



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

John Dewey High School

High School 540

**50 Avenue X
Brooklyn
NY 11223**

Principal: Barry Fried

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Reviewer: Jo Storrs

Content of the report

Part 1: The School Context

Information about the school

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well
What the school needs to improve

Part 3: Main Findings

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

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

John Dewey High School was established as an experimental school. There are about 3400 students enrolled at the school. Of these, 31.7% are Black, 28.4% are Asian/Pacific Islanders and others, 20.9% are White and 19.0% are Hispanic students.

There is a slightly higher proportion of special education students, taught in self-contained classes and collaborative team teaching classes, and English language learners than in similar and City schools. The percentage of students recently arrived in the country is 11.3% which is higher than the figure for similar and City schools.

Attendance was slightly below that of similar schools in 2005. Following significant improvements, the school won the Region 7 'the most improved attendance' trophy in 2006.

The school services Brooklyn and accepts students into four educational option programs. It is more than a third over-utilized and provides an Extended Day program, Resource Centers and a range of other programs and opportunities.

The school has several effective partnerships including the Computer Science Institute, Law Institute, Model Congress, Space Science Academy with NASA, Dance Ensemble and the Culinary Arts Institute.

The school is undergoing some refurbishment to improve facilities and enhance the learning environment.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal's leadership is inspirational and he is passionate about the school and its students.
- The assistant principals are dedicated and hardworking about sustaining the integrity of instruction and other areas so that every student makes good progress and achieves their best.
- All staff members are enthusiastic and committed about creating the most effective learning climate and conditions for each student.
- The school uses data at all levels as a basis for making decisions and improvements.
- The impressive wealth and richness, and quality and range of programs and opportunities are designed specifically to meet students' diverse needs
- The effective use of the Extended Day program and Resource Centers caters for the school population and provides choice, independence and support for students.
- The high percentage of good teaching interests and engages students, and teachers are flexible about trialing new methods and approaches to enhance learning.
- There is evident mutual respect and good relationships between staff members and students.
- There is very good care and support for students, particularly those who need extra help.
- Students develop as well-motivated, confident young people who enjoy learning and life at the school.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure all teachers differentiate tasks consistently in lessons to meet the needs of students more closely.
- Build on successes to further improve students' attendance and punctuality for lessons.
- Continue to develop literacy and numeracy skills of students.
- Persevere with strategies to involve parents in their children's education.
- Explore strategies to support the school in refurbishing and enlivening its facilities in order to enhance instruction.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a well developed school.

The inspirational leadership of the principal and his passion for the school and its students continues its aim of helping students to 'find out who they are and where they want to go in life'. Students feel the school has an identity they are 'happy to uphold'. The principal is respected and valued by the whole school community.

The school lives and breathes data which is used consistently at all levels to lead decision-making and to make improvements. Teachers are eager to develop professionally and to trial new methods and approaches to enhance learning. Consequently, most teaching is good and engages students. Teachers and all staff know students well. They are committed to sustaining students' personal and academic development so that each student achieves their best. Their excellent care and support for students, particularly those who need extra help, aids progress and performance. There is a mutual respect and good relationships between staff members and students. This engages students to become well-motivated and confident and to enjoy learning and life at the school.

Most parents are very pleased with the choice of programs and their children's progress. One parent said. "I really like the teachers, I feel they really care." In spite of the school's significant efforts, some parents do not become involved with their children's learning.

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 student progress over time.

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

There are excellent systems to collect and analyze all the test data for all groups of students, which are compared with the school's goals and prior performance, and the performance of similar and City schools. Annual performance targets are set to maintain and improve results in subject areas and in attendance.

The school uses data every day at all levels. The faculty checks each student's on-going progress against expectations, namely 'Keys to Mastery'. A full range of data is monitored including test scores, skills' analyses, report cards, on-going assessments, students' work, the curriculum programs, and students' attendance and their punctuality to lessons. All members of each department receive and analyze this student-led data at regular meetings led by the assistant principals. They examine and compare the progress of individuals and all groups of students with previous results and performance across subjects. The outcomes are used to identify specific instructional needs of individual students and to establish intervention and remediation programs, where required. For example, students falling behind are discussed at departmental meetings and given extra support during resource center time. The progress of students on intervention programs (Dewey Success), special education students and English language learners is also reviewed at regular collaborative meetings of teachers and other professional staff. These

identify successes or intervention programs, as and if necessary. All information is shared and discussed systematically at cabinet meetings and leadership team meetings. Student assessment data is used consistently every day by the principal, assistant principals, and staff to improve students' attendance, motivation and academic progress and performance. Consequently, successes in vocational courses, examination results and graduation diplomas have risen.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: 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.

