

Quality Review Report 2013-2014

Grover Cleveland High School

24Q485

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

Principal: Denise Vittor

Dates of review: May 27 – 29, 2014

Lead Reviewer: Joan Prince

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Grover Cleveland is a large high school with 1936 students, from grade 9 through 12. The school population comprises 5% Black, 64% Hispanic, 22% White, and 10% Asian students. The student body includes 22% English language learners and 14% special education students. Boys account for 56% of the students enrolled and girls account for 44%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 79%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- All members of the school community work cohesively to ensure a safe, inclusive culture and caring environment that promotes teacher learning and enhances students' academic and personal growth. (1.4)
 - All students are known well through frequent grade level teacher team meetings, during which individual and small groups of students are efficiently discussed and through the Small Learning Community 'Academy' program. The Academies are Allied Health & Athletic Science, Academy of Arts & Humanities, 'of Business, Hospitality & Tourism, 'of Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) and a fifth Academy is the 9th grade skills-based academy to transition struggling newcomers into the school successfully. Each student is assigned to an academy and they are strategically located throughout the school building in order to maximize unity and ownership among students and staff. Bulletin boards displaying student work is evident in each academy area to celebrate student learning. During passing, teachers are present at the doors of their classrooms welcoming students. Designated guidance counselors and social workers are assigned to each academy and have been relocated to be in close proximity to the students. Each student deemed in need of support receives a 'Guardian angel' where teachers, guidance and security work closely to plan interventions and be proactive in supporting the student's socio-emotional needs. Across the academies, there is focused collaboration between the dean, guidance and support staff, including the bi-lingual parent coordinator to support students and their families with workshops and academic email updates. Students are able to choose their area of interest, such as event planning or business technology, resulting in more engagement in learning across the classrooms. Students take pride in their school and state that their voice is welcomed and valued by their peers and the staff. Collaborating with High Schools That Work (HSTW), the Young Men's Catholic Association (YMCA) programs involve students and teachers sharing time to reinforce the value of collaboration, decision-making, and self-improvement. The student council members meet with staff and administrators weekly to provide input on school issues and events, so that they are meaningfully involved in school decisions that contribute to school improvement. Student voice is welcomed and valued; the school has many clubs including a Gay/Lesbian Committee that was requested by students. There is a priority that students engage in tasks and discussions involving evaluation and synthesis of a topic to promote growth both academically and morally. The combination of these effective strategies and the collaborative efforts of staff, students and families greatly contribute to a productive learning environment and a positive school culture. Achieve Now Academy is a pro-active action SLC that is specifically for students who have less than 10 credits and attendance issues that will impact passing. This pro-active policy is reflected across the school through student and staff interactions during classroom visits and noted in the data which shows lower incidents reports on the On-line Occurrence Reporting System (OORS) than in previous years. Thus, there is a high level of mutual trust and a caring school culture that positively impacts the academic and personal growth of students.
- School Leaders and staff constantly convey high expectations that support teaching and learning so that students achieve success in career readiness and college preparation. (3.4)

