



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Amistad Dual Language School

Elementary - Middle School 311

**4862 Broadway
New York
NY 10034**

Principal: Miriam Pedraja

Dates of review: December 4 - 5, 2007

Lead Reviewer: Lysbeth Bradley

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Amistad Dual Language School is an elementary-middle school with 401 students from kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 3% Black, 84% Hispanic, 10% White, and 3% Asian students. The student body includes 30% English language learners and 6% special education students. Boys account for 45% of the students enrolled and girls account for 55%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 94.5%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 68.7% eligibility.

Amistad is oversubscribed and admission is by lottery with a sibling policy. The school shares the building, including teaching rooms on one floor, with a monolingual elementary school. This presents a challenge to the school in developing aspects of its curriculum and in maintaining a consistency of approach and quality of display.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal skillfully enables staff to think creatively and innovate in the curriculum.
- The school is highly effective in developing mature and responsible students who are articulate, in both Spanish and English.
- Teachers use rubrics very successfully in literacy to set goals for individual students who are struggling.
- Teachers use data very effectively to drive instruction and accelerate the progress of English language learners.
- The comprehensive dual language curriculum is a significant factor in setting the highest of expectations for students.
- The school has robust strategies in place to build the capacity of administration and faculty, and to hold staff accountable.
- The school has established an inclusive and challenging curriculum for its special education students.
- Teachers continually refine their planning, instruction and assessment through well-planned opportunities for collaboration within and across grades.
- Administration and faculty are making great strides in analyzing a wealth of data to pinpoint strengths and weaknesses and take decisive action.
- There is a high level of parental commitment and involvement which directly impacts on their children's academic and personal development.

What the school needs to improve

- Formalize the setting of interim goals in math to take full account of predicted student outcomes to match what has been achieved in literacy.
- Extend differentiation strategies in math to constantly challenge the higher achieving students.
- Refine rubrics in science and social studies to enable students' performance and progress to be tracked accurately as they move up the school.
- Take professional development strategies to an even higher level by linking classroom observation very closely to whole school goals.

Part 3: Main Findings

Progress made since the last review

The school has made good progress in addressing the issues identified in the previous Quality Review report

Overall Evaluation

This school is well developed.

Amistad Dual Language School is extremely effective in developing students to become articulate in two languages as well as thoughtful and responsible young citizens. Parents are expected to be genuine partners in their children's learning and demonstrate high levels of commitment to all aspects of the school's work. The principal is a highly effective leader who is adept at bringing out the best in her staff. She sets very high standards for herself and for all members of faculty. Excellent systems have been put in place to hold teachers to account and to encourage them to do their very best for the students.

Successful teamwork and a culture of willing collaboration underpin every initiative. The principal is not afraid to take risks in encouraging individuals to introduce curriculum innovations and the administration ensures that each step is carefully monitored to produce the desired results. The Socratic Circle is one such example of how the school is achieving its goal to promote higher order thinking skills in order to challenge students in the upper grades.

The school has successfully developed an inclusive community where differences are recognized and celebrated. This is particularly evident in the good rates of progress made by English language learners and special education students. The school also provides excellent support for any student who is falling behind. Students speak warmly of the school community and believe that they have made "friends for life".

The administration, now supported by a fully functioning inquiry team, has made great strides in developing the range and quality of data in subjects across the curriculum. This ensures that all decisions to accelerate the progress of individuals, subgroups or cohorts are timely and well informed. The school has deepened its analysis of data relating to gender and ethnicity since the last review. Goal setting is now well established, although more formalized in literacy than in math where high performing students are not always challenged sufficiently. Evaluation strategies are effective in enabling the school to review and revise its plans. The administration has rightly identified the need to align rubrics that have been developed in both science and social studies to maximize the impact of teaching and learning in both content areas.

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 the student's progress over time.

This area of the school's work is well developed.

The school makes effective use of a wide range of qualitative and quantitative data to track progress and raise achievement. As a result of comprehensive training and well-managed systems, both administration and faculty show a deepening understanding of how to use data analysis to question how well the school is doing for individuals, subgroups and cohorts. The school keeps a close eye on patterns and trends and how well it is doing compared with similar schools, as well as checking its performance with schools with a selective intake, in its efforts to raise the bar continuously.

Good progress has been made in developing authentic assessments to inform planning. The parallel development of rubrics across content areas in both English and Spanish has been demanding for all those involved and is paying dividends. The school is very successful in working with English language learners, and uses data extremely well to identify students in need of intervention in either Spanish or English. The effectiveness of the school's strategies are reflected in the very high number of English language learners who became proficient last year and the fact that results in English language arts did not decline under a more stringent testing regime.

