



**Department of
Education**

Joel I. Klein, Chancellor

**Quality Review Report
Office of Accountability
2008-2009**

Quality Review Report 2008-2009

Grover Cleveland High School

High School 485

2127 Himrod Street

Queens

NY 11385

Principal: Dominick Scarola

Dates of review: February 24 - 26, 2009

Lead Reviewer: Bruce Berry

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Grover Cleveland is a high school with 2727 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 4% Black, 65% Hispanic, 23% White, 7% Asian and 1% other students. The student body includes 23% English language learners and 6% special education students. Boys account for 54% of the students enrolled and girls account for 46%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 79.2%. The school is not in receipt of Title 1 funding.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Grover Cleveland High School provides a good quality education for its students in a safe and caring environment. The principal's good leadership qualities are a key factor in creating the drive and vision for continually improving student achievement. He is ably supported by an energetic team of assistant principals, each of which has responsibility and accountability for designated subject areas. The school has excellent data systems that enable school leaders and teachers to effectively monitor student progress and create programs for students in need of extra support. However, there is not yet a consistent approach in setting short-term learning goals to help students with their next steps of learning.

The school's rich and varied curriculum offers opportunities for students of all achievement levels to study a wide range of subjects. In addition to the courses needed for graduation, a wide range of arts, advanced placement and elective courses is available for students. There are extensive extra-curricular programs on offer for the students, including a selection of sports and arts subjects, as well as the opportunity to receive valuable support for their academic studies. Teachers work effectively together to plan their curriculum and instruction. Students benefit from the dedication shown by the teachers in supporting them in the learning and in providing academic tutoring when students have concerns about their work. Teachers are well supported through individualized professional development programs to enhance their own knowledge and skills. Many teachers provide good quality differentiated instruction and learning activities that provide engagement and interest for the students. However, not all are yet consistently differentiating learning activities to match their students' achievement levels.

Strategic planning effectively focuses on the key areas identified as in need of improvement in order to improve student achievement. However, there is not yet a consistency in the plans to the setting of measurable improvement goals for accelerating student progress. Communication with families is very strong and parents are extremely positive about the good quality of education and the care their children receive from all the staff of the school. The school has the capacity to continue to improve and to create opportunities for an increasing number of students to gain college places as a result of the success they have achieved in the school.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal's good quality leadership and management provide the vision and drive for continuous school improvement.
- The principal and assistant principals form a highly effective team in providing clear systems and structures that create a safe and supportive environment for learning to take place.
- The teachers work well in teams to plan the curriculum and instruction and demonstrate high levels of professional dedication in supporting students in their academic and social development.
- The school uses its sophisticated data systems well to monitor student progress and to create improvement strategies for individuals and groups of students.
- The school curriculum provides a wide range of exciting, creative and challenging learning opportunities for students.
- Parents have high praise for the quality of education, the safe environment and the caring culture in the school.

What the school needs to improve

- Strengthen strategic plans through more consistency in the use of measurable improvement goals at whole-school, subject and classroom levels based on the students' present and projected achievement outcomes.
- Establish more consistent use of interim benchmarks to monitor the progress made in achieving long-term goals and in ensuring increased student success in their accumulation of credits.
- Develop systems to create more consistency in the setting of short-term learning goals to provide students with a clear understanding of their next steps of learning and how to achieve them.
- Continue to develop the differentiation of instruction and learning activities by providing teachers with the opportunity to experience and share best practices that already exist in the school.

Part 3: Main Findings

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

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do and to monitor the student's progress over time.

This area of the school's work is well developed.

The school has sophisticated data systems that it uses well to monitor student progress and provide improvement programs for individuals and groups of students in all subjects. This deep analysis begins with an annual review of all graduation, Regents and credit accumulation outcomes from the previous academic year. Senior leaders use the data effectively to identify trends in achievement for all the different sub-groups in the school. State scores and a reading assessment are used with incoming students to place them on appropriate courses in line with their achievement levels. Teachers use further reading assessments effectively throughout the year to track progress and make adjustments to student programs where appropriate. Ongoing assessment in all subjects is used well to analyze student progress. It provides the data that culminates in the marking period grades that contribute to the students' accumulation of credits, and assesses their progress towards their Regents tests. The school has excellent educational support systems in place for special education students and English language learners, who make very good progress. The online Achieve 3000 program provides highly effective differentiated instruction and learning activities for English language learners based on their individual needs. The honors program provides higher-achieving students with good levels of challenge through accelerated Regents courses, followed by the opportunity to study a range of advanced placement programs.

The school has highly effective communications systems with parents to keep them updated on their children's progress. A combination of report cards and interim progress reports provide parents with regular feedback on the achievements of their children. Conferences with teachers offer them valuable information on their children's progress. Parents have high praise for the quality of education and care their children receive and are confident in approaching the school on any matter concerning their child's education or welfare. The school's website also provides the opportunity for parents to communicate with the principal on any matter of concern.

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.

School improvement planning is a collaborative process involving all sections of the school community. The Comprehensive Educational Plan has well-structured strategic plans and goals, with each subject area identifying three areas of development for the academic year. Although a few of the plans have specific measurable goals for improving student outcomes, there is inconsistency in the use of measurable goals in the

planning process. This inhibits the school in its ability to monitor its own progress and success in achieving positive outcomes for plans and goals in a measurable way. However, the regularity of the checkpoints at the end of each marking period and the interim assessments taking place between the marking periods are used effectively to review student progress and make key decisions on the support required. Assistant principals review student progress in each classroom and conference with teachers on the outcomes of students in order to plan programs to further improve their achievement levels. Many teachers conference with students and provide valuable advice on how to improve. They also provide good support for the students through the regular tutoring programs that are available in all subjects. However, teachers do not yet consistently set short-term learning goals that provide students with a clear understanding of their next steps of learning and how to achieve them.

The school communicates effectively with students and parents in setting high expectations in respect of attendance, behavior and academic performance. The challenge of improving attendance is being addressed effectively through rigorous activities with students and parents. The school targets students with specific attendance levels with one-on-one support from an adult in the school. They have clear goals for improving their attendance in the short, medium and long term. The long-term absence, over which the school has little control, is a significant barrier to the school improving its attendance statistics.

Quality Statement 3 – Develop Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: The school uses rigorous curricula, teaching and organizational decision making to engage students and faculty in meeting all students’ learning goals.

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

The school has an exciting range of curriculum opportunities to enhance student learning. On entry to the school, the students are placed in subject programs in line with their achievement levels. High-achieving students are fast tracked to take Regents tests early. They then have valuable opportunities to study higher-level courses including advanced placement, College Now and a variety of honors courses. The arts are also well represented, with all students taking art and music. They have the opportunity to take advanced classes in drawing, painting and ceramics, as well as being able to major in orchestra, chorus or guitar. Students in greatest need of improvement receive excellent support and as a result make good gains in their achievement levels. For example, the double math periods enable students to have one period of instruction followed by a period of individualized support. The Ramp Up program is also used successfully to improve the progress of the students. The extensive range of extra-curricular activities provides further stimulus and interest for student learning. These include a wide selection of sports, arts and clubs, in addition to an extensive academic support program. There is excellent provision for students to receive individualized tutoring and academic support during the school day in all subjects.

Teachers use assessment data in many classrooms to provide focused differentiated instruction, with learning activities matched to the students’ achievement levels. In these classrooms, students are highly engaged and motivated by activities that provide appropriate levels of access and challenge at all levels of achievement. The school has rigorously worked on improving the differentiation of instruction and learning activities and has been extremely successful in many areas of the curriculum. The school is utilizing the existing good practices in the school to further develop consistency in the

use of differentiation across all subjects. The school budget is used imaginatively to support the curriculum and instruction. The principal skilfully manages the budget to cushion externally imposed reductions without impacting on the delivery of the curriculum and, at the same time, maintaining smaller class sizes. The budget also supports the increasing use of technology in instruction and student learning activities. The expansion of the use of SMART boards in many classrooms is leading to teachers using technology in imaginative ways to enhance their instructional practices.

The school is a well-ordered and highly respectful community. Teachers, students and parents work together to create a safe environment for student learning to take place. Teachers collaborate well with one another and the open door policy of the principal and assistant principals enables teachers to feel supported and valued in their work. The Learning Environment Survey demonstrated highly positive views from the parents and teachers. Although some of the students expressed concerns in the survey about their respect for one another and for their teachers, the students show very high levels of respect for their teachers and for one another in their collaborative activities in the classroom. They also have good levels of interest and engagement in their learning and display motivation to succeed in their studies.

Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school's goals for accelerating student learning.

This area of the school's work is well developed.

The school has effective systems in place for monitoring the quality of instruction and student learning through observations and classroom walkthroughs. The assistant principals regularly undertake walkthroughs of the subject area for which they are responsible and provide valuable feedback and support for teachers. Members of the school cabinet carry out regular walkthroughs with a specific focus. They conference with teachers using the information gathered as a result of the walkthroughs, together with the outcomes of data analysis. They then agree specific goals in respect of the teachers' identified professional development needs. The school's professional development plan appropriately focuses on the areas for development as identified in the previous Quality Review, with good evidence of progress in all the identified improvement areas. New teachers receive excellent support from a mentor and buddy teacher and have a program in place to help them with all aspects of their instruction. Along with other teachers, they have valuable opportunities to visit other classrooms to enable them to observe and share good practice.

The team structures in the school enabled teachers to work collaboratively to plan their curriculum and instruction, review student progress and plan new initiatives. The school cabinet provides effective systems that create a safe and supportive environment for learning to take place. Departmental teams meet regularly to discuss subject issues and further meetings take place within the departments at grade level to ensure coherence and consistency in the curriculum and instruction. The school is a model site for Math B Regents courses and shares its expertise with teachers from other schools. Staff also work with teachers from three middle schools to share their practices and create curriculum continuity for students moving to the high school. The inquiry team successfully focused on students who have been in the school for four years but failed to achieve Regents passing grades. They quickly identified attendance as a major issue and worked diligently with students and parents on programs to improve attendance and

achievement. This culminated in successful outcomes for many of the students in their Regents tests.

Excellent systems are in place to provide students with academic and social guidance to help with their personal development and growth. The students have programs that enable them to learn about and understand health and social related issues appropriate to their age group. Daily conflict resolution sessions are available, together with advice from counselors for students who are exposed to gang issues. The guidance counselors regularly visit classrooms and provide support and counseling for individual students. Community service, internships, honors society and a variety of clubs create many valuable opportunities for students to widen their academic and personal development.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and 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.

School leaders have excellent systems in place to monitor the progress of all groups of students at the end of each marking period and through interim progress reports. This enables them to make key decisions about student programs to support their identified academic needs. Teachers regularly monitor student progress through agreed assessment procedures. However, there is not a consistent use of long-term and interim student achievement goals to ensure they have increasing success in their accumulation of credits and in their other courses. Strategic plans are well structured and address important areas of improvement to enhance student achievement. However, they lack consistency in the use of measurable improvement goals at whole school, subject and classroom levels. Although the school regularly checks student progress, the inconsistency of interim goal setting inhibits the school in its ability to monitor its progress in reaching long-term goals.

School leaders successfully use a range of different sources of information to evaluate the effectiveness of all aspects of the work of the school. For example, the impact of the areas identified for improvement in the previous Quality Review is in evidence in many aspects of the work school. The inquiry team activities have led to early intervention projects in grade 9 in respect of improving the math outcomes for an identified group of students. A review of the programming in the school has resulted in the decision to minimize the changes to student programs. For example, grade 9 students have no changes in their programs and their classroom changes are limited to confined area of the school.

Senior leaders, teachers and parents share a vision for continually improving the learning opportunities for the students. Students' work is celebrated in an array of colourful displays that enliven classrooms and hallways throughout the school. There is good evidence of continually improving outcomes over the past few years in external tests and graduation levels.

School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

| | | | | |
|--|---|---|----------|----------|
| School name: Grover Cleveland High School | △ | ➤ | ✓ | + |
| Overall QR Score | | | X | |
| Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do, and to monitor the student’s progress over time. | | | | |
| <i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty regularly...</i> | | | | |
| | △ | ➤ | ✓ | + |
| 1.1 collect and analyze actionable information, including assessment results and attendance data, to provide a complete view of the learning outcomes and needs of individual students and groupings of students? | | | | X |
| 1.2 focus analysis on the learning outcomes and needs of all sub-groups of students? | | | | X |
| 1.3 engage in an open exchange of information with students and families about students’ learning needs and outcomes, including assessment results and attendance data? | | | | X |
| 1.4 design or adapt tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize and analyze student performance, identify trends and inform instructional and organizational decisions, and to enable students and their families to assess and track each student’s progress? | | | | X |
| Overall score for Quality Statement 1 | | | | 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 student’s learning. | | | | |
| <i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty...</i> | | | | |
| | △ | ➤ | ✓ | + |
| 2.1 use collaborative and data-informed processes to set measurable, actionable and differentiated learning goals in core subjects for individual students and groupings of students and develop differentiated plans and timeframes for reaching these goals? | | | X | |
| 2.2 use collaborative and data-informed processes to develop the school’s Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP)? | | | X | |
| 2.3 ensure that the achievement of learning goals, and the implementation of plans and timeframes for reaching these goals, is the central focus of school leaders, faculty, students and families? | | | X | |
| 2.4 communicate high expectations to all students and families, and involve students in developing their learning goals and plans and in taking their next learning steps? | | | | X |
| Overall score for Quality Statement 2 | | | X | |

