

Quality Review Report 2009-2010

Grover Cleveland High School

**High School Q485
2127 Himrod Street
Queens
NY 11385**

Principal: Dominick Scarola

Dates of review: March 23 – 25 2010

Lead Reviewer: Geri Taylor-Brown

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Grover Cleveland High School is a high school with 2,771 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 4% Black, 65% Hispanic, 23% White, and 7% Asian students. The student body includes 21% English language learners and 5% special education students. Boys account for 54% of the students enrolled and girls account for 46%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2008 - 2009 was 80%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is well developed.

Grover Cleveland High School is a place where students feel well supported and nurtured by caring adults who help them work out their challenges. Whether a student has an academic or personal difficulty, this hard working staff goes the extra mile to ensure student success. This insurance commences with the offering of a rigorous curriculum, which exceeds the State's expectation for high school graduation. Classes range from advanced placement to double period support classes.

The principal's clear focus on whole student success is echoed by his assistant principals and shared with the entire school community. This cohesive vision is part of a process of continual review of student data and revision of instructional and organizational plans. It begins with pointed data collection and review, which takes place regularly throughout the school year. This information is easily accessible to all staff members through the Daedalus data system. School, department, and class goals grow from this data analysis process. However, while school goals are precise in their linkage with student data, class goals are currently more generalized. For example, a math skills class focused on what all students needed to accomplish as opposed to individualizing the focus based on specific student learning needs,

The school continues in their cyclical journey of accelerating student learning as they have developed nine teacher teams that focus on specific areas in need of improvement. Team names such as "Students off track in Regents and credits" are not uncommon in this school where transparency has become a mantra. This practice of true transparency is seen as members of teacher teams include non-teaching staff such as guidance counselors, the parent coordinator, and the attendance teacher. One team member stated, "This process is us driven!" While the school has begun a great teacher team practice, the principal admits that evaluation of the long-range impact of the process "is a beginning practice." The school is hopeful that this practice will evolve as dynamically as their current practice of carefully measuring and revising interim and long-range goals for students.

An additional area that is evolving is the usage of differentiated instruction. Currently teachers use varied activities, which offer student choice but do not ensure that learning challenges are being appropriately addressed. That withstanding, Grover Cleveland is a place where staff, students, and parents expect the best from each other. Parents collectively agreed, "You can't go wrong here!" As one staff member states, we "understand where we are as a school" and we are "committed to conquer" whatever stands in the way of student success!

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school offers a wide range of course offerings to address learning needs and the interest of students which positively impacts academic achievement
 - The social studies department stands as a great example to other departments as they have rewritten their entire curriculum. This revised standards-aligned curriculum is posted on the school's website for easy access by staff, students, and parents. Included are pacing calendars and lesson plans. As a result, other departments have begun to revise their curriculum listings.
 - The school does an outstanding job offering a wide range of curricular choices that are clearly aligned with State standards. A recent academic improvement included the meshing of English as a second language with global history classes. This brilliant double class period merger features collaborative team teaching and instructional interventions that clearly address the learning challenges of each student. This positive intervention has rendered a marked increase in report card passing percentage rates among English language learner students.
- All stakeholders work cooperatively to maintain a safe and calm learning environment where students feel nurtured, supported and encouraged to improve their academic performance and behavior.
 - Teaching and non-teaching staff provide guidance and support to all students. Students confidently confide in trusted adults who help address their socio/-emotional and learning needs.
 - While students shared that there “are students who do get in trouble”, they praised their school as being a “helpful” place where teens “learn how to interact with adults.” The school provides solid counseling support and listens to student voice through school organizations such as the student council.
- The principal and assistant principals work closely with teachers to regularly gather and analyze student data from multiple sources, which is effectively used to understand performance and inform instructional and organizational decisions.
 - The school makes excellent usage of the Daedulus system, where student data from other sources, such as High School Scheduling and Transcript data and ARIS are readily retrievable. As a result, all staff members are clearly aware of the school's strengths and areas of need, and interventions are expediently implemented.
 - School leaders and faculty collect and analyze all student data a minimum of twice a month. They pay close attention to periodic assessment data of English language learner students to ensure maintaining or implementing instruction that helps them improve academically.
- The principal's positive leadership promotes his clear vision for continued school improvement, which is shared with all stakeholders and keeps the focus on student learning.

- School-level goal setting is clearly focused on academic areas of need. Each of the nine teacher teams was developed to provide inquiry work intent on finding resolutions to the schools areas of challenge. As a result, the school is implementing pointed effective changes that increase student success.
- Close examination of entering grade 8 English language arts assessment data moved the school to address students' reading challenges. As a result, all grade 9 students experience at least one semester in a classroom where lower, middle, and higher-level students individually build their skills through the use of a computerized reading improvement program. There has been an average increase of one grade level for this student group.
- The school's resources are pointedly used to support student success as all staff members share and discuss student information as participants on teacher teams.
 - Teacher teams include teaching and support staff members. This excellent practice keeps everyone fully informed about student progress. In addition, it hones the intervention skills of all staff members. For example, inclusion of support staff provides a fuller and broader picture of each student.
 - The school is making excellent use of the teacher team design as a forum for the strategic sharing and implementation of successful teaching strategies. A recent grade 9 team meeting focused on the good usage of their common vocabulary, which they call "Mortar" words. The posting and use of these words, e.g. estimate, compare, contrast, describe, etc. showed an increase in grade 9 students "conquering" social studies formative assessment essays.
- School leaders work cohesively in examining data to measure progress towards long-term goals, which provides the foundation for their continued processes of evaluation and modifications to ensure continued success for all.
 - The school cabinet, academic department and teacher teams are all integrally involved in the regular monitoring of student data. Additionally, the school leadership team serves as a "think tank" for examining proposed change possibilities from these groups. As a result, all stakeholders feel "a sense of ownership" for the future progress of the school.
 - The principal and his cabinet work cohesively to ensure that interim goals are set and met. The school's current work involves examining the possibility of redesign to smaller learning communities (SLC). This improvement model is a result of the increased scholarship of grade 9 students who were formed into an SLC in September.
- The school conveys high expectations for all students, which gives parents and students confidence and assurances that the school focus is consistently on achievement.
 - The school sponsors multiple celebrations to recognize the achievement of students including honor-roll breakfasts. Additionally, "Town Hall" meetings keep student well informed about the graduation requirements

and life skills necessary for today's world. As one student stated, "There's no way you can leave Cleveland unsuccessful!"

- Parents feel "empowered and encouraged" by the information and support they receive at monthly parent workshops. An offering of topics ranging from academics to immigration keep parents up-to-date in multiple languages. One parent states, I attend, "in order to have more power and influence with my kid."

What the school needs to improve

- Deepen school-wide usage of differentiated instruction to ensure consistency in meeting the learning needs of all students.
 - While most lessons include some variety of classroom activities, this usage is not constant across all subjects. As a result, all students' learning needs are not always met.
 - Many teachers use performance-based student groupings to facilitate student learning and engagement. However, the inconsistency of usage weakens the positive impact of this intervention for students of all learning levels.
- Extend the developing rigorous practice of goal setting to include clear differentiated student goals that are understood and owned by all children.
 - Teachers' conference with students to develop their class goals. However, teacher skill and expertise in this area varies, resulting in inconsistency in the rigor of goals for students enrolled in the same subjects. This hampers the acceleration of student learning.
 - Teachers establish class goals. While there is some variety offered in class activities, the learning goals are not always set solidly based on the specific academic challenges of individual students. As a result, some students have generalized next steps.
- Ensure the continued growth of collaborative inquiry as a means of professional development through clear alignment and connection with overall teacher support plans and linkages to positively impact student achievement.
 - The school is beginning the practice of closely monitoring the work of all teacher teams. The current practice is firmly focused on measuring team success through improvements in student performance. However, examining teacher growth in this environment has not yet been established.
 - Distributed leadership is solidly supported informally. This is evident as various staff members, such as teachers, guidance counselors and other support staffs take leadership roles on teacher teams. However, the school has not established a formal leadership development initiative. As a result, leadership development strategies vary amongst the teams.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2009-2010

School name: Grover Cleveland High School	Δ	▶	✓	+
Overall QR Score				X
Quality Statement 1 – Instructional and Organizational Coherence: The school has a coherent strategy to support student learning that aligns curriculum, instruction and organizational decisions.				
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	Δ	▶	✓	+
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous and coherent curricula, including the Arts, for a variety of learners and aligned to key State standards?				X
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best, and ensure that it is: aligned to the curriculum, engaging, and differentiated to enable all students to produce meaningful work products?			X	
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs?				X
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?				X
Overall score for Quality Statement 1				X
Quality Statement 2 – Gather and Analyze Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, analyze and share information on student learning outcomes to understand school and student progress over time.				
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	Δ	▶	✓	+
2.1 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the school level?				X
2.2 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the team and classroom level?				X
2.3 Use or develop tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize and analyze student performance trends?				X
2.4 Engage in an open exchange of information with students and families regarding students' learning needs and outcomes?				X
Overall score for Quality Statement 2				X

Quality Statement 3 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently engage the school community and use data to set and track suitably high goals for accelerating student learning.							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
3.1 Establish a coherent vision of future development that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are understood and supported by the entire school community?				X			
3.2 Use collaborative and data informed processes to set measurable and differentiated learning goals for student subgroups, and students in need of additional support?			X				
3.3 Ensure the achievement of learning goals by tracking progress at the school, teacher team and classroom level?				X			
3.4 Communicate high expectations to students and families, engage them in decision-making, and promote active involvement in the school community?				X			
Overall score for Quality Statement 3				X			
Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals and student learning and emotional needs.							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
4.1 Use the observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection, with a special focus on new teachers?				X			
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?				X			
4.3 Provide professional development that promotes independent and shared reflection, opportunities for leadership growth, and enables teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve learning outcomes?			X				
4.4 Integrate child/youth development, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations with the school-wide goals 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 progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
5.1 Evaluate the quality of curricular, instructional and organizational decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?				X			
5.2 Evaluate systems for assessing students, organizing data, and sharing information with student and families, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?				X			
5.3 Establish and sustain a transparent, collaborative system for measuring progress towards interim and long term goals and making adjustments during the year and over time?				X			
5.4 Use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of structured professional collaboration, capacity building and leadership development strategies?			X				
Overall score for Quality Statement 5				X			
Quality Review Scoring Key							
△	Underdeveloped	➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed