



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Public School 247

**7000 21 Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11204**

Principal: Christopher E. Ogno

Dates of review: January 4 - 5, 2007

Reviewer: David King

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Public School 247 is located in Bensonhurst, Brooklyn. It is a school with 675 students in pre-kindergarten to grade 5. The school has a diverse ethnic population and 22 languages are represented. The major languages other than English include Cantonese, Russian, Italian and Spanish. The ethnic breakdown is 48.4% White, 41.2 % Asian, 10.1% Hispanic and 0.3% Black. Public School 247 is a Title 1 school with 72.3% of the students eligible. Attendance is consistently around 95%, which is higher than similar schools and other city schools. 3% are special education students and 22% are English language learners.

There are five kindergarten classes. There are six classes in grades 1 and 2. There are four classes in each of grades 3, 4, and 5. In addition there is a self-contained $\frac{3}{4}$ bridge class.

The school has 75 professional and support staff, including a principal, two assistant principals and 31 class teachers. A further 6 full time cluster teachers provide art, music, computer technology, library, physical education and science. Special services are provided by a resource room teacher, two reading specialists, three second language specialists, three reading recovery teachers, a guidance counselor and a speech teacher. The school also has a full-time mathematics coach and part-time literacy and technology coaches. The teachers are all fully licensed and are fairly young, with 41% having more than 5 years teaching experience.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal and assistant principals provide dynamic, focused leadership.
- The school uses data rigorously to drive instruction.
- The school sets medium- and long-term goals for all its students within clearly defined time-frames.
- The school provides substantial support and intervention for its English language learners and special education students.
- The school uses the budget wisely to ensure that all students are well supported.
- The school provides a professional development program to meet the needs of all its teachers.
- The leadership team has a rigorous system for teacher observation and feedback.
- The leadership team uses the Comprehensive Education Plan flexibly to guide improvement planning.
- The use of wireless laptops is widespread throughout the school and information technology provision is further enhanced by the computerized music lab.
- The school is proactive in engaging parents in the work of the school and many activities are organized to bring them into the school.

What the school needs to improve

- Reinforce with all teachers the need to break down learning for the neediest students into more frequent, smaller and manageable tasks, including regular incentives.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a well developed school.

Public School 247 is an excellent school with a welcoming, caring and inclusive environment providing a rich educational experience for the whole school community.

The principal has created a school where the staff feel empowered, where students enjoy learning and where parents are happy to send their children. The principal has very strong values and insists on high standards. He is deeply committed to his students getting the best start in their education and he has the full support of his staff in trying to achieve that goal. He works very closely with his administration and knows the strengths of the individuals on his staff.

Rigorous and systematic use of data has supported the school's successful drive for improvement: the school's performance in English, mathematics and science has risen in recent years and standards achieved are amongst the highest in the city. There is, however no complacency and the school cabinet and staff are constantly reviewing progress and updating provision for the students.

The school has many strengths, the key one being the detailed knowledge that is held about each student and the way in which data drives instruction. There is also good communication between school and home. Instruction is delivered through a range of units of study and other programs designed to ensure that students make progress at all levels. The students themselves are well mannered and articulate young people.

How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor student progress over time.

This area of the school's work is well developed.

The school is adept at collecting data to track the performance of its students year by year for the whole school. The school makes effective use of formal assessments, interim assessments and the use of a daily conference/goals book to track how well students are doing both in the short and long term. These well-thought-out systems enable teachers to keep clear records of student progress, discuss goals for improvement and keep thorough written evidence on how well each student is doing. Regular monitoring of results is driven by the leadership and every student has a detailed mathematics profile, reading record and conference notes. The school has good systems to identify students at risk, those at the standard (levels 3 and 4) and those exceeding the standard.

The school has a clear understanding of the performance and progress of all the ethnic groups in the school based on the broad categories in the school report. It has not yet produced a detailed breakdown according to languages spoken but has the capacity to do so. English language learners and special education students receive a considerable amount of support from academic intervention services so the school is fully aware of the

progress of these students. The input from academic intervention services has resulted in support for these students being carefully considered and efficiently deployed. The school is fully aware of how its performance compares with others schools locally and City-wide. The school is also fully aware of the needs of its community which contains a number of non-English speaking families and presents the biggest challenge.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student’s next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student’s learning.

This area of the school’s work is well developed.

Public School 247 uses all its data very effectively to drive instruction, create groupings and to set goals. Students are grouped according to needs and strengths with the academic intervention services being used carefully to create flexibility of groupings when particular units of study are delivered. Each student has a conference book in which the teacher makes a note of daily progress and sets the students short term goals. The students make full use of their conference books to refer to goals, for example, when they are reading, a goal may be to use post-it notes to assist them in getting the key points from a page of writing. As a result, they are well aware of the strategies they need to use to take the next steps in their learning. These books are always available for use and information in them is shared in collaborative team meetings, which helps teachers to improve their teaching practice to meet students’ individual needs. Because parents see the conference books they are made aware of how well their child is achieving and what they need to do to improve further, which allows them to support their child when they can. Overall, students’ goals successfully drive instruction in the school at all times.