Teams discuss the outcomes of its data analysis to systematically identify priorities for improvement. Goals to continually raise the performance of all students are agreed and included in the Comprehensive Educational Plan. Parents, faculty, staff and students are represented on the school leadership team which formally constructs and agrees this plan. The goals and action plans are formulated by department teams at faculty and staff meetings and steer the work of all members of the school community to ensure the good progress and performance of each student. The plan clearly identifies specific staff responsibilities for oversight of each goal and the clear measures for evaluating whether and when the goals have been reached. Action plans focus on each student, grade level, academic subject and groups of students identified by the school.

Improving the progress and performance of students in greatest need, such as special education students, English language learners and students whose attendance is poor, is a key school priority. Older students actively support younger students through 'mingling' activities and trips and through being mentors and helpers for supportive programs such as conflict resolution. They discuss ideas at meetings with faculty and staff.

The school conveys high expectations in many ways, such as through the school newspaper and other information about the school curriculum and events, provided to students and parents/caregivers in many languages. Eight informative report cards and informal and formal parent and teacher meetings give good opportunity for parents to give and receive information about their children's progress. The school runs an 'open-door' policy so parents can 'drop into' the school whenever they need. Parents and caregivers are confident to approach the school if they have concerns and know that any issues will be dealt with appropriately. The parents involved with the school are pleased with their children's progress and feel all staff are supportive and approachable. Unfortunately, not all parents get involved with their children's learning or with the parents' association.

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

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

The rich curriculum and class and project-based learning which meet mandatory test requirements and students' diverse needs prepare everyone well for graduation. The school re-organizes four times each year into distinct 10-week cycles. Resource Centers in each subject area enable students to receive extra help or to consult teachers about

class or independent study projects for advanced credits. From grade 9, counselors provide excellent support to students so they adjust quickly, and so make the most of the exciting choices and opportunities the school offers in each cycle.

Special education students and students on intervention programs move less frequently during each cycle and so work with fewer teachers. Bilingual students and English language learners have one-to-one support in and out of school to help them access learning in the lessons. The wealth of clubs and activities before and after the school day meets the academic, cultural and social needs of the school population because they are all designed to interest and support students' interests and learning. Assistant principals work hard to improve instruction and student outcomes. Challenging goals are set to address the needs of students with poor literacy and numeracy skills through the school's support program.

Decisions about budget, grants, all resources and staffing respond directly to the school's goals and so used effectively to benefit students. For example, additional teachers and staff are provided to support special education students in self-contained or collaborative team teaching classes and to enable English language learners to receive individual instruction.

The good teaching, critical-thinking and problem-solving activities in many lessons result in well-motivated, confident students who enjoy learning and life at the school. However, not all instruction is consistently differentiated to closely meet all students' needs. Teachers and all staff know students' personal and academic needs well. There is mutual respect and good relationships between staff and students who feel well supported and know who to turn to with their problems. Most enjoy coming to school and find teachers and staff friendly. They particularly take pleasure in being trusted to work independently and to be treated as adults with responsibility for their work and learning. One said that it is 'the best school in the City' as it has an identity students are proud to uphold.

The school has very good systems to encourage and monitor student attendance and punctuality and so have improved significantly over recent years. Attendance remains an area of focus as not all parents support the school's efforts in this area and there are inconsistencies between teachers' practice to encourage good attendance.

Quality Statement 4 - Build and Align Capacity: 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 school has successfully appointed loyal and effective leaders and staff who have contributed to the school's many successes. Everyone feels well-supported, respected and valued by the principal and colleagues. One remarked that every day she was grateful that she was chosen to work at the school. Staff and teacher retention is very high. To be flexible, to work hard and be supportive of the school's innovative style are key criteria for selecting staff. All staff work well together and are dedicated to the school.

The principal and instructional assistant principals regularly observe teaching to identify successes and areas for further development. They provide constructive individual feedback. Professional development training is planned effectively to meet the diverse needs of students and individual staff and school goals. The full range of training opportunities focuses on raising students' performance and progress in all aspects of their

development. Some students are fully trained 'peer mediators'. Some innovative practice is evident. For example, the principal teaches a space science program with another teacher and links, through video conferencing, with a school in Wellpinit, Washington.

