



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Grover Cleveland High School

High School Q485

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

Principal: Denise Vittor

Date of review: April 27, 2015

Lead Reviewer: Miatheresa Pate

The School Context

Grover Cleveland is a high school with 1,750 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 4% Black, 65% Hispanic, 19% White, and 9% Asian students. The student body includes 21% English language learners and 5% special education students. Boys account for 58% of the students enrolled and girls account for 42%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 79.0%.

School Quality Criteria

Instructional Core		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
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	Additional Findings	Proficient
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	Focus	Developing
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	Additional Findings	Proficient
School Culture		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations	Additional Findings	Proficient
Systems for Improvement		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning	Celebration	Well Developed

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

The vast majority of teachers are engaged in structured inquiry-based professional collaborations aligned to school goals and opportunities are embedded to empower teachers to assume leadership roles that directly affect key decisions across the school.

Impact

School-wide structures enable teachers to play a central role in decision-making that promotes the Common Core Standards, strengthens teacher capacity, and improves student achievement for all learners.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers shared that Small Learning Communities (SLC) and teacher team meetings are utilized to discuss unit plans and student-centered instructional strategies. Administration revealed that all teachers participate in the inquiry process during common planning time meetings once per week, in data-informed collaborative planning three times per week and teachers participate in SLC information and event planning once per week. Through the partnership with High Schools That Work, teachers in teams use the Literacy Design Collaborative (LDC) model which “provides a common framework upon which teachers can individually or collaboratively build literacy-saturated curricula within their content area and for their focus topics.” Documentation noted progress resulting from implementation of this model towards the school’s goal of a 5 % increase on the ELA performance exams by June 2015.
- Teachers revealed that SLC coordinators are teacher self-selected and are responsible to turn-key learned information to their SLC. The administration revealed that SLC coordinators participate in the NYCDOE Teacher Leadership Program and professional development facilitated by High Schools That Work, focusing on the inquiry process to improve student learning and pedagogical practices. The coordinators turn-key this information to their departments.
- The inter-disciplinary team of 12 teachers using an agenda and the consultancy protocol focused on the integration of literacy skills across content which is a school goal. The team was observed looking at student work to determine how to help students improve their essays. A teacher facilitator ensured that each teacher had a copy of the task, student work, rubric, and student work template. During the meeting, teachers were observed providing warm and cool feedback in a fishbowl format. Teachers provided strategies to their colleagues such as “students are still struggling to make an inference so the bridging strategy can support that...” The meeting ended with team debriefs and next steps.
- The review of team documents revealed agenda items and meeting notes such as: the social studies teacher sharing student work (lowest third student). The minutes also reflected that the Bridge strategy would be used in all content areas for one week before revisiting outcome in the next teacher meeting. Teachers shared that the Bridge strategy aims to support students in developing their argumentative essays while improving student multiple choice scores on the New York State Regents exams in all contents. Documents further reveal that the Bridge strategy supports English language learners and students with disabilities by creating ‘process of elimination question bridges’. For instance, “ ___ is an incorrect answer. It states ___ which I know is incorrect because _____. Therefore, _____ is a better answer because _____.”

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Developing

Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices inconsistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula and student work products and discussions reflect uneven levels of student thinking and participation.

Impact

Lessons do not consistently provide supports for a diversity of learners, particularly English language learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities (SWD) and do not challenge all students to their full potential, thus limiting opportunities for them to engage in higher order thinking tasks and discussions.

Supporting Evidence

- In most classes, students are presented with the same task and receive limited feedback from the teacher. In some cases, several students quickly completed the task with no further direction while others struggled with minimal support. For example, during a math lesson, all students were asked to draw a circle and a tangent line and find a point where the tangent line intersected in the circle, then complete the 3 additional problems in their worksheet. Seven students had completed the assignment and were provided with no extension activity, while nine students struggled with the task and describing their noticing to their partner. In another math class, students completed the same math worksheet by rewriting simple rational expressions in different forms, six students completed the task independently and no extension activity was available to challenge their thinking.
- In some of the classrooms visited, students had opportunities to engage in partnership discussions; however, across classrooms, there were uneven levels of student thinking and participation. During an English Language Learners lesson, the teacher asked students to discuss the most important development in the history of written communication with their partners. Some students discussed it with the partners, while other students did not participate or respond to their partner. In an Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) class, there were two groups of students completing the same graphic organizer. The students were not given the opportunity to engage in a discussion with their partners or within their groups. One group completed the task, with five students sitting quietly waiting for the teacher, the task given to this group was not challenging enough and lacked differentiation that is leveled according to students' levels. Another group in the same class had difficulty completing the task without access to supports, such as partnership talk, sentence starters or other scaffolds to support their understanding of the task and accelerate their learning. Moreover, only in 4 out of 12 classrooms there was evidence of multiple entry points and supports, such as graphic organizers and learning support charts
- There were some opportunities for students to engage in discussions like 'turn and talk' as in a grade 10 social studies class that asked students to explain how and why the Nazis gained power, understand the basic tenets of Nazi ideology, and recognize rhetorical clichés and political propaganda. However, evidence of this deep level of thinking, peer-to-peer discussions, debates, or building on each other's ideas was only evident in a few classes.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and academic tasks consistently emphasis higher order skills for all learners.

