



# **The New York City Department of Education**



# **Quality Review Report**

**Magnet School of Humanities**

**Intermediate school 347**

**35 Starr Street  
Brooklyn  
NY 11221**

**Principal: John Barbella**

**Dates of review: May 17 - 18, 2007**

**Reviewer: Denis Pittman**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

IS 347 is an Intermediate school servicing the educational needs of 552 students, from grade 6 through 8. It is a school which is divided into two smaller communities, the Bushwick and Ridgewood vertical learning academies. Most students are drawn from the Hispanic community, with 87.7% Hispanic students, 10% Black, 1.3% Asian and 1% White. Special education students account for 10% of the school population and 19% are English language learners. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 89% of students qualifying which is above the City average and matches the average of similar schools. Attendance at 93% is above City and similar schools levels.

As a school of humanities, IS 347 has a curriculum focus on the arts including music, dance, arts and drama. The school shares in its building with another intermediate school.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal has a clear vision for the school, is well respected by students, parents and staff and leads by example.
- The school effectively collects data to set goals students' progress and to provide for their diverse needs.
- Relationships between students and staff are positive, which is reflected in the good academic support and help they receive.
- The curriculum provides a range of creative experiences through art, drama and music which motivates and stimulates students' learning.
- Students enjoy school which is reflected in improving attendance levels.
- A strong collaborative culture has been developed which promotes improving instructional practice.
- The school runs smoothly on a daily basis, with clear and effective procedures which provide a safe environment for students.
- Staffing and budgetary decisions closely reflect the learning needs of students.
- The school provides focused and effective support programs to promote English language learners' successful acquisition of language.

### What the school needs to improve

- Further develop the school's use of data to understand and monitor students' progress over longer timescales.
- Develop suitable programs, organisation and staff training for teachers to raise the quality of differentiated instruction across the school.
- Improve the achievement of special education students in mathematics and English language arts.
- Focus on developing strategies for analyzing data in science to identify strengths and weaknesses across grade levels.
- Continue to develop ways of monitoring and evaluating the school's work in the medium and long-term to measure the effectiveness of new initiatives..

## Part 3: Main findings

### Overall Evaluation

**This is a proficient school with well-developed features.**

IS 347 is an improving school which is promoting its students' achievement in challenging circumstances. The principal and staff have effectively developed a culture of support which is set within a context of high expectations for personal achievement. The school provides care and guidance for its community, including both students and teachers. Relationships between students and adults in the school are very good, and students and teachers are respectful of the views of others. Students are enthusiastic and eager to participate in the wide range of activities provided by the school. The curriculum is effectively geared to the language and creative needs of its students. The school is successfully developing students who are more confident in their language acquisition and in consequence feel empowered to try new activities. Teachers are very committed to the school, being willing to give time and energy to meet the individual needs of students. Lessons are mostly well prepared with an emphasis on providing a stimulating environment for students to learn. Parents value the support and guidance which is given to their children. They strongly endorse the openness and willingness to communicate which are positive features of the school's administration. The administration has a clear understanding of what the school does well and where further improvement is needed. The school has created an environment which is safe and stimulating, and it is well positioned for continued improvement.

### 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 proficient.**

The school collates and generates a significant amount of data on the performance of its students. Standardized assessments are given to all students and analyzed by grade and specific subgroups. Interim and practice standard assessments are completed by students, in all content areas, throughout the year. In this way the school is able to build up a comprehensive profile of classroom and grade level performance. The analysis of science data within respective grade levels, however, is not sufficiently rigorous so as to monitor progress adequately. In general, the monitoring of individual student progress is good. This process is enabled by utilizing the Princeton review and the Success Maker programs. To supplement this information, individual student/teacher conferences take place during the work period of the workshop model when other students are working by themselves.

The school has a predominantly Hispanic population with a relatively high proportion of English language learners, and the analysis of performance on the basis of ethnicity is effectively provided in that context. The analysis of English language learners' performance and progress, and that of special education students, is well developed. For example, students who receive special educational services are consistently assessed through the Wilson program. Individual education plans are updated annually and

individual students' needs are appropriately addressed. A particular focus for the school is students with severe disabilities. They are appropriately assessed utilizing New York State Alternative Assessment and data is systematically gathered in a portfolio to ascertain student performance and growth. The school proficiently uses external data to compare its performance with similar schools. Attendance data, for example, shows above average rates. However, comparative analysis of performance over longer timescales is not sufficiently developed.

**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.**

The school leaders use assessment data to appropriately inform the compilation of the Comprehensive Education Plan. The associated collaborative planning meetings enable measurable long-term goals to be identified accurately. To ensure that all staff members are working towards the same instructional goals, each person is given a memo binder with all of the school's collaboratively established goals and expectations. In a subject context, departmental meetings are regularly held to plan and set goals for all students based on individual student need. Teachers analyze and chart results of the State standardized practice assessments to determine specific student support. They then use this assessment information to plan for differentiated activities in lessons. Further analyses of data are provided for teachers by the Princeton review so they can assess individual students' strengths and weaknesses. This information is systematically broken down and used to inform planning according to skills and sub-skills which require further development. Particular attention is given to improving the performance of English language learners. Teachers very effectively utilize appropriate strategies to provide standards-based instruction for these students. This methodology enforces intensive vocabulary instruction and a 'scaffolding' strategy works well to meet their specific needs.

The school is particularly proactive in conveying its high expectations of performance to students and parents. Apart from the effective use of standard channels for communicating these messages, such as assemblies and newsletters, the school makes a strong commitment to producing an informative and well-administered advisory program. The academy structure is used well to promote clear expectations to students. The effective dialogue which has been established between staff, students and parents provides useful information for teachers to adjust their instructional plans. School goals and plans, which are clearly articulated in meetings held by the administration and English and mathematics coaches effectively drive the work of the school. The open communication which exists within the faculty and with its local parent community facilitates the sharing of aims and aspirations.

**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 regularly reviews the curriculum to ensure that individual subjects are appropriately aligned with mandated requirements. A particular strength of the curriculum is the commitment to the humanities with a range of courses including music, dance, art

and drama. These effectively promote the creative learning experience and achievement of students. Innovations or adjustments to courses such as in robotics or extensions to the English language learner's programs are appropriately evaluated in relation to the school's goals and objectives. Teachers effectively use instructional programs based on the 'America's Choice School Design' and Teachers College methodologies. These programs enforce the use of data to drive instruction. In consequence, data is being used well within departments to identify areas where adjustments to curriculum content or the use of time are needed in order to accelerate student progress.

Teachers are held accountable for improving student outcomes. They are becoming more adept at using data to improve teaching and learning. However, there is a lack of consistency in utilizing this data to regularly and systematically differentiate lesson activities according to the specific needs of students. Staff work effectively in teams, share good practice and look for ways to help students learn better. Collaborative team teaching by special education and general education teachers is increasing the focus on helping all students to achieve through a tailoring of teaching to their needs. In this context, data is used well to track students' progress, for example through the literacy and the academic intervention services program.

The school uses its budget creatively to support instruction such as the acquisition of computer software (Success Maker) to promote effective instruction which has a clear impact on student progress. There is also a significant financial commitment to providing support programs at the end of the school day and a Saturday Academy for English language learners. Additional staff have been hired to promote team teaching to service the needs of the special education students. Stronger departmental teams are being built under the effective guidance of the assistant principals within the academy structure. Scheduling decisions also reflect students' requirements, such as a bilingual program with an emphasis on literacy development in Spanish.

The positive relationship between students and staff promotes a strong commitment to the school. Students enjoy being at the school and take an active part in lessons. They are enthusiastic learners who are willing and able to contribute their ideas and opinions. Students say they feel safe in the school. They value the support and guidance which are given to them by all members of staff. There is mutual respect between students and staff, and students are strongly encouraged to be architects of their own learning. Attendance is given a high priority. The commitment of the students to the school, and the rigorous procedures which are in place, are reflected in good attendance levels.

**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 principal has clearly specified criteria for the selection of staff. Prospective new staff are required to take a model lesson, show subject competence through discussion of an initiative they have undertaken and be competent in the handling of data. Implicit in this process are clear messages of promoting high expectations of performance and providing a challenge for students. Regular subject meetings enable issues about data analysis and the comparability of standards across classrooms to be discussed and analyzed. The autonomy given to these planning meetings helps build the capacity of staff to share information and make decisions to improve student performance. Professional development objectives are discussed and planned for during instructional cabinet meetings. The information for these meetings is provided from a needs assessment which

is completed by all staff. A particular strength of professional development activities is the work of the literacy and mathematics coaches who provide staff with consistent support and guidance on how to use data to improve instruction.

The principal has a detailed program for formal and informal observation of lessons which is designed to improve teaching and learning. An effective rubric for the departmental observations has been designed and this is shared with the assistant principal to achieve a consistency of approach within the respective academies. The outcomes of inter-class visitations, which are usually conducted within departments, are shared with other staff members to promote a community of learners. The principal has the respect and support of the school community. Parents are very appreciative of his openness and willingness to communicate with them and create opportunities for their involvement in the school. They value greatly his commitment and that of the staff to meeting the needs of their children. School management procedures are efficient and effective, and well known and understood throughout the school so that it runs very smoothly on a day-to-day basis.

The school has established productive links with outside agencies to enrich its instructional objectives. It has connections with the Urban Advantage, Project Green Reach, and the Brooklyn Centre for Urban Environment. These projects provide students with hands-on enquiry-based experiences which promote curiosity and the motivation to learn.

**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 proficient.**

The school effectively evaluates its long-term and short-term goals in relation to students' needs and progress. The instructional cabinet meets bimonthly to discuss instructional plans, review student work and analyze student data. The outcomes of one such review indicated the need to increase the amount of reading that takes place in mathematics lessons. The issue is being addressed by providing professional development to show teachers how they may incorporate mathematic literature into their lesson activities.

The principal conducts periodic reviews with the assistant principals and teachers to provide a measure of the effectiveness of the school's work. The regular reporting cycles provide effective evidence of students' progress and where interventions have been introduced or may need to be made to address issues. For example, the school is appropriately evaluating the outcomes of its commitment to collaborative team teaching in grade 6. The development of the collaborative team teaching program has required an adjustment of teaching strategies of staff to accommodate a range of student abilities. The use of data as a diagnostic tool to evaluate the progress of specific groups is being appropriately established through regular assessment. A master spreadsheet showing all students' reading levels, grades, and test scores is being compiled to assist in tracking students' progress throughout the year. The school has shown its ability to be adaptable to students' needs through its introduction of Q-TEL strategies for the teaching of English as a second language. Staff have a clear understanding of the goals and core purposes of the school which drive its work. The outcome of this is shown in the help staff give each other, the involvement with extended day activities and the extracurricular program. The school has demonstrated the capacity to promote the academic achievement of students and to enhance their learning experiences.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: Magnet School of Humanities (IS 347)</b>	∅	✓	+
<b>Quality Score</b>		X	

<b>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.</b>	∅	✓	+
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"> <li>• each student, classroom, grade level,</li> </ul>		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"> <li>• ethnic groups, English language learners, special education students*</li> </ul>		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"> <li>• all other categories of interest to the school*</li> </ul>		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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>		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.

<b>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.</b>	∅	✓	+
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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>			X

<b>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.</b>	∅	✓	+
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
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>			X
<b>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.</b>	∅	✓	+
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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>			X
<b>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.</b>	∅	✓	+
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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>		X	