

James Madison High School

James Madison High School

High School 425

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Part 1: The School Context

Information about the school

James Madison School is a large high school with over 4,300 students. It is located in a pleasant suburban area of Kings Highway in South Brooklyn; it is housed in a historical building with 5 stories and a wide range of sporting facilities including playing fields and a swimming pool. The school is organized in houses to which students, teachers, counselors and assistant Principals are specifically assigned.

The population comprises approximately 56% White, 18% Black, 15% Asian and 11% Hispanic. The school community includes students from culturally diverse backgrounds. Over 32 languages are represented in the school. The four language groups with the largest number of English language learners students are Russian, Chinese, Spanish and Urdu speakers.

The students range from ninth through twelfth grades with a population that includes a high proportion of English language learners and students with special education needs. The school has been designated as a Collaborative Community of Practice. There are 197 teachers and 122 support staff.

The school motto is 'Education is the true foundation of civil liberty'.

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Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school is high performing when compared to City and similar schools.
- The school has developed robust systems to analyze performance data in order to improve the progress of students.
- The school has been designated as a Collaborative Community of Practice so that many good practices can be shared with other schools.
- The Principal provides charismatic and dynamic school leadership. Parents, staff and the community greatly respect his focused vision for the school.
- The school runs very smoothly on a day-to-day basis supported by a team of senior administrators.
- Effective systems are in place to ensure that the school is a very safe and secure environment.
- The strong culture in the school results in positive behavior and high student commitment to the school.
- Students are well prepared for further education, and the majority of students in the graduating classes enroll for college.
- The majority of teaching is good with some examples of outstanding practice.
- There are a wide range of curriculum programs that meet the needs of the large number of students.
- There is an extensive and varied program of enrichment activities with a good level of student participation.
- There are good systems of care which support the academic achievement and personal development of students.
- Intervention programs support students who require additional help with their work.
- The school is continually evaluating its performance and seeking new ways to improve the learning and progress of the students.

What the school needs to improve

- Develop additional strategies to encourage more parental involvement with the school particularly amongst the parents of low attaining and at risk students.
- Ensure that the best practice in teaching and learning is shared across the school so that all teaching continues to progress to higher levels.
- Build on the existing assessment procedures on individual student performance so that there is more consistency in the recording of information, the transfer of records between teachers and the reporting to parents.
- Further interpret the available assessment data to identify any differences in the performance and progress of students by gender and ethnic groups.
- Further develop the provision and use of technology as a tool for teaching and learning.
- Further develop the display work in the classrooms and corridors in order to enhance the learning environment in the school.

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Part 3: Main Findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a well-developed school.

This is a very successful school in terms of academic achievement and personal development of the students. The school has a strong reputation in the city and is used as a model of good practice. This is a well-developed school in terms of the evaluation criteria.

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

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

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

The school is high performing when compared to City and similar schools. It has a strong reputation for academic success and again surpassed the school's AMO for the total cohort in 2005. The percentages of students gaining over 65% in the Regents examinations was 87% for Math A and 86% for English Language Arts. The majority of the ELL students achieved proficiency in the NYSLAT examinations. Students are well prepared for further education, and the majority of students in the graduating classes enroll for college. Over 79% of students gained 4 Year College places in 2005 and many were awarded generous scholarships. Student Jia Lion Yee gained a Gates Millennium Scholarship last year. Julia James, from the Class of 2000 was named a 2004 Rhodes scholar. The Wall of Distinction is impressive with the names of many former scholars who have now gained national recognition.

The school has developed robust systems to analyze performance data in order to improve the progress of students. The Principal and assistant Principals are continually examining achievement within subjects, teaching groups and sub groups within the school. A number of the graduation year who did not gain passes, included long term absentees, transfers, special needs students and students who have dropped out of school. Students who do not graduate are encouraged to resit the examinations in August.

A detailed analysis of performance by subjects over the last three years has been completed and the trends noted. The examination overview is shared with the departments so that it is possible to see differences in passing rates between subjects and grade boundaries. Additional academic intervention programs were introduced in Math last year in order to increase the student passing percentages. The school has highlighted Science as an area for development in order to improve results in the Regents examinations.

The use of assessment and attendance data is well-developed and this is used well to facilitate the progress of students. However, further interpretation of the available

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assessment data could be made in order to identify any differences in the performance and progress of students by gender and ethnic groups. There could be more analysis of this area with particular reference to subjects and performance at different grade levels within the school.

Quality Statement 2: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student's next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student's learning.