The principal is highly regarded by the whole school community who value his passion for the school, his flexibility, willingness to experiment and join in, and his support for every person and student. Students feel he is there for them and 'is just a student at heart'. He drives change and improvements but empowers others too. Assistant principals, faculty and staff are fully respected. They have high expectations of themselves and their care and commitment to students and their families is impressive.

A range of staff teams meets regularly to evaluate frankly and honestly the school's goals, results and personal performance, and to revise plans and implement improvements. The day-to-day organization of the school is orderly, communication is clear and faculty and staff work very well together. The school's displays celebrate students' work and projects.

Excellent partnerships with universities, businesses, medical and arts groups provide a diverse range of vocational programs and advanced study from which students choose and which effectively help the school to achieve its academic goals.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: 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.

The principal and assistant principals are dedicated and gifted leaders with high expectations for the school, themselves and each student. They monitor and review school and departmental plans, results and programs closely. They take immediate action to secure improvements when necessary. The leadership team meets regularly to review the progress of action plans and goals in the comprehensive education plan, to assess their impact and to realign practices and resources to improve student academic and personal outcomes.

Leaders, faculty and staff are well-versed in collecting and interrogating data to identify strengths and areas for further improvement. This is reflected in the effective learning climate and conditions for each student and largely accounts for their progress and performance. Each department is required to compare each student's performance within and across classrooms and to introduce diagnostic assessments or interventions when required. All teachers regularly and consistently assess and evaluate students' work methodically against program and other expectations and adapt their plans and interventions as necessary. Student self-evaluation and teachers' assessment inform whole school decisions about the cycle of programs and improvement goals. Successes are celebrated in a range of ways including special breakfasts, bulletin boards, and school and local papers. There are highly effective systems for assistant principals, faculty, the school psychologist and counselors to consistently monitor the progress and intervention strategies for special education students and to hold discussions with students, parents and all providers. They feel confident to approach the school if they are experiencing problems. Any issues that arise are dealt with through the most appropriate means.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: John Dewey High School (HS540)	∅	✓	+
Quality Score			X

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 student progress over time.	∅	✓	+
1.1 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • each student, classroom, grade level, 			X
1.2 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ethnic groups, English language learners, special education students* 			X
1.3 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all other categories of interest to the school* 			X
1.4 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, ethnic groups, and other groupings of interest within the school.			X
Overall score for Quality Statement 1			X

* These criteria are partially aspirational as of now because schools do not have routine access to all of this data. The NYC DOE plans to provide schools with enhanced access to the necessary data in 2007.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: 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.	∅	✓	+
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 to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals.			X
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 a particular focus area.			X
2.3 Particular attention is given to improving the performance and progress of students in greatest need of improvement.			X
2.4 High expectations are conveyed to students and parents/caregivers. Students and their parents/caregivers are regularly invited to provide information about each student's performance and how to improve. This information is central to setting challenging goals and developing, evaluating, and revising plans.			X
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.			X
Overall score for Quality Statement 2			X

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity, resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.	∅	✓	+
3.1 The school selects the curriculum based on how well it aligns with or implements the mandated curriculum and on the curriculum's capacity to generate meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and to support the school's high expectations and improvement plans.			X
3.2 Teachers are accountable for improving instruction and student outcomes. They plan and differentiate their instruction based on the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.		X	
3.3 Budgeting decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.			X
3.4 Staffing decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.			X
3.5 Scheduling decisions about the use of teacher and student time are guided by the needs that emerge from examining student data and by the focused plan the school develops to improve student outcomes.			X
3.6 Instructional programs actively engage students.			X
3.7 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
3.8 Student attendance and engagement are high priorities. High rates and patterns of absences trigger immediate intervention.			X
Overall score for Quality Statement 3			X
Quality Statement 4 – Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.	∅	✓	+
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 decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes. 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 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
4.4 Planning, evaluation of results, and revision of plans takes place in teams. Leaders and faculty inform each other of their goals and results, candidly evaluate themselves and each other, and use what is learned to drive improvement.			X
4.5 The principal is respected and has capacity to effect change.			X
4.6 The school runs smoothly. Procedures are clear, communicated to all, and are generally followed.			X
4.7 The school aligns youth development and support services around stated academic goals. Partnerships with outside bodies are routinely used to achieve academic goals.			X
Overall score for Quality Statement 4			X
Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: 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 accelerating learning.	∅	✓	+
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 being effectively implemented and 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 periodic 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 successive phases of goal setting and improvement planning, and each successive phase is characterized by agile and flexible realignment of practices and resources to improve student academic outcomes.			X
Overall score for Quality Statement 5			X