

# Quality Review Report 2010-2011

**Jamaica High School**

**High School 470**

**167-01 Gothic Drive  
Queens, N.Y. 11432**

**Principal: Mr. Walter Acham**

**Dates of review: November 3 - 4, 2010**

**Lead Reviewer: Beverly Ffolkes-Bryant**

## **Part 1: The school context**

### **Information about the school**

Jamaica High School is a high school with 1,246 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 53% Black, 19% Hispanic, 1% White, and 24% Asian students. The student body includes 18% English language learners and 7% special education students. Boys account for 53% of the students enrolled and girls account for 47%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2009 - 2010 was 79%.

### **Overall Evaluation**

**This school is underdeveloped.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The Principal and staff create a caring, safe, school environment where students and teachers respect each other.
  - The principal takes a “no-nonsense” stance regarding student behavior allowing for a school tone that is good and students’ passing between periods is orderly and brief. Subsequently, classroom instruction involves few interruptions as teachers work to address students learning goals.
  - Students’ remark, “Their eyes are always on us,” thus relaying the feeling that the staff knows and cares about them. As a result, students build relationships with staff that encourage them to do their best in class.
- The school provides emotional and social support to students through a variety of services to promote students’ personal growth and development.
  - School leaders work to provide a supportive school environment. School-wide events such as the Thanksgiving Dinner, PEP rallies, and the Cardboard Boat Race, help to unite the school community and capture the interest of both students and staff. As a result, students feel more comfortable in their school and focus energy on succeeding.
  - A partnership with Queens Community House, use of the Positive Alternative to Student Suspension program, and a high-school transitioning program for incoming freshmen, evidence the school’s efforts to enrich student life. As a result, students report that they connect with the school and focus on graduation.
- Staff uses a range of school data to monitor school level needs, student progress, plan instruction, and create intervention strategies when needed.
  - The principal analyzes the school’s attendance and graduation rates and once disaggregated, distributes his findings to his assistant principals for further examination and possible next steps, thus assisting the school in identifying areas of need. For example, the principal provides the assistant principals and guidance counselors with the graduation rate report from automate the system (ATS), enabling them to give weekly updates on students’ progress.
  - The English as a second language teacher team gathers a variety of data that includes information from ARIS, student report cards, and Regents’ results. Teachers’ review of data from the Regents led to identifying a need for remediation on the writing portion of the test. They then collaboratively created lessons based on these needs to improve student outcomes.
- The school uses data-informed processes to plan and set school-wide goals to improve teaching and learning.
  - Using the Root Cause Analysis strategy, the principal develops school-wide goals in an effort to promote student learning. An action plan focused on “causative factors of student failure” is created and disseminated to staff.

- Based on student performance on the English language arts Regents exam, the emerging English language learner teacher team has taken the initiative to set goals and create action plans in content area writing for every English language learner. As a result, a significant number of English language learners successfully pass the written portion of the State Regents' examinations.

### **What the school needs to improve**

- Utilize school resources to create a variety of rigorous, high-level courses that attract and engage all students, including lower and higher achieving students.
  - Funding through the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Grant enables some students to participate in college courses at Queensborough College resulting in them obtaining college credit prior to graduation. However, this program reaches less than 5% of the total student population. Consequently, the curricula provided to the majority of students do not always have the same rigor and engage students in tasks that meet their needs.
  - The school offers advance placement classes in biology, calculus and history, but staff and students report that these classes have very large registers. As a result, teachers do not always deliver lessons that emphasize rigor and encourage higher-order thinking skills, as well as provide suitable differentiated support, thus students miss opportunities for higher achievement.
- Refine the school's curriculum maps to ensure alignment with State standards to promote effective classroom instruction.
  - The school use of curriculum maps in the core curriculum areas align to State standards. However, daily lessons do not yet reflect an effort to tailor these maps to meet the needs of the school population. As a result, teaching practices vary across the school creating uneven student performance throughout the school.
  - English language learner classes and one English class display elements of differentiation. In these classes, students are active participants and teaching strategies reflect planning for individual student needs. However, this practice is not systemic throughout the school, resulting in limited pockets of effective instruction.
- Align school resources to organizational decisions and goals to support improvements in teaching and learning.
  - The protocol of the English language learner teacher team which meets three times a week during common planning time does not exist elsewhere in the school. As a result, this limits teacher planning and sharing of effective practices and the school's ability to plan and successfully meet its goals.
  - The school offers advanced placement and elective classes for the students. However, the student registers in these classes are over/under populated, as the advance placement classes have a register of 36 students and one elective class has a register of 15. This questions the wise use of resources and the effectiveness of these classes.

