

There's No 'Win-Win' With Hunter Plan

To: The *Our Town* Editor
Re: Editorial 7/20/2006

Hunter College's proposal to switch sites with the Julia Richman Education Complex (JREC) is not a "win-win to emulate." Think of the message a "blueprint" such as this sends. Educators: Create a highly functioning complex of six schools from a once-failing high school. Then, following the culmination of years of extremely hard work, demoralize students and teachers by forcing them to relocate. Take an educational complex that doesn't need to be fixed and break it.

It is true that JREC "is a shining example of small schools at their best." This is precisely why JREC has become a national icon in education. Sadly, what is less known about our complex is that visiting educators consistently comment that they wish they had such a high quality building as JREC, with its sound structure, beautiful auditorium, marble floors and ironwork. The millions of dollars in what you described as "emergency repairs" is a misrepresentation of the facts, and it is offensive to the men and women who have invested the last twelve years preserving JREC as an immaculate facility. Any building, regardless of how old it is, requires constant upkeep and the staff at JREC has done a phenomenal job. The building's recent renovation is not a reflection of a dilapidated building and a premonition of further investments. Rather, JREC's caretakers diligently made the necessary improvements that any frequently used building would need. The insinuation that we are an "outdated" school with "crumbling classrooms" is not only completely false, but also insulting.

To date, Hunter's proximity to JREC has been an asset to both communities. College students work as student teachers in our classrooms, many JREC graduates go on to attend Hunter, and our high school students enroll in Hunter's College Now program. Yet now, the expectation is that we should move our schools out of convenience to the needs of Hunter's science program. This plan completely disregards the needs of our students who are thriving academically at our current site, just as it also disregards our students with autism who find comfort in JREC's familiar hallways. Our already existing relationships with local organizations such as the 67th Street Public Library and the Neighborhood Coalition for Shelter among many others are likewise irreplaceable. The editor would have us believe that Hunter's desire to have its facilities neatly clustered together on an Upper East Side campus outweighs what is best for our students. We respectfully disagree. Why should Hunter's "much-needed" science space trump what is in our opinion a much-needed school in an exceptional building?

We would like to publicly invite Hunter College President Jennifer Raab, members of the Hunter College community, and neighborhood residents to see firsthand this outstanding example of education in New York City. Please contact SAVEJREC@jrec.org for further information.

Sincerely,

Cathy Tomaszewski Burce on behalf of the SAVE JREC Campaign