foster an environment where students and staff feel that their voice is welcomed and valued. The staff and students meet in the cafeteria at the beginning of the day for morning circle and each session focused on one of the school’s core values. There is a separate time for the school leaders to conduct a circle with just staff, then students, and finally the whole school together. Each meeting culminates in the school’s pledge, recited by all, “I am important, I will respect myself and others, I will be successful.” In a meeting, teachers shared that this new structure has helped them to be more proactive in meeting student’s emotional needs, allowing them to observe students and their emotional state at the start of the day, and ensuring that they get the supports they need. School data supports this and reflects that the number of incidents have decreased this year.
## Area of Focus

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>2.2 Assessment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Developing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### Findings

Faculty use beginning and end-of-year assessments to determine student progress and have begun to administer interim assessments across content areas. Teachers have begun to use checks for understanding and student self-assessment, however, this practice is not consistently implemented across classrooms.

### Impact

The results of common assessments and checks for understanding in the classroom are inconsistently used to make adjustments to curricula and instruction to meet student learning needs.

### Supporting Evidence

- During the review, a few teacher’s online grade books were shared that demonstrate how individual teachers track student progress. The online grade books evidence that students take common assessments, but there was little evidence in online grade books or in other school documents shared of adjustments made to meet student learning needs from these assessments. School leaders shared action plans created from an analysis of beginning of the year assessments given, and some adjustments to curriculum maps. Beyond that, there was little evidence of further adjustments. Mid-year assessments were given but there was scant evidence that results were used to make adjustments as they were at the beginning of the year. The math mid-year assessment was given in February, but by mid-April, teachers had yet to review class-level data reports to make adjustments. During the review, teachers were beginning to look at the February assessment results, but shared that they relied on other information about students, such as an analysis of the previous year’s exam to make adjustments. These practices demonstrate inconsistencies in teachers’ use of common assessments to meet student learning needs.

- In a meeting, teachers shared that they give end-of-unit assessments in English Language Arts (ELA) and math, though it is unclear from planning documents shared how teachers use them to inform adjustments, as lesson plans shared did not reflect planning for individual students and seldom demonstrated adjustments for groups of students. In other subjects, such as science and social studies, teachers shared that they grouped students based on performance on in-class assignments, rather than a set of assessments. In reading, different than other subject areas, teachers and students shared that leveled reading assessments were used to match students to independent texts at their level, demonstrating a consistent use of this common assessment to meet student learning needs.

- Across classrooms, teachers’ assessment practices demonstrate inconsistent use of checks for understanding to make effective adjustments. In a few classes observed during the review, teachers checked for understanding through the use of questioning, and then made on-the-spot adjustments to meet student learning needs. For example, in an ELA class, on using text evidence to support a claim, the teacher listened in to a small group of students discussing the text, and redirected the group’s thinking with the question, “How has this impacted Troy and how he raises his kids?” The question prompted students back to the text, where they quickly found evidence to support their argument. In other classes, such as a math class on understanding the relationship between two variables, the teacher stopped the entire class for a mid-lesson review, hindering many students who were ready to move on to more challenging work. In other classes, teachers asked many questions of students to elicit student thinking, but made no adjustment, and no note of student thinking for future adjustments.
Findings
School leaders and faculty ensure that the curricula, across grades, purposefully align to key Common Core Learning Standards, and consistently emphasize higher order thinking skills and rigorous habits for all learners.

Impact
Tasks across the school consistently offer all learners, including students with disabilities and English Language Learners (ELLs), the opportunity to practice higher order thinking skills and habits, through Common Core aligned tasks that require students to use textual evidence to support their thinking.