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

The school has developed effective systems for teachers to record the grades of individual students. Students are identified and tracked on a house basis according to performance in the tests and attendance at school. There are regular discussions among departments, house coordinators and guidance counselors regarding individual and groups of students. Some subjects such as literacy, social studies and physical education are building up more detailed records of students' understanding and skills. The school could now build on the existing assessment procedures on individual student performance so that there is more consistency in the recording of information and the transfer of records between teachers.

Report cards are distributed to parents and guardians six times a year and give a clear indication of percentage grades achieved by the students. Comments on the reports are included for some subjects. There are regular Parent Conferences when subject teachers discuss the individual progress of students. However, the percentage attendance at these meetings is low and the school should encourage more parental involvement so that all students are better supported in their learning. Parents commented on the good practice of some subjects which put the homework on the school web site.

The detailed analysis of assessment and attendance information identifies students who require additional help with their work. Intervention programs are well organized ranging from whole classes, such as the literacy programs, to small group tutoring before and after school. The school has provided some of the academic intervention programs before school so that students can participate in the extra curricular activities. Students who are identified as at risk have opportunities to participate in the after school program Project Support which provides intervention support in all content areas. Students who do not pass 9th Grade literacy are programmed for a double period 10th Grade NCEE literacy class. A wide range of collaborative programs allows the school to draw on help from the community to provide specific support for students. There are good systems of guidance and counseling which support the academic achievement and personal development of students.

Case studies of ELL and students with special learning difficulties showed outstanding progress with well documented progress records. Two students who arrived at the school with no English have progressed through the intensive ESL program and recently gained high marks in their Regency examinations. They are both taking College Now credits as well as a wide range of electives in preparation for college. Most students make good progress during their time at the school as measured by certification and entry to college. The school uses assessment information from the previous schools effectively. Counselors receive the English Language Arts and Math scores in June from the 8th grade

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and use them for student placement into houses and courses as well as for early identification of the particular learning needs of the students. The school continues tracking of progress throughout the school so that all students can maximize their achievement and success.

Quality Statement 3: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.

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

Curriculum programs are well-developed with an impressive range of core classes and electives to meet the needs of the large number of students. The school offers the full range of courses in every subject area, including Regents level, Honors and Advanced Placement classes. The school operates four educational option programs including Law, Bio-Medical, Information Technology and Music and Art. The school is organized on a house system so that students, teachers, guidance counselors, house coordinators are assigned to smaller communities within the large school.

The school has a large number of collaborative programs to extend opportunities and support students in need of assistance. For example the Arthur Ashe Health Science Academy provides specific support for a group of English Language Learners, while the Jewish Board of Family and Child Services provide counseling sessions for targeted students. Higher achieving students can enroll for College Now and Baruch College has extended their program to include a summer component. The school has pioneered some imaginative intervention work through double periods in 9th grade literacy. Students who achieve Levels 1 or 2 on the ELA examination are placed on the very effective literacy program or project support in order to improve their reading and writing.

The majority of teaching is good with some examples of outstanding practice. Teachers engage the students in a variety of activities and students respond in a positive manner. Many teachers are emphasizing routine working habits and print rich environments as well as modeling good practice in their lessons. Teaching in the literacy classes particularly helps the learning styles of both boys and girls. Students worked well in the law classes with a group of students from elementary school. In a few lessons teachers teach the class as whole with little attempt to differentiate the work according to the ability of the students. In some classes, students are passive and are not encouraged to fully participate in lessons. Some teachers use technology in their lessons but the school should further develop this as a tool for teaching and learning. The school may also consider the further development of display work in the classrooms and corridors in order to enhance the learning environment in the school. The challenge for the school is to ensure that the best practice in teaching and learning is shared across the school so that all teaching continues to progress to higher levels.

Quality Statement 4: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around 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 provides charismatic and dynamic leadership. Parents, staff and the community greatly respect his focused vision for the school. He conducts himself in a

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highly professional manner and provides a positive role model for new and aspiring leaders. He knows how to delegate effectively and empower his Assistant Principals and staff to have a real ownership of their work. He has an eye for detail and knows his school well. His presence around the school and in classrooms is greatly appreciated by the teachers and students. Parents applaud the open and welcoming approach of the school which they feel originates from the attitude of the Principal.

The cabinet team of assistant Principals provides essential links between the teachers and the Principal. They are responsible for the management of subject areas including the instruction and professional development of the teachers. They are fully involved in the monitoring of student performance for both teaching groups and individual students. There is an emphasis on improving teaching and learning in order to raise the academic achievement of all students. The team is fully involved in whole school discussion at formal monthly meetings in addition to informal daily meetings with the Principal. Recent discussions at cabinet included plans for the extension of double periods and the sharing of good practice in working with English Language Learners across the subject areas. Decisions regarding the budget, staffing and timetabling are both pragmatic and strategic in order to enhance the learning outcomes of students.

