It's a coincidence, I have no life, either," there's a temptation to say "headmaster" discussing the founding principal, Len Largmann, who recently asked staff officers to address what he considered fiercely door-holding and other hallway eddies among students. He described to a school ethic this way: "We don't expect efficiency. We merely accept it." Not that students need the remon. A lot of the students feel here is self-imposed. Dominika Bednarska, who won early tance to Brown University this year, wasn't Harris, originally an academy then gifted boys for City College, was d in 1942 and reopened in Queens in , when civically inclined and highly suc- 1 alumni got the political backing of its politicians who wanted a selective 1 for their borough. Paraly to distinguish from the science schools, it chose-to as an alumni assessor, a strong classical. All students take Greek or Latin. Veral told me that their parents had made to them, since their elementary days, that better get As since they were going to send Harris. While the school is open to this from all five boroughs, it draws most ly to Queens and can take a limited 15 of students from any Queens neigh­ yourself was a significant portion of students are cho­ an on their academic records and their arized reading and math scores. English and history are requirements, ives offered this spring (in addition to the College courses) include a creative­ workshop, Literature of Oppression Protest, a law seminar, and Science via. All students are encouraged to pursue xient-research projects in the social or sciences. In fact, the research facilities are spacious that student scientists plan- tenter national science competitions get idually dedicated lab space. Be included in an honors society, stu- also must perform 40 hours of community service a year. Largmann tells them it's ack for the privilege of attending the 1: "We're building leaders of the future. is what we expect of leaders." While a round of griping greeted that newly shed standard this year, junior Annie Yan that her work leading ceramic classes for vantaged children had been the formative experience of her high-school life. Having steered 100 hours last year at the Jamaica Center, she called it "my second home." hile the school is financially supported in by the city, its financial situation a parents' nization. It lacks the budget to exploit its rm building fully. The audiovisual lab is times locked for lack of staff. tumselors at Townsend Harris are known ing particularly important about help­ students secure summer internships at law financial offices, as well as gaining entry (often scholarship-supported) to such summer college seminars as the writing course Bednarska attended at Brown. And judging Chadwick Stewarts, he mentioned how a counselor recently called him in to ask why his chemistry grade had slipped from a 90 to an 85. He wasn't complaining, he said. He appre­ ciated the nudge. "They always put you back on top of your game."

**BENJAMIN N. CARDozo HIGH SCHOOL**

5700 232d Street, Bayside

**EARY 11,000 STUDENTS FROM WELL BEYOND BAYSIDE CONTINUE TO LIVE EACH YEAR FOR THE 300 PLACES IN BENJAMIN N. CARDozo HIGH SCHOOL'S MATH-AND-SCIENCE, LAW, AND DANCE PROGRAMS. THE SCHOOL IS TWELFTH AMONG PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOLS NATIONALLY IN THE NUMBER OF STUDENTS TAKING ADVANCED-PLACEMENT EXAMS, AND IT STILL SHINES IN THE CITYWIDE BAKE-OFFS FOR STUDENT SCIENTISTS AND SCULPTORS.**

Still, the question of how secure­ly it rests on its green hilltop remains in play. It took a hit this year when Board of Education investiga­tor Edward Stanick sug­gested there might be gang troubles at the school, until it quickly rebuffed the mayor, who declared the school gang-free. Sensitiv­ity to parents' need to have their public-school choice validated, principal Arnold Goldstein bombards them with charts and graphs demonstrating the school's academic domi­nance not only among neighborhood high schools in the five boroughs but in comparison to Nassau and Suffolk too.

But the best example of Goldstein's skillful spin traveled home this year with the announcement of PhoneMaster 2000. The new automated phone system is an unglam­orous tool to reduce class-cutting. Parents can dial in and discover if their kid skipped a class that day. But sounding a more positive note, Goldstein noted that parents will soon be able to get recorded updates on team schedules, band concerts, and college nights. "I consider PhoneMaster a triumph for Benjamin Cardozo High School," he wrote, "and hope you share my enthusiasm."

Cardozo has as full a schedule of AP cho­ices as can be found beyond the selective schools, and a team-and-club roster that is const­antly building (though scheduling choices can be tough). Do you debate or join Students for a Free Tibet? Lacrosse conditioning or the stock-market club? Though the last dance fizzled (security rules kept out dates from other schools), the spring pep rally rocked. The science labs, where top students in the DaVinci Program tend years-long research projects, are getting a $1.5 million update that will allow for DNA research. Alternative-sci­ence aficionados explore the mind-body con­nection in stress-reduction classes.

Many teachers here have deviated from the monotony of chalk-and-talk, but Goldstein says he'd like to see faculty break up the class­room rhythms even more with small-group discussions and student-initiated projects. Still, the general calm of the instructional cul­tive at Cardozo seems to carry over into what could be a tense social situation. Some 4,100 students knock backpacks in a building meant for 2,400. Students complain they can't pro­gram their schedules with as many electives as they'd like. "Before, the problem was budget; now it's crowding," Goldstein says.

Goldstein doesn't want to lose anyone to the crowd, and his staff is serious about reaching out to every kid. "Duet each student in the building have one adult he feels confident going to if he has a problem?" he says. "That's really important to us."

Students here are not faceless. Shortly after visiting Cardozo, I met an administrator who told me about a senior whose mom, a teacher at another city school, had developed terminal breast cancer. As the student's mother rapidly declined, it became clear she would not make it, as she'd fervently wished, to her daughter's graduation. The story reached Goldstein late on a Friday afternoon. He found a diploma and drove to the woman's house. There, at her mother's bedside, the senior was granted her degree.