Supporting Evidence

- Lesson plans shared across the subject areas demonstrate alignment to the Common Core, with a focus on citing evidence from texts to support claims and ideas building coherence. In ELA and math, lessons and units include the use of the RACERS strategy for short responses that asks students to restate the question, answer it, cite the evidence from the text or problem, explain, reread, and summarize. This strategy helps align tasks to several instructional shifts, including the use of text-based evidence and promoting deep understanding in math. Units shared across the subject areas also include Common Core aligned performance tasks to stretch student thinking and focus students on real life application promoting college and career readiness. Typical of other units, a seventh grade ELA unit on character development in literature culminates in a student writing piece where students are asked to describe a major event in their life and how it has shaped them as a person. This alignment to the Common Core and instructional shifts was present in lessons and units shared throughout the review.

- Another unit shared, an eighth grade science unit on plant adaptation aligned to Common Core standards for ELA and math, and several Next Generation Science standards. The unit included opportunities for students to create models of relationships among variables affecting plant life, and also had students conduct short research projects on topics of their choice about plants, and conduct labs about how plants engage in photosynthesis and tropism. Learning targets within the unit, such as one that asks students to design an experiment with celery, water and food coloring also provided different roles for students, ensuring that there were opportunities for students, including students with disabilities and ELLs to engage in rigorous habits as they engaged in scientific inquiry. This was typical of other units shared.

- During the review, students shared work from their classes that also demonstrated rigor in tasks that asked students to cite evidence from text, or demonstrate their problem solving strategies in math. One student shared a writing piece about Shay’s Rebellion from a social studies class that asked the student to synthesize evidence from several primary sources. The student shared that the assignment was challenging because he had to provide a lot of evidence from various pieces of text. Another student shared work from a math class on slope and y intercept, where the student had to define the terms, solve several problems, and explain their mathematical thinking, demonstrating rigor aligned to the Common Core.
## Additional Finding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.2 Pedagogy</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Developing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

### Findings

Teaching strategies, including supports for students and discussion techniques, inconsistently provide students with access to the curricula.

### Impact

Student work products and classroom discussions inconsistently challenge students and promote uneven levels of participation.

### Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, the most common teaching strategies used to provide students with multiple entry points into the curricula were providing students with access to their peers for support, and the use of scaffolded questions from the teacher. In a ELA class for students with disabilities, the teacher provided students with a structured note-taker and discussion organizer as the class participated in an interactive read aloud of August Wilson’s play *Fences*. The note-taker provided vocabulary supports and included questions that prompted students to revisit the text to find evidence for their group discussion, and also provided room for students to take notes from the discussion itself. This scaffolding for both deep understanding of the text and for the class discussion helped students to review the key ideas in the text and demonstrate understanding of multiple perspectives through reflection. In other classes, this level of structured questioning, vocabulary support, and opportunity for students to demonstrate higher order thinking in written work and discussion was not always present.

- In some classes, student work products led to uneven demonstrations of student thinking. In an ELA class on using precise words and descriptive details, the teacher opened the lesson with a video to bring in a real world connection about mass incarceration in America to the class novel *Monster* by Walter Dean Myers. The video contained many content specific vocabulary terms, such as mass incarceration, juvenile justice and truancy, that were undefined for students. Students also had no task during the video, or opportunity to discuss what they had seen before moving into a discussion of poetry, leading to an uneven demonstration of thinking as students produced no work products. In a science lesson on the Doppler Effect, the teacher engaged the class in an experiment to understand the phenomena, but the teacher conducted the experiment, rather than the students, leaving them to take notes on what the teacher orally explained was happening. Some students were able to follow and take notes, others were less able to discern the important information, and took sparse notes about the experiment, demonstrating uneven levels of understanding.

