



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

The Rafael Hernandez Dual Language School

Public School/Middle School 218

**1220 Gerard Avenue
Bronx
NY 10452**

Principal: Leticia Rosario

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Reviewer: Richard Woolf

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Rafael Hernandez Dual Language School serves approximately 960 students in kindergarten through grade 8. The school has been open nine years with the current administration being in place for the last eighteen months. During this period many significant changes have taken place, especially in the development of dual language classes in both English and Spanish for kindergarten through grade 5 students.

The population of the school is made up of 87% Hispanic, 12% Black with Asian, White or other at 1%. The female population, at 57% is higher than similar schools and subsequently the male percentage is lower at 43%. The number of English language learner students is approximately 24% and is higher than both similar and City schools. Special education students make up 6% of the school population and this is comparable to similar schools but higher than City schools. Student attendance consistently runs at over 95% which is higher than both similar and City schools. The school has recently won a trophy for being the best attended school in the region. The school receives Title 1 funding for 85% of the students and this comparable with similar schools.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal and administration provide sound leadership in the development of a well organized school.
- The development of the dual language aspect of the school.
- The teachers are feeling more confident and open to change.
- Students are very positive about their teachers and working environment.
- The teachers and students interact well in lessons.
- There is excellent behavior throughout the whole school.
- The school has excellent rates of student attendance.
- The ethos of the school is supported by the work of the support staff.

What the school needs to improve

- Continue to take a more strategic approach to school development and planning.
- Increase communication between parents and the school regarding the school's future developments.
- Develop systems to allow for peer observations and sharing of good practice amongst staff.
- Improve planning mechanisms, such as the use of the Comprehensive Education Plan.
- Establish monitoring strategies to demonstrate overall improvement in outcomes.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

The principal, who is an experienced educator, is in her second year as leader of Public School/Middle School 218 and provides strong leadership which is valued by staff, parents and students. She is determined that the school will deliver an academic program which enhances the opportunities of each student in both English and Spanish. The improvements seen over the last eighteen months are appreciated and valued by the entire school community. Through effective use of data, the staff are being challenged to rethink their approach to differentiation and the expected norms of the past. This approach is fully endorsed by senior colleagues who are acting as the change agents alongside the principal. The principal is increasingly aware that she has the opportunity to further develop her senior colleagues professional development and for herself to take a more strategic overview of the school's future. Data is starting to provide classroom teachers with the information they need to help them raise academic achievements.

Parents are increasingly aware of the efforts being made by the staff to raise their children's expectations and endorse instruction created by the dual languages approach. The school has very good links with supportive outside agencies and this is beginning to impact upon the school.

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 is building on the work developed over the last eighteen months with regard to how it gathers data. However, it does use all data as accorded by the State and City tests as a basis to plan teaching groups and to identify students in need of extra support and guidance. This year more detailed data is being generated in house to inform instruction and to take into account of the performance of its ethnic groups, English language learners and special education students. This data includes tracking systems as well as a computer pilot system which provides teachers with disaggregated data more quickly. These are being driven by the administration to effect change on instruction and to more effectively respond to student's individual or group needs. Each member of staff has an assessment folder for recording their student's achievements every six weeks. For those students displaying particular needs, a system of additional support has been established through the use of specialist teachers as well as outside school agencies. The principal has special responsibility for those held over to ensure there is continued progress for this group. As a result of the increased use of data, the principal feels that her teachers can discuss more confidently with parents about their children's progress.

There was an increase in academic results during the last academic year, compared to both similar schools and other City schools. However the principal and her staff believe an increased emphasis on the use of data will provide a further improvement in academic

achievement especially as the impact of dual language instruction is further established and data generated is compared to previous performances of individual students and grade levels.

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.

There is a growing confidence among staff that the plans being put forward for the better use of data are having a positive effect on their instruction. The new development this year on a daily basis, is for grades kindergarten to 5, to have common planning time has been greatly appreciated by the staff as another tool to enhance their instruction. This also acts as an early warning system for students who may be falling behind in their work or are experiencing difficulties from outside of the school.

By more effective use of the assessment folder staff now have more up to date knowledge of the progress their students are making and can call upon specialist help when identified situations occur. The school’s extended day program further enables students to benefit from smaller group work as is the case for identified groups in the upper grades. This kind of focused attention helps students and teachers address areas that are in need of improvement. The principal is aware that not all staff have taken ownership of the newly implemented systems and that additional support may help them fully embrace it as a means to raising outcomes. The principal uses the Comprehensive Education Plan for setting goals.

The wealth of new data is impacting on instruction as demonstrated by the grade level meeting. The level of debate was focused on how to improve student understanding and development. The work of the coaches and intervention services are also assisting in developing both staff and student aspirations to improve overall achievements and set further challenging goals. The school does not yet focus sufficiently on assessments recorded in Spanish as they do for English.

Parents are encouraged to be active partners in their child’s learning. However due to the school’s recent past, increasing parental involvement is a strong challenge for the principal and her staff. The principal is aware that the parents would appreciate, and benefit from having more strategies to help their children reach the higher academic expectations now being required by the school.

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 school has a balanced curriculum in English language arts and mathematics. There was evidence of good teaching which engaged the students as active learners. In all lessons, in kindergarten through grade 5, there appeared no difference in delivery, be it in English or Spanish. The standard of work on display in classrooms and hallways is exemplary. Data is helping teachers differentiate instruction. The students are aware of

the need to try hard and be successful. They have a great deal of respect for their teachers and principal and there is always an adult prepared to help them. The staff are now better aware of the principals' goals and are generally supportive of her school wide plan. Staff are appreciative of the time to discuss academic achievement and are now accepting the responsibility of being more accountable for their student's progress and evidence of assessment folders would support this.

The principal is operating with one less assistant principal, due to promotion of that person mid year. This has afforded her the opportunity to look carefully at her management and budgetary needs and, as a result will be looking to employ two new assistants and a business manager in the next academic year.

Attendance is very high, compared to other City schools. This achievement has recently been recognized with the school receiving the region's top attendance award. Parents are aware of the role the principal is playing in seeking to set high standards and are more supportive as they see her efforts impacting upon their children.

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.

The principal's staff selection policy is very clear in that new staff have to be personable, knowledgeable, intrinsic learners themselves and, wherever possible, bi-lingual to meet the stated aims of the dual language school. She is building a team of individuals who appreciate and understand that their students can succeed in life by being given a positive and encouraging start. Teachers accept that her management style is changing, from micro managing to allowing them more professional freedom. This has the effect of making the staff feel trusted and valued. There are good opportunities for professional development both within the school and outside, with the use of external consultants. The data generated from this is improving instruction and helping teachers understand students' needs.

The principal sets high standards and demonstrates these to the whole school community on a daily basis. She is respected for being approachable and is a constant presence in the school. She visits staff informally as well as conducts formal classroom observations. She has detailed knowledge of her staff. The school is well managed and organized, which encourages learning. Parents play an active role in the school and are responding favorably as the new management establishes itself. The principal recognizes the vital role parents play with the school and uses her breakfast meetings to strengthen the partnership. Excellent links have been developed with outside community based organizations and groups such as Bank Street College, Dreamyard and the Center for Applied Linguistics to assist in widening and supporting student aspirations.

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 undeveloped.

The Comprehensive Education Plan is in place and has been put together by a large representative team of the school's community. However, as a working document there is insufficient evidence to demonstrate how developmental issues are highlighted.

There was evidence of teams within the school meeting to discuss the effectiveness of instructional programs. Similarly, comparisons were made of student progress across classrooms and grades to measure whether specific programs were having the required impact. The same monitoring procedures do not exist for the delivery of the curriculum in Spanish. The school does not currently monitor with sufficient rigor the progress of its students in the middle school in order to demonstrate progress amongst its level three and four students.

The school is able to demonstrate planning and to show improvement takes place, but its impact upon instruction is limited due to a lack of monitoring.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

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| SCHOOL NAME: The Rafael Dual Language School (PS/MS 218) | ∅ | ✓ | + |
| Quality Score | | X | |

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| 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. | ∅ | ✓ | + |
| 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"> each student, classroom, grade level, | | 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"> ethnic groups, English language learners, special education students* | | 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"> all other categories of interest to the school* | | 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 | |
| Overall score for Quality Statement 1 | | 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.

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| 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. | ∅ | ✓ | + |
| 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 | |
| Overall score for Quality Statement 2 | | X | |

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| 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. | ∅ | ✓ | + |
| 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 |
| Overall score for Quality Statement 3 | | X | |
| 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. | ∅ | ✓ | + |
| 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 |
| Overall score for Quality Statement 4 | | X | |
| 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. | ∅ | ✓ | + |
| 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 | | |
| Overall score for Quality Statement 5 | X | | |