

Name: Melanie Alfaro
Subject/s taught: Mathematics
Grade/s taught: 6
School: Deming Intermediate School
District: Deming Public Schools
City, State: Deming, NM

Melanie Alfaro, a sixth-grade math teacher at Deming Intermediate School in New Mexico, holds all her students to high standards. She employs a multitude of instructional strategies in her classroom, including active engagement and collaborative grouping, and is trained on AIMS3, a state dual-language program that supports English learners. The school doesn't have a gifted program, but Alfaro makes sure advanced learners stay challenged with appropriate course work and encourages higher-achieving students to mentor those who need more help. Alfaro immerses her students in data, setting individual and whole-class goals, charging students with monitoring their own progress, and holding family classes to ensure parents are fully equipped to support their children's efforts in math. Deming has jumped two letter grades and 16 percentage points in end-of-year math assessments in the past few years; Alfaro's students lead the sixth grade in math proficiency.

As head of the math department, Alfaro sits on Deming's school leadership team and was deeply involved in the formulation and monitoring of its 90-day improvement plan. She mentors teachers throughout the district, leads professional development, sits on the math pacing guides and superintendent's advisory committees, and was instrumental in bringing former New Mexico Secretary of Education Hanna Skandera to Deming to talk about the status of education in the state. Alfaro has advocated strongly in favor of the district's sometimes-controversial policy of busing U.S. citizen children living across the nearby Mexican border into Deming schools. In 2016 she was selected to join the New Mexico Teacher Leader Network.

A Deming native and product of Deming Public Schools, Alfaro is an accomplished athlete who played Division I basketball at New Mexico State University and was inducted into its Hall of Fame in 2014. She has worked hard to build up Deming's Little League baseball program, serving on the board and as president. Alfaro started a summer basketball camp and coaches basketball, t-ball and Little League baseball; the district offered her the opportunity to coach varsity basketball, but Alfaro opted to work with younger students to teach them the fundamentals and prepare them for higher-level athletics. In the classroom, Alfaro stresses the importance of both academics and athletics, reminding students that working hard at one supports success in the other. Students often come back to share their good news and accomplishments with Alfaro, telling her that they are top of their class, entering honors courses, and even graduating as valedictorian.

Alfaro earned a bachelor's in business administration in 2002 from New Mexico State University and a master's in education in 2013 from Western New Mexico University.