The system called Monitoring for Results is also effectively managed by the coaches and leadership team. Consequently, the school can spot those students struggling to reach the standards of levels 3 and 4 at the completion of every unit of study, ensuring that any necessary interventions for students are put in place. The mathematics coach is particularly adept at making use of this system.

Teachers meet during common preparation periods to plan and examine data. The weekly professional development period for grades 1 through 5 is also well used as an opportunity for staff to analyze student work and progress. High expectations are conveyed to students and parents or caregivers, who receive regular updates on student progress and are able to discuss that progress with teachers and the school leadership. This area is a considerable strength of the school, which invests a lot of time and money in developing teachers’ skills in evaluating student work and data in order to plan effectively to meet student needs.

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.

This area of the school’s work is well developed.

The school is very good at aligning instruction with the data gathered. All planning and instruction is based on the on-going collection and evaluation of data. The school delivers the mandated curriculum and teachers make sure that their planning is aligned with the students’ conferencing notebooks. Groupings are set up for students with common needs

and lesson planning refers to their concerns. The analysis of student work during collaborative meetings results in teachers revising units of study according to need. Any subsequent teacher planning is then aligned to these new revisions. Teachers are confident in using conferencing and questioning techniques to plan accordingly. These strategies for teacher planning result in effective differentiation for almost all the students, although for the neediest students' learning sometimes needs to be broken down further.

Because the school uses data well it is able to allocate its resources according to the needs of the students. A considerable amount of the school budget has been allocated to academic intervention services instruction, which is a notable strength of the school. Academic intervention services staff are used particularly effectively in reading recovery and leveled literacy intervention programs throughout the school. Small group programs, one-to-one work and the extended day program are other ways in which the school ensures that the weakest students, particularly those achieving at level 1, receive individual attention. The school has maintained a philosophy for balanced literacy and research and has also bought in outside support services such as the Center for Integrated Teacher Education and AUSSIE to provide the staff with professional development. Additional funding has been sensibly used to purchase mobile computer labs, a full time technology cluster and a part time technology person for professional development. The school also houses the City's only elementary school computerized music lab. This blend of exciting, carefully allocated resources, skilled staff, and programs which support their individual learning needs, means that students are motivated and engage well in their learning. Some of the special education students would benefit from further differentiation of learning tasks, so that they learn in manageable steps, and with incentives built in to the process.

Scheduling decisions are driven by the needs that emerge from student data analysis. There are common grade preparation blocks and weekly grade wide professional development administrative meetings. Extra groups have been introduced in all grades and a further reduction to grade 1 class size has been introduced. The average size in grade 1 is now 17 students. This helps to make sure that English language learners receive support very early in their school lives. The teachers are very aware of the academic needs of all the students and the students themselves enjoy the challenge of school and are respectful to each other and to all staff in the school. Attendance is very good and is monitored every day.

Quality Statement 4 - Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

This area of the school's work is well developed.

The staff is young and highly motivated, sharing the school's expectations and demonstrating a high level of commitment. The principal is aware of the strengths of each member of his staff. Because he is clear about the aims and vision of his school, he has carefully selected his staff and has made every effort to hire only the best teachers. Any weaknesses in his staff are monitored by a capable pair of assistant principals and coaches, all of whom model good teaching, and a rigorous action plan for improvement is implemented. The weakest teachers from the previous year have since left and new teachers receive a supportive induction program.

The professional development program is a carefully gathered succession of ideas from teachers and the leadership team. It is designed to allow the staff to develop their skills so that they accelerate the learning of each student as effectively as possible. Examples of

this include the training for the guided reading program and the program for developing a non-fiction unit of study incorporating readers' and writers' workshops. The outcome of this training is much clearer, more focused work to support student research. Professional development also includes the opportunity to review standards by analyzing student work in groups and teams.

Teacher observations take place regularly on both a formal and informal basis. The principal and his two assistants regularly visit classrooms to monitor performance and to model teaching. Every teacher receives the mandatory formal observations and receives very thorough and supportive feedback. New teachers also have a "buddy" teacher and get regular opportunities to visit other classrooms. The coaches also have a support role with new teachers. The block arrangement of the schedule means that all teachers can arrange inter-visitations regularly and engage in the evaluation of each other's performance, and this is encouraged. Combined with other aspects of the professional development program, these classroom observations effectively develop teachers' knowledge and understanding of how to help students to reach their goals. The principal respects and supports the teachers and all the staff enjoy being treated in a professional manner. The staff is contented and they enjoy working in the school.

The school has good systems and structures, procedures are clear and the atmosphere is calm and purposeful. There are many partnerships with community-based organizations, including the Neighborhood Improvement Association program in the extended day and an arts program including instruction in band, chorus and orchestra. Parents are also involved as Learning Leaders and the parent coordinator runs programs in adult literacy and citizenship. As a result, parents are well-supported to become involved in their children's learning.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerated learning.

This area of the school's work is well developed.

The principal and his staff are constantly striving to raise standards and help them to meet their high expectations. The majority of decisions are reached collaboratively and always with the needs of the students in mind. Data drives instruction and the staff has a thorough knowledge of student progress and engages in regular discussion about it.

