

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

**Rafael Hernandez Dual Language Magnet School
Elementary /Middle School 218**

**1220 Gerard Avenue
Bronx
NY 10452**

Principal: Leticia Rosario

**Dates of review: December 12-13, 2012
Lead Reviewer: Dolores Esposito**

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Rafael Hernandez Dual Language is an elementary middle school with 909 students from first through grade 8. The school population comprises 8% Black, 88% Hispanic, 0% White, and 4% Asian students. The student body includes 37% English language learners and 8% special education students. Boys account for 47% of the students enrolled and girls account for 53%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 95%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school has developed a highly supportive and inclusive culture that promotes students' personal growth and academic development. (1.4)
 - The principal has cultivated a culture that embraces high standards for academics while providing key supports to students and families. Every meeting with students, staff and parents focus on the positive relationships that exist in this school to make it a safe and respectful environment. As a result, the school's Environment Survey received a "A" grade highlighting the effective attendance of 95.7%, communication and collaboration that exists among teachers, students and families. The principal shared, "I want to make sure that students have a voice in our school and have direct access to various adults including me". The student council from grades 2-8 meets regularly to discuss issues of concern in the school such as bullying, safety and issues regarding school choice. For example, middle school students wanted choice in seating during their lunch time and met with the principal to present their proposal. As a result, school policy was changed to provide students in grades 4 to 8 with choices for seating and other options during this time. In turn, students articulate their excitement regarding the impact of their voice in school decisions. Consequently, the students are involved in many activities and programs that also promote wellness which resulted in the school receiving a gold award from the Borough President's office and recognition during a pre- Yankee game ceremony. In addition, the United Federation of Teachers also hosted a ceremony to recognize this school for their efforts in wellness. These improvement efforts and accomplishments support the development of students and adults in raising academic expectations, which received the highest score of 8.1 on the school's most recent Environment Survey.
 - Students and families benefit from a wide range of supports within the school and partnerships with outside organizations, such as Whedco, Morisania, Columbia University and the Helmsley Foundation. For example, doctors from the health clinic work with families to support students who are at risk because of obesity. They provide targeted families with counseling and guidance on health and nutrition plans. Furthermore, guidance counselors, social workers and mentors provide students with resources and tools to deal with conflict, anxiety, bullying and other sensitive issues of concern. Middle school youngsters have advisory and health periods weekly to address academic and social-emotional issues. Consequently, the school's learning environment survey received an "A" in the most recent progress report. In terms of academic achievement, four students with disabilities out of 15 students citywide, were recipients of an essay writing award from the "Nicks". As a result, these partnerships help all students to grow socially and foster a respectful school community that enrich student's learning experiences and promote academic success.
- The principal strategically uses resources that align to the school's goals resulting in meaningful student work products. (1.3)

- The principal is strategic with resources that support the school's goals in writing through the partnership with a foundation that subsidized the costs for consultants. As a result, the school was able to hire additional literacy supports with consultants for the elementary and upper grades as well as for math. In addition, the school has invested their resources with other partners, such as Junior Great Books to support inquiry-based literacy instruction. For example, in the upper grade classrooms there are richer student-led discussions and accountable talk practices that foster critical thinking skills and cognitive engagement was highly evident. In turn, student writing across the content areas with a focus on informational texts, is evident in hallways and in classrooms throughout the school. To further support this endeavor, during the summer, the school was involved with a pilot program called Summer Quest. Students engaged in meaningful activities that served to promote critical thinking skills and writing across the content areas including the arts. This is a practice that the school is continuously refining through these strategic partnerships. As a result, the quality of teacher's written and oral feedback from school leaders indicates that there is improvement in pedagogy and also growth in student progress measured by the periodic assessments in literacy and student work samples. the academic focus on the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and support school improvement efforts throughout the year.
- Teachers benefit from weekly structured opportunities for planning, analyzing student work and data review. Teachers receive extensive professional development this year from consultants who support the school's focus on writing across content areas and planning for subgroups. For example, teachers in the early grades have revised their units during grade meetings and made curricular adjustments to include word studies that better engage students in writing activities. As a result, these weekly meetings foster accountable collaboration and meaningful discussions around student progress as teachers create very extensive lesson plans that reflect the school's goals regarding vocabulary development, writing and the shifts in the CCLS.
- Teacher teams collaboratively align assessments to the curricula that provide actionable feedback in order to make instructional adjustments to increase student achievement. (2.2)
 - During grade meetings, teachers discuss assessments and findings from student work to determine areas of focus across grades. In the upper grades, teachers use assessment analysis sheets to disaggregate data and revise their units of study. In turn, they develop a 6 week instructional plan to further target specific areas or shifts in mathematics such as measurement. Teachers across the grades have followed a similar practice resulting in the adjustments of their units of study aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). These practices promote greater coherence in curricula, instruction, and assessments thus resulting in progress in mathematics in grades 4 and 6, based on NYS assessment data.

- The leadership supports teacher development through regular cycles of classroom observations that provide effective feedback to promote reflection and growth. (4.1)
 - Teachers develop individual growth plans in collaboration with administration based on a research-based teaching framework. These growth plans are aligned to the schools' goals which include lesson plan development, improvement in writing and a focus on subgroups. The plans are collaboratively reviewed throughout the year with grade leaders, support staff and administration. Teachers benefit from focused instructional feedback from this entire administrative team around lesson plans and student progress. New teachers also receive extensive feedback and guidance from support staff, mentors and administration. This process is coupled with a review of cycles of observations and teacher feedback that reveals the alignment of the specific feedback given to teachers with the school's goals resulting in a reflective community of educators that thrive on improving their craft.

What the school needs to improve

- Develop the quality of academic tasks to effectively challenge all students and improve student outcomes. (1.1)
 - The school has developed teacher teams that work collaboratively with support staff and administration to align curricula with the CCLS and implement lessons that foster inquiry and conversations. This was evident during the teacher meetings in the upper grades. This work has evolved in some classrooms where student discussions lead to effective engagement. However, during classroom visits, some students were not appropriately challenged and finished assignments earlier while others needed more targeted interventions. In addition, a review of curriculum maps and academic tasks revealed an uneven emphasis of critical thinking skills and cognitive demand across content areas and grades. Therefore, all students are not cognitively engaged which impedes their progress, evident in the school's recent progress report. For the past two years, the lowest third subgroup has not made sufficient progress in literacy and mathematics resulting in a slight decline in performance levels 3 and 4 on the NYS math assessments.
- Expand the use of data to further develop teaching practices that promote academic rigor and improve learning outcomes for all students. (1.2)
 - During classroom visits, most teachers use a workshop model to provide direct instruction, guided practice and a share at the end of their lessons. They also provide some scaffolding with language strategies, graphic organizers and visuals. However, teaching practices do not effectively provide adequate supports that engage students in challenging tasks that produce meaningful work products. Therefore, student work samples reflect uneven levels of student thinking thus providing limited progress of student subgroups, such English language learners and students with disabilities.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: Rafael Hernandez Dual Language Magnet School	UD	D	P	WD			
Overall QR Score			X				
Instructional Core							
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula, including the arts, physical and health education, 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 that is informed by a research-based, common teaching framework and is aligned to curricula, engaging and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products?		X					
2.2 Align assessments to curricula, use on-going assessment and grading practices, and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom levels?			X				
School Culture							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?				X			
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve them?			X				
Systems for Improvement							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet students' learning needs as evidenced by meaningful student work products?				X			
3.1 Establish a coherent vision of school improvement that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are tracked for progress and are understood and supported by the entire school community?			X				
4.1 Use the observation of classroom teaching with a research-based, common teaching framework 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				
5.1 Evaluate the quality of school- level decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school, with particular attention to the CCLS?			X				
Quality Review Scoring Key							
UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed