Quality Review Report

2018-2019

Mott Hall III
Junior High-Intermediate-Middle 09X128
580 Crotona Park South
Bronx
NY 10456

Principal: Jorisis Stupart

Dates of Review:
December 6, 2018 - December 7, 2018

Lead Reviewer: Buffie Whitfield
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 III 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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Core</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To what extent does the school...</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>Area of Celebration</td>
<td>Well Developed</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>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</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>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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<tr>
<td>School Culture</td>
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<td>To what extent does the school...</td>
<td>Area</td>
<td>Rating</td>
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<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>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
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<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>Well Developed</td>
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<tr>
<th>Systems for Improvement</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>To what extent does the school...</td>
<td>Area</td>
<td>Rating</td>
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<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>Well Developed</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>Well Developed</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>Well Developed</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>Well Developed</td>
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<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>Area of Focus</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Findings

All curricula across grades and content areas are aligned to writing and problem solving. Academic tasks and the core curricula are strategically revised and refined based on analysis of student work and data.

Impact

The strategic integration of the instructional shifts results in lessons and academic tasks that promote college and career readiness for all students. The analysis of student work leads to the branding of skills to meet the needs of diverse learners and promotes cognitive engagement for all students.

Supporting Evidence

- Lesson plans are detailed and include specific learning targets and objectives. Additionally, all lessons include learning outcomes and include required components namely, the lesson in context sections, a behind the scenes planning section, differentiation strategies, and student choice. Social Studies tasks are rigorous and ask students to determine the reliability and significance of primary and secondary sources, and to use multiple sources to challenge accounts of historical events. In Science, students conduct hands-on investigations and evidence-based discussions to connect their observations with their developing understandings. In math, tasks consistently require students to address why something works rather than simply repeating a procedure to identify an answer. In English Language Arts (ELA) units, students are tasked to read and write for a variety of purposes, including whole-class investigations into essential questions as well as students’ independent pursuit of individualized goals in literacy. Across all subject areas, tasks challenge students to connect their learning to current events, their own experiences, and phenomena in the natural world, thus pushing the level of thinking needed for college readiness.

- All students engage with curricula across all subjects that include higher order thinking skills and the instructional shifts. For example, in ELA students were required to defend a position and formulate an argument drawing upon the arguments of the authors to support their point of view. English unit plans include closed reading, text-based writing, questioning and discussion. Modules include performance-based and summative assessments, a culminating performance-based assessment, a student checklist, as well as scaffolds, extensions and resources for vocabulary, text-dependent questions and literature circles.

- Revisions to the curricula and lesson plans are based on the analysis of student work and formative assessment data. Teachers systematically use protocols for looking at student work, and determine mastery of concepts for each unit of study. Revisions are then made to address the gaps in student learning that have surfaced. Changes have included revisions in the sequence of topics, additional lessons for re-teaching within the units and the selection of culturally relevant and appropriately challenging materials. Within the various curricula, teachers continually revise and refine plans to reflect the goal of productive struggle through the use of scaffolds and supports to ensure access for the diverse learners. In ELA, tiered supports in approaching writing tasks are dependent on performance assessments. Teachers have reflected and decided to replace low-level texts included in the Expeditionary Learning curriculum with texts that are more rigorous and relevant for students. For example, for the seventh grade, *A Long Walk to Water* was replaced with *Enrique’s Journey, a more challenging text*. The curriculum has been streamlined to reduce redundancy within lessons, to increase the amount of writing and nonfiction reading. As a result there has been steady improvement in students’ reading comprehension and writing which is evidenced in the latest assessment data.
Area of Focus

| Quality Indicator: | 5.1 Monitoring and Revising Systems | Rating: | Proficient |

Findings

School leaders and faculty have a process in place to regularly evaluate the instructional core along with systems for improvement. Work is focused on ensuring structures are more purposeful and effective.

Impact

Even though there are periodic adjustments made to increase coherence, there are missed opportunities to make strategic adjustments aligned to the Common Core to lead to more uniformity in the effectiveness of teacher teamwork and the quality of professional learning experiences.

Supporting Evidence

- School staff has an informal structure to review the effectiveness of curricula materials, assessment tools, and teaching practices on a regular basis. Although school leaders and staff utilize data to inform adjustments being made to curricula tools and resources there were missed opportunities for a strategic alignment between these constructs across some subject areas. Most teachers thoughtfully craft activities to provide appropriate scaffolds during learning activities, execute them, and assess learning for their student populations. The school continues to work on building greater alignment and coherence between what is taught and how all other teachers teach to all student populations and provide extensions to challenge students.

- Teacher teams meet to review curricula, the implementation of effective teaching practices, and the quality of assessment practices to gauge student understanding. This work has helped teachers reflect on decisions on how to make the curricula more engaging and rigorous. Most teachers utilize an online platform to glean best practices from each other to strengthen the teaching of the instructional core to avoid gaps in teaching, learning, planning, and assessment across the school. Staff members and school leaders articulated next steps to try to provide meaningful feedback aligned to the Common Core so that more students can internalize the feedback.