DEFINITIONS

“**Analyze**” or “**analysis**” includes, but is not limited to, comparisons of:

- the current and past outcomes of . . . individual students, administrative groupings and sub-groups of students and the school itself in core subjects;
- the outcomes of different classrooms and sub-groups in the same grades and core subjects; and
- the school’s Progress Report and other outcomes to those of peer/other schools

“**Assessment results**” include student outcomes on summative assessments (e.g., state ELA, math, science and social studies tests, NYSESLAT, Regents Exams, and Performance Based Assessment Tasks) and formative assessments aligned to the school’s curriculum (including Periodic, DYQ, and teacher-developed Classroom Assessments).

“**Core subjects**” are ELA, math, science, social studies/history, the arts, foreign language, and physical education/health.

“**Data-informed processes**” include analysis of Progress Report, Quality Review, Learning Environment Survey, Inquiry Team findings, assessment results and attendance data

“**Groupings of students**” include classrooms, grade levels and high school cohorts.

“**Organizational decisions or strategies**” refer to a school’s use of budget and resources, staffing, planning, scheduling, grade structure, departments and teacher teams and other aspects of the school’s structure and organization that can affect student outcomes.

“**Sub-groups of students**” include special education students, English Language Learners, the other NCLB sub-groups, boys, girls, and other groups significant to the school.

Quality Statement 3 – Develop Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: The school uses rigorous curricula, teaching and organizational decision making to engage students and faculty in meeting all students’ learning goals.

| <i>To what extent do ...</i> | Δ | ➤ | ✓ | + |
|---|---|---|---|----------|
| 3.1 school leaders and faculty deliver challenging and engaging curricula in core subjects, including the arts, that are aligned to state standards? | | | | X |
| 3.2 teachers plan and teach lessons that are differentiated to meet the needs of individual students and student groupings and are designed to enable all students to reach their learning goals? | | | X | |
| 3.3 school leaders make strategic organizational decisions to support a coherent and rigorous instructional approach that enables students to reach their learning goals? | | | | X |
| 3.4 school leaders maintain a culture of mutual trust and respect and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults? | | | | X |
| Overall score for Quality Statement 3 | | | | X |

Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals for accelerating student learning.

| <i>To what extent do school leaders...</i> | Δ | ➤ | ✓ | + |
|--|---|---|---|----------|
| 4.1 use their own observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of student outcomes to implement an explicit, differentiated strategy to improve each teacher’s instruction, with a special focus on new teachers? | | | | X |
| 4.2 encourage teachers to take part in Inquiry Teams and other structured professional collaborations (informed by the examination of student work, assessment outcomes and their own peer observations) and share in the instructional leadership of the school with the goal of improved student learning? | | | | X |
| 4.3 provide professional development that encourages teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve student outcomes? | | | | X |
| 4.4 utilize youth development, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students? | | | | X |
| Overall score for Quality Statement 4 | | | | X |

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

| <i>To what extent do ...</i> | Δ | ➤ | ✓ | + |
|--|---|---|----------|---|
| 5.1 the school’s plans for improving student outcomes and its strategies for improving each teacher’s instructional practices include measurable interim goals and suitable time frames for evaluating success and making adjustments during the year? | | | X | |
| 5.2 school leaders and faculty use interim checkpoints and data to inform lessons, improve curriculum, differentiate instruction and revise student learning plans throughout the year? | | | X | |
| 5.3 school leaders use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of and modify organizational decisions, structured professional collaborations and teacher improvement strategies? | | | | X |
| 5.4 school leaders and the school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to support academic, personal and professional growth? | | | X | |
| Overall score for Quality Statement 5 | | | X | |

Quality Review Scoring Key

| | | | | | | | |
|---|----------------|---|---|---|------------|---|----------------|
| Δ | Underdeveloped | ➤ | Underdeveloped with Proficient Features | ✓ | Proficient | + | Well Developed |
|---|----------------|---|---|---|------------|---|----------------|