- Develop assessments that provide a clear picture of individual student strengths and the areas of need to support the differentiation of classroom instruction.
  - The English language learner teacher team collaboratively creates assessments to ascertain if a student has mastered the concepts taught, and schedules the administration of these assessments as to not overwhelm the students. Unfortunately, this practice is not evident throughout the rest of the school and therefore the lack of common assessments hinders student accountability and progress.
  - The school administers the ACUITY predictive test in English and math. However, teachers do not use information from these assessments to analyze students' strengths and weaknesses or to make decisions towards differentiation and grouping in the classroom.
  
- Expand the use of the school's observation tool to identify good teaching practices to ensure continue improvement in the classroom.
  - Using data and/or prior information from observations, the principal identified content area reading, writing, and critical questioning as the school's instructional focus this year. However, these priorities are only evident in conversation with teachers of English language learners during their common planning time, and in a few classrooms. As a result, there is limited emphasis school-wide on improving instructional practices.
  - School leaders rely on the professional development opportunities provided by the network, which is turn-keyed by the assistant principals in each department. Nevertheless, this professional development is not differentiated according to the teachers' needs or expertise, which hinders their pedagogical development.
  
- Develop effective systems to distribute and monitor school-wide goals and initiatives so that all stakeholders can evaluate, revise and adjust the curriculum as needed.
  - The school uses the Root Cause Analysis strategy to develop instructional goals for the school year. However, teachers are not aware of these goals and therefore cannot integrate them into their lessons to affect student outcomes.
  - School leaders do not use assessments to gather information and therefore cannot use this knowledge to adjust resources to support student needs. As a result, there is little coherence between policies and practice.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2010-2011

<b>School name: Jamaica High School</b>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
<b>Overall QR Score</b>	<b>X</b>			
<b>Quality Statement 1 – Instructional and Organizational Coherence: The school has a coherent strategy to support student learning that aligns curriculum, instruction and organizational decisions.</b>				
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous and coherent curricula, including the Arts, for a variety of learners and aligned to key State standards?	<b>X</b>			
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best, and ensure that it is: aligned to the curriculum, engaging, and differentiated to enable all students to produce meaningful work products?	<b>X</b>			
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs?	<b>X</b>			
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?		<b>X</b>		
<b>Quality Statement 2 – Gather and Analyze Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, analyze and share information on student learning outcomes to understand school and student progress over time.</b>				
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
2.1 <b>Gather</b> and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the school level?		<b>X</b>		
2.2 Align assessments to curriculum and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom level?	<b>X</b>			
2.3 Use or develop tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize, aggregate, and analyze student performance trends?	<b>X</b>			
2.4 Engage in an open exchange of information with students and families regarding students' learning needs and outcomes?	<b>X</b>			

<b>Quality Statement 3 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently engage the school community and use data to set and track suitably high goals for accelerating student learning.</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>			
3.1 Establish a coherent vision of future development that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are understood and supported by the entire school community?		<b>X</b>					
3.2 Use collaborative and data informed processes to set measurable and differentiated learning goals for student subgroups, and students in need of additional support?		<b>X</b>					
3.3 Ensure the achievement of learning goals by tracking progress at the school, teacher team and classroom level?		<b>X</b>					
3.4 Communicate high expectations to students and families, engage them in decision-making, and promote active involvement in the school community?	<b>X</b>						
<b>Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals and student learning and emotional needs.</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school...?</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>			
4.1 Use the observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection, with a special focus on new teachers?	<b>X</b>						
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?	<b>X</b>						
4.3 Provide professional development that promotes independent and shared reflection, opportunities for leadership growth, and enables teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve learning outcomes?	<b>X</b>						
4.4 Integrate child/youth development, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations with the school-wide goals to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students?		<b>X</b>					
<b>Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and evaluating progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>			
5.1 Evaluate the quality of curricular, instructional and organizational decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?	<b>X</b>						
5.2 Evaluate systems for assessing students, organizing data, and sharing information with student and families, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?	<b>X</b>						
5.3 Establish and sustain a transparent, collaborative system for measuring progress towards interim and long term goals and making adjustments during the year and over time?	<b>X</b>						
5.4 Use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of structured professional collaboration, capacity building and leadership development strategies?	<b>X</b>						
<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
<b>UD</b>	<b>Underdeveloped</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>Developing</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>WD</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>