



**2016-2017**  
**Mott Hall II**  
**Spotlight on Grade 7**  
**A Year of Discovery and Changes**

A scholar's 7th grade year can be both exciting and overwhelming. Students have to manage several priorities, such as family obligations and extracurricular activities, in addition to staying on top of their class work, homework and grades. Students are navigating through their most impactful year of middle school, experiencing dramatic changes with their bodies and hormones, potentially competing with peers on both academic and friendship levels, coping with various school and personal stressors and possibly seeking approval of loved ones, teachers and friends. As their bodies and brains develop, even the most perfect, straight-A scholars may seem like completely different people in grade 7. Keep encouraging and supporting them--they may not verbalize it, but they need you!

### **SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL GROWTH<sup>1</sup>**

During the early adolescent stage between 12 and 14 years old, scholars have a desire for sudden and increased independence. Some characteristics you may notice during these years include:

- Struggling with sense of identity
- Moodiness
- Improved abilities to use speech to express oneself
- More likely to express feelings by action than by words
- Close friendships gain importance
- Less attention shown to parents, with occasional rudeness
- Realization that parents are not perfect; identification of their faults
- Search for new people to love in addition to parents
- Tendency to return to childish behavior
- Peer group influences interests and clothing styles
- Increasing career interests but mostly interested in present and near future

In addition to the characteristics above, families may experience other changes in a scholar's personality, such as:

- Is spirited and enthusiastic
- Can "stay put" longer and exercise self-control
- Develops a growing sense of intuition and insight into self and others

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<sup>1</sup> American School Counselor Association

- Becomes less moody and may become good-natured around adults
- Becomes increasingly self-reliant and self-centered
- Is curious but not ready for long-term planning
- Has a strong desire to be like peers.

Ms. Robbins, has an open-door policy with students. They are encouraged to seek out assistance from an adult they trust, when they need academic, social and/or emotional support.

## **ACADEMICS**

Seventh grade scholars should expect to complete 30 to 40 minutes of homework every night in EACH core subject. Students should expect an increase in the difficulty and complexity of their academic work as teachers work to prepare them for the rigors of high school. Scholars will be expected to think and work independently as they tackle algebra, read more complex texts, write papers and give oral presentations. Scholars are also expected to take notes during class, study and read independently at home and ask for assistance when needed. Families can be a great help in 7th grade by helping your scholar to stay organized and submit assignments on time. Allow your scholar to work and struggle independently, but step in when you notice s/he is in need of encouragement and support.

We urge you to frequently communicate with your child's teachers. E-mail is the best and most immediate form of communication. Also, families may request a scheduled conference if necessary. Our online grading system, in addition to mid-quarter progress reports, report cards and parent-teacher conferences are a great way to remain informed about your child's progress. Often times, we find 7th graders do not communicate information to their families about their education. It will become more of your responsibility to stay informed!

## **GRADING POLICY**

Each teacher has his/her own grading policy and weighs homework, class work, tests, projects, and participation slightly differently. We invite parents to attend our Curriculum Night in September to meet with 7th grade teachers and gain a better understanding of how each teacher will evaluate work.

Throughout the year, 7th grade teachers offer support in the form of Study Hall. Study Hall for each core subject is held on a designated day, providing scholars with additional support to maintain their academic performance at a high level.

Scholars who earn Honors will be permitted to eat lunch outside of the building, with parents' permission. Students who achieve Honors at the end of fourth quarter in the sixth grade will be allowed to go outside during their lunch hour in the fall.

## **CORE CURRICULUM HIGHLIGHTS**

### **English Language Arts**

The 7<sup>th</sup> grade ELA course follows the Common Core reading and writing standards for fiction and informational texts. Throughout the year, scholars are encouraged to become independent readers, writers and thinkers. They will use close reading strategies to identify relevant evidence, which they incorporate into their writing to support their ideas, opinions and claims. The counter-claim, or alternative argument, is a prominent focal point in 7<sup>th</sup> grade writing, and is highlighted in various units. There is also a strong emphasis on grammar and vocabulary acquisition. 7<sup>th</sup> grade readers and writers feature compositions on character analysis, allegory & perspective, figurative language, narrative writing, informational writing, poetry, drama and argumentative writing. Several texts that may be used during the year include *Bronx Masquerade*, *Animal Farm* and *The House on Mango Street*.

### **Mathematics**

In 7th grade Math, scholars will expand on the skills they mastered in sixth grade to become more adept problem solvers. There will be an emphasis on real-world applications in the areas of Ratios & Proportional Relationships, Number Sense, Expressions & Equations, Statistics & Probability, and Geometry. Our curriculum is based on the Accelerated 7th Grade Common Core Learning Standards, which will prepare all scholars for the opportunity to take Regents Algebra as 8th graders. Throughout the year, scholars can expect to complete real-world project applications (as groups or individually), technology-based investigations, written explanations, and complete assessments and exams.

### **Social Studies**

In 7th grade social studies, scholars will become historians, geographers, and active, informed citizens. Our curriculum is based on the New York State Social Studies standards and the Common Core Literacy standards in Social Studies. Instead of a textbook, scholars engage with a diverse array of written and visual primary sources and articles by renowned American historians. They will study historical content ranging from the Native Americas and European exploration to the Civil War and Reconstruction and will also learn the fundamentals of U.S. government and the judicial system. Throughout the year, 7th graders will engage in thoughtful debate with their peers and will form well-reasoned opinions rooted in historical evidence. Students will demonstrate their learning through argumentative writing, class debates, written and visual historical fiction, and exams.

## Science

In 7th grade science, we work to encourage curious scientists in developing and articulating a deeper understanding of themselves and the world around them. Our curriculum is based on the Next Generation Science Standards, NY State Science Standards, and Common Core ELA Standards for Science and Technical Subjects. Students routinely participate in a variety of hands-on labs and field trips. They demonstrate understanding and show growth through tests, quizzes, labs, and writing assignments ranging from lab reports to public service announcements. 7th graders will learn science content in the Physical and Life Sciences starting with the structure of the Periodic Table and concluding with the systems of the human body. Students will study and discuss both past and current scientific discoveries throughout the year.

## COMMUNITY SERVICE LEARNING

Mott Hall II believes that community service can be an enriching and rewarding experience for students and providers alike and for the organizations in which they work. Giving back to our communities in various ways is an important component of the high school application process. It satisfies an admissions requirement for the high schools of greatest interest to our students and their families.

Our community service learning program has been developed with the purpose of fostering students' sense of responsibility for their community by providing them with the opportunity to make a commitment, learn the basic skills required in a workplace, and to make a contribution to the local community. These goals are consistent with the overriding goals of our school program, which are best captured by our motto: "Today's Scholars – Tomorrow's Leaders".

Community service learning is an integral part of our curriculum, which is designed to help scholars grasp how a strong academic foundation can empower them to realize their ambitions in the future, and how to better their communities while learning. Service learning hours are to be completed after school, on weekends or during school breaks. Students are expected to secure their own sites; a list of possibilities will also be provided.

## HIGH SCHOOL ADVISEMENT<sup>2</sup>

The high school advisement process begins in the spring of 7<sup>th</sup> grade, when students are given a 500-page high school directory. This *Directory of NYC Public High Schools* is compiled by the NYC Department of Education and includes details for over 400 high schools throughout NYC, as well as information regarding the high school admissions process.

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<sup>2</sup> NYC Department of Education: DOE Home Page > Choices & Enrollment > High Schools

In addition, there is a *Specialized High School Student Handbook*, which includes information specifically pertaining to high schools that require students take the Specialized High School Admissions Test (SHSAT) in order to be considered. There is also a new schools directory available each year, which provides detailed information about the approved new high schools starting in the fall of the next school year.

Scholars should review the directory with their parents, and should begin to create a wish list of desired high schools. Beginning in the spring of 7<sup>th</sup> grade, Ms. Gorman, our guidance counselor, will personally work with families to narrow down the list. Ms. Gorman will schedule one-on-one meetings with each family to discuss the high school admissions process. These meetings are tailored for each student, personalizing the conversation around the student's college and career pursuits, academic performance, enrichment activities, and student interests. Ms. Gorman will also guide families as to the best possible high school options taking into account all variables of a scholar's academic history.

The high school process is a highly competitive process. It is a choice process that provides families with options for public schools, specialized high schools, performing arts schools, private schools, boarding schools and Catholic high schools. A strong academic record, standardized test scores and excellent attendance are all factors in the high school selection process. Mott Hall II has a very strong, collaborative teaching and support staff that supports Mott Hall II scholars achieve their goals and aspirations.

### **SPECIALIZED HIGH SCHOOL ADMISSIONS TEST (SHSAT)<sup>3</sup>**

Scholars who wish to apply to New York City's specialized high schools must take the Specialized High School Admissions Test (SHSAT) and submit an application listing their choices of schools in order of preference.

The SHSAT is a timed multiple-choice test with two sections, verbal and math, which must be completed in a total of 2 hours and 30 minutes. In the first section, students demonstrate their verbal reasoning and reading comprehension by ordering sentences to form a coherent paragraph, answering questions of logical reasoning, and analyzing and interpreting texts. In the second section, students demonstrate their math skills by answering computational and word questions that require arithmetic, algebra, probability, statistics, and geometry.

Students are ranked according to their scores on the test, and assigned to a school depending on their rank on the list, the priority in which they placed schools and the seats available at each school.

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<sup>3</sup> NYC Department of Education: DOE Home Page > Performance & Accountability > Yearly Testing > Specialized High School Admissions Test (SHSAT)

The Specialized high schools that require the SHSAT are: Bronx High School of Science; Brooklyn Technical High School; High School for Math, Science and Engineering at City College; High School for American Studies at Lehman College; Queens High School for Sciences at York College; and Stuyvesant High School.

Mott Hall II scholars are offered the opportunity to participate in a SHSAT test prep program. The program typically begins in the spring of 7<sup>th</sup> grade. Students would attend after-school test preparation classes a few times per week, take a break during the summer months, then continue in the fall of 8<sup>th</sup> grade; culminating with the SHSAT testing days in the fall. While the program is endorsed and approved by Mott Hall II, families would pay for this service. Families are also welcome to invest in a test preparation program outside of Mott Hall II, if scholars are considering taking this exam.

### **THE IVY LEAGUE EXPERIENCE**

Seventh grade students are invited to apply to the Ivy League Experience at Mott Hall II. This prestigious program is facilitated by College Students for Enrichment in Secondary Schools (CSESS) with the purpose of bringing knowledge of various content areas to our school. Harvard University students who are on their holiday break will present their specific fields of study to select Mott Hall II students. There are six to eight days of two-hour seminars (or courses) that will consist of presentation, whole-group, small-group, and individual activities. Each of the days will focus on a different topic. The final course list will be available in the spring.

The Ivy League Experience is an opportunity to learn about subjects and ideas that might be new to scholars – and to learn from “experts” who are currently studying these disciplines in school. This is a prestigious program that will count as an additional course on second quarter report cards. The Harvard Institute at Mott Hall II is another program scholars can talk and write about in high school applications and essays.

### **ACADEMIC ENRICHMENT PROGRAMS**

Mott Hall II scholars participate in many after-school enrichment programs. Our scholars attend programs such as Science & Technology Entry Program (STEP), Appleseed Workshop, TRUCE Fitness & Nutrition Center, Harlem Children’s Zone and more. Please contact Ms. Robbins for a full list of available programs, selection criteria and additional information.

### **SCHOLARSHIP & MENTORSHIP PROGRAMS**

The counseling team assists scholars in applying for several programs which help students who would like to pursue boarding school, college readiness, mentoring and more. Programs such as A Better Chance, Breakthrough, TEAK Fellowship and Prep 9 are some of the programs Mott

Hall II scholars have been accepted to. Please contact Mrs. Gorman for a full list of opportunities, selection criteria and additional information.