



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Grover Cleveland High School

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

Principal: Dominick Scarola

Dates of review: March 12 – 14, 2008

Lead Reviewer: Clive Parsons

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Grover Cleveland is a high school with 2866 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 4% Black, 64% Hispanic, 25% White, and 7% Asian students. The student body includes 22.5% English language learners and 5.9% special education students. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 79.5%. The school is not in receipt of Title 1 funding.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal is steadily dispersing responsibility and leadership, so that the school's capacity to improve is increasing further.
- The school uses data well to evaluate the impact and effectiveness of its programs.
- The school provides a safe and secure environment for students, where learning can take place.
- The school succeeds well in aligning services and external support to enhance students' personal as well as academic progress.
- There is very good differentiation within the curriculum and programs, which are continually refined as the school attempts to meet student needs even more successfully.
- Teachers appreciate the support and guidance that they receive from their colleagues and the administration.
- Much effort has been put into improving communication within the school, supporting greater consistency and a broader understanding of its plans and goals.
- The school is very well managed, with effective organization and systems ensuring that it runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis.
- The principal is directing resources to where the data and student outcomes show that they are most needed.
- There is a high level of respect and mutual trust between students and adults.

What the school needs to improve

- Maintain the current level of student attendance, while at the same time continuing to seek new and innovative ways to encourage students to want to come to school and to succeed.
- Continue to support teachers in the use of data to differentiate their instruction to build on the positive changes to date.
- Articulate the school's longer-term goals with measurable success criteria and interim goals to provide milestones along the journey.
- Continue to work with students to engage them more extensively in self-review and the production of subject and personal goals.
- Continue to develop and implement diagnostic assessments to enable teachers to focus even more strategically on student strengths and development areas.
- Continue to infuse technology into the curriculum to enhance the range of engagement strategies available to teachers.

Part 3: Main Findings

Progress made since the last review

The school has made good progress in addressing the issues identified in the previous Quality Review report.

Overall Evaluation

This school is well developed.

The school has focused strongly on the outcomes of the previous Quality Review report, using them to drive further improvement, while maintaining the strengths noted at that time. Central to this has been increasing the degree and effectiveness of communication across the whole school community. As a result, outreach to parents is more coherent and staff are working more consistently to develop and implement the school's plans. While plans have become more systematic to support longer-term planning, they have yet to consistently articulate measurable success criteria and interim goals. There is an increasing use of technology to support both learning and management, with a clear intent from the principal to support this further wherever possible. The school continues to work hard on maintaining attendance levels, while seeking additional strategies to improve it.

There has been an increase in the range of strategies used to engage students in their learning, with some corresponding increase in differentiation within classrooms. Focused professional development, including support and guidance from the administration, as well as through collaborative planning, has been a cornerstone of these developments. There are high expectations of all students, and many work with their teachers to establish academic goals for their classes. There is some use of diagnostic assessments, although this is not sufficiently widespread to support further differentiation and specific goal setting through the identification of individual strengths and weaknesses. The school's inquiry team has established a group of students for a more in depth study. They are exploring patterns, trends and connections between students for whom graduation is at risk because of failure on the mathematics Regents. This work is developing strategies to work with individual students more holistically, as well as pointing towards earlier identification and intervention.

How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor the student's progress over time.

This area of the school's work is well developed.

The school is very data rich. Well-considered systems and structures enable effective analysis and evaluation, so that the data becomes meaningful and useful. Understanding the performance of individual students starts as early as possible. Where available, grade 8 test scores for in-coming freshmen are analyzed and used to establish the most suitable program for them. Assessments then take place during the first week of school, with program changes resulting if inconsistencies in the data are identified. New English language learners are tested using standardized and in-house assessments to ensure that

they are placed in the most appropriate class. Teachers then routinely collect academic data on an on-going basis through a variety of measures. There is some use of standardized, common and diagnostic tests, together with common rubrics and grading policies to ensure consistent evaluation between teachers. Scholarship reports for student cohorts are analyzed systematically and evaluated by subject and by teacher. The data is used to identify trends and patterns, as well as to identify areas for further exploration and to drive discussions within departments or between the administration and individual teachers. This further supports consistent and reliable grading between teachers. The principal has strengthened communication between teachers, deans and guidance counselors, so that student's personal needs are reviewed alongside information about their academic performance and progress.

The performance and progress of special education students and English language learners are monitored well. Data, such as Regents passing rates and levels, is evaluated at cohort level for other student groups to ensure a thorough understanding of their achievement. The principal makes comparisons with the school's own previous performance to identify patterns and trends. The principal also makes comparisons with other schools, including those within the school's peer group, as well as local schools of similar demographics. The principal has used his own technical and data skills well to ensure that the school has developed its own systems to collect, manage and evaluate the wide-ranging data available. This has been especially important in ensuring that appropriate data is made available to teachers to support their instruction. The school has targeted appropriate professional development to help teachers use the data with increasing effectiveness.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each student's learning.

This area of the school's work is well developed.

The school has appropriate structures to engage all parts of the school community, including parents, in the development and evaluation of school plans. School plans are more rigorous and systematic and provide clear direction. However, school-wide plans do not always articulate specific, measurable goals and success criteria, or interim goals that support staged, longer-term progress. Good collaboration between teachers, with the good support of instructional assistant principals, ensures that curriculum plans and programs provide for good progression. The school uses data very effectively to identify students and subjects that require improvement. Fine tuning of the curriculum takes place, with differentiated routes for students to work towards graduation requirements. The school's inquiry team is looking at students holistically to identify any common barriers to this group of students achieving success in mathematics. The school supports individual students who are in greatest need of improvement very well, with a wide range of interventions and adjustments made to suit their individual needs.

The school consistently conveys high expectations to students and their parents. Expectations encompass behavior and attendance, as well as academics. Some students talk about their generic academic goals, how they have discussed these with their teachers or how they have been supported in setting and achieving them. However, consistent structures are not in place to build on diagnostic and other assessments to engage students systematically in developing their own subject specific goals and in taking personal responsibility for achieving them. The school works hard to engage as many parents as possible in their child's education. Communications are routinely

translated into a variety of languages. Teachers are especially eager to engage with parents to identify possible barriers to learning and develop strategies to overcome them. Those parents who use it welcome the principal's open door policy. The school has increased the use of technology to make routine regular contact, for example to keep parents informed about forthcoming meetings. Workshops are held to keep parents informed about school developments, as well as to provide parents with skills and information that support families more generally. However, a limited proportion of parents take advantage of these opportunities. The school has recently doubled the number of communications going home to parents to keep them informed of student progress.

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.

This area of the school's work is well developed.

There is very good differentiation within the curriculum and the programs made available to the students. These are continually refined with alternative routes, timescales and interventions as the school attempts to meet wide-ranging student needs ever more successfully. There is a good range of electives and higher level courses available during the day. Tutoring and after school enrichment activities further extend the opportunities available. Teachers are held accountable for the quality of their work. This is through data analysis, as well as direct observation. There is a high level of respect and mutual trust between students and adults and teachers provide a safe and secure environment for students, where learning can take place. Teachers are increasingly using a range of strategies that encourage or require students to engage in learning. There has also been an increase in the use of data to support differentiated instruction, although this is not yet consistently built upon the outcomes of diagnostic assessments.

The principal is very effectively directing resources to where the data and student outcomes show that they are most needed. Teachers welcome the ease of access to materials that enable them to improve their instruction. The principal has increased the availability of technology which teachers are using with increasing success to support student learning. The principal is committed to continuing to infuse technology into the curriculum to enhance the range of engagement strategies available to teachers and the subsequent positive impact on student learning. The school has robust systems in place to encourage student attendance and timely arrival to class. Appropriate strategies are used to target poor attendees, with outreach and parental contact a high priority school-wide. These systems are managing to maintain current levels of attendance, but are not yet breaking into a significant pattern of improvement.

Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

This area of the school's work is well developed.

The principal is steadily dispersing responsibility and leadership, so that the school's capacity to improve is increasing further. The principal and assistant principals make frequent visits to classrooms, which is enabling them, individually and collectively, to maintain a good overview of the quality of instruction throughout the school. This is in turn, enabling them to develop differentiated and individualized support and professional

development for teachers. The teachers welcome and appreciate the support and guidance that they receive from their colleagues and from the administration. The quality of instruction is improving as a result. New teachers are also supported very well, through buddies and mentors. In addition, they feel very welcome and greatly appreciate the school's nurturing environment.

The school is very well managed, with effective organization and systems ensuring that it runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis. This is of great importance, given the size of school and the complexity of the schedule and programs. The school aligns wide-ranging internal and external support services very effectively to enhance students' personal as well as their academic progress. This is often on the basis of well-established and well-targeted relationships with other groups, for example to support attendance and dropout prevention.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The school uses data very well to evaluate the impact and effectiveness of its programs. There is very good differentiation within the curriculum as a result of continual refinement following evaluation of student outcomes. The school is constantly trying to understand its students better so as to meet their needs ever more successfully. Data is integral to this understanding. Plans and goals are developed and build systematically upon an evaluation of previous ones. There is a vision for the continued development of the school, which is consistent between key staff. The aspiration of maximizing student achievement and providing them with positive future pathways is articulated by the whole school community.

