



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Rafael Hernandez Dual Language Magnet School

Elementary-Middle X218

**1220 Gerard Avenue
Bronx
NY 10452**

Principal: Sergio Caceres

**Date of review: March 20, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Roxan Marks**

The School Context

Rafael Hernandez Dual Language Magnet School is an elementary and middle school with 958 students from kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 7% Black, 89% Hispanic, 1% White, and 3% Asian students. The student body includes 32% English language learners and 9% special education students. Boys account for 48% of the students enrolled and girls account for 52%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 94.5%

School Quality Criteria

Instructional Core		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
1.1 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards	Additional Findings	Proficient
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the instructional shifts and Danielson Framework for Teaching, aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products	Focus	Proficient
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	Additional Findings	Proficient
School Culture		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations	Celebration	Well Developed
Systems for Improvement		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning	Additional Findings	Well Developed

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
---------------------------	------------------------------	----------------	-----------------------

Findings

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations through a variety of means. Professional development opportunities are aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Persistence and will power are part of the large message promoting college and career readiness.

Impact

There is a culture of mutual accountability for the expectations set for all, resulting in partnership with families and ongoing progress towards goals.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders communicate clear expectations through the staff handbook, weekly reminders and newsletters. The Weekly Reminders for February 2015 share assessment administration, professional learning opportunities in effective questioning, research based comprehension strategies and close reading. The principal shares research based articles and best practices through the i-News publication. Well-defined expectations are communicated to parents and students through a handbook that delineates the mission, beliefs, academic policy, promotional criteria, code of conduct and various other topics. Partnership with WHEDCo supports afterschool programs for more than 300 students, provides grade 7 and 8 students with a specialized high school prep class and coordinates the high school fair. A social worker provided by WHEDCo partners with the guidance counselor to support articulation and social-emotional development. College and career readiness includes resume production, career aptitude activities, real life connections in learning, regent classes and the career cluster teacher guides students inquiry into college and careers. For example, a student created a research paper on Yale University providing history, admission process, logo, map, some examples of degrees offered, financial aid and sports.
- Teachers establish high expectations through goal setting, and students reflect on their current goals as they create new ones. Teachers commented that parents are their biggest supporters and use time scheduled on Tuesdays as well as appointments to provide progress updates towards goals for families. Access to a web program, Skedula, gives updated information on grades and assignments; this system is accessed by parents through the web. Progress reports are sent home in English and Spanish sharing information on core subject areas, homework, conduct, attendance and include individualized comments written by teachers.
- The school garden provides a space where staff, students and parents contribute to the upkeep. School leaders and teachers create opportunities for families to learn about Common Core Standards, legal services, immigration and English classes. Students are continually exposed to high expectations daily through announcements echoing themes of persistence, will power, and that reading is a “cool” activity to engage in. Students hear messages in English and Spanish related to tenacity, steadfastness, resoluteness, drive, conviction and bravery.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Proficient

Findings

Classroom instruction and teaching practices are aligned to the school beliefs about learning and the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Across classrooms teaching strategies provide entry points to allow all students access into learning.

Impact

Instruction and teaching strategies provide scaffolds for students allowing them to demonstrate higher order thinking in work products and discussions.

Supporting Evidence

- The strong belief in cultivating bi-literacy in students, collaboration, workshop model, student centered learning environments with discussions and projects is shared in the school and seen in classrooms. This dual language school offers instruction in English and Spanish. Teachers use a variety of groupings, tiered tasks and questioning to encourage students to lead discussions. Students learn best when using technology and varying learning modalities in lessons, and charts and visual supports are provided. In most classrooms visited, print rich environments with word walls in all subject areas offer visual imagery. Likewise classrooms display leveled libraries in two languages, projects, goals, rubrics, exemplars, student work with feedback and process charts.
- Across classrooms teaching strategies and practices consistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula and provide entry points for English language learners and students with disabilities. In a fifth grade integrated co-teaching class, the tasks and visual supports were differentiated with peer support and scaffolds. Student were studying character traits and making inferences as they worked in groups. Choice was offered to a group of students in book selection; the rest of the class used leveled pre-selected texts. The teacher supported the guided group and provided sentence starters for students after she modeled an example by writing down key words. The teacher asked a range of questions at varying levels and provided two different lists of character traits that student used.
- In a grade 6 English language arts lesson using Code X students were engaged in a Socratic seminar exploring life in America through immigration. Students were conducting a close read of the text to gather and deepen their comprehension. Students used accountable talk stems to respond to the teachers' questions as they engaged in the seminar. Although the questions were planned in the lesson, some questions posed by the teacher limited thinking and generated responses from students of one or two words. The teacher's voice dominated this lesson. A missed opportunity to release the ownership to students would have allowed them to ask questions of peers and to engage in authentic dialogue with their classmates.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
---------------------------	-----------------------	----------------	-------------------

Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) integrating the instructional shifts and college readiness. School staff and leaders make adjustments to academic tasks using student work and data.

Impact

All students including ELLs and SWDs have access to a coherent curriculum and to cognitively engaging tasks.

Supporting Evidence

- The school utilizes ReadyGen for literacy and Go Math in the elementary grades. Code X for English language arts and Connected Mathematics Project 3 ensure CCLS alignment for the middle school grades. College and career readiness is addressed through programming a cluster teacher who uses a school-developed curriculum to ensure CCLS alignment during instruction. Teachers indicated that they make a concerted effort to connect learning to real life situations. The school focuses on creating autonomous learners by teaching students to be researchers.
- A review of the grade 2 curricula map includes big ideas, reading and writing standards as well as end of unit tasks. Lessons were developed along with a pacing calendar, and each lesson includes essential questions, mini-lesson and independent or group activity. A grade 8 unit plan for social studies provides clear strategies for differentiation along with tiered group activities with appropriate scaffolds. However, not all unit plans contained this level of differentiation nor included key vocabulary to maximize access for all.
- Teacher teams use student work products and assessment data to make adjustments to curricula and lessons. For example, the unit of systems of equations and inequalities was modified based on data. Learning sequences were altered, and extended time was applied to certain lessons. The school has a large percentage of English language learners, and teacher teams create tools including visual prompts, peer assistance, tiered vocabulary and other supports to ensure students have access to learning. The creation of a foundational unit in grade 1 was designed to support literacy for bilingual students by building on phonological awareness, speaking, listening, reading and writing.

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
---------------------------	-----------------------	----------------	-------------------

Findings

Across classrooms, teachers create and use assessments, rubrics, and checklists aligned to curricula. The school uses common assessments to monitor progress of students towards goals.

Impact

The use of data provides actionable feedback to students, and data is used to adjust and modify curricula and lessons.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders developed an assessment plan that outlines the timelines and required assessments that staff will engage in for the year. The school conducted an analysis of New York State English language arts and mathematics assessment data to identify areas that require additional support. Analysis of baseline, middle and end assessment data including M-Class for the elementary students informs decisions to adjust curricula and create small group plans. Periodic assessments are also done for the ELLs, and fall and spring benchmark assessments are scanned and used to inform instruction. Throughout the year assessments are administered using unit tests from core curriculum programs, and assessments are calendared for all subject areas. Formative data guides decisions to target students for academic intervention services. Engrade and Skedula are used to collect and share data with key stakeholders.
- During the review, evidence of rubrics used to give feedback and next steps to students were seen on bulletin boards and in student work folders. Performance tasks in writing were scored with an end-line rubric which assesses ideas, purpose, organization, details, elaboration, voice, vocabulary, syntax and conventions. Rubrics are tailored to standards and tasks to ensure clear guidelines for work products that give students distinct next steps to improve their learning.
- Student data is reviewed by teams in order to identify differences in student performance and progress towards standards and is used to inform curriculum and lesson planning. Students create goals that are directly connected to learning outcomes. Most teachers conduct conferences with students using different methods for recording information. Teachers also record guided reading notes for students. These documents are arranged by reading levels and include possible strategies pertaining to specific reading behaviors in students.

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Well Developed
---------------------------	---	----------------	-----------------------

Findings

The vast majority of teachers are involved in structured professional collaborations to enhance teacher pedagogy and promote implementation of Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) across grades and subjects. Distributive leadership structures afford a voice for teachers to give input in school decision that impact instruction and curricula.

Impact

Through participation in teacher teams and shared decision making, teachers play an integral role in the school leading to coherence across classrooms and grades.

Supporting Evidence

- Common planning time is scheduled for teams of teachers to meet with a focus on using school and student level data to ensure curricula alignment to CCLS. Teams look for gaps in learning by continuously analyzing formative assessment data and different levels of student work to inform their planning and lesson delivery. Various types of teams meet to support the goals. For example the professional learning team used a survey to assess the needs of the staff and created cycles of professional learning to address identified needs. Goals around strengthening the dual language program, enhancing teacher practice and strengthening community relations are supported by team participation. Weekly professional learning focuses on deepening content knowledge of staff in core subject areas including writing, native language arts, social emotional learning and fine arts. Teachers commented that participation on cross grade teams increases their knowledge of the skills needed in other grades.
- Distributive leadership structures allow teachers to share in decision making that impacts professional development, curricula, social-emotional learning and instruction. Teacher leaders support the grade level work of teams and also serve as lab-site facilitators. Participation in the New Teacher Center initiative helps to develop teacher pedagogy in the understanding the Danielson Framework and in norming expectations across grades.
- During the team observations teachers shared that they have a say in making adjustments to units based on the work in teams. Teachers communicated they have a voice and were given choice in selecting professional learning aligned with their needs and interest. Teachers stated that when they noticed a gap in the development of vocabulary and grammar in student, they researched programs and approached school leadership with the program choice, and it was purchased and implemented this year. Teachers take ownership of conducting workshops for colleagues, and participation in inter-visitations helps to spread best practices that will improve teacher development. The school uses the inter-visitation toolkit and resources from the Handbook for Professional Learning to support work in this area.