

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

**Grover Cleveland High School
High School 485**

**21-27 Himrod Street
Queens
NY 11385**

Principal: Denise Vittor

**Dates of review: May 7 – 9, 2012
Lead Reviewer: Juan Mendez**

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Grover Cleveland High School is a high school with 2081 students from grade 9 through grade 9. The school population comprises 4% Black, 63% Hispanic, 23% White, 7% Asian students, and 2% other students. The student body includes 24% English language learners and 15% special education students. Boys account for 54% of the students enrolled and girls account for 46%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 79.4%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school has established effective systems of formal observations and coaching with a clear focus on supporting teaching practice, leading to higher levels of teacher preparation and effectiveness. (4.1)
 - School leaders use an adapted Danielson Framework to assess teacher competencies and provide feedback both formally and informally. Observations are meticulously documented, and feedback is richly detailed. The observational feedback form clearly identifies key competencies from Danielson and also delineates targeted competencies that teachers have been working on. The observational cycles used at the school are wrought with a level of transparency that results in clear action steps for teachers to follow in order to grow professionally.
 - Extensive staff development focuses on enhancing teacher quality to support student needs. Representatives from 'High Schools that Work' lead workshops that offer multiple rubrics for teachers to hone their practice. These rubrics align to the school's framework and provide additional information on student engagement and lesson planning. This intensive staff development has resulted in the ongoing experimentation of research-based instructional strategies so that teachers create multiple points of entry into the lesson, accept student attempts to answer questions, readdress questions to deepen levels of mastery, and get more students to answer higher level questions.
- School leaders regularly gather and analyze a wide range of relevant data to determine areas of strengths, trends and needs used to monitor school and student progress over time, resulting in greater student achievement. (2.1)
 - The administration utilizes the Student Transcript and Academic Recording System (STARS) and ARIS to identify on-track and off-track students and periodic flagging of students who need additional classes. Additionally, teachers spoke about the use of Automate the Schools (ATS) and ARIS databases to identify areas of strengths and challenges among students. This systematic analysis of summative data provides a platform for effective decision-making that generates the proper instructional supports to positively impact academic progress, resulting in a 12% increase in students receiving Regents' diplomas.
 - School leaders maintain regular efforts to uncover emergent trends in summative data for specified subgroups. This effort corresponds with the school's Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP) goals that focus on math and English, "to improve our Regents performance in all subgroups to reach Safe Harbor targets...by August 2012." Subsequently, the administration develops action plans to identify the number of students in each subgroup who need to pass Regents' examinations. This results in the planning of interventions, such as additional classes and Regents' preparatory tutoring sessions as well as extended outreach to parents.
- The principal effectively engages all members of the school community in a shared vision of future development that is well focused on school improvement, so that student achievement continues to accelerate. (3.1)

- The new principal is determined to create measurable change in the school. Her rationale in doing so stems from a desire to support improving outcomes for the disproportionate number of underperforming and under-credited students in the school. Thus, the school's extensive CEP provides a list of goals and action plans that address graduation rate, attendance, scholarship, and accreditation. The correlation between attendance and academic achievement has prompted extensive school-wide efforts to increase student attendance through outreach and attendance contests, assisted by a network attendance initiative that has utilized targeted interventions for key groups of students. This has resulted in modest gains in attendance.
- School leaders effectively communicate with the school community to generate support for the school's direction. Recently, students participated at a Town Hall meeting to discuss their involvement with the school and the support they have been receiving from all staff. A consultative council, which includes a student executive board, meets with the principal on a monthly basis to survey ongoing progress. The school leadership team, which consists of teachers, parents, and students, also impacts the goals and vision of the school with continuous dialogue about all pressing concerns regarding future development.
- School leaders and faculty align content course curricula to the new Common Core Standards and make purposeful decisions, so that a diversity of learners are cognitively engaged. (1.1)
 - The administration is working with teachers to encourage the implementation of Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) tasks to promote postsecondary readiness in all grades. In several classes visited, student engagement through the use of technology was evident in courses such as the building of computer applications and the creation of dramatic re-enactments. A social studies class involved groups in short skits that helped students not only establish a sense of the conflict but also a heightened understanding of the resolution at the Nuremburg Trials. These types of lessons bring about high levels of cognitive engagement and due to the high level of student interest and participation generated serve as models for decisions to modify curricula in all subject areas in order to meet the demands of the Common Core.
 - Teachers use student work and data to design academic tasks that appeal to a diversity of learners. A greater use of informational texts, a Common Core shift, in multiple classes, was accompanied by visuals and instructional strategies, such as gallery walks and grouping techniques, appealing to a variety of learning styles. This produces high levels of critical thinking among students who are highly engaged with a variety of instructional supports.
- Classroom lessons provide multiple entry points that allow for increased and meaningful student engagement, resulting in higher levels of mastery. (1.2)
 - The faculty who believe that "all students can learn, and that it is the school's job to teach them" have been working to establish a strong culture for learning and as motivated teachers now integrate strategies for every student to be engaged. Meaningful engagement is evident in authentic learning tasks that correspond to programs of study that surfaced in each of the small learning communities. Several small learning communities feature themes connected to health, business, and tourism that teachers describe "real time experiences." As one student noted, "In ninth grade, I did not have to write essays, now, I have to write argumentative essays." Thus, student engagement is more relevant, and

students are moved forward on the path toward mastery of skills in select professions.

