



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Grace Dodge Career and Technical High School

High School 660

**2474 Crotona Avenue
Bronx
NY 10458**

Principal: Craig Shapiro

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Reviewer: Denis Pittman

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Grace Dodge Career and Technical High School provides a comprehensive general and vocational education for its students. The school is in its second year of implementing 'Small Learning Communities' which has an organizational framework reflecting student interests and need. The structure of the school includes a Freshman Academy, and learning communities related to health and cosmetology, business and technology, legal and criminal studies and beauty and care.

The number of students on the school register is 1481. The school serves a culturally diverse community. The ethnic composition of the school is 61.3% Hispanic students, 34.3% Black and 4.4% White and Asian. In relation to the whole school population 17% of students have special education need. A relatively high proportion of the school population are English language learners (21.7%). The school is in receipt of Title I funding.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal provides very effective leadership of the school.
- The small learning communities meet the needs of students well.
- The school has created innovative programs for students through the Freshman Academy, 'Achieve Now' and the Young Adult Borough Center.
- Good working relationships have been established with business to support internships and after school programs.
- The school is well-ordered and procedures are clear and understood by the school community.
- Positive relationships have been developed between students and staff.
- Administrative procedures are effective, particularly the scheduling of school programs.
- The school has a developing team ethos which supports the significant changes taken place at the school.

What the school needs to improve

- Continue to support the drive to improve differentiated instruction and involvement in unit planning.
- Develop professional development programs so that assistant principal's can take an enhanced role in data collection and analysis, review, and evaluation of work related to their areas of responsibility.
- Develop a more formal assessment of special education students.
- Continue to work on improving overall attendance levels and punctuality.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

Although the school is in a transitional stage, the drive and energy of the principal has created a secure base for the school to continue successfully in its cycle of change. A core feature of the school is to raise the expectation for high achievement. There is a clear message of high expectations in all facets of the school's work. Students are responding to this message and are showing a greater commitment to school through improved attendance levels. Relationships in the school are positive. Students value the support and the guidance they receive from staff in relation to academic choices. Staff work well together. The changes to the organizational pattern of the school have demanded changes in their own professional practices. Generally they are responding well to these changes. Parents value the opportunity for their child to learn in a smaller learning environment. The school is building a capacity to sustain the changes which are an integral part of its development.

How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor student progress over time.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The school utilizes the external data it receives to monitor progress and performance well. The Regents data it receives is reviewed effectively to analyze the performance of students within the respective content areas. For example, standards in mathematics exceeded the specified target by 14 points but in English the school narrowly failed to meet its AYP target. A systematic review of the data indicated that English language learners students were the identified group who needed most assistance in meeting New York State standards. A recovery program has been put in place.

The school uses its baseline assessment for the Freshman Academy to effectively create teaching groups to meet the particular needs of students. This focus that has resulted in a significantly improved passing rate of 75% in 2006 compared with the figures in 2003 where it was only 49%.

There is no specific focus on the performance of ethnic groups but the quality of data which is now being generated enables an analysis of achievement based on gender. A particular focus as indicated above is the performance of English language learners. The detailed baseline data indicated that there was an emerging problem of more students with poor first language skills as well as little to no skills in English. In a broader context the dual language program is successful in not only raising achievement in the first language but has also improved English language acquisition.

The progress of students with special educational need is inconsistently monitored in the small learning communities. To address this issue each community has access to specialized programs such as Ramp Up and Wilson. The school has been particularly

innovative and effective in using its data to identify freshman students who did not meet the criteria to become sophomores. The creation of the 'Achieve Now' program is designed to give continuous support for these students. The focused support in the program enables progress to be monitored very closely.

The evolving nature of the school means that the data management systems for the respective learning communities are in the process of being established. A good beginning has been made. Not least is the effective use the school makes of data it has through involvement with the program 'High Schools that Work'. The school is able to compare its performance against a cohort of similar vocationally orientated schools. Within these criteria the school shows the highest attendance levels, has the least number of major incidents and its overall performance is the highest of the other seven schools. The school is at an early stage of identifying trends in performance but shorter term measures of comparative data in relation to marking periods are used well to identify and monitor the progress of students.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student's next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student's learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The school effectively uses data from surveys, conducted through the 'High Schools that Work' program, to identify objectives for improving the progress of students. For example, issues are centered on common planning and giving an emphasis to reading and writing. As a result collaborative meetings have taken place between science and social studies staff. The respective teams have designed units that have culminated in project based assignments. Good evidence of this work is now being seen in classrooms. The focus on reading and writing is not only in academic areas but also within vocational courses.

The school has proficiently created rubrics and assessment procedures which monitor the progress of students in vocationally oriented reading and writing. The school's data on 9th grade students revealed a group who were failing to achieve a minimum level of credits. In response to this, the school organized, financed and staffed a specific program called 'Achieve Now' for this cohort. The outcomes of this successful strategy have been improved accumulation of credits, less disciplinary issues and better attendance. In a similar vein the school has effectively analyzed data to identify the need for a recovery program for seniors unable to fulfill graduation requirements.

The school conveys its message of high expectations of achievement through newsletters and assemblies. A particularly innovative feature is the creation of 'photo-call' entitled 'Graduation Class 2010'. Just a few days after they enter the school 9th grade students have a photograph taken of them in graduation gowns. The photographs are now displayed on the wall of the principal's office. This very effectively establishes a clear message of high aspirations for the cohort, to both students and parents alike. The compilation of progress reports and the sharing of grades with students and parents provide information which generates targets for improvement and a focus for the school community.

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.

This area of the school’s work is proficient.

The school's curriculum has an appropriate focus on mandated state requirements. The knowledge content of subject courses are appropriately aligned to the requirements of the Regents tests. However the school has effectively supplemented these requirements by placing an emphasis on skill development which goes across specific subject content areas. For example social studies and English share rubrics which deal with the assessment of thematic essays. There is a clear indication of the expectation on staff to reflect the development of skills such as researching evidence and communicating outcomes as aspects of each content area. Currently there is a degree of variability to the extent that these approaches have been successfully implemented within the separate learning communities. Assessment information derived from rubrics is promoting differentiated activities in classrooms but this is not a consistent practice through the learning communities.

Budgetary expenditure reflects the outcomes of data analysis in relation to student need. This is shown through the creation of the ‘Achieve Now’ program and resources allocated to the implementation of the after school classes. Staffing decisions also appropriately reflect student issues. For example, the school appointed a teacher with expertise in the delivery of the Wilson program to support lower achieving students and special education students. The scheduling in the school is very efficiently and effectively carried out. The complexities of programming student requirements for ‘five’ learning communities in addition to specialist programs are a particular challenge.

The small learning communities and the organizational set up provide more opportunities for students to be engaged in their lessons. Where staff have been able to adjust more quickly to working within a learning community rather than specifically in a subject area then lessons are more stimulating and therefore engage students better. However some lessons too teacher dominated A particular advantage of the small learning community is that individual students are known better. Relationships between students and staff are positive and students value the support that is given to them. Attendance is a high priority for the school. The school has had a pattern of low attendance but recent strategies and reinforcement have led to a 4% increase in the levels attendance.

Quality Statement 4 - Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school’s collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

This area of the school’s work is proficient.

The administration is working effectively to improve the ability of staff to use and interpret data to monitor student performance. To that end the school is using curriculum coordinators, coaches and external consultants to communicate to staff expectations on this issue. For example, in social studies the implementation of a grading policy which reflects formal and informal assessments is enabling student progress to be tracked and documented through portfolios. Professional development issues have emerged from teacher surveys. In that context ‘lab sites’ have been created to promote collaboration and development of instruction. The introduction of project based inquiry has provided an opportunity for sharing of expertise.

The principal has a clear management strategy for the observation of classes. The procedure enables a pre-and post-element to the observation so the feedback is detailed and well informed. This process is now being modeled for the assistant principals of the separate learning communities. Senior staff are at varying degrees of proficiency in the monitoring process. There is time allocated for common curriculum planning for review and revision of plans to take place. This process is particularly effective in science. The opportunities for peer evaluation are provided but are not consistently implemented.

The principal is well respected for his instructional knowledge and leadership capacity. Clear, effective and efficient management procedures have been implemented in the school. The school has strong partnerships with its local community. A particularly positive feature is the internships, at a local hospital, provided through the vocational component of health sciences. Support agencies are also working well with the school to support students who are likely to drop out of education.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerated learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The effectiveness of the implementation of the small learning communities strategy is regularly evaluated through the 'High Schools that Work' program. Against the parameters which are identified in that program, the school is doing well, as previously indicated in the report. The process of restructuring the school has shown success through increases in achievement, retention levels and attendance rates. The strategic decision to implement a recovery program for students at either end of the grade range (freshman and seniors) is regularly evaluated. The improved outcomes are reflected in reduced class cutting rates, better attendance and high passing rates.

The principal uses the data generated within the school to make effective decisions in relation to the use of resources, both human and physical. A significant strategy was to implement a grading policy which reflected an assessment of a skill component as well as a body of knowledge. This has been a focus for planning and professional development meetings. An interim assessment has revealed a variability as to how grades are arrived at. The school is adapting its practice as a result of this information by reviewing grade books and the grade criteria being used in subjects. The implementation of diagnostic procedures and monitoring has been variably implemented across the learning communities. The collection of data to reflect and monitor progress of students within individual classrooms is proficient. However the processing of this data and its collection and analysis to inform decision-making about progress within the separate learning communities is inconsistent. The result is that decision-making then tends to be reactive to circumstances rather than being proactive in dealing with emergent problems and challenges.

The school is flexible in its planning and thinking. It has shown this by the effective implementation of a recovery program for students who were failing. It is also responsive to the outcomes of surveys. It used the analysis of student perceptions to provide counseling services to a small group of students who were experiencing feelings of anger and frustration. The school has implemented effective systems for collecting data from a

variety of sources. Currently there is insufficient coherence in the way that the data is being utilized to inform decision-making at grade and learning community level.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Grace Dodge Career and Technical High School (HS 660)	∅	✓	+
Quality Score		X	
Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor student progress over time.	∅	✓	+
1.1 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • each student, classroom, grade level, 		X	
1.2 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ethnic groups, English Language Learners, special education students* 		X	
1.3 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all other categories of interest to the school* 			X
1.4 Performance and progress are measured based on comparisons with similar schools, with the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grade levels, academic subject areas, ethnic groups, and other groupings of interest within the school.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 1		X	

* These criteria are partially aspirational as of now because schools do not have routine access to all of this data. The NYC DOE plans to provide schools with enhanced access to the necessary data in 2007.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student's next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student's learning.	∅	✓	+
2.1 Using data, school leaders and faculty engage in a collaborative process to set demanding, objectively measurable goals for immediate and long-range improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals.		X	
2.2 Goals and plans focus on the school as a whole and on each student, classroom, grade level, academic subject, and group of students whose performance or progress has been identified by the school as a particular focus area.		X	
2.3 Particular attention is given to improving the performance and progress of students in greatest need of improvement.		X	
2.4 High expectations are conveyed to students and parents/caregivers. Students and their parents/caregivers are regularly invited to provide information about each student's performance and how to improve. This information is central to setting challenging goals and developing, evaluating, and revising plans.			X
2.5 Goals and plans for improving student performance and progress drive the activity of all members of the school community: leaders, staff, students, parents, and other partners.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 2		X	

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity, resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.	∅	✓	+
3.1 The school selects the curriculum based on how well it aligns with or implements the mandated curriculum and on the curriculum's capacity to generate meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and to support the school's high expectations and improvement plans.		X	
3.2 Teachers are accountable for improving instruction and student outcomes. They plan and differentiate their instruction based on the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.		X	
3.3 Budgeting decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.			X
3.4 Staffing decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.		X	
3.5 Scheduling decisions about the use of teacher and student time are guided by the needs that emerge from examining student data and by the focused plan the school develops to improve student outcomes.			X
3.6 Instructional programs actively engage students.		X	
3.7 Staff know and respect students and respond to their academic needs, as well as their personal needs that affect academic performance. Each student knows and trusts an adult on the staff who is concerned about him or her.		X	
3.8 Student attendance and engagement are high priorities. High rates and patterns of absences trigger immediate intervention.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 3		X	
Quality Statement 4 – Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.	∅	✓	+
4.1 Leaders, faculty, and staff are selected based on their high expectations for student performance and progress and based on their commitment and capacity to use data, compare outcomes within and across classrooms and schools and develop and revise plans and methods to improve performance and progress.		X	
4.2 Professional development decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes. Professional development is designed to help leaders, faculty, and staff use data, self- and peer-assessments, and collaboration with peers to achieve goals for improved school and student outcomes. Professional development and self- and peer-evaluation are aligned and overlap.		X	
4.3 The principal frequently observes classroom teaching and has a considered strategy for improving the quality of each teacher's instruction. Teachers frequently observe and support each other's classroom instruction with the goal of improving student outcomes.		X	
4.4 Planning, evaluation of results, and revision of plans takes place in teams. Leaders and faculty inform each other of their goals and results, candidly evaluate themselves and each other, and use what is learned to drive improvement.		X	
4.5 The principal is respected and has capacity to effect change.			X
4.6 The school runs smoothly. Procedures are clear, communicated to all, and are generally followed.			X
4.7 The school aligns youth development and support services around stated academic goals. Partnerships with outside bodies are routinely used to achieve academic goals.			X
Overall score for Quality Statement 4		X	
Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.	∅	✓	+
5.1 All school plans and other interventions include frequent interim goals and diagnostic assessments of progress designed to reveal in objectively measurable ways whether the plan is being effectively implemented and reaching stated goals.		X	
5.2 Comparisons of student progress within and across classrooms and schools are used in making interim diagnostic assessments and measuring the progress of plans and interventions.	X		
5.3 Information generated by periodic assessments and diagnostic measures of progress and comparisons is used to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals. Interim and final goals are modified when data objectively demonstrate that revision is required.		X	
5.4 Each plan's interim and final outcomes drive successive phases of goal setting and improvement planning, and each successive phase is characterized by agile and flexible realignment of practices and resources to improve student academic outcomes.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 5		X	