

Quality Review Report 2010-2011

Amistad Dual Language School

Elementary/Middle M311

**4862 Broadway
Manhattan
NY 10034**

Principal: Miriam Pedraja

Dates of review: April 4 - 5, 2011

Lead Reviewer: Martha Madera

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Amistad Dual Language School is an elementary/middle school with 433 students from kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 1% Black, 86% Hispanic, 9% White, and 4% Asian students. The student body includes 33% English language learners and 6% special education students. Boys account for 45% of the students enrolled and girls account for 54%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2009 - 2010 was 96.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is well developed.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school's curriculum offers rigorous learning experiences resulting in student projects that demonstrate deep content knowledge.
 - As a dual language school the curriculum is delivered in both languages and teachers have integrated the Common Core Standards in literacy and math. In addition, a key standard identified is critical analysis and as a result, essential questions that spark higher order thinking are embedded in all content to ensure increased student outcomes on State tests.
 - Project and performance-based tasks that probe for deep understanding and application of learning are embedded across all grades so that all students are challenged. Students have access to Prezi, a web-based program that encourages making connections of ideas with different concepts to see how they relate. As a result, students develop their creativity and technical skills as they create presentations, graphic organizers and diagrams to incorporate into their research projects.
- Across the school teachers differentiate instruction and provide opportunities so that learners have multiple entry points in the learning process.
 - A cohort of teachers have engaged in an in depth study of differentiated instruction. This year the focus of the study is on conferencing strategies with students to plan instruction that meets their individual needs. As a result, there is ongoing improvement of instruction to meet the needs of students to further accelerate their progress.
 - Teachers use open-ended questions that promote critical thinking and accountable talk, leading to high levels of student engagement. Lessons require students to explore, analyze and synthesize information in order to complete assignments. This was evident in a social studies class where students were engaged in the study of the Progressive Era and its impact on society today. Students worked in groups and challenged each other's thinking which supports a deeper understanding of the content.
- The principal has maximized the use of resources by making strategic decisions designed to achieve school goals and increase student outcomes.
 - The instructional goals are supported by a literacy coach, data specialist and technology consultants who coordinate their efforts to enhance classroom practice by integrating technology across the school which is infused into all content areas. Teachers use SMART boards to deliver interactive lessons and students use laptops to access search engines to support their writings, research papers and project based assignments all contributing to improving student achievement. The wise use of the school budget and thoughtful scheduling allows teacher teams to meet weekly with coaches and consultants to analyze data, review student work and make curricular adjustments in response to their students' needs. In the upper grades, strategic teacher assignments allow

language arts teachers and social studies teachers to co-plan their lessons in order to develop tasks that promote student progress.

- Effective communication with families results in a productive home-school partnership and a shared commitment to the school's goals.
 - Parents and students have access to "Skedula", the school's web based grading system that is used to communicate with families daily. Parents review attendance, tests results and homework assignments. Using personalized messages, teachers inform parents of their children's progress and learning needs. Parents attest that they have daily access to their children's teachers, as a result they continuously engage in reciprocal discussions about their children's next learning steps.
 - The school provides training to parents on the use of ARIS Parent link to support their understanding of their performance and invite them to classrooms publishing parties where they can communicate with teachers on the progress their children are making. In addition, they can access the school's online web site which includes class web pages to further enable parents to collaborate with the school to support student learning.
- The school communicates high expectations and provides opportunities that enable families to be involved in school-wide decision-making.
 - High academic expectation is supported by parents on the School Leadership Team and Parent Association. With the principal's approval, parents have established grant writing and fund raising committees that have been instrumental in securing funds to support the school's technology initiative. As a result of their efforts, every six grade student received a laptop; the parent's room has been equipped with computers and funds for classes to participate in the Pocono Environmental Science Program were all accomplished due to collaboration between the administration and parents. This has led to a shared commitment of excellence to the school's instructional goals ensuring that students achieve at the highest level of academic performance.
- School leaders strategically use observations to develop coherent school wide expectations that improve opportunities for professional growth.
 - The principal conducts goal setting and reflection meetings with teachers three times a years to set measurable goals for professional development that are grounded on teacher needs, instructional goals, teacher data reports and the needs of their assigned student population. As a result, a differentiated plan is established that outlines the support that will be provided to assist them meeting these goals. The plan is a flexible document that is adjusted throughout the year based on results of formal and informal observations and analysis of student work in order to ensure teachers develop their pedagogical skills to raise student performance.
- The school has structures in place for evaluating the effectiveness of curricular decisions and adjustments to improve students' learning.
 - The school's data sources are systematically reviewed and resources are re-directed to meet identified student needs. The last school-wide data analysis revealed a need to support students in the areas of literacy and

English as a second language. Consequently, intervention teachers in both content areas were identified to work with students during the day and after school to ensure both subgroups make significant progress.

- The school uses baseline and benchmark Periodic Assessments that are aligned to the curriculum and support students' mastery of the evolving State standards. Test results are analyzed to identify areas in need of re-teaching, as well as those that students have mastered. The results of the mid-year analysis identified that higher achieving students needed to be further challenged, and as a result teachers were supported to design tasks that promote the analytical and evaluative thought processes of this subgroup. Consequently, an afterschool program was implemented to support students in making the expected gains.

What the school needs to improve

- Promote greater focus for middle school teacher team meetings in order to improve learning outcomes for the students they share.
 - Teachers across the grades are engaged in professional collaboration on teams. They meet regularly to plan, monitor student progress and identify trends across the grades. While the lower grade teams established literacy as a focus for their work together, middle school teachers whom are responsible for teaching two different content areas look at student work across contents, resulting in a lack of instructional focus during their meeting time impacting on their ability to develop content specific strategies that maximize their student learning.
- Expand the process to critically analyze information on student learning in order to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom level.
 - Teachers routinely use assessments that are aligned to the school's key chosen standards and analyze results to evaluate student progress and identify the instructional needs of all subgroups. As a result of their collaborative work, teachers in the third grade adjusted the writing curriculum unit on literary essays to increase volume and accurate use of punctuation. However, granular data on individual students is not yet reviewed in order to establish a portrait of student mastery, thus limiting opportunity to maximize their writing potential.
- Build on the structure of evaluating the effectiveness of teacher teams in order to enhance coherence between curricular and instructional practices.
 - The cabinet meets regularly to review data, observations and the impact of teacher teams. Hence, there is an on-going focus on supporting teams, and evaluating teachers' performance to ensure they support their students instructionally. However, teams in the upper grades need further support to establish greater coherence of instructional focus to better support student needs. Although teachers participate alongside coaches and administrators to develop the school's instructional agenda, there is a void in the identification of teacher leaders to lead the work of teams across grades, thus limiting opportunities for teachers to develop their leadership capacity and further contribute to their students' progress.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2010-2011

School name: Amistad Dual Language School	UD	D	P	WD
Overall QR Score				X
Quality Statement 1 – Instructional and Organizational Coherence: The school has a coherent strategy to support student learning that aligns curriculum, instruction and organizational decisions.				
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	UD	D	P	WD
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous and coherent curricula, including the Arts, for a variety of learners and aligned to key State standards?				X
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best, and ensure that it is: aligned to the curriculum, engaging, and differentiated to enable all students to produce meaningful work products?				X
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs?				X
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?				X
Quality Statement 2 – Gather and Analyze Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, analyze and share information on student learning outcomes to understand school and student progress over time.				
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD
2.1 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the school level?				X
2.2 Align assessments to curriculum and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom level?			X	
2.3 Use or develop tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize, aggregate, and analyze student performance trends?				X
2.4 Engage in an open exchange of information with students and families regarding students' learning needs and outcomes?				X

Quality Statement 3 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently engage the school community and use data to set and track suitably high goals for accelerating student learning.

<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD
3.1 Establish a coherent vision of future development that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are understood and supported by the entire school community?				X
3.2 Use collaborative and data informed processes to set measurable and differentiated learning goals for student subgroups, and students in need of additional support?				X
3.3 Ensure the achievement of learning goals by tracking progress at the school, teacher team and classroom level?			X	
3.4 Communicate high expectations to students and families, engage them in decision-making, and promote active involvement in the school community?				X

Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals and student learning and emotional needs.

<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	UD	D	P	WD
4.1 Use the observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection, with a special focus on new teachers?				X
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?			X	
4.3 Provide professional development that promotes independent and shared reflection, opportunities for leadership growth, and enables teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve learning outcomes?				X
4.4 Integrate child/youth development, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations with the school-wide goals to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students?				X

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

<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	UD	D	P	WD
5.1 Evaluate the quality of curricular, instructional and organizational decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?				X
5.2 Evaluate systems for assessing students, organizing data, and sharing information with student and families, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?				X
5.3 Establish and sustain a transparent, collaborative system for measuring progress towards interim and long term goals and making adjustments during the year and over time?				X
5.4 Use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of structured professional collaboration, capacity building and leadership development strategies?			X	

Quality Review Scoring Key

UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed
-----------	-----------------------	----------	-------------------	----------	-------------------	-----------	-----------------------