

# Quality Review Report 2010-2011

**Grover Cleveland High School**

**High School Q 485  
2127 Himrod Street  
Queens  
NY 11385**

**Principal: Dominick Scarola**

**Dates of review: October 26 - 28, 2010**

**Lead Reviewer: Myrta Rivera**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Grover Cleveland High School is a high school with 2,467 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 4% Black, 64% Hispanic, 24% White, and 7% Asian students. The student body includes 23% English language learners and 11% special education students. Boys account for 54% of the students enrolled and girls account for 46%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2009 - 2010 was 80.2%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is proficient.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- School leaders effectively align its resources and make organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals.
  - The successful grade 9 academy provides students with an interdisciplinary team of teachers and guidance support for a seamless instructional program. Eighty-three percent of all grade 9 students including special education and English language learners passed all classes in the first marking period compared to last year at this time where only 67% passed all subjects. The implementation of this new structure has an impact on the progress of students and is the first phase of a long-range plan to restructure the school into small learning communities.
  - The effective use of circular six allows for inquiry teams to meet regularly and academic intervention services to support at-risk students. The entire staff meets on Mondays by departments in teams planning instruction and looking at student data to plan effective lessons that meet the needs of individual and groups of students. The team's focus on the bottom third cohort last year yielded 4.5 credits towards closing the achievement gap on the progress report.
- Relationships among staff and students are respectful and result in a secure and orderly environment that supports the social, emotional and academic growth of students.
  - A comprehensive approach to school safety includes the use of school safety rubrics of best practice, cameras, deans and teachers working together to ensure an orderly climate. One student said that the speaker system that uses a count-down system helps get kids to class on time. These strategies provide for a safe environment as documented in the school environment survey with a score of 8.7 out of 15, which is an increase from last year.
  - Students are actively involved in their education and want to learn. Several students said that their teachers provide them with additional assistance before school, during lunch and after school so that they can succeed. Students are part of the school leadership team and take an active role in the development of the Comprehensive Education Plan. The student government has initiated a student survey asking for input in the development of small learning communities and they are recommending that student service become a requirement for graduation. This engagement results in improved achievement.
- The principal and assistant principals use a comprehensive range of data effectively to identify school strengths and areas of need in order to plan applicable instructional programs that maximize student performance.
  - A review of the school's data reveals the need to increase the graduation rate. The creation of a small learning community for incoming grade 9 students has positive results with 83% of all students passing all of their classes in the first marking period and an increase in attendance to 87.1% in October. One teacher said that she had never had the entire class present three days in a row.
  - School leaders regularly review periodic assessment data and department data on student sub-groups. In order to support students taking Regents exams in

English language arts, mock Regents, conducted on weekends, provide students with practice time. As a result, eighty-seven percent of students who attended passed with a score of 65 or above.

- School leaders have structures in place to evaluate the quality of curriculum and instruction to build alignment and coherence that optimizes student learning.
  - The cabinet meeting structure allows for discussions around curriculum implementation. In reviewing math data, the math department changed their math materials to Prentice Hall for this school year to improve outcomes.
  - Regular meetings with the assistant principal in charge of the grade 9 academy provide the structure and forum to monitor and evaluate the full implementation of the small learning community. In addition, a regular review of scholarship reports provides additional evidence of the impact of this program on achievement.
- Teachers use data to inform the development of class and student goals that support their instructional practice.
  - Teachers review diagnostic assessment data in the development of individual student goals. Class goals, posted monthly in every classroom, provide students with specific content goals. A student sharing his goals for the semester was able to explain his strengths and areas to improve from a goal sheet given to him by his teacher. Student work in folders supports the attainment of goals using rubrics as the guide. This action provides students with feedback on their academic performance resulting in continuous progress.
  - Teacher teams identify students in the third and lowest cohort to develop differentiated learning goals. These students are the focus of teachers' inquiry work. Last school year, this strategy was successful in increasing performance of these students in English language arts and mathematics.
- The principal's positive leadership supports the vision of continuous improvement towards meeting students' academic and social emotional development.
  - School goals, posted all over the school, have a clear message of school improvement in attendance, graduation rate, an increase in academic performance and in providing engaging and differentiated instruction. All constituents are aware of the vision and needs of the school and support the goals found in the Comprehensive Education Plan resulting in a shared focus.
  - A review of data revealed that a group of students who were late often also did not have enough credits for promotion and could drop out of school. The Achieve Now program was designed to offer a late class schedule with students coming to school in the fifth period and staying late. This program with a team of social workers, guidance counselors and dean is providing students with social, emotional and academic supports needed for them to succeed.

### **What the school needs to improve**

- Refine the curriculum so that academic tasks are engaging, rigorous and meet the needs of a diverse student population with accelerated instructional strategies to support student learning and progress toward graduation.

- Even though curriculum maps and pacing calendars are in place in all classes and subjects, students who are repeating a course do not have access to different material or approaches. Most classes have engaging activities for their students, however holdover classes were largely teacher directed. A lack of rigorous and engaging activities may hinder student learning and jeopardize students' willingness to remain in school to graduate.
- Even though there are a large number of English language learners in the school, there was no evidence of language supports to engage and accelerate their learning which can prolong the mastery of English and jeopardize student progress
- Deepen differentiated instruction in all classes across all subjects so that lesson planning reflects purposeful grouping to ensure that students are challenged consistently thus maximizing learning outcomes.
  - Staff report that students learn best by being involved in their work especially through small group settings. However, these academic tasks are not consistently challenging. This lack of alignment between teaching practice and the rigor of student work can jeopardize extensions into the curricula.
  - Even though many classes differentiated instruction, this is not a school-wide practice. This uneven implementation of teaching practices does not provide multiple entry points, supports, and extensions into the curricula.
- Establish a process with feedback focused on classroom teaching and student learning outcomes that improves instructional practice.
  - School leaders provide inconsistent feedback to teachers based on classroom observations and some student data. Including a review of student work products can provide valuable insight into teaching and learning.
  - Teachers receive school-wide and department professional development to promote professional growth. However, there is no differentiated support to promote personal growth and reflection. Lack of differentiated support inhibits the capacity needed to support school goals.
- Upgrade the work of teacher teams in the analysis of student work to insure that instructional decisions at the team and classroom level are adjusted to directly improve achievement.
  - At a team meeting, teachers share student writing and provide feedback to colleagues on next steps. A teacher shares a strategy to differentiate between “there” and “their”. Looking at student work is important but a lack of connection to key standards and curriculum diminishes learning outcomes.
  - Teachers develop common assessments and utilize the Daedulus system, which compiles a variety of data. Weak links between the analysis of assessments and instructional decisions may result in an inaccurate picture of student needs that impedes growth.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2010-2011

<b>School name: Grover Cleveland High School</b>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
<b>Overall QR Score</b>			<b>X</b>	
<b>Quality Statement 1 – Instructional and Organizational Coherence: The school has a coherent strategy to support student learning that aligns curriculum, instruction and organizational decisions.</b>				
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous and coherent curricula, including the Arts, for a variety of learners and aligned to key State standards?			<b>X</b>	
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?		<b>X</b>		
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs?				<b>X</b>
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?				<b>X</b>
<b>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.</b>				
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
2.1 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the school level?				<b>X</b>
2.2 Align assessments to curriculum and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom level?			<b>X</b>	
2.3 Use or develop tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize, aggregate, and analyze student performance trends?			<b>X</b>	
2.4 Engage in an open exchange of information with students and families regarding students' learning needs and outcomes?			<b>X</b>	

<b>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.</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>			
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				
<b>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.</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>			
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				
<b>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.</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>			
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				
<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
<b>UD</b>	<b>Underdeveloped</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>Developing</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>WD</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>