Quality Review Report

2016-2017

Grover Cleveland High School
High school 24Q485
21-27 Himrod St.
Queens
NY 11385

Principal: Denise Vittor

Dates of Review:
March 9, 2017 - March 10, 2017

Lead Reviewer: Valerie Taylor
The Quality Review Report

The Quality Review is a two-day school visit by an experienced educator. During the review, the reviewer visits classrooms, talks with parents, students, teachers, and school leaders and uses a rubric to evaluate how well the school is organized to support student achievement.

The Quality Review Report provides a rating for all ten indicators of the Quality Review Rubric in three categories: Instructional Core, School Culture, and Systems for Improvement. One indicator is identified as the Area of Celebration to highlight an area in which the school does well to support student learning and achievement. One indicator is identified as the Area of Focus to highlight an area the school should work on to support student learning and achievement. The remaining indicators are identified as Additional Finding. This report presents written findings, impact, and site-specific supporting evidence for six indicators.

Information about the School

Grover Cleveland High School serves students in grade 9 through grade 12. You will find information about this school, including enrollment, attendance, student demographics, and data regarding academic performance, at http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/tools/report/default.htm.

School Quality Ratings

### Instructional Core

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Area of Focus</td>
<td>Developing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Developing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### School Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults</td>
<td>Area of Celebration</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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### Systems for Improvement

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<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Area of Celebration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.4 Positive Learning Environment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
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</table>

Findings

The positive environment of the school reflects a theory of action that builds an inclusive culture involving student voice in decision-making. There are structures in place to reinforce this positive environment, such as Paw Prints, and support student’s academic and personal behavior.

Impact

The school's environment reflects a culture of respect and positive attitudes that promote the academic and personal growth of students and where staff and students feel safe and students are well known by at least one adult. The school leadership team and administrative cabinet are venues for student voice in decision-making.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and staff created a theory of action which states that students learn appropriate and respectful behaviors through respectful interactions with adults. This theory has resulted in a shared understanding in practice to include a schoolwide matrix that outlines appropriate behaviors. In addition, Paw Prints reward system branded after the school’s tiger mascot is implemented to reward positive behaviors. Students who demonstrate these behaviors are nominated by teachers to earn Paw Prints that can be cashed in once per month in the school's store. In November, nominated students were treated to a Thanksgiving luncheon sponsored by teachers. In a teacher interview, one teacher stated, “It is better to show them that we respect them than to tell them.” Another teacher noted and the others agreed that the Paw initiative has had an impact on the way students treat each other. For example, more students are taking time out to turn over lost identification cards and other personal items to the office and show a willingness to help each other.

- The schools' Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS) program is a well-functioning system that boosts the schools' positive culture building. The PBIS team which includes principal, dean, and guidance counselors facilitates discussions on student personal concerns as well as attendance, punctuality and academic performance. This initiative is having an impact on students' academic and social behavior as it provides a platform for students to meet with counselors and teachers once per week to set learning goals and engage in self-assessment of their performance. Students shared that they enjoy going to advisory because the advisors encourage them and help them stay on track. These activities continue to promote gains in student social behaviors as reflected by fewer reported incidents of misconduct as per the Online Occurrence Reporting System. During the parent interview, one parent noted that his son is excited about the advisory program. Parents all agreed that supports are in place to help their children to be successful.

- Across grades and classrooms, a nurturing and positive environment is apparent via staff showing respect to students and families, creating a positive rapport. This was confirmed through the conversations that took place during meetings with both parents and students. Students shared that they feel safe and supported by the entire staff. In addition, they stated that teachers give up their lunch periods to support them with their academics. Furthermore, they reported that the credit recovery class managed by teachers helps them to make up assignments and catch up on work they missed. One student shared that she is new to the school, but she feels welcome. She stated, “The staff here really cares about children.” Furthermore, the students all agreed that through the student government they have representation on the school leadership team and on the administrative cabinet which give them voice in the decisions that affect the school as evident in the types of clubs that are offered. In addition, they noted that student council members serve as mentors for freshman students and represent the student body on the administrative cabinet.
Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator: 1.2 Pedagogy
Rating: Developing

Findings

Teaching strategies inconsistently provide multiple entry points such as differentiated tasks, the use of technology and a variety of manipulatives to support student engagement in challenging tasks.