Central to the principal's vision for raising achievement is the determination to track the progress and performance of all special education students against State standards as well as against their individual education plans. This robust approach has led to decertification and mainstreaming in house as well as enabling many students to reach Level 2 and some to meet the standard.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each student's learning.

This area of the school's work is well developed.

The school has improved the quality of its goal setting through refining its collaborative structure and developing clear and consistent systems. Measurable goals not only evolve from the discussion of data within and across grades, but also in conversations that the principal has three times a year with each teacher, and in discussions between parents, students and teachers. The school has developed a number of ways to share its goals. One of the most effective is the monthly community meetings the principal holds with students in grades 6 to 8. These meetings have resulted in students feeling that they have a voice that is listened to and respected.

Teachers are knowledgeable in their use of data to identify those students who are not making expected progress, whatever their level. The instructional cabinet meets regularly with teachers to review progress and to determine next steps. Any stalling or regression is challenged in both literacy and math, interventions are evaluated and new solutions sought and then closely monitored. The quality of goal setting for these students is exemplary in literacy with the insightful diagnosis of what is "known", "almost known" and where "confusion remains". This depth of diagnosis leads to sharp action planning with the student, class teacher and the intervention team to identify the requisite next steps in learning.

High expectations permeate every aspect of the school's work, not least that all students will be able to function effectively in both English and Spanish by the time they move on to high school. The principal is uncompromising in what she expects in terms of commitment from parents, students and faculty, and has established a community committed to striving for the very best. Parents have to commit formally to working in partnership with the school and are eager to do so. Clear communication channels ensure that no one slips

through the net because parents have open access and are actively encouraged to contribute information about their child and to ask questions.

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.

This area of the school’s work is well developed.

The school has a well developed strategic approach towards curriculum planning and makes highly effective use of all the resources at its disposal to ensure the maximum benefit for students. It is well on its way to establishing a comprehensive assessment system with dual language rubrics in all content areas. The school recognizes that the next step is the alignment of rubrics across the grades in science and social studies to ensure that there is continuity and progression in all key areas.

The school places a strong emphasis on the creative arts as part of each student’s entitlement, as well as offering a motivating range of extra and co-curricular activities, including journalism and tai chi. Students really appreciate the breadth of the curriculum and the wide range of experiences on offer. Every curriculum decision results from thorough evaluation of its impact on student learning and engagement. Creativity and innovation are actively encouraged with new initiatives subject to careful scrutiny. The introduction of Socratic Circles in grade 7 is proving highly effective in enabling students to develop higher order thinking skills. The depth of discussion and analysis of “Hurricane” by Bob Dylan and Jacques Levy was impressive, as was the mature way in which each student voiced their own interpretation of the text, and the ability of the group to analyze the effectiveness of the debate.

Teachers are held to account at regular intervals for their students’ progress and the learning environment that they establish. They are called on to explain the reasons behind the results and what action they have taken to remedy any shortfall. The school has been effective in enabling teachers to set work that matches the needs of students working at different levels within the same class, particularly in literacy where the work is often well matched. The introduction of intervention in math has improved the quality of differentiation, although not all teachers are sufficiently confident to give their highest achieving students work pitched at the right level without first asking them do work that they already understand.

Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school’s collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

This area of the school’s work is well developed.

Professional development aligns closely with the school’s goals and takes good account of individual needs and interests. There are highly effective structures in place to promote effective collaboration and “bottom up” developments. Clear parameters are set, with individual teachers given scope to find the best way of achieving each objective. The principal knows her staff very well and provides timely opportunities and challenges to support, motivate and extend their capacity to meet the school’s taxing goals for student achievement.

There are well structured programs of observations with follow up meetings to discuss adaptations to plans and goals. Formal walkthroughs take place three times a year but do not fully exploit the potential to align the focus with whole school goals. There are good opportunities for staff to visit each others' classrooms and other schools to deepen their understanding of curriculum and technological developments. New teachers are supported well with senior teachers held accountable for the support they provide.

All outside partnerships link closely with the school's aims and goals and spring from thoughtful planning for students' academic and personal development. For example, at the school's instigation, the Metropolitan Museum of Art developed workshops in Spanish to provide enrichment for its students who speak Spanish as a second language. The school also provides very good opportunities for students to extend their science inquiry through regular visits to a private forest.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.

This area of the school's work is well developed.

The principal communicates her vision for the school's development very clearly to all members of the school community and has their full support in her efforts to realize that vision. Along with the instructional leadership team, she has shown the ability to manage change with flexibility and sensitivity, but without compromise.

Since the last Quality Review, the school has refined its approach to monitoring and evaluating its work. Good strides have been made in establishing timelines to check on progress towards its goals. This is most evident in literacy where teachers use data from periodic assessments and other diagnostic measures to monitor students' progress against predicted outcomes based on data analysis. Interim goals have been set in math but procedures have yet to be formalized to the same extent.

The school has put in place a highly effective strategy to establish interim goals for teachers, to which they have input. Goals are related to developing their own practice and to student outcomes, based on data analysis. The principal has a very clear grasp of how well teachers are meeting their goals through scrutiny of data, walkthroughs, examination of students' work and regular accountability meetings.

Meetings at grade level and between grades provide good opportunities to work with data on a regular basis to track progress and monitor the effectiveness of curriculum and instruction. As a direct consequence, teachers continually refine their planning, instruction and assessment practices.

The instructional leadership team monitors and disaggregates standardized assessment data to highlight patterns of growth and areas for improvement. Regular conversations uncover the underlying reasons behind the data and seek solutions based on methodical evaluation of what works and why. Regular meetings with individual teachers, grades and faculty means that full account is taken of data gathered at individual, grade, group and whole school level. Each round of goal setting, whether during or at the end of the year, is informed by what the administration has learned.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Amistad Dual Language School	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
Quality Score				X	

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather and generate data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor the students progress over time.

To what extent do school leaders and faculty provide . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
1.1 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of each student, classroom, grade level?				X	
1.2 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of special education students?					X
1.3 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of English language learners?					X
1.4 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of ethnic groups, gender groups and all other categories of interest to the school?				X	
1.5 a measurement of performance and progress based on the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grades and subject areas?				X	
1.6 a measurement of performance and progress based on comparisons with similar schools?				X	
1.7 training, management systems and structures that support teachers in the use of school data to inform planning and instruction and to track the progress of students?					X
Overall score for Quality Statement 1				X	

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each students learning.

To what extent do school leaders and faculty . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
2.1 engage in collaborative processes to set demanding, objectively measurable goals for improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals?				X	
2.2 focus 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 identify and improve the performance and progress of those students in greatest need of improvement?					X
2.4 share whole school goals with all members of the school community to rigorously improve the performance and progress of students?				X	
2.5 convey consistently high expectations to students and their parents/caregivers?					X
2.6 regularly provide students and their parents/caregivers with information about the goals set for each student, and about each student's progress and performance, and how they can improve?				X	
2.7 invite and enable parents/caregivers to provide useful information to teachers and the school about the learning needs and capacities of their children?					X
Overall score for Quality Statement 2				X	

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.

To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
3.1 select core curricular approaches that facilitate and provide meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and focus on raising the achievement of students?				X	
3.2 provide a broad and engaging curriculum, including the arts, to enhance learning both within and outside the school day?					X
3.3 hold teachers accountable for the progress and learning of the students in their charge, for making instruction interesting and compelling, and for creating a positive safe and inclusive learning environment?					X
3.4 ensure that teachers use school, class and student data to plan for and provide differentiated instruction that meets the specific needs of all the students in their charge?				X	
3.5 make budgeting, staffing and scheduling decisions strategically, based on data, to meet the school's academic goals for all students?					X
3.6 ensure that there is an environment of mutual trust and respect between all staff and students to support personal and academic development?					X
3.7 ensure that there are effective and consistently applied procedures to encourage and monitor student attendance?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 3				X	

Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
4.1 use frequent observations of classroom teaching by the principal and other available information to develop a differentiated strategy for improving the quality of each teacher's instruction?				X	
4.2 make professional development decisions strategically, based on data, to help meet the improvement goals of students and teachers?					X
4.3 provide frequent opportunities for teachers to observe each other's classroom instruction and to meet together in teams to plan, share effective practices, and evaluate one another's instruction in an open and reflective professional environment?				X	
4.4 develop effective procedures for the induction and support of teachers who are new to the profession or the school?				X	
4.5 align youth development, guidance/advising and other student support services around stated academic and personal development goals?				X	
4.6 consistently implement clear procedures that enable the school to run smoothly and encourage effective student learning?				X	
4.7 create effective partnerships with outside entities that support the academic and personal growth of the students?					X
Overall score for Quality Statement 4				X	

Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.

To what extent do . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
5.1 the school's plans for improving student outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?				X	
5.2 the school's plans for improving teacher outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?					X
5.3 teachers and faculty use periodic assessments and other diagnostic tools to measure the effectiveness of plans and interventions for individual and groups of students in key areas?				X	
5.4 teachers and faculty use the information generated by periodic assessments and other progress measures and comparisons to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals?				X	
5.5 school leaders track the outcomes of periodic assessments and other diagnostic measures and use the results to make strategic decisions to modify practices to improve student outcomes?					X
5.6 school leaders and staff use each plan's interim and final outcomes to drive the next stage of goal setting and improvement planning?				X	
5.7 the principal and school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to effect change?					X
Overall score for Quality Statement 5				X	