

Increasing Student Achievement Through Instructional Effectiveness

DISTRICT PROFILE

Metro Status: Urban

Total Schools: 63

Grades: PreK–12

Total Enrollment: 410

**Eligible for Free or
Reduced-Price Lunch:** 89%

“It took us four weeks to create a totally bilingual project. We were able to really do some amazing things that really paid off in terms of student achievement.”

GOALS

- Develop an instructional focus around rigor, relevance, and relationships in order to improve students’ motivation to learn.
- Clarify expectations for teachers and students by defining higher standards of instruction and of student performance.
- Increase the number of students performing at the Proficient and Academic Advanced performance levels on the Puerto Rico Test of Achievement in Spanish Language Arts, English as a Second Language, and mathematics.

CHALLENGES

The leadership team at Dr. Antonia Saez Elementary School was seeking to dramatically raise the academic achievement of students in the school. Dr. Antonia Saez Elementary School had not demonstrated adequate yearly progress on the Puerto Rico Test of Academic Achievement for seven consecutive years. Dr. Antonia Saez Elementary School reached out to ICLE, knowing changes to curriculum and instruction were necessary in order to improve student achievement. In partnership with the Education and Professional Services Corporation, ICLE helped Dr. Antonia Saez Elementary to develop a comprehensive reform plan.

SOLUTION

■ Developing Instruction Based on Rigor and Relevance

ICLE provided training and job-embedded coaching to reinforce teachers’ understanding of the Rigor/Relevance Framework. Implementing the framework ensured lesson quality as teachers began building individual lesson plans for each student to target his or her areas of weakness in core subjects. A formal lesson-planning tool was developed to provide a cohesive vision of activities and connect lessons to standards and objectives. To become more effective at targeting individual needs, teachers administered a learning style inventory to their students and began collecting more frequent data on student progress. They also analyzed Puerto Rico Test of Achievement test results and developed rigorous lessons to specifically address areas where students showed deficiencies.

■ Facilitating Collaboration Focused on Curriculum and Instruction

Increasing collaboration and shared planning opportunities among teachers was a critical step in improving effective teaching practices. Dr. Antonia Saez Elementary School organized collaborative teacher teams by grade, and cross-planning periods were identified. In their group meetings and teacher-coordinated team workshops, teachers began sharing their learning about the Rigor/Relevance Framework and working together to build lessons consistent with the framework and learning criteria. The grade-level teams also collaborated to examine results of the Puerto Rico Test of Achievement, identify the standards and objectives that required particular attention to meet proficiency goals, and shared these findings with students and families.

■ Increasing Student Motivation

To further support student learning and improve achievement, Dr. Antonia Saez Elementary School staff began instituting strategies to increase students' motivation to succeed. Teachers awarded certificates to students who scored at the proficient or advanced levels on the Puerto Rico Test of Achievement. Families and the community were invited to take part in a celebration recognizing students who met AYP goals. Teachers also developed activities outside of school to celebrate students' success on the Puerto Rico Test of Achievement.

“We were looking to make at least a 5% increase in Spanish Language Arts and Mathematics performance but Dr. Antonia Saez Elementary School really blew those numbers out of the water.”

SUCCESS

Dr. Antonia Saez Elementary School made remarkable progress in raising student achievement levels on the Puerto Rico Test of Achievement between 2009 and 2010. The largest gains at Dr. Antonia Saez Elementary School occurred in mathematics. The percentage of ASES students scoring at the proficient or advanced levels on the Mathematics Puerto Rico Test of Achievement more than tripled, growing from 10% in 2009 to 34% in 2010. On the ESL portion of the Puerto Rico Test of Achievement, the percentage of Dr. Antonia Saez Elementary School students scoring proficient or above doubled, from 24% in 2009 to 46% in 2010. Dr. Antonia Saez Elementary School students far outperformed the average ESL proficiency rate at the ten similar schools. The percentage of Dr. Antonia Saez Elementary School students scoring proficient or advanced also nearly doubled on the SLA portion of the test, from 21% in 2009 to 41% in 2010. With clear expectations, rigorous instruction, and improved motivation, Dr. Antonia Saez Elementary School students gained problem-solving and critical-thinking skills.

“We needed to support 63 schools and so we identified a team of bilingual consultants who were experts in the content of instructional leadership and instructional strategies.”

