



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



# **Quality Review Report**

**Pablo Neruda Academy  
for Architecture and World Studies**

**High School 305  
1980 Lafayette Avenue  
Bronx  
NY 10473**

**Principal: Ivan Cohen**

**Dates of review: May 8 - 9, 2008  
Lead Reviewer: Ainslie Cumberbatch**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Pablo Neruda Academy for Architecture and World Studies is a high school with 392 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 26% Black, 71% Hispanic, 1% White and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 16% English language learners and 20% special education students. Boys account for 69% of the students enrolled and girls account for 31%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 77%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 81% eligibility.

The school is in its fifth year and is one of seven schools on a campus setting. It celebrated its first graduating class last year. This is the principal's first year at this school.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal focuses all his efforts on improving educational outcomes for students.
- Parents receive information about their children's progress and they value the open dialogue they have with the school.
- The school generates a good range of data that enables the effective tracking of students' progress.
- The school has developed a good improvement action plan that includes interim goals and timeframes for measuring success.
- The principal is skillful and creative in managing the budget, staffing and schedules to align with the school's improvement needs.
- A very positive climate for learning exists in which all members of the school community treat one another with respect.
- A wide range of effective partnerships strongly promotes students' academic and social progress.
- The support of special education students and English language learners is improving with higher achievement levels compared to the previous year.
- Grade and department team meetings support personal development well and have a strong focus on student achievement.

### What the school needs to improve

- Improve strategic planning to include interim measurable goals for student and teacher outcomes to speed progress towards meeting key school goals.
- Extend students' involvement in setting their individual goals, so that they can take greater responsibility and increase the interest in their own learning.
- Expand the curriculum to include a range of higher-level courses to engage and challenge, and explore opportunities to extend these beyond the school day.
- Ensure that all teachers have the necessary training and support in the use of data to plan and deliver differentiated instruction effectively.
- Monitor the performance of the different ethnic subgroups on a regular basis at classroom, grade, subject and school levels and use data to revise plans.

## Part 3: Main Findings

### **Progress made since the last review**

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

### **Overall Evaluation**

#### **This school is proficient.**

The principal focuses on improving educational outcomes for students and is making progress in developing the quality of teaching and learning. The school generates a good range of data that enables the effective tracking of students' progress. Students are not deeply involved in helping set their individual goals and benchmarks and to take a greater responsibility for their learning. The school has developed a good action plan that includes interim goals and progress measures. It is proving a valuable guide, keeping staff on track in their whole-school improvement efforts. However, plans for improving student and teacher outcomes are under-developed. There is a significant increase in the level and effectiveness of support for special needs students and English language learners as compared to the previous year. As a result, these students' performance is improving. Although rising, student attendance is still below the City average for similar schools.

The school collaborates successfully with the Institute for Student Achievement (ISA) to assist with addressing students' academic needs. Meaningful partnerships exist with a number of architectural organizations that enable students to participate in portfolio development, inquiry-based learning and internship programs that support their academic and personal growth well. A very positive climate for learning exists in which all members of the school community treat one another with respect. Parents comment that they love the small school setting and feel that staff listens to them.

The school is making some progress in addressing key issues from the previous Quality Review. Staff members now work in teams to review and develop curriculum in the core academic areas. Students receive increased opportunities for credit accumulation and preparation for Regents exams but voice that they would like to see higher-level courses offered. Teachers use assessment data more frequently to inform their lesson planning. However, not all differentiate instruction to meet the individual needs of students. Decisions around professional development are not totally aligned to school improvement efforts. Monitoring and evaluation of performance and progress of sub-groups at class, grade, subject and school levels is not yet sufficiently rigorous.

The Inquiry Team has made good progress in identifying and supporting its focus group of grade 9 special education students who struggle with math.

## **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 proficient.**

The school's work is helping to raise teachers' awareness and confidence in gathering and analyzing student performance data. Students participate in periodic assessments from the National Center for Restructuring Education, Schools and Teaching and Design Your Own test administrations. Teachers use periodic assessment and credit accumulation data well to capture emerging trends and inform their work. The principal engages staff in data review and analysis in grade and department team meetings. School teams' review disaggregated data using a color-coded system. However, the principal recognizes through formal and informal observations that the faculty makes better use of qualitative rather than quantitative data. Support for staff in the use of school data to inform planning and instruction is ongoing.

The school looks closely for any difference in the achievement between males and females and knows that according to recent school data there is no significant difference in their relative performances. At present, no comparison takes place of the achievement between the two major ethnic groups in the school. This means that the school does not modify the curriculum to reflect the varying interests and needs of students from different ethnic backgrounds.

A growing feature of the school's work is its ability to use in-house generated data to determine individual student and cohort strengths and weaknesses. The school is resourceful in using data to identify the needs of special education students and English language learners. As a result, staff target their instruction to improve the outcomes of these groups. The school compares itself to other schools in the building and other ISA schools. It does not concretely measure progress over time of the different subgroups at class, grade, subject and school levels in order to adjust planning and make improvements.

**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 proficient.**

The school community engages in an effective collaborative process to set meaningful and challenging goals for improvement. There is a school-wide portfolio program with specific requirements by grade level. Procedures are less rigorous when it comes to considering how to accelerate the learning of high achievers. These students are sometimes responsible for helping other students, but instruction does not always accelerate their own learning. Students understand that there is now a more serious and purposeful climate for learning and want to see higher-level courses within the curriculum.

The scheduling of "team" common planning time across the school helps teachers to share information about students and set high expectations. Students in greatest need are identified using multiple data sources. They receive support through targeted intervention during the day and after school. The school community knows the school goals and understands what is working and how much more is needed to secure success.

Students discuss school goals in the advisory program but are not actively involved in individual goal setting that allows them to take greater responsibility for their learning.

The school is driving hard to prepare students to achieve Advanced Regents diplomas and to eliminate the need for widespread “catch up” programs. A no credit designation is now included as a course grade to allow students time to complete outstanding requirements. The principal celebrates the fact that the old comment that “students won’t stay,” now reads “provide something that students like and they will stay”.

Parents say they receive a great deal of information about their children’s progress and that the school addresses any concerns they raise. The school generates interim progress reports, notifies parents when student promotion is in doubt and sends other forms of communication to keep parents informed.

**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 proficient.**

Teachers set realistic goals for students and develop assessments that identify student needs and strengths. They effectively monitor interim progress through routine assessments such as quizzes, tests and homework assignments. The curriculum though is not broad enough. Students take the required courses and a variety of electives. In addition to the required art and music courses, students may take advantage of a wide range of arts related programs after school. However, at this time the school’s course offerings do not include any advanced placement courses, honors classes, or College Now opportunities. Within the departmental team structure, teachers are now developing a four-year scope and sequence in the core content areas to facilitate better-focused instruction and clear benchmarks for student progress.

Teacher accountability for the progress and learning of students occurs through team review of assessment data, administrators’ ongoing review of scholarship results and school performance on Regents exams. Administrators’ observations of classroom instruction and coaching by ISA staff are helping teachers to improve their instruction. Students find that lessons vary in interest but most feel overall their classes are challenging. They enjoy strong relationships with adults in the building and know that there is a focus on supporting their academic success. Differentiation of instruction based on the specific needs of each student or groups of students does not occur throughout the school.

The principal makes well-informed decisions regarding the school’s budget, staffing and schedules that are in line with school improvement needs. As a result, there is an increase in school scholarship. There is an improvement in student attendance as compared to the previous year but attendance remains below average for City high schools. Several staff members work specifically on attendance outreach.

**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 proficient.**

The principal and assistant principal regularly check the quality of instruction by conducting classroom observations. However, the administration does not sufficiently differentiate its professional development to fully support individual teacher needs and improvement goals for students. Understanding by Design, collaborative team teaching and differentiated instruction are currently the school-wide focus areas. Teachers meet weekly in teams by department and grade to plan, review curriculum and share best practices. Some teachers visit their colleague's classroom but it is not a formal process organized by the school administration. New teachers receive the contractual level of mentoring, feedback in observation reports and department/grade professional development. They do not receive individualized support.

The principal is spearheading several key initiatives this school year. A strong student advisory program is raising students' awareness of careers and improving their preparation for college. The guidance counselor, school social worker and two social work interns work with teacher advisors to address student academic and social-emotional needs. Case managers referred to as "Angels" provide effective support to seniors at risk of not graduating. As a result, the total number of principal suspensions to date is 75% less than last year. The school's work with ISA to address its academic needs is showing promise. The partnerships with Salvadori Center, MyHome and Ace Mentoring provide students with valuable internship experiences. The school is evaluating next steps.

**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 has developed an action plan that focuses on school improvement. The plan includes realistic interim measures that the school community uses to assess success. However, school goals focusing on teacher and student improvement do not receive the same level of review. The absence of interim goals or milestones in these plans means that the school is not able to evaluate the progress of these two groups in relation to school-wide goals. There are effective tools that support the school's work in terms of early identification of student needs and targeted interventions. Administrators regularly review department progress towards stated goals using assessment data at the end of each marking period and make relevant modifications to instructional approaches as a result. The principal and assistant principal regularly meet with teachers to review teachers' plans in individual conferences. The instructional team also reviews whole-school plans regularly. This practice allows administrators to share clear expectations and tailor supports for teachers. Early in the school year, the school organized a credit recovery program after reviewing the needs of juniors and seniors. This program allows students to gain needed credits to fulfill graduation requirements.

The principal, who took up his post at the beginning of this school year, has a clear vision for a school with a solid instructional foundation that will result in positive outcomes for students. He is working with teachers to develop a four-year scope and sequence in the core content areas following the "Understanding by Design" format. Teachers value the process but wish they had more time to complete the task. He has gained rapid acceptance as a principal who engages well with staff and students and is highly visible around the building. One parent summed up the principal's progress by saying, "He's on top of things".

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME:</b> <b>Pablo Neruda Academy for Architecture and World Studies</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.

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		
<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.

To what extent do school leaders and faculty . . .	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.

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 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>