- School leaders observe teachers frequently. In a few cases, administrators’ feedback is not normed. School leaders are monitoring and evaluating pedagogical feedback. Although teachers are involved in an inquiry group to improve students’ academic outcomes, protocols to share team findings on an ongoing basis are less formalized. This limits teachers’ capacity to fully evaluate students’ varied learning needs and make additional data-informed decisions on implementing new instructional approaches that maximize students’ achievement across content areas and support student mastery.
## Additional Finding

### 1.2 Pedagogy

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<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
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### Findings

Across classrooms teaching strategies, including questions that emphasize discourse and the use of scaffolds, consistently provide multiple entry points for all students.

### Impact

Students have access to challenging and rigorous tasks that promote discussion and engagement resulting in high levels of thinking and learning.

### Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms there is an emphasis on discourse as students are encouraged to explain and deepen their thinking. In a Social Studies class, some students discussed questions they wanted to answer in their groups. For example, students discussed what it was like to live in the New England, the middle and southern colonies while other students shared the similarities and differences between the European colonies in North America. In an ELA class, via a gallery walk, students reviewed various statements and worked with peers to support a stance based on a topic within the text, *Enrique's Journey*. There is an emphasis on evidence-based discourse, as students have multiple opportunities to show, explain, and expand their thinking through collaboration with peers.

- Across classrooms, discussions reflect high levels of student thinking and participation. For example, in a Science class, the teacher asked students to explain how a lawnmower works? Students explained the form of input and output energy. Students used academic vocabulary in their explanation as they discussed the forms of energy including chemical, elastic, magnetic, gravitational, electrostatic, nuclear and electrical. Students polled their peers before accepting explanations which required students to be engaged.

- In an ELA class, the teacher posed to the class, “How do poets create their own work based on a mentor text? Students turned and talked with classmates to come to an agreed upon answer based on facts they had learned. Students responded to the teacher and shared their opinion while citing evidence found in the poems to support their statements. In the social studies classes observed, students employed critical thinking skills as a habit of mind, considering different viewpoints using evidence from the text and making connections. In a global history class, students developed a claim and an argument that addressed Lincoln’s and Lee’s perspectives by using hashtags to give their main idea. For example, students used #PRESERVINGOURUNION as a hashtag to support an argument related to the Civil War. As students shared out, they interpreted quotes from the text and offered their opinions demonstrating their learning.
**Additional Finding**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>2.2 Assessment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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**Findings**

Common assessments include the use of standards based and task specific rubrics across subject areas. Assessments track progress of students towards goals.

**Impact**

Data from common assessments leads to adjustments in curricula and instruction that impact student learning and provides actionable feedback to students on their achievement.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Teachers use standards based and task specific rubrics across grades and subjects to assess student work. This consistency enables teachers to analyze work together to determine student progress within the unit of study or a particular lesson. Students say that the teachers are easily accessible and allow them to come visit them for tutoring. They believe the feedback given to them about their writing, projects and classwork has helped them to improve. One student spoke of the feedback he received which addressed the content of her writing. The teacher’s comment indicated that it lacked a clear claim. She shared that the feedback kept her motivated to write clearer thesis statements and has helped her in other subjects as well. Students discussed the use of rubrics during daily class lessons and when working on projects.

- Teachers have created assessments for the beginning, middle, and end of the year that align with each grade’s curriculum content which help determine student progress toward their goals. In Social Studies, teachers assess student performance in key social studies skills: map skills, reading charts and graphs, interpreting political cartoons, vocabulary, and document-based questions. Common assessments also assess students’ ability to write a thematic essay using a rubric that has been adapted from the US History Regents Exam rubric. In Math, students take unit exams that assess their performance on each unit’s standards. Teachers use a variety of reports from Standards Mastery and student performance reports, to plan next steps for whole-class as well as individual instruction. This practice has resulting in gains in a variety of student subpopulations. The 2018 New York State assessment data indicates a 10 percent improvement in proficiency for students with disabilities; a 12 percent increase for English Language Learners (ELLs) and economically disadvantaged students evidenced a 7 percent increase in proficiency. Additionally, ELLs made significant gains on the NYSESLAT Exam with 82 percent of ELL students making progress and 44 percent of them scoring at the highest level of Commanding.

- In ELA, teachers administer final unit assessments that address the essential questions from the unit and students are assessed using a common writing rubric that has been adapted from the NYS ELA Exam rubric. ELA teachers also use Scantron Performance Series Assessments to determine student Lexile levels. Students use their progress in Lexile levels for ongoing reflection, goal-setting, and independent reading choices throughout the year. ELA and Math teachers administer benchmark assessments to assess students’ performance on standards that have been taught to date. Results from these assessments are analyzed by teachers and findings are shared with administrators during data conferences. Students are then guided in conducting individual analyses of their own test results, including assessing and revising their responses to constructed- and extended-response questions. As a result, most recent data indicates that students outperformed their peers on the 2018 NYS ELA Exam with a 19 percent increase in students achieving proficiency.
### Findings

School leaders and staff systematically emphasize high expectations for professionalism and academic excellence to the entire school community. Expectations connected to a path to college and career readiness are provided students via ongoing progress reports and a strategic orientation program.

### Impact

Communication structures ensure a high level of trust and mutual accountability across the school community. School leaders and staff successfully partner with families to support student progress toward attaining their goals.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teachers engage in professional development focused on aligning instructional practices with the expectations of the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. Weekly meetings address issues related to the grade and subject area content. Teachers state that feedback specific to rigor and the quality of the questions being posed during their lessons helps ensure accountability regarding the high expectations they must maintain to provide the best possible learning experiences for their students. On the school survey, 100 percent of teachers said that the principal communicates a clear vision for this school; 100 percent of teachers said that they would recommend their school to families seeking a place for their child; and 100 percent of teachers said that they would recommend their school to other teachers as a place to work.

- Families state that the principal, administrators and staff have high expectations for student excellence and success, which is established on their very first day of school. Students go through a rigorous selection process to be admitted, including a one-on-one interview with a teacher and; the completion of a writing sample addressing their qualifications and interest. A teacher panel convenes to review student applications and make selection decisions using a standardized rubric that includes a student’s academic data, and data from the in-person assessments. Parents of prospective students attend an informational meeting while their children are being interviewed, and parents of accepted students are required to attend a parent orientation meeting in June. At this meeting, parents receive all the information they need to ensure their child’s smooth transition to sixth grade. This includes the student handbook, supply list, summer vacation homework, and uniform information. They also receive information about the mandatory student orientation program, which occurs one week prior to the official first day of school. Teachers shared that they all attend orientation to ensure that students and parents are aware of the high expectations set for students and families. According to a survey 93 percent of families said that teachers and families think of each other as partners in educating children and 90 percent of families said that school staff regularly communicate with them about how families can help their child learn.

- Teacher teams create norms, such as being on time and speaking positively about students, which govern their team meeting. Professional responsibilities and expectations are outlined for staff in their faculty handbook and during new teacher orientation. Expectations for curriculum planning, assessments, and data tracking are formalized in planning guides that describe coherent practices across departments. Teachers collaborated in the creation of the planning guides, which are revised each year to reflect current practices. Teachers hold one another accountable through intervistations. On the school survey, 100 percent of teachers said that the principal sets high standards for student learning; and 100 percent of teachers said that they look forward to each day at their school.
Findings

The vast majority of teachers are engaged in a variety of structured, inquiry-based professional learning collaborations through participation in department, grade, co-planning and advisory teams. Teachers have key leadership roles that focus on improved student learning and pedagogy through systematic analysis of instruction, data, and student work.

Impact

Inquiry work and the Friends with Bagels critical friends group have strengthened teacher collaborations resulting in school-wide instructional coherence, effective teacher leadership, and improvement in teacher pedagogy and student achievement.

Supporting Evidence

- All teacher teams, including department, grade-level, advisory, co-planning teams, and working groups, are involved in structured, inquiry-based collaborations. Teachers meet weekly in their respective teams to work on their teaching practice, analyze student work, and discuss specific instructional strategies to ensure that these collaborations improve their practice and help students make progress toward their goals. Some teachers stated that because of meeting regularly they have seen growth in their own planning, especially in addressing the instructional shifts, and in differentiation and introducing elements of the Learning Cultures model. Additionally, the school leaders provided Advance-tracker data to show evidence of teachers improving in the competencies of the Danielson Framework for Teaching, specifically around student discussion.

- Teachers meet weekly to discuss schoolwide and/or team goals to ensure coherence and consistency. Teacher teams, including department teams and grade teams, provide support for teachers and students. The department teams collaborate to write syllabi and unit plans that ensure literacy activities are coherently embedded in content courses across classes. Teachers brainstorm to make adjustments, decide actions to take, and execute unified team action plans to strengthen their teaching. Additionally, teachers engage in analyzing lesson plans, discuss findings and prepare feedback for the teachers they visited. Teachers agreed these visits are helpful in improving their own practice.

- The administration strongly supports initiatives led by teachers, including mentoring of new teachers, collegial team teaching and interdisciplinary projects that encourage teachers to work together across content areas. For example, science teachers shared that students struggled with vocabulary. As a result teachers increased the use of vocabulary in class and routinely assessed students on content vocabulary. Teacher leads collaborate across grades to make key decisions around curriculum, instructional strategies, inter-visitations and professional development sessions. Teachers shared that the principal trusts and empowers them to make decisions. They feel supported by the leadership and appreciate the opportunities to be creative within their subject and grade level responsibilities. This system for distributive leadership has engendered a culture of trust for the entire school community positively impacting and advancing student learning outcomes.