



**NYCDOE**

**Quality Review: Final Report**

# **The New York City Department of Education**



# **Quality Review Report**

**Jamaica High School**

**High School 470**

**167-01 Gothic Drive  
Queens  
NY 11432**

**Principal: Jay A. Dickler**

**Dates of review: November 28 – 30, 2006**

**Reviewer: Derek Lever**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Jamaica High School is located in Queens. There are 2343 students enrolled across grades 9 to 12. Just over 50% of the students are Black, with almost all the rest equally divided between Hispanic and Asian. White students comprise 2-3% of the student population. 139 special education students, 6% of the total, are taught in self-contained classes. There are 278 English language learners, almost 12% of all students. Attendance rates have been similar to other schools in the City and efforts to raise them are a priority.

The school serves the needs of both zoned students and those who meet the entry qualifications for one of the five special academic programs: The Gateway Program, the Academy of Finance, The Computer Science Institute, The Art Sequence and The Law Program. There is a range of partnership activities involving other schools, agencies and community organizations.

The whole campus, including a sports field, swimming pool and two gymnasias, is made available out of school time for community usage.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal has a high profile around the school and provides good support for staff, students, parents and all those involved with the school.
- The principal works tirelessly to provide a positive, safe and secure learning environment for all students, celebrating their achievement and maintaining high expectations.
- Leadership and management responsibilities are distributed among senior members of staff who collaborate effectively.
- The staff work together well to meet the needs of students by providing targeted learning opportunities, guidance and an effective mediation program.
- Relationships throughout the school are positive, with students and staff feeling valued.
- The school offers a range of programs to enhance students' learning experiences and connect their academic progress with community involvement initiatives.
- Parents are welcomed into the school, appreciate the 'open door' policy and are both well informed about, and encouraged to take an active part in, their children's education by attendance at meetings, workshops or parent teacher activities.
- A comprehensive range of sports and extra-curricular activities enhances opportunities for learning, developing skills and interests and further cementing relationships.

### What the school needs to improve

- Develop a simple system for tracking students' progress and analyze rigorously the performance of various groups within the school.
- Use this information to set measurable goals and targets, including interim goals, for grade levels, academic subjects, and other groups.
- Feed this information into whole-school goals which can themselves be monitored, evaluated and adapted as new information emerges.
- Develop differentiated learning so that all students, and not just those with higher achievement or special needs, feel fully engaged with and excited by their work.
- Continue to improve attendance and punctuality.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Overall Evaluation

#### **This is a proficient school.**

The principal supports staff well so that staff feel empowered to do their jobs. Students know that he has their interests and welfare at heart. He understands both the strengths and areas to develop in the school and is a tireless worker, totally committed to all the students.

Students acknowledge that their school is a safe and secure environment and a place of learning. However, although there are challenging programs for the higher achieving students and a comprehensive package of support for special education students, other general education students feel less engaged with their work. Raising the rates of attendance is a priority. Lateness to school is also an issue.

After a period of concern over examination results, there are indications of improvement. The staff know that the challenge is to sustain and build on recent improvement, particularly in English language arts and mathematics. They are working together to analyze the data held in school more systematically, so that outcomes of this process can be used to plan programs and shape the curriculum that will match all students' needs more accurately. This is essential and timely. Given the willingness of teachers to do this, the school has the capacity to succeed.

### **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 proficient.**

The school's agenda is to raise the levels of student achievement. The administration focuses on gathering data to provide a clearer picture of the school's situation. Analysis of this information is gathering momentum, but does not currently feed into a simple recording system that would enable staff to track progress and also plan for future improvement. There is much quantitative data available to the school and this it uses quite effectively, especially for its more talented students and those who struggle to achieve. The school recognizes the need to develop the gathering and analysis of qualitative data so that they have a sharper view of how the students see themselves and how they might better respond to what is offered to them.

The school uses available data and also, but to a lesser extent, generates its own. The principal ensures that his senior staff and the school leadership team have access to this information. The principal, his cabinet and leadership team identify trends in student performance and have an understanding of the school's relative strengths and areas for improvement. Their knowledge of grade levels and examination results is sound, but there is less in-depth understanding of the performance and progress of individual students or classes, or some groups. The exceptions, however, are students of higher achievement

and special education students for whom program planning is rooted in past performance and future need.

The standards of achievement for 2006 show positive strides being made. The school has already used its data to identify where further progress can be made either by support and intervention, for example decoding classes in English, or double-period timetabling and tutoring in mathematics.

**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 proficient.**

The principal takes the view that the context for planning and setting goals for improvement is wider than analyzing performance data alone. Consequently, data concerning for example staff attendance, safety issues and counseling logs is analyzed by the principal, his leadership team, pupil personnel team and parent/teacher association representatives and used as instruments to plan for strategic intervention or to set goals. Collaboration is sound. Interventions are clearly identified. However, objectively measurable, demanding and time-related goals for improving quality at the individual teacher or student level have yet to be developed.

The school is quite clear about its priorities and all staff have the students’ interests at heart. The assistant principals responsible for English language arts and mathematics are totally committed to raising the levels of student performance and are now well placed to do this with their colleagues. They recognize the need to concentrate on using the data, including the contextual information where relevant, to set clear, unequivocal targets for vulnerable students. These include those in danger of underachieving either because they are insufficiently challenged or disengaged. In some cases, students fall into these categories because they do not understand what they need to do to improve their achievement to the level of performance of which they are capable. Students receive information from guidance staff concerning grade levels, grade promotion and graduation.

Guidance staff keep students at all grade levels informed as to what they have to do to be promoted or to graduate. Great efforts are made by the school to involve parents in their children’s education. Information is given regularly, as are opportunities to discuss issues of mutual concern and contribute to setting goals. Staff see this communication as an essential ingredient in the school-home partnership with the students being the beneficiaries, although many parents remain difficult to engage.

**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 proficient.**

The curriculum is designed to provide support in preparation for the State Regents in English and mathematics. All disciplines from the various departments offer a variety of required courses to fulfil the needs of graduation, with additional programs for at-risk students. Writing support classes and themed electives are offered for students who fail

rather than having them repeat the same curriculum. As well as an appropriate focus on building students' skills in mathematics and English, the school offers a wide range of other subjects. Students have opportunities to engage with the specialist areas associated with their academies. There are partnership and community activities, Honors and Advanced Placement classes, and College Now classes. College preparation, counselling and guidance start in 9th grade and continue consistently across all grades, and college preparation is kept in focus.

The principal has supported curriculum development by targeting resources at priority areas, for example in English language arts and mathematics. He has also ensured that staffing levels, including support staff, are adequate for delivery of the curriculum. Use of teacher and student time has been reviewed based on meeting the needs of students and best utilization of staff. This considerable investment has yet to be evaluated to ensure it is providing good value for money and is sustainable, although 2006 test results suggest that it is successful.

The needs analysis of the students reveals that more rigorous differentiation of work in the classroom would further engage the majority of students. Work for special education students has appropriate levels of challenge. This is also true for students of higher performance. In their planning, some teachers identify learning objectives and others establish the aims, both of which are related to activity. These are communicated to students, usually by being displayed at the start of lessons. What is less noticeable is an identification of what the students will actually learn in the lesson and where this sits in their overall development. Students are clear about what they are expected to do, but not necessarily why and how this will develop their knowledge, skills and understanding.

Every student has an adult they can approach with the certainty that help will be given in time of need. The purpose of the range of experiences offered to students is to build self-esteem, school spirit and academic development. Students can become peer mediators, which is an excellent initiative greatly valued by students, parents and staff. They can involve themselves in institutions of higher learning, before and after school sessions and summer programs. Despite this, many students are disengaged and missing out. The school recognizes the need to identify these students and their reasons for lack of attachment.

There is an appropriate focus on raising attendance rates. For example, records are kept of persistent absentees and latecomers and they and their parents are challenged. The parent coordinator is very active and will contact parents to check on non-arrivals and is always approachable to discuss any related issues or anxieties. Good attendance is celebrated. The school's efforts need to be even more determined in order to reach the attendance target.

**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 proficient.**

It is the commitment and talent of the principal that drives the school forward. He is the fuelling force behind all accomplishments. He is a tireless worker, provides firm but sensitive leadership and is universally admired. Policies and procedures are clear and he expects everyone to follow them. He is not afraid to take tough and sometimes unpopular

decisions, like the scanning-on-entry system, but does so in the confident knowledge that he is acting in the best interests of those in his charge.

Professional development decisions are made with due reference to student need, and are frequently based on observations. Many of the regularly-held sessions target classroom organisation and provide useful opportunities for teachers to discuss what has gone well and what has been less effective. Professional development and self- and peer-evaluation are aligned and overlap. The principal and his cabinet monitor the quality of instruction regularly. There is a program of observation with follow-up conversations in which success and effectiveness are celebrated and anything unsatisfactory is noted and then dealt with sympathetically, supportively and always professionally. The principal maintains a very comprehensive, electronic record of the monitoring of teaching and learning and this enables him and his leadership team to hold an overview of quality.

The school is a safe, secure learning environment, and runs smoothly overall. Expectations about behaviour are made clear to students, and disruptions are reducing. A range of partnerships with community-based and academic organizations support the school in students' academic and personal development.

**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 proficient**

The Comprehensive Education Plan is a collaboratively-generated document that identifies priorities and indicates who is responsible for what and by when issues should be addressed. It is clearly written and provides a useful framework and context for how the school intends to move forward. At its centre can be seen the commitment to provide the best for all students.

Teachers are well aware that the school's education plan is a relevant tool that influences overall school effectiveness. They also know that they are responsible to a large degree for the success or otherwise of their students. They collaborate well and enjoy good relationships across all parts of the school. They need to be aware of the power of setting clear, measurable targets for students rather than projecting results based on entry skills. More comparisons between classes and similar schools would offer a benchmark and professional discussion. The school is aiming for parents and the students themselves to have a greater involvement in discussions about levels of performance and the intervention strategies required to help students to improve. This is entirely appropriate and the structures for collecting the information are in place. The school has much "intelligence" on its students and has the capacity to use this more strategically to ensure levels of student performance are further raised and that improvement is sustained over time.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: Jamaica High (HS 470)</b>	∅	✓	+
<b>Quality Score</b>		X	

<b>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.</b>	∅	✓	+
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"> <li>• Each student, classroom, grade level,</li> </ul>		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"> <li>• ethnic groups, English Language Learners, special education students*</li> </ul>		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"> <li>• all other categories of interest to the school*</li> </ul>		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		
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>		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.

<b>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.</b>	∅	✓	+
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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>		X	

<b>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.</b>	Ø	✓	+
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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>		X	
<b>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.</b>	Ø	✓	+
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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>		X	
<b>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.</b>	Ø	✓	+
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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>		X	