- The principal meets daily with all assistant principals to review expectations, roles and responsibilities for the day. Individual meetings are set with designated teacher leaders to turnkey information to teachers related to curriculum planning and classroom instruction, thereby creating a culture of mutual accountability in meeting the school's expectations. School leaders communicate high expectations to the staff through faculty conferences, grade meetings, professional collaborations and individual conversations following classroom visits. The Danielson Framework for Teaching serves as a source to build a common understanding related to professional responsibilities, planning and preparation, classroom practice and communication with students and families to promote academic success. The school-wide belief is that students learn best when engaged in the content and the tasks with supports for struggling learners. Teachers are provided with professional development through double period faculty and departmental conferences and workshops to ensure a clear understanding of the Common Core and Danielson Framework. Teachers participate in classroom intervisitations, co-planning and professional collaborations that support effective instructional practices and collaborative planning to improve student outcomes. All academy programs are Small Learning Communities (SLCs), using specific academy names, where students choose a major area for study for either college or career. Work-based learning experiences are developed by each academy and some provide certification thus conveying high expectations. In the Career Technology Education students' participate in a national industry certification programs, including American Red Cross and NYS Department of Health licensing. At the student meeting, several students stated proudly that they were certified life guards for the summer and teach swimming to children ages 4 to 9 at the school and students also work as Certified Emergency Medical Technicians (EMT). There is active participation in Science, Technology, Engineering & Math (STEM) based programs and students have won competitions on the local and national level. In the Music program several partnerships culminated in public performances and the school band, 'The Tigers', released a compact disc (CD) supported by Little Kids Rock Association. For the school's Information Technology Academy, students are one of eight schools participating in Y-PLAN projects supported through the University of California connecting community development and planning with schools. Students created Android digital Apps to assist the hearing impaired and presented during this visit and at a national conference. The Academy of Hospitality and Tourism has established partnerships with various hotels to provide students with job shadowing opportunities. As a result, the staff works collaboratively with industry to inform classroom instruction and accelerate student learning, evident in the consistent practices and high level of expectations observed during teacher meeting visits, student meetings and parent meetings. The administration and staff regularly meet with families to discuss curriculum, instructional practices and Common Core alignment across grades and subjects. Families are informed of all career study initiatives, and acquire hands-on experiences and information. As a result, families understand what their children need to know to be successful and expressed confidence that the school is preparing their children with the college and or career readiness skills they need for future success.
- The school organizes staff time so that teacher teams engage in professional responsibilities aligned to instructional goals leading to improved student progress in college and career readiness. (1.3)

- All students are organized into career-themed, small learning communities that focus on college and career preparation. The 9th grade Academy is programmed for advisories centered on academic behaviors and college access. The school has embedded in their schedule several ways to support instructional goals and improve student progress. Cardio-Pulmonary Resuscitation (CPR) dummies were purchased to practice CPR and revival techniques in the Lifesaving class, and students will become Emergency Medical Technician (EMT) certified. Students will be able to apply what they are learning outside of the classroom, and connect it to their futures in both college and careers. Summer internship programs are facilitated through guidance counselors to establish a work based learning program providing career exploration and job readiness activities. Their decision to have the Saturday Institute continue throughout the school year has been successful with active student participation. An investment in Smartboards is evident in most classrooms to assist instructional techniques. Furthermore, funding allows for per session, training rate and per diem coverage for teachers to engage in planning of curriculum and assessment of student work. Academy teams are programmed to meet three times per week to review student work, incorporate scaffolding strategies to support learning and ensure that the Common Core is implemented. Academy meetings include inquiry to inform and improve instruction, case conferencing to discuss and improve 'at risk' student performance, and looking at student work to improve students' achievement on specific tasks. The 9th grade math team meets everyday to look at strengths and areas for improvement in practice and they have created a shared rubric to establish clear expectations. All academies are designed to strengthen the instructional core across classrooms by having opportunities to discuss ways to improve students' achievement, social and emotional needs and performance. Every subject department meets regularly to incorporate the Common Core into their content area. There are large faculty professional development meetings once per month to provide teachers with opportunities to collaborate across academies. Therefore, the effective use of resources, the collaborative work of teacher teams coupled with the focused analysis of student work and the targeted academic intervention services for students planned during team meetings, contributes to the increased success in meeting goals of career and college, and is reflected in end of unit performance task results and student work posted on boards and in work folders.
- The school uses assessments aligned to the curriculum to acquire a good understanding of student performance, in order to adjust curricula and instruction and provide actionable feedback to students. (2.2)
 - Each content area team, both across grades and subject areas, has an assessment plan that captures the types of assessments, Common Core aligned tasks, and expected outcomes. Teachers use curricula-aligned assessments as a source for actionable feedback regarding students' strengths and areas of need. This was evident in the argumentative essays and writing tasks that were displayed on bulletin boards with rubrics and feedback in content areas. Teacher feedback and common grading practices determine student progress toward meeting subject specific benchmarks across grades and subjects within academies. Teachers maintain checklists and conferring notes to help identify who needs immediate attention with learning tasks during lessons. During a teacher team meeting an item analysis of English language arts assessment resulted in surfacing learning gaps in the comprehension of informational texts and identifying evidence to support claims. Adjustments to curriculum and instruction suggested included generating focused teaching points, increasing informational text use and engaging students in discussions using text-based

