NYSED/NYCDOE JOINT INTERVENTION TEAM REPORT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

BEDS Code/DBN:	24Q485
School Name:	Grover Cleveland High School
School Address:	21-27 Himrod Street Ridgewood, New York 11385
Principal:	Dominick Scarola
Restructuring Phase/Category:	Persistently Lowest-Achieving
Area(s) of Identification:	Graduation Rate
Dates of On-site Diagnostic Review:	October 26 - 27, 2010

PART 1: INTRODUCTION

A. Community and School Background

Grover Cleveland High School is a comprehensive high school that serves 2,664 students in grades nine through 12. The student population is 65 percent Hispanic, four percent Black, seven percent Asian, and 24 percent White. Thirty-seven percent of the students live near the school.

The administrative cabinet includes the Principal, who has led the school for ten years, and 11 Assistant Principals (APs) for Organization; Physical Education; English; Foreign Languages; Mathematics; Guidance; Security; Social Studies; Science/Tech; COART; and Instructional Support Services. They have served the school as administrators from four to 12 years.

There are 132 teachers on staff, and two teachers have fewer than three years of experience. Five percent of the teachers are not highly qualified. The administrative and teacher turnover rate is low.

PART 2: ASSESSMENT OF THE SCHOOL'S EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

A. Performance on Key Indicators of Student Achievement Trends and School Progress

Positive or Negative Indicator (+/-)	School Performance Indicators	✓
	NYSED Quantitative Performance Measures	
+	Positive trend data for all identified subject/areas and subgroups for the past two consecutive years), as demonstrated by an increase in the percentage of students performing at or above Level 3 and/or a Performance Index increase of five or more points.	✓
+	Performance data for the school on NYSED Accountability Overview Reports (AOR) for the past two consecutive years) indicate the school has reduced the achievement gap between identified subgroups and **the *All Students*** subgroup in ALL identified subject/area(s) by ten percent or more.	✓
-	School is ten or more points away from meeting its Effective Annual Measurable Objective (EAMO) for one or more identified subgroups in subject/area(s) of identification.	✓
-	For 2009-10, the school was identified as a **Persistently Lowest- Achieving school.**	✓

Positive or Negative Indicator (+/-)	School Performance Indicators	✓
-	Total Cohort Graduation rate is below 60% (for high schools)	✓
	NYCDOE Quantitative and Qualitative Performance Measures	
-	Grade of C on the most recent NYC Progress Report	✓
+	NYC Quality Review Score of Well-Developed	✓

B. School Strengths

- The building is a safe and secure. School safety officers, teachers, administrators, and other staff were visible throughout the hallways.

- School goals and expectations were prominently displayed throughout the building.

- Recognizing the need to better serve the instructional needs of grade 9 students, the administration researched programs and created study groups to analyze data that resulted in the creation of a Grade 9 Academy. Preliminary indications, such as an improved attendance rate, demonstrate this will better serve their students. The administration is now exploring programs that may expand this type of academy into other areas of the school.

- The Special Education Department actively seeks approaches to meet the needs of students with disabilities. The students with disabilities subgroup made significant gains in the 2009-2010 school year.

C. Key Findings and Recommendations

Summary of the key issues (causal factors), and other areas of concern, identified during the on-site diagnostic review that are negatively impacting student achievement in identified areas, as well as recommendations, as related to the seven JIT Indicator Categories:

I. Curriculum

Findings:

- Classroom observations revealed that curriculum taught to retained students mirrored curriculum previously failed. Predictably, students have continued to fail. Classes were not aligned with grade level requirements and expectations. A review of first marking period results in 40 randomly selected holdover core classes indicated that only 44 percent of the students passed. Additionally, a four percent passing rate in one English as a Second Language (ESL) class was noted.

- Holdover, long term English Language Learners (ELLs), and Students with Interrupted Formal Education (SIFE) classes did not have lesson objectives that were aligned with State standards.

- There was little evidence of diverse and rigorous curriculum opportunities that included native language related resource materials for long term ELLs and SIFE.

Recommendations:

- Holdover classes should be eliminated. Alternate programs should be designed to assist students to remain with their cohort. These programs might include a greater use of credit recovery opportunities, push-in instructional support, and/or intensive summer school programs.

Mandated tutoring should be available from the beginning of the term as well as before, during and after school.

- A closer analysis of the curriculum, identifying specific areas which students are failing, should be examined to inform instructional practices and program development.

- As indicated by student achievement data and classroom observations, there should be consideration of an "ELL Academy" for SIFE and long term ELLs. This program should have the same support and instructional aspects that appear to be successful in addressing the grade 9 student achievement issues in the Grade 9 Academy.

II. Teaching and Learning

Findings:

- Sixty-five observations of classes by the review team across grade and core curriculum areas indicated an inconsistency in rigorous questioning, and an absence of diverse instructional activities in the classroom.

- Although some classes had incorporated higher order thinking activities, there was a lack of consistency in all classes that resulted in a low level of student engagement and student achievement.

- In more than half of the core classes observed, there was no summarizing of any activity; questioning was not rigorous; and technology was not incorporated.

- Grouping was in evidence; however, in most observed classes it was not effectively implemented.

- The English and Social Studies Departments did not align curriculum, although social studies was thematically reconfigured.

- Holdover classes revealed low level instruction and homogeneous grouping that resulted in low expectations for students enrolled in these classes. The failure rate was high in these classes.

- Lesson transitions were weak.

- Maximizing the use of instructional class time was not observed in classes. Summarizing of one activity before entering another was not apparent in the majority of classes observed.

Recommendations:

- There should be a singular instructional focus that incorporates higher order thinking skills and related activities such as reading and writing skills into every lesson, every day.

- A schoolwide requirement to incorporate critical thinking skills to classroom instruction should be implemented and supported by coordinated staff development.

- Differentiated activities that require higher order thinking should be implemented. Since Smart Boards are readily available, teachers should incorporate this technology as a student-centered, activity learning board rather than a chalkboard.

- The process for observation of teachers should focus on grouping as a schoolwide goal. Teacher achievement in this area should be reflected in end-of year evaluations.

- Coordination between English and social studies is essential for students to make connections through interdisciplinary experiences.

- Holdover classes should be eliminated and replaced with opportunities for students to recover credits.

- Summary activities that integrate assessment type questions should assist in evaluating student understandings.

- Lesson planning should aim to maximize class time. Specific lesson plan templates need to be used by professional staff. This should include all elements that are essential to quality class instruction, including higher order thinking questions and pivotal devices such as aims and motivations.

III. School Leadership

Findings:

- The Principal has initiated several instructional programs to better meet the diverse needs of students, e.g., the Grade 9 Academy and course annualization. However, he has not addressed the chronic problems of repeated student failure, e.g., holdover classes within existing core classes.

- Some departments, such as the social studies and science departments do not demonstrate consistently high expectations for students. Solutions for student failure are placing them in holdover classes. The social studies department has the largest number of holdover classes. This student failure is viewed as a student problem rather than a function of poor instruction. This problem also existed in the science department.

  In addition, students neither are encouraged to take nor enroll in large numbers in high level science courses. Interviews indicated low student expectations by various administrators and a general impression that students are unable to succeed in these courses.

- Administrative positions such as APs and the parent coordinator account for almost 10 percent of the total school budget. The Principal has invested a significant amount of the school's budget on administrative and non-instructional services, which have not served to improve student achievement. In addition, the administrative team engages in little or no professional development (PD).

- There was little evidence that ongoing support for instructional improvement was linked to a systemic teacher evaluation process of observation, PD, and teacher evaluation.

Recommendations:

- The Principal should continue to examine the root causes for chronic student failure unique to this school, analyze research to address these identified issues, and design programs to meet students' needs.

- Scholarship reports, which summarize grade, course, class, and teacher passing percentages, should be examined each marking period to identify student and teacher failure before the end of the year. Interventions should then be planned to address chronic problems.

- It is recommended that the substance of the administrative team needs to be closely examined. A new configuration with more instructionally focused administrators in social studies, science, and guidance who have high expectations for all students should be employed in these areas. An evaluation process, similar to the recommendation for a teacher evaluation process, that also addresses PD should be created for the administrative team.

- A system that clearly delineates and links observations, teacher PD, instructional performance, and the end-of-year evaluation should be implemented.

III. Infrastructure for Student Success

Findings:

- Guidance counselors' student caseloads range from 69 to 407 students. Approximately 284 students are being supported and advised by teachers (grade advisors) who are not certified counselors.

- There are no departmental procedures for the consistent delivery of guidance services to students.

- There is no schoolwide system for sharing information about PSAT and SAT results.

- College counseling is limited to grade 12 students.

- There was little evidence of any systematic career counseling by the guidance department.

Recommendations:

- The AP for Guidance should reassess the use of staff to better serve the diverse needs of students.

- A guidance scope and sequence that addresses appropriate career and college counseling, which is delivered in a timely, student-centered manner, should be developed and implemented.

- The PSAT and SAT testing schedule and the summary test results should be shared with the entire staff and integrated into the curriculum. This assessment information can be used for planning instructional improvements.

- A career and college guidance curriculum that begins in grade 9 should be developed and implemented. This will ensure that students develop career goals and are college ready well before grade 12.

IV. Collection, Analysis, and Utilization of Data

Findings:

- Though the school uses formative assessment results to inform instruction, there is a need to collect, analyze, and use summative data to do schoolwide planning for underachieving students, i.e., repeaters, SIFE, and long term ELLs.

- Daedalus and the Achievement Reporting and Innovation System (ARIS) data systems are chief data sources for the school. The school does not effectively and appropriately use NYS accountability rules and the definitions of the different cohorts as they apply to the school's accountability status.

Recommendations:

- School leaders should analyze summative data and use the results to inform decision-making and schoolwide planning.

- School data sources should be aligned with the requirements of the New York State Testing and Accountability Reporting Tool data system in order to ensure access to accurate and appropriate data results. The school data specialist should regularly participate in Network and citywide training.

V. Professional Development

Findings:

- Teacher surveys indicate that the weakest area was PD in teaching strategies, data analysis, and content support. A schoolwide PD plan was not evident.

- Individual staff PD plans are not consistent with student needs as identified by a review of classroom instruction and student achievement results.

- PD is not a continuous process aligned with school goals and student needs.

Recommendations:

- PD should be a singular focus, e.g., critical thinking activities/questioning that drive schoolwide PD and individual teacher needs.

- The observation process should be aligned with this PD to further improve the instructional process.

- The end-of-year evaluation process should reflect teacher progress in achieving these PD goals.

VI. District Support

Finding:

The Principal, APs, and staff have articulated a lack of support from Network/District resources.

Recommendation:

The Network should provide support in implementing the recommendations of the Joint Intervention Team (JIT).

PART 3: OVERALL FINDING AND RECOMMENDATION

A. Overall Finding

Reference	Review Team Finding	✓
(a)	The school has not made sufficient progress in identified areas, and is unlikely to make AYP under the current structure and organization.	✓

B. Overall Recommendation

Delete the recommendations that do not apply to the school reviewed.

Reference	Review Team Recommendation	✓
(a)	Develop and implement a new plan that could include significant changes in staff, organizational structure, leadership and/or configuration, to address issues that continue to negatively impact student academic performance in identified areas.	✓

C. In the space below, include specific information to support the District in determining how the above recommendation should be accomplished.

- This school, as presently structured, will not make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in the foreseeable future without significant changes in administration, staff, and educational programs.

- The school has recognized the need to restructure the school as evidenced by the implementation of a Grade 9 Academy. There are some early indications, such as an increase in student attendance, that demonstrate this program could have a positive impact on student success. The school should examine the successful elements for this Academy using the data analysis of student achievement and other school report indicators, i.e., attendance, stability, suspensions, and credits earned. Consideration of an extension of this Academy into grade 10 should be examined.

- Further restructuring should be vertically aligned with State standards that provide access to the most rigorous curriculum for all students. No restructuring effort will succeed until holdover classes are eliminated. Opportunities should be used that provide mandated additional instruction, push-in instructional support, and differentiated teaching to prevent continued failure of high risk students.

- Any restructuring effort should consider the various needs and supports required to assist SIFE and long term ELLs. An immersion academy, which could transition these students into the mainstream, should provide instructional, guidance support, and language acquisition on an intensive basis. PD should be provided to all teachers to attend to the needs of these subgroups.

- Some departments, such as the English department, have made significant progress in student achievement results. For example, this department had the smallest number of holdover classes. Yet there was little curriculum collaboration between the English and the social studies departments. Collaboration between the social studies and the English departments should be fostered to help students read and understand informational texts. The social studies department should integrate reading and writing strategies into daily lessons and familiarize its staff with the ELA curriculum. There was no evidence of the integration of reading and writing across curriculum areas. This should be immediately addressed.

- The guidance program should be redesigned to include a four-year, comprehensive support service for all students and teachers. A scope and sequence for the department should include specific grade level activities, marking period systems to identify at-risk students and a team approach that includes instructional staff in department meetings. The school should adopt a proactive rather than reactive approach to support students. Counseling staff should be required to state individual goals and be observed with a focus on these goals. PD for the counseling staff should include career and college counseling to support the students in becoming college ready and to enhance the college application process.

- The restructuring of the school program will necessitate a knowledgeable, focused administrative team. The present cabinet's strengths and weaknesses needs to be closely reviewed with consideration to the replacement of its weakest members.