- Teachers are frequently able to bring student thinking to appropriate levels of understanding. An abundance of classrooms display exemplary student work and showcase creative strategies to move students through the writing process. One English as a second language teacher guided her students in the analysis of the representation of a subject in two different artistic mediums, which is an ELA Common Core Standard. The teacher explained that she wanted her students to “connect Michael Jackson’s song *Thriller* with Edgar Allen Poe’s short story, ‘*A Tell-Tale Heart*.’” The teacher used the story and the song to allow groups of students to explore multiple perspectives and encouraged them to use evidence to build their arguments. As a result, multiple entry points are being used to allow access to challenging material and engage all learners.
- School leaders and the cabinet make informed and effective organizational decisions in order to support the school's instructional goals and long-term plans, to support improvement in learning. (1.3)
 - Organizational decisions based on a detailed analysis of student credit accumulation, Regents’ exam passing rate, and use of budget, have led to major school-wide changes in programming and support. One noteworthy change came on the heels of a total reprogramming of students that enabled students to take additional classes, Regents’ preparatory sessions, and tutoring during and after school and on Saturday. The use of resources to develop mock-Regents’ examinations helped to support this effort. Another major step to address challenges in accreditation is indicated the school’s CEP goal which is, “to increase the credit accumulation of second year students receiving eleven or more credits, especially those in the lowest third Citywide.” The school discovered that the reason it was in the 25th percentile of the City’s high schools, was due to many sophomores not being scheduled for enough classes to meet the credit accumulation criteria. As a result, over 70 additional course sessions were offered in the Spring and the passing percentage of students attending Saturday Regents’ preparation sessions is approximately 83%.

What the school needs to improve

- Promote greater consistency by teacher teams and individual teachers in the use of data and differentiated learning goals for relevant subgroups so that effective and timely interventions can be shared with school community. (3.2)
 - School goals are posted throughout the building. Although teachers use a variety of data to assess the needs of students, differentiated learning goals are infrequently addressed within grade level teams and differentiated goal-setting that is personalized for groups of students with recurring academic or behavioral issues is only beginning to become embedded school-wide. In the team meetings observed, teachers raised concerns about student attendance and one teacher offered her approach as a solution. Thus, inconsistent approaches and differentiated goal setting for students has led to lackluster scholarship reports and below average statistical gains on the majority of Regents’ exams.
- Deepen the use of professional collaboration to include key elements of student work that is shared, and results in adjustments to curriculum, instruction, and assessment, thus increasing learning outcomes for all students. (4.2)

- Although student work and rubrics are being used to perpetuate discussions during professional collaboration on key areas of concern, inquiry teams infrequently examine students' results on Regents' exams. Additionally, teacher discussions around pedagogy often are generic and do not focus on Common Core shifts. Humanities inquiry teacher teams are inconsistently sharing improvements in questioning techniques that blend the identification of themes with textual analysis to elicit greater specificity in student's written responses. Consequently, the school has seen a decline in scores on social studies examinations.
- Increase the use of qualitative and quantitative data to evaluate the effectiveness of collaborative teams in order to provide the necessary supports that can lead to higher quality teamwork and effectiveness. (5.4)
 - Although the principal's cabinet is immersed in the analysis of quantitative data, this data is not being consistently provided to and used by collaborative teams thus limiting their efforts to accelerate student learning. Additionally, systems to evaluate the work of teacher teams are beginning to surface via teacher leaders who guide the conversations. However, classroom observations and teacher teams' minutes are not used to drive these conversations. On occasion, qualitative data in the form of student work is the basis for professional collaboration that is typically informal. Since distributed leadership is only beginning to emerge in this school, its effectiveness has been limited in terms of professional collaboration by teacher teams.
- Systematize teacher practice with data collection of periodic checks for understanding so that real time data is captured regularly and used in a timely manner to maximize support for student subgroups. (2.2)
 - Although teams of teachers work on creating assessments and rubrics, periodic data that would allow for spotting emergent trends was unavailable during the Quality Review. Teacher teams shared rubrics that are being used as a means to develop instructional strategies for student subgroups, and at times teacher teams resort to the use of student self-assessments and teacher classroom assessment tests to make curricular adjustments. However, authentic data is used sparingly and not timely, to gauge ongoing student-learning outcomes. The delay in the attainment of time-sensitive information impacts the school's and teachers' ability to maximize instructional support for individuals and groups of students and measure success of on-going interventions during the semester.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: Grover Cleveland High School	UD	D	P	WD
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>	UD	D	P	WD
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 as evidenced by meaningful student work products?			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	
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>	UD	D	P	WD
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 Align assessments to curriculum, use on-going assessment practices and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom level?			X	
2.3 Use grading policies and tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize, aggregate, and analyze student performance trends to inform instruction and curriculum?			X	
2.4 Engage families in school decision-making, activities and an open exchange of information regarding students' progress toward school and class expectations?			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>	UD	D	P	WD
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 staff, students and families, and support students and families to achieve them?			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>	UD	D	P	WD			
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				
1..4 Integrate child/youth development, guidance/advisement support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations with the school-wide goals to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students?			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>	UD	D	P	WD			
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, with particular attention to the CCLS?			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					
Quality Review Scoring Key							
UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed