



2016-2017
Mott Hall II
Spotlight on Grade 8
A Year of Maturation and Leadership

Mott Hall II scholars enter sixth grade in transition, discover changes and choice in the seventh, and mature in the 8th. With our nurturing environment, and tough-love approach to learning and independence, our scholars depart 8th grade as leaders, ready to take on the challenges of high school and beyond.

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL GROWTH¹

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 in your 8th grader include:

- A need to keep a neat appearance. Looks are extremely important to your child at this time.
- A quiet demeanor. Kids this age are usually quieter than kids a year older or younger.
- The need to be left alone, especially at home.
- Sensitivity. You might notice your child's feelings are easily hurt. Beware— teens this age can easily hurt others feelings, too.
- Close friendships— this is often more important to girls.
- Boys hang out in groups.
- Girls will express an interest in older boys.
- A strong interest in sports.
- Preoccupation with television, computers, and video games.
- Music might start to have a big influence.
- Peer pressure increases, and your teen might be influenced on his clothing choices, musical tastes, and how he speaks in an effort to be "cool."
- Worrying about schoolwork.
- An off-beat sense of humor highlighted by sarcasm.
- Collecting jewelry, make-up, music.

¹ FamilyEducation.com

- Becoming very aware of body image. The mirror might become your child's best friend and worst enemy. While this is normal, be on the lookout for any dangerous or obsessive behaviors.

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

- An eighth-grader's withdrawn nature protects his developing self-concept and any intellectual ideas that might not yet be fully formed.
- Abstract reasoning and "formal operations" will begin to come into play.
- Although your teen might take a tentative approach to difficult intellectual tasks, he won't be willing to take big risks when learning.
- Eighth graders like to challenge intellectual and social authority.

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

8th grade academics prepare students for the increased expectations and independence of high school. 8th grade scholars do not travel by homeroom, as they once did in the earlier grades. Scholars have an individualized schedule tailored to their capacity to take the Algebra I. All students now take Regents Living Environment, which is an advanced 9th grade course. Students can expect homework in each of their core classes every night, including brief assignments, long-term projects, and studying for assessments. Students are also encouraged to read independently each day. We work with students to help develop time management skills to balance the demands of academics, extracurricular activities, and social life. Students are strongly encouraged to take control of their education by reaching out to teachers for extra help or grading issues. Teachers are available for extra help (by appointment) during lunch and after school; various teachers offer study hall during lunchtime, when students may use laptops and have a quiet work space. All teachers post homework and resources online, and answer student e-mails in a timely manner.

8th grade scholars also have added academic responsibilities related to high school. For example, in December, high school applications are due. With this deadline comes many additional demands such as interviews, auditions, personal essays, teacher recommendation submissions and exams like the Specialized High School Admissions Test (SHSAT) and the Test for Admission into Catholic High Schools (TACHS)

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 8th grade teachers and gain a better understanding of how each teacher will evaluate work.

Each teacher clearly delineates their grading policy in their curriculum guide or syllabus which is handed out at the beginning of the year. Regarding late assignments and late homework – our current policy is that we will only accept late assignments up to 3 days past the due date. Anything past 3 days is not accepted.

8TH GRADE PRIVILEGES

There are an abundance of privileges afforded to 8th grade scholars. One privilege 8th graders experience immediately is lunch out. With parents' permission, 8th grade scholars are allowed to venture in the neighborhood during their lunch period. In addition, in the spring our seniors enjoy a trip to our nation's capital, Washington, D.C. Our 8th grade scholars also enjoy a formal dance during their last month, in addition to a graduation ceremony held in Columbia University's Albert Lerner Hall.

CORE CURRICULUM HIGHLIGHTS

English Language Arts & the Study of Writing

ELA opens up the world of writing that is created through our own words or those that have been left behind by others.

Space of Reflection: Writing provides a space of reflection based on interpretations and aspirations that are often based on observation of ourselves and others.

Basic Sentence: We are constantly reflecting which can be seen in the most basic sentence. Here's an example: "She laughs." To figure out the story behind the laugh we can use the 5ws: Who, When, Where, Why, How.

From Sentence to Story: By answering these questions not only can we expand this sentence, but we can also develop a: poem, fictional story, research paper, or news story. Imagine, just two words can provide the background for a larger study.

Studying in ELA: Study we will this year in ELA. You will be the recorder who will shape the simplest sentences from what you have read, observed, and even written into dynamic newscasts, poems, literary/argumentative responses alongside a whole host of written responses reflect what you do outside the classroom (text messaging for example).

From Your World to the "ELA World": Don't forget that our imagination is fueled by the writing that is around us on billboards, computer/tablet/phone screens, periodicals and of course books! We'll keep all these texts in our line of vision on a regular basis!!!

Mathematics

All eighth-grade mathematics courses are designed to fully prepare scholars for success in the high school academic setting and in life beyond: mathematics is all around us, and all courses are designed to help scholars foster their love and aptitude for this science! All scholars will work to master linear equations, functions, and systems of equations. Students enrolled in the 8th Grade Mathematics sections will cover all pre-algebra, algebra, and geometry standards as dictated by the Common Core standards, and these students will take the math state test in spring. Scholars enrolled in the Regents Algebra I course will cover the full Algebra I curriculum as dictated by these standards, including quadratic and exponential equations. The Regents course culminates in a Regents exam in June, which may allow students to place into Geometry for their freshman year of high school. Through partner and group collaboration, strategic questioning, peer tutoring, and lessons that involve critical thinking as well as logical reasoning skills, eighth graders will leave with new-found confidence and abilities in mathematics.

Social Studies

In 8th grade Social Studies, scholars connect with our nation's history through engagement with a variety of primary and secondary sources. Beyond learning the details of *what* happened, students question *why* it happened and how it affects their world today. As young people, they are taking their first steps into the wider world of citizenship, and an understanding of history is critical in helping them become informed and critical adults. Our course builds on the skills learned in 6th and 7th grade Social Studies, and picks up where 7th grade Social Studies left off – carrying students from the late 19th through the late 20th centuries, a time of exciting transformation.

Science

Eighth grade science is a very exciting year as now teach the Regents Living Environment, a 9th grade course, to all of our eighth grade scholars. The information that will be presented can be connected to our daily lives. A working understanding of these topics is important for success in an increasingly science-literate world. The goal is to foster critical thinking and analysis. We want our scholars to have a knowledge-base they can use to make more informed decisions in the present and the future. Our topics range from ecology to the genetic basis of heredity. We will tackle issues of biotechnology, such as the advantages and disadvantages of genetically modified foods. As part of the genetics unit, we take a trip to the Cold Spring Harbor DNA Learning Center, where students conduct laboratory experiments involving DNA recombination and DNA fingerprinting. Students will sit for the Living Environment Regents exam at the end of the year. This allows scholars the opportunity to place into Chemistry during their first year of high school, depending on the school they attend.

HIGH SCHOOL ADVISEMENT²

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.

Beginning in the spring of 7th grade, Ms. Gorman, our high school counselor, will personally work with families to narrow down the list of high schools scholars should apply to. 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.

Furthermore, to help teachers or advisors write recommendation letters, scholars are asked to complete a "Brag Sheet." A brag sheet is a scholar's opportunity to provide as many details as possible in regards to all of the wonderful things that have been accomplished in the scholar's academic history. Teachers use this boastful information to write and complete exemplary recommendation forms.

SPECIALIZED HIGH SCHOOL ADMISSIONS TEST (SHSAT)³

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.

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

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

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.

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 7th 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 8th 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.

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.