The principal has a detailed Comprehensive Education Plan with action plans for its implementation and monitoring. It is a document which is used flexibly and guides improvement planning. Plans are revised when new information comes to light and student schedules are continually re-evaluated.

The school is flexible in its approach to scheduling and learning is organized to respond to the needs of students. This is particularly effective in the support for English language learners and other students in need of extra help. The majority of students are challenged by the teaching and the atmosphere in the school is very positive. The school acknowledges that the needs of its students in physical education must be catered to, although the space restrictions imposed by the building make that a problem. The constant evaluation of student performance and the willingness of all the staff to modify student goals and plans where necessary make this school particularly successful.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Public School 247 (PS 247)	∅	✓	+
Quality Score			X

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor student progress over time.	∅	✓	+
1.1 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • each student, classroom, grade level, 			X
1.2 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ethnic groups, English Language Learners, special education students* 			X
1.3 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all other categories of interest to the school* 			X
1.4 Performance and progress are measured based on comparisons with similar schools, with the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grade levels, academic subject areas, ethnic groups, and other groupings of interest within the school.			X
Overall score for Quality Statement 1			X

* These criteria are partially aspirational as of now because schools do not have routine access to all of this data. The NYC DOE plans to provide schools with enhanced access to the necessary data in 2007.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student's next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student's learning.	∅	✓	+
2.1 Using data, school leaders and faculty engage in a collaborative process to set demanding, objectively measurable goals for immediate and long-range improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals.			X
2.2 Goals and plans focus on the school as a whole and on each student, classroom, grade level, academic subject, and group of students whose performance or progress has been identified by the school as a particular focus area.			X
2.3 Particular attention is given to improving the performance and progress of students in greatest need of improvement.			X
2.4 High expectations are conveyed to students and parents/caregivers. Students and their parents/caregivers are regularly invited to provide information about each student's performance and how to improve. This information is central to setting challenging goals and developing, evaluating, and revising plans.			X
2.5 Goals and plans for improving student performance and progress drive the activity of all members of the school community: leaders, staff, students, parents, and other partners.			X
Overall score for Quality Statement 2			X

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity, resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.	∅	✓	+
3.1 The school selects the curriculum based on how well it aligns with or implements the mandated curriculum and on the curriculum's capacity to generate meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and to support the school's high expectations and improvement plans.			X
3.2 Teachers are accountable for improving instruction and student outcomes. They plan and differentiate their instruction based on the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.			X
3.3 Budgeting decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.			X
3.4 Staffing decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.			X
3.5 Scheduling decisions about the use of teacher and student time are guided by the needs that emerge from examining student data and by the focused plan the school develops to improve student outcomes.			X
3.6 Instructional programs actively engage students.			X
3.7 Staff know and respect students and respond to their academic needs, as well as their personal needs that affect academic performance. Each student knows and trusts an adult on the staff who is concerned about him or her.			X
3.8 Student attendance and engagement are high priorities. High rates and patterns of absences trigger immediate intervention.			X
Overall score for Quality Statement 3			X
Quality Statement 4 – Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.	∅	✓	+
4.1 Leaders, faculty, and staff are selected based on their high expectations for student performance and progress and based on their commitment and capacity to use data, compare outcomes within and across classrooms and schools and develop and revise plans and methods to improve performance and progress.			X
4.2 Professional development decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes. Professional development is designed to help leaders, faculty, and staff use data, self- and peer-assessments, and collaboration with peers to achieve goals for improved school and student outcomes. Professional development and self- and peer-evaluation are aligned and overlap.			X
4.3 The principal frequently observes classroom teaching and has a considered strategy for improving the quality of each teacher's instruction. Teachers frequently observe and support each other's classroom instruction with the goal of improving student outcomes.			X
4.4 Planning, evaluation of results, and revision of plans takes place in teams. Leaders and faculty inform each other of their goals and results, candidly evaluate themselves and each other, and use what is learned to drive improvement.			X
4.5 The principal is respected and has capacity to effect change.			X
4.6 The school runs smoothly. Procedures are clear, communicated to all, and are generally followed.			X
4.7 The school aligns youth development and support services around stated academic goals. Partnerships with outside bodies are routinely used to achieve academic goals.			X
Overall score for Quality Statement 4			X
Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.	∅	✓	+
5.1 All school plans and other interventions include frequent interim goals and diagnostic assessments of progress designed to reveal in objectively measurable ways whether the plan is being effectively implemented and reaching stated goals.			X
5.2 Comparisons of student progress within and across classrooms and schools are used in making interim diagnostic assessments and measuring the progress of plans and interventions.			X
5.3 Information generated by periodic assessments and diagnostic measures of progress and comparisons is used to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals. Interim and final goals are modified when data objectively demonstrate that revision is required.			X
5.4 Each plan's interim and final outcomes drive successive phases of goal setting and improvement planning, and each successive phase is characterized by agile and flexible realignment of practices and resources to improve student academic outcomes.			X
Overall score for Quality Statement 5			X