evidence across subjects. During class visits, students were using rubrics to self-assess their work. When interviewed, students were able to refer to the rubrics and identify next steps needed to improve their work based on the criteria. Teacher assessment practices observed reflected checks for understanding during small group activities. In a co-teaching English language arts class, the students were assessing, comparing and citing text from works by J.D. Salinger. While students were divided into groups, teachers circulated to assess their understanding and range of learning. “Stay with what we know” was stated by one teacher to explain that citing is based on the text, not what we imagine to be true. Frequent cycles of classroom observations are used as assessments to make decisions about professional development for teachers are conducted by assistant principals as well as the principal. Measures of Student Learning (MoSL) assessments are used extensively across grade and subject areas to inform targeted instructional adjustments. For example, as observed in an academy meeting, data from MoSL informed the need to improve students’ ability to write text-based claims. It was determined that subsequent lessons focus on the strategic use of text-based discussions to help engage students and learn to support claims. The school’s commitment to such assessment practices has resulted in effective instructional adjustments and increased actionable feedback to students, increasing their ability to improve their knowledge and skills.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that curricula and academic tasks emphasize CCL instructional shifts, rigorous habits that result in cognitive engagement for all students. (1.1)
 - Teachers have professional opportunities to work with administration in reviewing the domains focusing on student engagement, questioning and managing behaviors. Both *EngageNY* Modules and Literacy Design Collaborative (LDC) are used to develop units. However, the strategic integration of instructional shifts resulting in coherence within all subject areas was not evident. Curricular scope and sequence are not yet fully developed for all subject areas within the grades, and lesson plans did not always reflect key standards. Additionally, rigorous instructional activities were not evident in lesson planning or classrooms. For example, in a bilingual US History class the students saw a video on Civil Rights translated into Spanish subtitles. Students were working on ‘agree or disagree’ printed worksheets. Some students were engaged while others were not. There were groupings but they did not seem purposeful as there was no group interaction. The lesson was not completed and there were no discussions in either groups or whole class. Although there is a conscious effort to build instructional coherence school-wide, nevertheless, there is a lack of alignment in implementing instructional shifts for all content areas, hindering a unified approach to develop rigorous habits and higher-order skills across subjects and grades so that all students can demonstrate their thinking.
- Improve instructional practices so that across classrooms all students have multiple opportunities to be actively engaged in higher-order thinking and discussions. (1.2)
 - In some classrooms, students were engaged in lesson activities and worked in collaborative groups to complete assignments. Though most classes evidenced these practices, implementation was not consistent across all classrooms. In several classrooms, student tasks did not fully align with the lesson objectives or the stated expected outcomes and in others, instructional activities were conducted in a whole group with little evidence of in-depth learning opportunities to support student subgroups and students performing at different levels. In

some classrooms, there was little evidence of planning tasks that generated higher order thinking for student subgroups, thus decreasing opportunities to engage in lesson activities that provoke thinking for a diverse population of students, especially students with disabilities and English language learners. In a special education class during science, the topic was 'What is Color Blindness'? There was no time for students to engage in discussions and students were cutting up articles that had been downloaded to extract evidence from the text to support their answers. Specific questions had to be answered and the overall structure of the class was not providing opportunity for student-to-student interaction as grouping was not effectively used to support instruction preventing students from demonstrating higher order thinking and engagement. The quality and depth of questioning were not always evident in all content areas; therefore limiting students' ability to think critically and have engaging academic discussions to maximize learning and create high level work products.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

School name: Grover Cleveland High School 24	UD	D	P	WD			
Overall QR Score			X				
Instructional Core							
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.1 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards?			X				
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the instructional shifts and Danielson Framework for Teaching, aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products?		X					
2.2 Align assessments to curricula, use on-going assessment and grading practices, and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom levels?			X				
School Culture							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults?				X			
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations?				X			
Systems for Improvement							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
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				
3.1 Establish a coherent vision of school improvement that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are tracked for progress and are understood and supported by the entire school community?			X				
4.1 Observe teachers using the Danielson Framework for Teaching along with the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection?			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				
5.1 Evaluate the quality of school- level decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school, with particular attention to the CCLS?			X				
Quality Review Scoring Key							
UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed