



Grover Cleveland High School

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Dominick Scarola, Principal

Good News Crowley Fights To Save GCHS

“The DOE’s grading system is flawed,” says Principal Dominick Scarola



City Council Member Elizabeth Crowley posed with the Grover Cleveland High School Science Olympiad team on Saturday, Feb. 6 at the Ridgewood school. Mr. Alizai, science teacher is pictured at back left; Krishna Mahabir, the school’s Science Olympiad head coach is pictured kneeling in second row, at left.

Grover Cleveland hosts 2010 New York City Regional Science Olympiad

BY STEVE MOSCO

One area school has perfected the science of proving education officials wrong. On the heels of being named as one of the city’s lowest performing schools by the New York State Department of Education (NYS DOE), Grover Cleveland High School in Ridgewood recently hosted the 2010 New York City Regional Science Olympiad.

Grover Cleveland officials said that the Olympiads, which the school has hosted since 2004, highlights the unfair methods that the NYS DOE uses to measure schools’ performances.

“The DOE’s grading system is flawed. It does not measure many of the challenges that some schools face,” said Dominick Scarola, principal of Grover Cleveland High School. “The DOE does not take into account schools with high populations of students with learning challenges.” Councilmember Elizabeth Crowley, who presided over the Olympiad, said that the NYS DOE study misses the boat in terms of who is attending the school and the type of education they receive.

“The study does not take into account the significant number of new Americans that enroll in the school annually and have additional challenges due to language barriers,” said Crowley. “Despite the study’s results, Grover Cleveland is excelling in the fields of science and the school, along with its administration, should be commended for that.”

Instead of handing out compliments to school administrations and students, the NYS DOE recently joined Partnership Zone Initiative with Mass Insight, an independent nonprofit, to turn around under achieving schools.

“Certain schools have failed too many of our students and require immediate intervention,” said State Education Commissioner David Steiner. “We’ve joined the Partnership Zone Initiative to develop aggressive intervention models that will make a profound difference in the outcomes for students.”

The outcome for students at one Queens school is sure to be different, as a City Department of Education (DOE) plan shows that Peninsula Preparatory Academy in Far Rockaway will be one of three politically connected charter schools to receive city money for new buildings.

The city DOE did not return requests for comment.

It all comes back to a lack of transparency, according to United Federation of Teachers (UFT) Queens Representative James Vasquez.

“We created a system that is different on the federal, state and city levels. They are not all aligned,” said Vasquez. “We want to target how best to improve, how to get funding. But which system are we using?”

The best system, Grover Cleveland faculty members believe, involves determined teachers and willing students, whose science is overcoming the odds.

“We have a multicultural institution with students from all over the world that converge into one common goal of excellence in education,” said Krishna Mahabir, science teacher and Science Olympiad head coach. “Science Olympiad had a profound effect on my teaching and I am honored to work with students who, despite many daily struggles, are still able to maintain academic excellence

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