- In a few classes, there were missed opportunities for students to explain their thinking to peers or in writing, beyond whole class shares that asked few students to contribute. In a reading class, the learning target stated that students would engage in effective collaborative conversations. Students read their independent novels for part of the period with a prompt to reflect on their story on a post-it. The teacher then engaged students in a whole class discussion, where four students shared summaries about what they had read about during the period. The prompt did not engage most students in a collaborative discussion aligned with the learning target, or ask the reader to write with specificity or length about their novel, aligned with the grade level standards. Rather than engage in collaborative discussions, many students sat silently waiting for a new task, something that students in a separate meeting shared is common in their classes, as they often spend time waiting for their peers to complete the task, or for their teacher to give them more work.
**Quality Indicator:** 3.4 High Expectations

**Rating:** Proficient

**Findings**

The school leaders and teachers consistently communicate high expectations and college readiness to the entire school community.

**Impact**

Students and parents understand student progress and student advisory leads to next-level readiness.

**Supporting Evidence**

- School staff and teachers consistently communicate expectations and student progress to families through an online grading system and frequent progress reports and report cards. The school sends home four progress reports and four report cards every year, ensuring that families have a clear understanding about student progress. In a meeting with families most shared that they have easy access to their child’s teachers, as well as school leaders and guidance counselors, who are always available by phone and communicate often about student progress and schoolwide expectations. The school also hosts parent teacher conferences that are accompanied with workshops about the curricula and family game nights that help families to understand the expectations for collaboration and math at the school.

- The school has created a culture for learning that makes expectations clear to students through the school’s morning meetings, and advisory structure. Daily morning circles are in place to set the tone of high expectations for students. During this time, students are reminded of instructional expectations, upcoming events, and schoolwide norms. All students also engage in advisory, where students receive additional guidance in a smaller group about schoolwide expectations, and high school expectations. In advisory, students engage in goal setting throughout the year, selecting their own goals aligned with schoolwide expectations as well as performance on New York State (NYS) exams, and advisors and peers provide students with guidance on how to meet expectations.

- Throughout their three years in the school, advisory provides students with guidance about selecting a high school appropriate for their interests, preparing the application, and supports them throughout the process. In sixth grade advisory, students are introduced to the high school directory, and students are taught how to explore different programs and requirements for each school. Eighth grade students also meet with sixth grade advisory groups to discuss the choices that they made, or schools that they most want to attend. In seventh grade, students are supported in completing their applications, and have a program to help students practice for the specialized high school exam, should they want to apply. By eighth grade, the focus of advisory shifts to focus more on the skills students will need to be successful in high school, such as study habits, and managing their time, ensuring that students are prepared for the next level.
### Findings
The majority of teachers engage in structured, professional collaborations connected to the school’s goals. Teacher teams analyze student work.

### Impact
There is not yet an inquiry process in place. Reviews of student work and data have yet to ensure student progress on a consistent basis.

### Supporting Evidence

- The majority of teachers are engaged in structured, professional collaboration focused on curricular revisions and discussions of student performance. ELA and math teachers meet weekly, and teachers of other subjects meet regularly with the assistant principal to engage in similar curricular work. The school also has an attendance team that meets weekly to focus on efforts to improve student attendance. Together, the majority of teachers and staff engage in professional collaborations that focus on the implementation of the Common Core and the school’s instructional goals.

- In a math team meeting observed during the review, teachers met to discuss the performance of a group of ten students, identified as students whose overall performance on the beginning of the year assessment demonstrated that they may be able to achieve the grade level standard on the end-of-year NYS assessment. During the meeting, teachers discussed overall student performance for the ten students on a mid-year assessment given in February, as they had in a previous cycle for the beginning of the year assessment, but were not able to articulate any progress toward goals for the group of students during the school year.

- After a focused discussion of the ten students, the teachers turned their attention to a review of student performance on the mid-year assessment for students across the grade, excluding the students with disabilities receiving self-contained service. Teachers identified standards for re-teaching across the grade, without attention to particular students or groups of students who would specifically need lessons re-teaching skills aligned to the particular standards that were discussed. The teachers also shared that they did not use this data to make adjustments ahead of the NYS exam, but instead looked at standards that were not addressed in this assessment, and conversations with students. This demonstrates that while teachers are analyzing student data, the work does not typically result in progress toward goals for groups of students.