Lesson observations of teachers are firmly established as both a monitoring and support mechanism in the subject departments. Teachers are observed at least twice a year and senior staff regularly visits lessons on an informal basis. Feedback to teachers from the Assistant Principals includes a discussion on strengths and areas for development. This is then linked to appropriate professional development and support as required by the individual teachers. Staff development days are well used with a good balance of internal and external inputs. Recent topics have included vocabulary in context, essential questions, student engagement, differentiation, literacy practices and collaborative team teaching. There has been a growing interest in peer observations within and across departments.

There is a real commitment by all teaching and support staff to provide the very best opportunities for the students. There are good systems of care which support the academic achievement and personal development of students. The school runs very smoothly on a day-to-day basis supported by a team of senior administrators. Effective systems are in place to ensure that the school is a very safe and secure environment. The deans and safety officers work well as a team under the supervision of an Assistant Principal. The atmosphere in the school is calm and it is sometimes difficult to imagine that there are over 4000 students in the school. There is a positive cultures in the school resulting in high standards of behavior and a sense of student commitment to the school.

Quality Statement 5: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerated learning.

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

Teachers regularly assess the students through a variety of formative and summative assessments. Teachers are accountable to their Assistant Principals for the performance of their classes and students. There is good networking between departments and information on students is passed on effectively by the house coordinators, counselors

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and teachers. The Principal and his cabinet are meticulous in analyzing the assessment information and identifying areas of underachievement in any classes or specific groups of students. Students who need extra support are quickly identified. Teachers use many opportunities to enlist the support of parents and guardians to help their students raise their levels of performance. The school is aware that it will need to develop additional strategies to encourage more parental involvement with the school particularly among the parents of low attaining and at risk students. There are good systems for monitoring attendance and records are well used to establish student programs and arrange outreach to parents as required.

The school has been designated as a Collaborative Community of Practice so that many good practices can be shared with other schools. The school has many visitors to look at the work in areas such as literacy, numeracy, music, ELL, after school activities and college advisement. The mock courtroom in the Law Institute is used by a large number of intermediate and elementary schools. The school is continually evaluating its performance and seeking new ways to improve the learning and progress of the students. The Principal and Assistant Principals are well aware of the strengths and areas for development in the school. The self evaluation form provides an accurate picture of the school and identifies many of the key issues for development. The Comprehensive Education Plan is a working document and provides a very clear guide to the priorities for the year. There are defined targets with success criteria, actions and monitoring arrangements. Each subject area has fully embraced self evaluation and has action plans for improvement. The school constantly reviews its plans and adjusts them throughout the year. The Leadership Team of the Principal, parents, teachers and students is well attended and provides active support and guidance in defining the direction of the school. There are exciting plans for improvement and the school has a strong capacity for further improvement and outstanding success.

Other key observations

There is an extensive and varied program of enrichment activities with a good level of student participation. The school had recently organized the Spring Concert Series which involved over 100 students and is now preparing for a concert by the Rock Orchestra and Concert Choir. The athletics field has been modernized through support from the Take Field Foundation and provides an ideal resource for sporting activities in and out of school hours.

The Peer Mediation Center and the Citizenship Center provide first class support for challenging students and have a very high success rate in integrating students back into the mainstream of school without resorting to suspension procedures.

Some students do particularly well at school and are invited to join the Honors Societies such as ARISA for superior academic achievement and FIDELITAS for school and community service.

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Part 4: Evaluation Criteria Grade Summary