Impact

The school has made purposeful curricular decisions that build coherence and promote college and career readiness across grades and subjects and for English language learners and students with disabilities.

Supporting Evidence

- The school has partnered with High School That Work to Implement the Literacy Design Collaborative (LDC) model for Common Core implementation across the content areas.
- The administration revealed that “CCLS units have been developed across all curriculum areas, including the academic core classes, foreign language, ESL, health and physical education, and Career & Technical Education classes. All courses are aligned with NYS content standards, raising the level of rigor in every classroom. Content goals are embedded in the curricula, and language/literacy skill goals are incorporated into each course.” For example, a review of curriculum documents in earth science reveal embedded close reading of text which was also reflected in the literacy curriculum. Lesson plans revealed Common Core alignment, such as in a grade 10-12 algebra 1 course, students focused on standard F.IF.C.7a which required them to graph functions expressed symbolically. To meet the standard, students were tasked to identify and represent functions, given set coordinates find intersection points solutions to equations, determine relations between graphs, and compare and contrast a horizontal translation to a vertical translation. Unit plans in chemistry revealed alignment to Common Core standards RST 10.7, and to meet this standard, students were asked to apply concepts, principles, and theories during a unit on Moles/Stoichiometry.
- Teachers revealed the use of the EQIP (Educators Evaluating the **Q**uality of Instructional **P**roducts) rubric to assess the alignment of lesson/unit plans and curricula to the CCLS and multiple access points for all students. One of the rubric indicators requires teachers to “provide appropriate level and type of scaffolding, differentiation, intervention and support for a broad range of learners.” For instance, when reviewing revised curricula, Integrated Algebra specifically addresses modifications to the instruction for English language learners, delayed learners, and advanced learners. This was not indicated within the previous curricula document.

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders and staff communicate high expectations and establish a culture for learning that offers ongoing feedback to students and families.

Impact

Staff is accountable for the school’s high expectations for students and offer ongoing feedback to help families to understand those expectations and provide supports that prepare students for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- The school communicates with parents through several modalities: principal meetings. Parent Association meetings, emails, automated phone calls, personal phone calls, postal mailings, parent-teacher conferences, case conferences, parent newsletters, information nights, and events. Parents shared that they receive updates from many of the communication systems shared by the administration. Additionally, the principal and parents noted that the “parent coordinator is the school liaison who reaches out and informs parents about various programs, scheduled events and meetings. She also communicates with individual families on a regular basis to address their questions and concerns.”
- Administration shared that “Town Hall meetings and forums for each Small Learning Community (SLC) are conducted with specific groups of students so that pertinent topics are discussed, for example, in the month of October, senior assemblies were held for each SLC to discuss academic and personal expectations, and college applications and preparation.” Furthermore, guidance counselors conduct monthly class sessions on integral topics for college and career readiness such as goal setting, and planning for success.
- Documents reviewed evidenced mailed correspondence informing parents on the monthly professional learning sessions, what students will learn, updates regarding the new Global History and US History Common Core Standards and Assessments, the Geometry Common Core Regents Examination, the list of Global History terms will be displayed in the school. Also, both progress reports and report cards are distributed six times per semester. The principal added that “sending both of these documents will ensure families receive written information on their child’s academic progress approximately every 3 to 4 weeks”. Parents noted that teacher conferences are held twice per year where parents receive their child’s marking period report cards.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use common assessments and rubrics aligned to school’s curricula to determine student progress toward goals across grades and subjects.

Impact

The use of common assessments and rubrics ensure that students receive actionable feedback and support teachers in adjusting curricula and instruction.

Supporting Evidence

- The review of student work products revealed consistent actionable feedback provided by teachers. For instance, student work products in a Global History class included feedback that stated, “...you should have addressed capitalism in your counter-argument...although you mentioned communism there is no comparative analysis in the counter-argument...you could have introduced communism there and why it did not work...”
- Bulletin boards, across classrooms, displayed rubrics that included actionable feedback. For instance, an English language arts bulletin board showed that each student had a rubric attached to his or her specific work, and reflected comments such as, “... Great job citing evidence to support your position. Be sure to explain each piece of evidence separately to fully develop your thesis statement. Also, watch your pluralization.”
- Documents revealed common department grading policies which provide guidance to students as to their performance within a class. Administration revealed that across classrooms teachers use common assessments such as TOEFL, mock Regents, Preliminary *Scholastic Assessment Test* (PSAT), Measures of Student Learning (MOSL)-New York City Performance in the fall and spring for grades 9 through 12, and other teacher department-created assessments.
- Teachers use common assessments to inform their instruction and better understand needed curricula adjustments. For instance, assessment data revealed a need for increased non-fiction reading and teaching across the curricula. The review of curricula demonstrated non-fiction. Common assessments also revealed that students struggled to cite textual evidence. The review of teacher team notes surfaced that teachers are using graph organizers to address this student challenge. One teacher stated in the team meeting minutes “... I see the student was able to cite strong textual evidence mostly because of the use of the graphic organizer...”