



# **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**

**Dates of review: February 11 - 13, 2008**

**Lead Reviewer: David Herbert**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Grace Dodge Career and Technical High School is a high school with 1429 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 34% Black, 64% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 18.68% English language learners and 16.26% special education students. Boys account for 37% of the students enrolled and girls account for 63%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006 -2007 was 80.7%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 100% eligibility.

The school provides both a general and vocational education for all students. In addition to a Freshman Academy, four small learning communities offer students vocational education in the School of Health Sciences, the School of Business and Technology, the School of Professional Beauty Care and Legal and Criminal Studies.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal's clarity of vision for instructional quality and his expertise with data successfully drives all school improvement activities.
- The school generates a wide range of data, which the principal and administration monitor exhaustively to pinpoint students' needs.
- There is a depth of understanding about English language learners, separating their language acquisition from their reading comprehension.
- Detailed annual plans for each subject and each learning community support a specific five-year programme of goals.
- Tightly focused informal observations by administration enable curriculum coordinators to provide highly personalized support for teachers.
- Assistant principals in the small learning communities have now extended their roles to lead all aspects of the effectiveness of learning.
- The school carefully targets students, including special education students, with early interventions to avoid the risk of them failing to graduate.
- Academic and vocational courses combine to set high expectations for students, motivate them and give them real purpose in their education.
- Creative budgeting and scheduling enable the learning communities to maintain their identities and offer stimulating internships for students.
- The good environment of trust and respect is significantly reducing disciplinary incidents and creating the sense of a 'learning community'.

### What the school needs to improve

- Consolidate all classroom teachers' analysis and use of data to extend its impact on their grouping of students and planning for their needs.
- Ensure close alignment between school goals, measurable teacher goals and student goals, sharing them across the school community.
- Integrate the current lesson plan structures and differentiation of instruction to ensure they are consistent across all classes.
- Introduce more formalized systems to evaluate the impact of all school improvement activities.
- Continue working to involve parents more, sharing student goals with them and seeking more supportive information from them.

## Part 3: Main Findings

### Progress made since the last review

The school has made good progress in addressing the issues identified in the previous Quality Review report

### Overall Evaluation

#### **This school is proficient.**

“No one rises to low expectations”. The principal’s high expectations for both students and staff alike are driving the Grace Dodge Career and Technical High School forwards. Students say, “They always want you to do better, they are always pushing us to graduate”. These expectations stem particularly from the principal’s clarity of vision for the nature and impact of instruction required. The principal and administration know the importance of data analysis and use it consistently and robustly to identify successes and the further needs of students. Teachers’ use of data is less consistent, relying mainly on administration at present to provide them with the necessary analysis for them to group students in lessons. Goals and action plans at school level are well defined. There is a new goal setting process for teachers and individual goal setting plans commit students to improving themselves through each semester, reaching for particular mark levels. At present, these systems have not been in place long enough for them to align their objectives under a cohesive school improvement process. The extended role of the assistant principals in leading the small learning communities and the steady development of more differentiated instruction mean that the school has made good progress since the last Quality Review.

A school-designed grading syllabus enhances the curriculum. This identifies the core skills required to pass each subject course and underpins teachers’ planning. It is aiding the progression of students by enabling teachers to monitor constantly what they have learned and what they need to master next. Interim assessments in some subjects, such as math, now also further the opportunity to track students’ progress in particular areas of the subject. There is a searching analysis here, seeking out those skills in which students are not secure to inform future planning. The provision of vocational education through small learning communities gives the school a unique character. The vocational courses take up a substantial part of students’ schedule, and include internship experience. This practical experience motivates and engages students, giving them purpose in their education. Fulfilling vocational commitments and meeting the needs of academic course graduation sets high expectations of students. Teachers recognize that the principal “wants change, but is willing to support you in that change”. New expectations for lesson planning are making a significant impact on instruction and are currently being established across the school.

The inquiry team is focusing on a group of 24 students in the Achieve Now program, supporting students in 9th grade who are in danger of failing to graduate to 10th grade. Attendance, lateness and cutting levels are a continuing concern for the school. There are robust systems to resolve these issues and daily monitoring checks their impact on the data. The school finds it difficult to maintain close contact with parents due to the very wide area from which students come. However, there are few systems to enable parents to contribute information to the school about their children.

## **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 the student's progress over time.**

**This area of the school's work is proficient.**

The principal and assistant principals drive data use and monitor all available information with rigor. Using electronic spreadsheets, administrators complete rapid and exhaustive checks for patterns in performance and progress. This means that exploration follows new data entry immediately, comparing students' performance across subjects, classes and grades. The principal identifies students who are near to passing their Regents exams, and checks their rate of progress. In math, interim assessments allow the school to track progress on specific questions and skills, comparing performance across classes on each one. Where issues arise, assistant principals research the causes with teachers, and take prompt action as a result.

There is a close focus on special education students, who participate fully in the vocational education of the small learning communities. The school gives detailed attention to English language learners, studying the contrast between their general language acquisition and their comprehension of the technical language required by vocational courses. Long-term English language learners are a particular concern for the school. Collaboration with City College is researching the performance of this group further. Much training in the use of data is delivered through collaborative work between the curriculum co-ordinators and teachers, both one-to-one and in common grade planning time. Administration and curriculum coordinators complete most data analysis at present, though it is starting to involve class teachers more in the formation of groups of students for their lessons. The monitoring of the performance of refined subgroups such as gender and ethnic groups is still completed at administration level rather than penetrating to class level awareness.

**Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each student's learning.**

**This area of the school's work is proficient.**

A five-year plan sets out the goals and key focus areas for instructional improvement across the school. This is a coherent plan, setting clear direction for the school over time, and embodying the vision of the principal. All areas, subgroups and aspects of the school are included, making this a comprehensive development tool. The five-year plan is supported by detailed annual development plans and action plans for each subject and learning community.

There are very good links between policy, action plans and data checks. For example, the drive to reduce lateness reduced it from 70% late to 30% late at the beginning of the day through carefully targeted actions. The school goals are also expressed in the principal's personal performance review, but there is not yet complete cohesion to link these goals to those of teachers, classes and students. At present, there are no means to ensure everyone is fully committed to the same outcomes. However, student goal sheets prompt valuable self-evaluation and commitment on their part. These are working documents,

signed by the student. They provide good accountability on the part of these young adults for their own performance, linked to a target grade each semester.

Parents are sometimes difficult to engage as many live some distance away from the school. The school shares the grading syllabus for each relevant course with parents so that they know the overall skills program for the year for their child. The school does not yet share the good individual student goal-setting plans with parents, who have limited opportunity to contribute information to help the school plan for their children.

**Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.**

**This area of the school’s work is proficient.**

All students receive a broad general education throughout their time in the school. Students enter the Freshman Academy for one year before selecting their vocational course. This gives them time to adjust to the climate of high school before they make this important choice. They value the opportunities of extended practical study and internship experience. One student said, “It shows us what’s out there,” whilst another commented that, “It actually gives you a head start at college”. Some students enter the College Now program, taking courses at Bronx Community High and earning credits that will transfer into their college career. All this is building students’ commitment to college education and their self-belief to achieve it. These strategies also encourage good attendance, leading to increased achievement.

Creative budgeting and scheduling enables this complex organization to run smoothly and efficiently for students, but this is not at the cost of the broader curriculum. For example, a revised social studies curriculum presents a menu of mini projects that integrate the skills students need and raise their interest levels. These projects are supported by the grading syllabus so that the focus on progression of skills is maintained. There is a continuous accountability placed on teachers for the effectiveness of their instruction. This is supportive in nature, currently focused on the structure of lessons to continue raising students’ engagement and the grouping of students in classes to enable more differentiated instruction. Teachers’ accountability for the resulting impact on student outcomes from these developments is still growing. Teachers recognize that they are “moving in the right direction”. The small learning community structure means that teachers build good relationships with students, understanding their needs well and developing mutual trust and respect with them as young adults. Teachers work as cohesive staff teams. However, they still have other good opportunities to work as wider grade and subject teams that provides variety and strength in the school.

**Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school’s collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.**

**This area of the school’s work is well developed.**

A robust lesson observation process by administration gives precise analysis of strengths and areas for further improvement. These recommendations pass to curriculum coordinators, leading to well-structured and collaborative development work.

The curriculum coordinator role is particular to the school. These teachers take their own classes and spend a proportion of their time coaching other teachers in a highly collegial approach. This enables them to lead development work and to implement all initiatives themselves, sharing full accountability with their colleagues. The outcomes of this focused intervention pass back to the principal for central monitoring. In this way, the principal maintains a close view of the quality of instruction and the impact of all development work.

Intervisitations by teachers, especially using lab sites, are effective and purposeful. Teachers make pre-observation notes and focus on specific, differentiated issues in the observation. Post-observation notes require them to be reflective and determine how they will use the new knowledge in their own instruction. Teachers work well together, as seen in the development of common expectations of essay writing across the curriculum which have helped raise standards in social studies and science. The school runs smoothly and calmly with students taking responsibility for themselves. The positive impact of the Freshman Academy together with improved climate has led to a significant reduction in the number of suspensions over the last four years.

**Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.**

**This area of the school's work is proficient.**

The principal's performance goals and the annual professional development action plans for teachers are specific and contain clear interim stages and timeframes. The principal collates all judgments from the observation process so that he maintains a data picture of the performance and improvement of instruction across the school. Drawing together such information from each subject area, the principal is able to make purposeful strategic decisions to modify practice across the school. For example, the reversal of the daily schedule for students repeating their 9th grade placed their internship experience at the beginning of the day, with academic courses later in the day. This motivates students, leading to better attendance and a rise in their achievement. At class level, teachers are developing their practice of using exit questions at the end of each lesson to test what students have learned. This provides immediate, ongoing assessment information to inform the next stages of their planning. This is strengthening across the school and is gaining in consistency.

This responsive organization is typical of the principal's drive to implement his vision in the five-year plan. Although assessment data is gained from each development initiative, there are currently no formal systems for evaluating the impact of school improvement plans as a whole. Nevertheless, the current process is leading to secure and steady improvement in all areas of the school.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: Grace Dodge Career and Technical High School</b>	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
<b>Quality Score</b>			X		

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

<b>To what extent do school leaders and faculty provide . . .</b>	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
1.1 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of each student, classroom, grade level?				X	
1.2 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of special education students?				X	
1.3 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of English language learners?				X	
1.4 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of ethnic groups, gender groups and all other categories of interest to the school?			X		
1.5 a measurement of performance and progress based on the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grades and subject areas?			X		
1.6 a measurement of performance and progress based on comparisons with similar schools?			X		
1.7 training, management systems and structures that support teachers in the use of school data to inform planning and instruction and to track the progress of students?			X		
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>			X		

**Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each students learning.**

<b>To what extent do school leaders and faculty . . .</b>	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
2.1 engage in collaborative processes to set rigorous, objectively measurable goals for improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals?				X	
2.2 focus 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 identify and improve the performance and progress of those students in greatest need of improvement?			X		
2.4 share whole school goals with all members of the school community to rigorously improve the performance and progress of students?			X		
2.5 convey consistently high expectations to students and their parents/caregivers?			X		
2.6 regularly provide students and their parents/caregivers with information about the goals set for each student, and about each student's progress and performance, and how they can improve?			X		
2.7 invite and enable parents/caregivers to provide useful information to teachers and the school about the learning needs and capacities of their children?		X			
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>			X		

**Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.**

<b>To what extent does the school . . .</b>	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
3.1 select core curricular approaches that facilitate and provide meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and focus on raising the achievement of students?			X		
3.2 provide a broad and engaging curriculum, including the arts, to enhance learning both within and outside the school day?				X	
3.3 hold teachers accountable for the progress and learning of the students in their charge, for making instruction interesting and compelling, and for creating a positive safe and inclusive learning environment?			X		
3.4 ensure that teachers use school, class and student data to plan for and provide differentiated instruction that meets the specific needs of all the students in their charge?			X		
3.5 make budgeting, staffing and scheduling decisions strategically, based on data, to meet the school's academic goals for all students?				X	
3.6 ensure that there is an environment of mutual trust and respect between all staff and students to support personal and academic development?				X	
3.7 ensure that there are effective and consistently applied procedures to encourage and monitor student attendance and tardiness?			X		
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>			X		

<b>Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school’s collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.</b>					
<b>To what extent does the school . . .</b>	<b>Δ</b>	<b>➤</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</b>	<b>◇</b>
4.1 use frequent observations of classroom teaching by the principal and other available information to develop a differentiated strategy for improving the quality of each teacher’s instruction?				X	
4.2 make professional development decisions strategically, based on data, to help meet the improvement goals of students and teachers?				X	
4.3 provide frequent opportunities for teachers to observe each other’s classroom instruction and to meet together in teams to plan, share effective practices, and evaluate one another’s instruction in an open and reflective professional environment?				X	
4.4 develop effective procedures for the induction and support of teachers who are new to the profession or the school?				X	
4.5 align youth development, guidance/advising and other student support services around stated academic and personal development goals?			X		
4.6 consistently implement clear procedures that enable the school to run smoothly and encourage effective student learning, and effectively address discipline related incidents?				X	
4.7 create effective partnerships with outside entities that support the academic and personal growth of the students?			X		
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>					X

<b>Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student’s progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.</b>					
<b>To what extent do . . .</b>	<b>Δ</b>	<b>➤</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</b>	<b>◇</b>
5.1 the school’s plans for improving student outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?			X		
5.2 the school’s plans for improving teacher outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?			X		
5.3 teachers and faculty use periodic assessments and other diagnostic tools to measure the effectiveness of plans and interventions for individual and groups of students in key areas?			X		
5.4 teachers and faculty use the information generated by periodic assessments and other progress measures and comparisons to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals?			X		
5.5 school leaders track the outcomes of periodic assessments and other diagnostic measures and use the results to makes strategic decisions to modify practices to improve student outcomes?				X	
5.6 school leaders and staff use each plan’s interim and final outcomes to drive the next stage of goal setting and improvement planning?			X		
5.7 the principal and school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to effect change?			X		
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>					X

◇	<b>Outstanding</b>
+	<b>Well Developed</b>
✓	<b>Proficient</b>
➤	<b>Underdeveloped with Proficient Features</b>
Δ	<b>Underdeveloped</b>