Quality Statement 1: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor and facilitate the student's progress over time.	o	✓	+
<p>1.1 The school uses available data (e.g., diagnostic, formative, and summative assessments, students work products, standards-based portfolios, attendance, descriptive review, security data, etc.) and generates its own to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of how well each student, classroom, grade level, and other important categories of students and the school are:</p> <p>(1) currently performing, and (2) progressing over time, on English Language Arts, mathematics, and other important academic subjects.</p> <p>Criteria for measuring student progress are "objective" when they are</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • standards-based, • consistent across students, • capable of revealing progress or a lack of it over time and ways to close the gap between current and expected practice, <p>and when they allow</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the performance of different students to be compared, and • learning activity to be broken down into component parts so strengths and weaknesses on each sub-activity may be identified. 			X
<p>1.2 The school makes effective use of the data to assess the performance and progress of students by racial and ethnic groups, English Language Learners and special education students, and all other categories of interest to the school.</p> <p>{This criterion and the next are partially aspirational as of now. City and State Report Cards and Division of Accountability and Assessment reports provide only some of the necessary data. The NYC DOE will soon provide schools with fuller access to better data.}</p>			X
<p>1.3 Performance and progress are measured based on comparisons with similar schools, with the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grade levels, academic subject areas, racial and ethnic groups, and other groupings of interest within the school.</p>		X	
Quality Statement 2: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student's next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student's learning.	o	✓	+
<p>2.1 Using data, school leaders and faculty engage in a collaborative process to set demanding, objectively measurable, goals for immediate and long-range improvement, and it develops plans and timeframes for reaching those goals.</p>			X
<p>2.2 Goals and plans focus on the school as a whole and on each student, classroom, grade level, academic subject and group of students whose performance or progress has been identified by the school as warranting attention.</p>			X
<p>2.3 Particular attention is given to improving the performance and progress of students in greatest need of improvement.</p>			X
<p>2.4 High expectations are conveyed to students and parents. Students and their parents/caregivers are regularly invited to provide information about each student's performance and how to improve. That information is central to setting reasonably challenging goals and developing, evaluating, and revising plans.</p>			X
<p>2.5 Goals and plans for improving student performance and progress drive the activity of all members of the school community: leaders, staff, students, parents, and other partners</p>			X

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Quality Statement 3: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.	o	✓	+
3.1 The school selects the curriculum based on how well it aligns with the school's high expectations and improvement plans and on the curriculum's capacity to generate meaningful interim data about progress towards goals.			X
3.2 Decisions about the use of teacher and student time are based on the organization of the day and week needed to inform teachers about each student's performance and next learning steps, set goals and plans for improved student learning, and implement and continuously improve plans for reaching stated goals.			X
3.3 Staffing decisions are driven by the needs that emerge from examining student data and by the focused plan the school develops to improve student outcomes.			X
3.4 Budgeting decisions are driven by the needs that emerge from examining student data and by the focused plan the school develops to improve student outcomes.			X
3.5 Teachers are accountable for student outcomes. The Principal frequently observes classroom teaching and has a considered strategy for improving the quality of each teacher's instruction. Teachers frequently observe and support each other's classroom instruction with the goal of improving student outcomes.			X
3.6 Staff know and respect students and respond to their academic needs as well as their personal needs that affect academic performance. Each student knows and trusts an adult on the staff who is concerned about him or her.			X
3.7 Student attendance and engagement are high priorities. High rates and patterns of absences trigger immediate intervention.			X
3.8 Instructional programs actively engage students.		X	
3.9 The school aligns youth development and support services around stated academic goals. Partnerships with outside bodies are routinely used to achieve academic goals.			X

Quality Statement 4: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.	0	✓	+
4.1 Leaders, faculty, and staff are selected based on their high expectations for student performance and progress and based on their commitment and capacity to use data, compare outcomes within and across classrooms and schools and develop and revise plans and methods to improve performance and progress.			X
4.2 Professional development is designed to help leaders, faculty, and staff use data, self- and peer-assessments, and collaboration with peers to achieve goals for improved school and student outcomes. Professional development and self- and peer- evaluation are aligned and overlap.			X
4.3 Leaders, faculty, and staff share the same goals and frequently evaluate themselves, their interventions and each other's plans and interventions, including, when possible, by comparing outcomes across classrooms and schools. The school monitors its performance and tackles weaknesses. Even in areas where the school is successful, leadership is not complacent, but aims to improve further. The goal in all cases is to improve student and school performance and progress.			X
4.4 Planning, evaluation of results and revision of plans takes place in teams.			X
4.5 The Principal is respected and has capacity to effect change.			X
4.6 The school runs smoothly. Procedures are clear and are generally followed.			X

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Quality Statement 5: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerated learning.	o	✓	+
5.1 All school plans and other interventions include frequent interim goals and diagnostic assessments of progress designed to reveal in objectively measurable ways whether the plan is reaching stated goals.			X
5.2 Comparisons of student progress within and across classrooms and schools are used in making interim diagnostic assessments and measuring the progress of plans and interventions.			X
5.3 Information generated by interim assessments and diagnostic measures of progress and comparisons is used to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals. Interim and final goals are modified when data objectively demonstrate that revision is required.			X
5.4 Each plan's interim and final outcomes drive each successive phase of goal setting and improvement planning, and each successive phase is characterized by agile and flexible realignment of practices and resources to improve students' academic outcomes.			X