



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



# **Quality Review Report**

**The Rafael Hernandez Dual Language School**

**Elementary-Middle School 218**

**1220 Gerard Avenue  
Bronx  
NY 10452**

**Principal: Leticia Rosario**

**Dates of review: March 24 - 25, 2008**

**Lead Reviewer: Sandra Tweddell**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The Rafael Hernandez Dual Language School is a middle school with 918 students from kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 14% Black, 82% Hispanic, 1% White, and 3% Asian students. The student body includes 32% English language learners and 12% 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 95.9%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 85% eligibility.

The school is a magnet school that is developing a dual language program. Currently, students in kindergarten through grade 4 are taught in English and Spanish on alternate days. The program is expanding and many classes in grades 5 through 8 are taught in both languages. The school experiences some difficulty in recruiting bilingual staff to achieve its goal of universal bilingual instruction. A significant number of teachers have taken maternity leave this year and 14 new teachers have been appointed to fill these vacancies.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal is an inspirational leader with very high expectations of her teachers and students.
- The cabinet has excellent expertise that it uses well in its drive to meet the vision of a dual language school.
- Most teachers are highly committed to the school vision and work with great energy to achieve it.
- The school generates and uses a wealth of data to assess learning in both English and Spanish.
- Teachers have responded very well to the expectation that their teaching should be lively and so students are motivated by the lessons.
- Students respect both the peers and teachers and demonstrate very good behavior.
- Attendance is good as students enjoy school and the great majority are eager and enthusiastic learners.
- The curriculum is enhanced by the dual language program, the arts and a wide range of after school activities.
- Strategic deployment of staff and careful curriculum planning supports the school's goal of becoming fully bilingual.
- Parents rate the school highly and are particularly pleased with the care their children receive.

### What the school needs to improve

- Work with the small number of teachers who lack confidence in using data.
- Ensure that all teachers differentiate their instruction to provide challenging work for higher-achieving students.
- Refine the school action planning with more specific timeframes and points for action.
- Persevere with strategies to enable parents to gain a better understanding of how they can help their children with their work.

## 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.**

Exceptionally strong leadership by the principal, who has a passion for education, has created a strong learning community with a shared vision for the school's development. The cabinet is a new team that has quickly gained the respect of both students and parents. Members of the team have particular strengths, which they use very well both to drive school improvement and to lead their individual areas of responsibility.

The school has a large number of new staff and evidence of the high quality of the support they receive is seen in their classrooms. Their practice, along with that of all other staff, reflects the priorities identified in the Comprehensive Education Plan. This is a useful working document that has been developed in conjunction with all the teachers. It has appropriate goals and timeframes based on the analysis of school data. These are currently long-term goals, which do not always reflect the good progress that has been made by the school team, particularly in many of the identified areas from the last review.. The majority of teachers are confident about using the wealth of useful data collected by the school, particularly to assess the Spanish content of the curriculum. However a very small number of staff members still lack confidence in using it.

The school is one of a few that uses a dual language approach, so opportunities to learn from similar schools are limited. However, very strong teamwork between pairs of teachers, grades and content areas goes a long way to mitigate this. Thoughtful deployment of staff ensures that the difficulties in recruiting bilingual staff do not impact negatively on the quality of teaching and learning. The inquiry team has an excellent structure to support its work and its findings are already making a difference in teaching and learning in the school.

The impact of very strong leadership and effective management is seen in a steady increase in results, although there is more to do to ensure that those students who are capable of reaching the highest possible standards, do so. The other result of the leadership is that students want to learn, behave very well and respect one another and adults. Parents regard the school highly and say they cannot keep their children away, even when they are ill.

The school has made good progress since the last review. The effective development of the Comprehensive Education Plan has involved all staff and is now used as the basis for professional development. Parents are invited to a range of meetings and attendance has increased as a result, particularly at the principal's breakfast. Planning meetings, grade and pair meetings contribute very well to professional development. Data is used to monitor classroom practice in addition to frequent visits by the principal and the assistant principals. The school has begun to implement inter-visitations, but the program was affected by the large number of teachers on maternity leave.

## **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 collects a wealth of data that reflects the needs of a dual language school, such as tests in Spanish to assess language arts skills. The principal is aware of the need to improve this practice further by, for instance, identifying a Spanish test that assesses math. Data is used to identify trends among groups of students but the analysis has revealed no significant patterns.

The school has successfully moved large cohorts from the lower levels of the State test to the mid-range in both English language arts and math. Higher results in math are the result of the use of data to identify areas for improvement and subsequent professional development that has had an impact on the quality of teaching and learning in the classroom. The school is now using similar strategies to increase the number of students performing at level 4.

The inquiry team makes excellent use of data to monitor the progress of their interventions. The analysis of data is central to the school's work and used to provoke discussion about, "Why were Spanish and English results so closely aligned in Grade X?" The result of this is that, with a few exceptions, many of the large cohort of teachers are extremely confident in the analysis of data.

The principal has sought schools that offer a dual language program in order to compare how well her school is performing, but there are a limited number. Relationships have been established with two similar schools and visits are planned for the near future.

**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 Comprehensive Education Plan is a useful working document that is understood by all teachers because they work on sections in teams and meet regularly to share the outcomes. The action plans formed from these discussions are excellent working documents. Like the data, the plan is made visible to teachers and is regularly discussed. The impact of this is discernible in classrooms where the plan's priorities frequently guide teaching and learning. One example among many was a lesson where the teacher extended students' vocabulary by ensuring that they thoroughly understood the key words.

An excellent focus on special education students and English language learners has helped move large numbers of students from Level 1 in State tests to Level 3. Teachers are using the same procedures, based on the analysis of data, to continue the shift into Level 4. Team meetings use group and individual student data as a basis for their discussion and more importantly, the discussion always ends in next steps for each student or group of students, or for the school.

The principal shares her very high expectations with parents and students through conferences and meetings such as the principal's breakfast, which are very well attended. Teachers now share the information in their assessment binders with parents who attend the meetings, which has enabled them to understand how well their child is doing and what they need to do next to improve. Curriculum meetings for parents, designed to help them to support their child, do not attract such a good attendance. As a result, many parents do not understand sufficiently how they can help their child to succeed in their work.

**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.**

Teachers are involved in writing their own curriculum based on the mandated instructional program. This is consistent with the principal's philosophy that teachers need to be accountable and involved in all decisions about the school. Teachers believe that their opinions matter, which has resulted in high morale and a number of new initiatives coming directly from teachers.

Lessons reflect the developing English language arts curriculum. Students are highly motivated by the choice of topics and the wide range of methodologies that are used. They spoke warmly of how their work in the arts consolidates their understanding of subjects such as social studies and science and were particularly struck by the arts work they did on the scientific concept of matter.

The language arts and math data in assessment binders is used very well in to differentiate teaching and learning, for example by grouping students homogenously. In some lessons, however, the highest-achieving students finish their work quickly and are not challenged sufficiently.

The school experiences difficulty in recruiting bilingual staff but strategic deployment of staff has ensured that this does not negatively impact the dual language program. Very rigorous procedures have led to high attendance; the school has a zero tolerance approach to both absence and tardiness. High attendance also reflects the enjoyment that students have in learning. They feel cared for and valued as individuals, and so want to come to school.

**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 for teachers is based on the analysis of data about each class, which is used to establish individual programs. The principal and assistant principals regularly visit classrooms and teachers welcome their feedback, both verbal and written.

The most potent form of professional development comes from the very strong culture of a learning community that inspires a high level of professional debate at meetings. Inter-visitations between classes have just started and are contributing well to teaching and learning, so the principal rightly wishes to develop these further. Teachers work in pairs to teach the English and Spanish components of the dual language program. A major strength is the planning that takes place in the pairs. This not only contributes to high-quality professional development, but has also leads to a very high degree of consistency between classes in each grade.

Students' personal and academic development is supported most effectively by very close links with a number of local organizations and social workers who work in the school. The arts group, "Dreamyard," effectively consolidates learning across the curriculum for many students.

**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 proficient.**

The school effectively uses the action plan from the Comprehensive Education Plan as a working document to guide its work. All teachers work in groups to analyze data and trends, and then meet as a whole staff to agree on plans based on their analyses.

The action plan is used as a touchstone at most meetings and is regularly revised, for example, to reflect the findings of the inquiry team. Clear end-of-year goals are set with timeframes, but the lack of interim goals and benchmarks means that the progress made throughout the school year is not always recognized and timely adjustments cannot be made to accelerate progress towards goals still further.

The principal's vision for the school, based upon the highest academic and personal achievement, is clearly expressed, well documented with shared with the whole school community. It is tangible to all teachers and forms the basis of all the school's work.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: The Rafael Hernandez Dual Language School</b>	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
<b>Quality Score</b>				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.**

<b>To what extent do school leaders and faculty provide . . .</b>	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		
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>				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.**

<b>To what extent do school leaders and faculty . . .</b>	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
2.1 engage in collaborative processes to set rigorous, 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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>				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.**

<b>To what extent does the school . . .</b>	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 and tardiness?				X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>				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, and effectively address discipline related incidents?				X	
4.7 create effective partnerships with outside entities that support the academic and personal growth of the students?				X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>					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 makes 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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>					X

◇	<b>Outstanding</b>
+	<b>Well Developed</b>
✓	<b>Proficient</b>
➤	<b>Underdeveloped with Proficient Features</b>
Δ	<b>Underdeveloped</b>