Impact

Across classrooms, teachers are beginning to implement academic support such as graphic organizers, leveled questions, and anchor charts to produce meaningful work products, yet there are missed opportunities for all learners, including English Language Learners and students with disabilities, to demonstrate higher-order thinking and participation.

Supporting Evidence

- The level of engagement and participation in lessons varied across classrooms. Some lessons were teacher-directed with minimal opportunities for students to talk, and higher-order questioning or multiple entry points into lessons to meet the needs of all students were not evident in several classrooms visited. For example, in a tenth grade Global History lesson, students were expected to write high order thinking questions about France during Nazi Germany. However, students struggled as there was no text for them to use to create questions and a text-based discussion. In one group, the question asked, “Was there a resistance to the French government?” Similarly, in a grade twelve English lesson, students were expected to use a writing rubric to compose a level four paragraph for an argumentative essay. The students were presented with the same task and no verbal engagement and additional guidance from the teacher were provided. A few students attempted the task; one student had her head down, while three students were having a friendly conversation.

- In rooms where discussion was observed, it was evident that students were deeply engaged in their learning. For example, in a tenth grade English class, students listened to the lyrics of Lin Manuel Miranda’s Hamilton, in groups to discuss how he used his writing craft to grab his audience’s attention. One student pointed to the use of repetition. Another student quoted a line from the text to highlight the use of metaphor, “I'm a diamond in the rough, a shiny piece of coal.” In another class, students discussed whether Macbeth is easily influenced and what his strengths and weaknesses are. In one group, a student stated, “Macbeth was not easily influenced by the witch.” Another student agreed but noted, “Although Macbeth was not influenced by the witch he showed weakness toward his partner.” However, this level of thinking and participation was not observed in the majority of classes. In an eleventh grade earth science class, the lesson was teacher-directed and questions were at the lower levels of Webb’s Depth of Knowledge (DOK) scale such as, “What is the name of the ocean floor area?” This resulted in a missed opportunity for students to demonstrate high order thinking.

- Across classrooms, teachers are beginning to use accountable talk conversation prompts. Students are prompted to engage in conversation in most of the classrooms visited. However, the conversations often resulted in teacher to student. For example, in an eleventh grade lesson the teacher posed a question to the class, “How can we use P and S waves to locate an earthquake?” The teacher moved forward with the lesson after one response. In a ninth grade social studies lesson students were asked, “Why did people move to the city during the Renaissance?” Although the question required high levels of thinking the response was teacher to student with a missed opportunity to delve deeper with a follow-up question and engage the student in high-level discussion.
Findings

School leaders and faculty align curricula to the Common Core Learning Standards and the instructional shifts with a focus on academic vocabulary and writing from source. Lesson plans reflect rigorous academic tasks that promote higher-order thinking.

Impact

Lesson plans and curricula build coherence and emphasize college and career readiness and that all students, including English Language Learners and students with disabilities, demonstrate high-order thinking.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and faculty develop curriculum maps, lesson plans, and pacing calendars aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and incorporate the instructional shifts. The schoolwide focus of analysis and text-based questions was evident in a ninth grade English lesson plan requiring students to read *Night* by Elie Wiesel as the central text and analyze how the author creates characters and shows their development and change during the story. A tenth grade writing lesson shows that students will be asked to cite specific examples of how the writer of the Broadway’s musical *Hamilton* used techniques to grab his audience. An eleventh grade ELA lesson will ask students to read act one scene three in *Macbeth* and cite evidence of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

- English, science and social studies planning documents all evidence teachers’ focus on the use of informational text and academic vocabulary. In math, teachers plan activities for students to demonstrate the instructional shifts of conceptual understanding as well as procedural knowledge. In a tenth grade math lesson plan, the task criteria required students to find the solution to a system of equations algebraically, using the substitution and elimination method. In a Global History plan, on the Renaissance, students are required to cite text evidence to respond to the essential question, “How did the Renaissance differ from the earlier Medieval Period?” In an eleventh grade science plan on earthquakes, students will use academic vocabulary such as epicenter, waves, fault, and seismic waves to discuss the essential question, “To what extent does plate movements cause changes in the positions and shapes of Earth’s landmasses?”

- Planning documents emphasized the use of a variety of questions across Webb’s *Depth of Knowledge* to promote higher-order thinking. Students are expected to answer a range of questions such as, “Why the time gap changes for one seismic station to the other?” “Why does Banquo want the witches to speak to him?” “Why are some volcanoes explosive?” In addition, planning documents reflect tasks designed to engage higher-order thinking such as comparing and contrasting texts, solving multiple steps problems and in science gathering and organizing data and graphing to organize patterns.
**Findings**

Teachers are developing in their use of common assessments such as end-of-unit tests to measure student progress toward goals across grades and subject areas. Across classrooms, teacher assessment practices inconsistently reflect the use of on-going checks for understanding.

**Impact**

Teachers inconsistently use the analysis of baseline assessments to adjust curricula and instruction and do not regularly use on-going checks for understanding to make effective in-the-moment adjustments to meet the needs of all learners.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Teachers analyze student scholarship scores, item skill analysis, performance tasks, and mid-term assessments to provide a view of how students perform and determine areas of strengths and challenges as a school. Aggregated data regarding performance on scholarship are distributed to teachers. Notes from one department indicate that teachers analyzed this data and determined that the passing goal of sixty five percent and higher was not met. However, there is little evidence that data is disaggregated to the student level to identify trends and patterns of student performance and to adjust instruction accordingly. For example, school leaders noted that students did not do well on writing short responses and on multiple-choice responses on the fall exams; however, not all teachers are tracking the performance of individual students.

- School leaders indicated that the use of ongoing checks for understanding varies across all classrooms and includes the use of exit slips, whole class on-the-spot checks and follow-up questions. In the majority of classrooms visited, teachers circulated throughout the classroom and checked for understanding by asking targeted questions. However, only a few teachers captured the information obtained from those conversations to make adjustments such as stopping the lesson and redirecting the students and providing additional materials. For example, one teacher observed tenth grade students during independent work time and collected information about how well students were making the connections between two documents about World War II. The teacher interrupted and redirected the students to a previous document to help clear up the misconceptions that were observed. Not all teachers were taking the opportunity to collect student-specific performance to make similar adjustments.

- Although the staff and administration have determined that checking for understanding during lessons is a schoolwide area of focus and have created professional development to that end, it is work in progress. There are classes where checking for understanding is done so that students’ needs are met and others where it is still developing. In an Integrated Co-Teaching class, the teacher checked for student understanding throughout the lesson starting with explaining the learning objective. The teacher asked students to identify terms that might be confusing and clarified them using student input. Additionally, the teacher used open-ended questions to give students discussion opportunities and ask them to share out their answers to assess understanding. However, in a tenth grade algebra lesson the teacher modeled the word problem and asked students to demonstrate their level of understanding by solving a similar problem. Although the teacher circulated throughout the classroom, there were several students who did not complete the problem correctly and there was no procedure set to help clarify their misunderstanding or make effective adjustments during the lesson.
**Additional Finding**

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<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>3.4 High Expectations</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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**Findings**

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the entire staff in weekly newsletters and provide training to meet those expectations. School leaders and staff consistently communicate expectations that are aligned to college and career readiness and provide ongoing feedback to families.

**Impact**

Faculty and staff receive training on school-wide expectations and are held accountable for them. Families are well informed about the progress their children are making to meet high expectations.

**Supporting Evidence**

- School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to faculty and staff via the staff handbook, a weekly newsletter, professional development sessions and faculty meetings. This year professional learning focused on instructional planning, the delivery of instruction, questioning, and discussion techniques. Teachers are expected to use higher-order question skills, checks for understanding, and engaging tasks to expand student participation and discussion. A system to monitor the implementation of these expectations includes frequent classroom walkthroughs, one-on-one feedback conversations, and written feedback on observations aligned with the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. An example of this feedback noted, “You were presented with many strategies to engage students in student-to-student discourse. Please refer to the professional development document and implement one of the strategies in your lessons.”

- A professional learning calendar demonstrates alignment with the expectations communicated by school leaders and the professional development teachers receive. During three different teacher meetings, teachers agreed that in the beginning of the school year, school leaders ran a series of workshops on teacher practices based on the schools’ goals, classroom observations and teacher’s professional development feedback. A review of the feedback survey revealed that teachers identified questioning as an area in which they would need additional support. The agenda for the month of November showed that teachers participated in professional work around Webb’s *Depth of Knowledge* questions to increase student conversation during a lesson. Another opportunity focused on the using checks for understanding during instruction to assess students’ comprehension of the learning objective.

- Parents are informed about the expectations connected to college and career readiness through frequent communications and forums such as the Family Tuesday meetings. Parents reported that they are provided with information specific to their child and ideas about how to support them at home such as checking to make sure homework assignments are completed. In addition, parents noted that the transparency in following students’ performance through PupilPath and regular communication with teachers have made them aware of the expectations of the Common Core Learning Standards and the process for college and career readiness. Furthermore, several parents noted that the student progress report and phone calls from teachers keep them abreast of their child’s progress and give them the opportunity to monitor their child’s progress regularly.
Findings

The majority of teachers are engaged in inquiry-based professional collaborations that promote school goals. There are distributive leadership structures in place that provide teachers with leadership opportunities and give them voice in schoolwide decisions.

Impact

Professional collaborations result in strengthening the teachers’ instructional capacity and enhance their voice in key decisions that affect student learning.

Supporting Evidence

- School goals are promoted through the work of teacher teams focused on strengthening the use of instructional shifts and the Common Core Learning Standards. Teachers have common planning time built into their schedules to meet for collaboration during the school day and to engage in professional learning. During a teacher team meeting, teachers demonstrated the protocol for analyzing student work. The objective was to analyze written evidence gathered by students to participate in accountable talk. Through this practice, they determined the areas of need, created an action plan, and discussed next steps. One teacher proposed providing scaffolds such as graphic organizers to help the students organize their ideas. Team members stated that their function was to guide students in deepening their discourse using accountable talk as well as to help them structure their essay. This endeavor is aligned to the school’s goals to achieve an increase in student performance in the area of essay writing.

- Teachers in three different meetings shared that they feel the constant cycles of team meetings have allowed them to become better teachers by increasing their repertoire of teaching strategies. One teacher noted that strategies shared during one team meeting on scaffolds, gave him ideas that he might not have used especially for English Language Learners. Thus, using anchor charts and graphic organizers have enhanced his instruction and he feels confident meeting the needs of his students. Another teacher talked about how observing one of her colleague’s modeling writing using the graphic organizer to help the students organize their ideas helped her in her planning and delivery of writing instruction. In addition, one teacher noted that team meetings have provided a safe place for them to learn from each other and reflect on their own learning. The other teachers all agreed.

- Distributive leadership is evident through teacher leaders who have wide latitude in instructional decisions. Teachers affirmed that they have significant voice in decision making throughout the school by participating on various committees such as the Professional Learning Committee. School leaders stated that teachers provide coaching, facilitate workshops, and serve as mentors for new teachers. Furthermore, there are a number of teacher-initiated programs designed to instill a sense of civic awareness and preparedness for college and career readiness such as the hospitality program and the music program. Teachers stated that the professional development feedback sheets allow them to have input and give them voice in the types of professional development they receive.