However, two important components are not yet having the full impact that they could. Intentions and aspirations are not always articulated in clear and measurable success criteria, with milestones to chart and measure interim progress towards them. In addition diagnostic assessments are not yet consistently used to provide periodic evaluation of student progress and performance. Nevertheless, there is a commonality of purpose and intent, which is driving the school forward. More widespread leadership and responsibilities are ensuring buy-in from staff and most students. Data is being used with increasing effect at all levels throughout the school.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Grover Cleveland High School	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
Quality Score				X	

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather and generate data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor the students progress over time.

To what extent do school leaders and faculty provide . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
1.1 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of each student, classroom, grade level?				X	
1.2 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of special education students?				X	
1.3 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of English language learners?				X	
1.4 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of ethnic groups, gender groups and all other categories of interest to the school?				X	
1.5 a measurement of performance and progress based on the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grades and subject areas?				X	
1.6 a measurement of performance and progress based on comparisons with similar schools?				X	
1.7 training, management systems and structures that support teachers in the use of school data to inform planning and instruction and to track the progress of students?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 1				X	

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each students learning.

To what extent do school leaders and faculty . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
2.1 engage in collaborative processes to set demanding, objectively measurable goals for improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals?			X		
2.2 focus on each student, classroom, grade level, academic subject and group of students whose performance or progress has been identified by the school as a particular focus area?				X	
2.3 identify and improve the performance and progress of those students in greatest need of improvement?				X	
2.4 share whole school goals with all members of the school community to rigorously improve the performance and progress of students?			X		
2.5 convey consistently high expectations to students and their parents/caregivers?				X	
2.6 regularly provide students and their parents/caregivers with information about the goals set for each student, and about each student's progress and performance, and how they can improve?				X	
2.7 invite and enable parents/caregivers to provide useful information to teachers and the school about the learning needs and capacities of their children?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 2				X	

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.

To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
3.1 select core curricular approaches that facilitate and provide meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and focus on raising the achievement of students?				X	
3.2 provide a broad and engaging curriculum, including the arts, to enhance learning both within and outside the school day?				X	
3.3 hold teachers accountable for the progress and learning of the students in their charge, for making instruction interesting and compelling, and for creating a positive safe and inclusive learning environment?				X	
3.4 ensure that teachers use school, class and student data to plan for and provide differentiated instruction that meets the specific needs of all the students in their charge?			X		
3.5 make budgeting, staffing and scheduling decisions strategically, based on data, to meet the school's academic goals for all students?				X	
3.6 ensure that there is an environment of mutual trust and respect between all staff and students to support personal and academic development?				X	
3.7 ensure that there are effective and consistently applied procedures to encourage and monitor student attendance?			X		
Overall score for Quality Statement 3				X	

Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school’s collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.					
To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
4.1 use frequent observations of classroom teaching by the principal and other available information to develop a differentiated strategy for improving the quality of each teacher’s instruction?				X	
4.2 make professional development decisions strategically, based on data, to help meet the improvement goals of students and teachers?				X	
4.3 provide frequent opportunities for teachers to observe each other’s classroom instruction and to meet together in teams to plan, share effective practices, and evaluate one another’s instruction in an open and reflective professional environment?				X	
4.4 develop effective procedures for the induction and support of teachers who are new to the profession or the school?				X	
4.5 align youth development, guidance/advising and other student support services around stated academic and personal development goals?				X	
4.6 consistently implement clear procedures that enable the school to run smoothly and encourage effective student learning?				X	
4.7 create effective partnerships with outside entities that support the academic and personal growth of the students?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 4					X

Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student’s progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.					
To what extent do . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
5.1 the school’s plans for improving student outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?			X		
5.2 the school’s plans for improving teacher outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?			X		
5.3 teachers and faculty use periodic assessments and other diagnostic tools to measure the effectiveness of plans and interventions for individual and groups of students in key areas?			X		
5.4 teachers and faculty use the information generated by periodic assessments and other progress measures and comparisons to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals?			X		
5.5 school leaders track the outcomes of periodic assessments and other diagnostic measures and use the results to makes strategic decisions to modify practices to improve student outcomes?				X	
5.6 school leaders and staff use each plan’s interim and final outcomes to drive the next stage of goal setting and improvement planning?				X	
5.7 the principal and school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to effect change?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 5					X

◇	Outstanding
+	Well Developed
✓	Proficient
➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features
Δ	Underdeveloped