



**NYCDOE**

**Quality Review: Final Report**

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



# **Quality Review Report**

**Amistad Dual Language School**

**Public School 311**

**4862 Broadway  
New York  
NY 10034**

**Principal: Ms Miriam Pedraja**

**Dates of review: February 12 - 13, 2007**

**Reviewer: Eileen Hill**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Amistad is a kindergarten through grade 8 dual language school. There are 406 students enrolled, 34% of whom are English language learners. The school has 26 (6.4%) special education students, mostly in two self-contained classes. At 84%, the overwhelming majority of students are Hispanic. Almost 10% are White and just over 3% Black. The main languages spoken by the students are English and Spanish. The school is Title 1 eligible for almost 70% of its students. This figure is higher than for similar and City schools. Attendance rates in 2005 were just over 93% and slightly higher than other City and similar schools. Suspensions are very low.

The school was previously a dual language academy in a much larger school but has been operating as a separate school for almost three years. Most teachers at the school are bilingual and all students are taught in both English and Spanish. Seventy-five percent of teachers have been teaching for five years or less. The school continues to use the same building and to share facilities, such as the auditorium and library, with a monolingual kindergarten through grade 5 school. The school is an Empowerment school. As such, it has more flexibility to make key decisions and to control resources for the school community. It is free to develop or purchase professional development services, choose which schools to affiliate with and benefits from reduced reporting and paperwork requirements.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal has a clear vision for the school and a highly developed sense of how it is progressing.
- The school uses a wide and appropriate range of data to provide up-to-date information on the performance and progress of its students.
- Goal setting and planning are based systematically on the ongoing review and analysis of data.
- Students in greatest need are identified as a result of periodic and other assessments and effectively supported through closely focused interventions and extended day classes.
- High expectations are conveyed to students and to their parents who have a high level of involvement with the school.
- The curriculum is balanced and appropriate with a strong focus on the creative arts.
- Dual language teaching is fully integrated in to the curriculum and extends and enriches learning for students.
- Students are very well behaved, stimulated by their lessons and actively engaged in them.
- Staffing and budgeting decisions are based on the needs of the school with very careful recruitment of teachers and strong support from the administration for the development of the curriculum and the quality of instruction.
- Professional development is clearly focused on the needs of teachers and on improving impact for students.

### What the school needs to improve

- Make more overt use of the detailed data gathered by the school to monitor trends in the performance and progress of ethnic groups and boys and girls.
- Make the goals of the school more objectively measurable in terms of outcomes for students.
- Make more explicit the strategic arrangements for reviewing and revising goals and plans.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Overall Evaluation

#### **This is a well-developed school.**

Amistad Dual Language School provides fully integrated dual language teaching in order to enrich the curriculum for its students. The school is in its third year and in that time has made significant progress in meeting its main goal of providing high quality education for all its students in order to improve their performance and life chances. With the aid of external consultants, the school has identified supplementary assessments in addition to the periodic assessments in mathematics. These assessments, in combination with the very regular periodic assessments of reading and literacy, are used to monitor students' progress between and within classes. The process is having an impact on the performance of students in all grades.

The curriculum is fully aligned with the mandated curriculum, but is further enriched by classes in music, art and drama. Classrooms are lively and well organized with rich displays of students' work to stimulate and encourage engagement. Students are very well behaved and enthusiastic about their learning. Although many teachers are relatively inexperienced, they make rapid progress because of regularly coaching and support by the principal, more experienced staff and consultants. Parents are committed to the school and turn out in large numbers to parents' evenings and other events. The principal is highly respected by parents, teachers and students and has very high expectations for the school and the outcomes for students.

### 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.**

The school uses a wide and appropriate range of data, including that generated by its own periodic assessments, to provide an objective and regularly updated understanding of the performance and progress of its students. Teachers keep assessment files for each class, with information on the progress of each student in English language arts and mathematics. Assessments are carried out in mathematics, using materials from Every Day Math and the Princeton Review tests. In addition to City and State tests, students in each testing grade also take standardized periodic tests in mathematics as a diagnostic measure. Periodic assessments are made in both English and Spanish.

English language learners are regularly assessed to measure their competence in spoken and written English. Outcomes lead to academic interventions where necessary. Data kept by the school shows that English language learners and special education students make good progress as a result of the support and interventions provided by the school in response to its data. The school has extensive data on the performance of all its students, including all relevant groups, but it does not yet make overt use of the detailed data to monitor trends in the performance of ethnic groups and of boys and girls.

The school bases its measurement of the progress and performance of its students on comparisons between classes and grade levels and on comparisons with previous years. All such data provides the school with clear indicators of improvement or identifies where there are issues. The principal has made visits to other dual language schools in order to make comparisons with her own school, but there are few dual language schools in the City and this limits the extent of such comparisons.

**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.**

Goal setting and planning are based systematically on the ongoing review and analysis of data. The principal works closely with the cabinet and the school leadership team to scrutinize data and establish long-term goals for the school. She meets with her assistant principal and the specialist English language arts coordinator daily to ensure plans and goals are fully aligned with the needs of the students. Long-term goals focus on the school as a whole. The goals are not expressed as measurable outcomes for students. Nevertheless, the principal and her cabinet focus specifically on classes and individual students in their daily and weekly evaluations. Particular attention is given to improving the performance of English language learners and other students who are not making sufficient progress to meet grade level requirements. All students performing at level 1 or 2 in English language arts or mathematics are targeted for intervention support or attend extended day classes. This kind of scrutiny and support has made a difference to the progress of students in all grades.

The school has high expectations of the students’ behavior and performance and it shares these with parents. Parents are highly committed to the school. They particularly value the dual language teaching at the school and believe their children are well-prepared for the modern world. The proportion of parents who attend parents’ meetings and other functions is high. Communications with parents are regular and explicit about what the school is doing and what their children are achieving. Goals and plans drive all members of the school community. They are integral to the work of teachers and other staff and their implementation is carefully monitored.

**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 school selects a broad and balanced curriculum for the students, including those in self-contained classes. Almost all classes are taught in both English and Spanish and students quickly become fluent in both. English language arts, mathematics and science form the core curriculum, but the school also makes time for the creative arts, such as music, art and theatre. In all areas of the curriculum, students are encouraged to talk about their learning and engage in practical activities with their peers. When teaching creative arts, the teachers further promote the literacy skills of the students by their choice

of reading material and the opportunities they provide for students to speak, listen and read.

Teachers are held fully accountable for improving instruction and for student outcomes. They make close reference to the mandated curriculum in their planning and teaching, have copies of the outcomes of State tests in their class assessment folders and know how each student performed on certain questions. They use this information to differentiate their teaching. In English language arts there is a strong focus on reading. Teachers carry out guided reading on a daily basis and make ongoing assessments of students' progress. A portfolio of writing is kept for all students and this information is used to monitor progress and ensure appropriate next steps in learning.

Budgeting decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data. In response to the need to improve students' levels of literacy, the school has provided high quality leveled libraries in each classroom and created a very well-resourced English language arts room. Every Day Math is in use in every grade; another careful budgeting decision. Scheduling decisions about the use of teacher and student time are closely aligned with the needs of the students revealed by data and students are almost always engaged by their instructional programs. Students in grade 8, for example, were fully engaged by their study of Romeo and Juliet because instructional activities made it accessible and enjoyable for them. Staff know and respect students and respond promptly to their needs. Attendance and engagement are high priorities for the school. Attendance is carefully monitored and all absences checked and followed up. The engagement of students is also carefully monitored through the daily visits to classrooms by the principal and assistant principal.

**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 effective procedures in place for selecting its leaders and staff. Teachers undergo a thorough interview process. The school selects only those teachers who are fully bilingual and whose qualities will help to promote success for the students. Staff are committed to the ethos of the school and have good capacity to use data to understand and compare the progress of the students in their classes. With a relatively new staff, high quality professional development is a priority for the school. Training opportunities are designed around the goals and plans of the school, such as for improved differentiation in teaching, but they also aligned to the needs of individual teachers. The assistant principal is a former mathematics coach. Both she and the specialist English language arts teacher have a role in professional development. Based on the monitoring of data and visits to classroom, they spend time each week with teachers in each grade, reviewing progress and providing additional training and development. Teachers are paired in grades and also work together on their weekly planning. Experienced teachers are paired with those with less experience and this offers another form of professional development.

The principal and assistant principal make informal visits to classrooms each morning and afternoon. New teachers receive regular formal observations but other teachers have one-to-one meetings with the principal to discuss their progress. The principal knows her staff well and uses the information gained from her observations of classrooms to inform her one-to-one meetings. All planning and evaluation takes place in teams. Grade and

department teams meet weekly and the principal meets daily with the assistant principal and other members of her cabinet to discuss and review progress. Teachers and other staff are kept informed of results and have strong capacity to evaluate progress and drive forward improvements. The school runs very smoothly. Procedures are clearly communicated to all and their implementation carefully monitored.

Youth development and support services are carefully aligned around the academic aims of the school and both make a difference to the progress and performance of the students. The school has a number of after school activities for the students, including sports' clubs. A flourishing drama club leads to public performances of school plays. Girls have the opportunity to take part in a girls' action group which helps to promote their sexual health and well-being.

**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 school establishes its main goals and plans for the year and works assiduously towards meeting them in all aspects of its work. It does, not however, have strategically planned points for review and revision. All periodic assessments, testing and interventions are carefully reviewed in order to reveal if the school is being successful in its overarching goal to improve the performance and progress of the students. Assessment data is compared within and across classrooms. Where this evidence shows weaker results in one classroom or a regression in the progress of individual students, then action is taken. This action could include additional interventions for students or additional monitoring and professional development for teachers. If there is a school-wide issue, the principal organizes whole-school professional development.

The school is currently working on improving the writing of its students, but recent data on the progress of English language learners suggested they needed more support for speaking and listening. This information led to realignment in the focus of teaching for such students. The school's data also suggests a need for better differentiation in mathematics and more opportunities for students to solve mathematical problems through talk. The mathematics curriculum has been aligned to ensure this happens. Goal setting and the flexible realignment of goals and plans are integral to the practices of the school.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: Amistad Dual Language School (PS311)</b>	∅	✓	+
<b>Quality Score</b>			<b>X</b>

<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>			<b>X</b>
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>		<b>X</b>	
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>			<b>X</b>
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.			<b>X</b>
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>			<b>X</b>

\* 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.		<b>X</b>	
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.			<b>X</b>
2.3 Particular attention is given to improving the performance and progress of students in greatest need of improvement.			<b>X</b>
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.			<b>X</b>
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.			<b>X</b>
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>			<b>X</b>

<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>	∅	✓	+
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>	∅	✓	+
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>	∅	✓	+
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