



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

**"47" The American Sign Language and English
Secondary School**

**High School 047
225 East 23rd Street
New York
NY 10010**

Principal: Dr Martin Florsheim

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Reviewer: Jeff Plumb

Content of the report

Part 1: The School Context

Background information about the school

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

What the school needs to improve

Part 3: Main Findings

Overall evaluation

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

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

This school is a dual language school and is unique in that it serves both deaf and hearing students in the same classroom. The hearing students are codas: students who can hear, but who have deaf siblings or deaf parents in the same classroom. During instruction time, teachers use American Sign Language to sign and speak or only sign, using provided interpreters as required. The school provides for 210 students in Grades 6 through 12. The majority of students are Regents and Local Diploma students, with some students working towards an IEP Diploma.

Over 90 per cent of the students live outside the school neighborhood. The proportion of students from Hispanic and White backgrounds is higher than that found in similar schools and also the City average. About 40 per cent of students have special educational needs. The percentage of students with Title 1 eligibility is 62% which is lower than that found throughout the City. Attendance at 89% is above the City average.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal has a good knowledge and understanding of the barriers the deaf community experience in accessing learning and plans effectively to ensure that they are overcome.
- The principal provides effective leadership and empowers his staff to shape strategies that benefit deaf and hearing students including codas.
- The regular tracking of student progress over time and the interventions taken to raise achievement for each student.
- Collaborative planning in teams contributes to the realignment of the curriculum and instructional practice to meet students' needs.
- The baseline ASL assessment is robust and used effectively to determine suitable instructional programs.
- Good ASL instruction results in deaf students and codas developing as confident signers.
- The provision for students with additional needs is good.
- Professional development is effectively aligned to the curriculum mapping and instructional practice and so contributes to improving the quality of education students' experience.
- Transition arrangements for students moving on to college or entering employment are good.
- Data is gathered effectively and used well to raise the achievement of deaf students and codas.

What the school needs to improve

- Increase the involvement of parents and students in the process of setting achievement goals.
- Benchmark performance data by categories of gender and ethnicity and use it to set goals to raise achievement for these groups.
- Sharpen the monitoring of instructional practice and its impact on learning outcomes for students.
- Improve teachers' short-term lesson planning so that instructional practice focuses on specific learning outcomes for students in lessons.
- Review the success criteria on the Comprehensive Education Plan with a view to improving them as measures of student outcomes.
- Repair the floor of the gymnasium so that students can follow a physical education program, thus enriching their curriculum experience.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

Driven by a commitment to provide high quality education for deaf students and a vision to educate them alongside hearing students including codas the principal created a unique dual language school. The American Sign Language curriculum is formally accredited. This strategy ensures numbers are viable, deaf students become effective communicators using signing and codas are better equipped to communicate with their deaf siblings and parents. It is a unique and innovative model. The principal has carried the staff with him with his vision for the school and has an in depth knowledge and understanding of the needs of the deaf community and addresses the needs of each student in his school.

Recently introduced structures facilitate collaborative planning and the culture established encourages teachers to realign their curriculum and instructional practice on a regular basis to benefit students. However, as admitted by the school, its planning is much better than its documented plans! Its documented plans to achieve its goals identify success criteria, but they do not yet focus sharply enough on outcomes for students. The principal monitors instructional practice on a daily basis and gives constructive feedback to teachers on how they can improve, but he does not focus sharply enough on cause and effect. The model of cohort leaders demonstrating good teaching is good practice.

A wide range of data is gathered about student performance, but the school is at an early stage of using it to inform planning to accelerate learning. Yet because this is a small school the needs of every student are known. Sharper use of data could ensure that those needs are even better met than at present. The Comprehensive Education Plan focuses on raising standards in the City tests and improving ASL provision, but the priorities are too broad and the evaluative criteria are not sufficiently focused on student outcomes. Nonetheless there is evidence of significant success stories in this school. Transition is skillfully managed, and all students go on to college or meaningful employment when they leave school. Pull up strategies ensure that students meet their goals; the principal, assisted by a competent assistant principal, takes a direct interest in all students on tutoring programs. The vision to improve the breadth of the curriculum is thwarted; however; by poor accommodation and lack of visual resources which act as a barrier to enrichment. However, given the principal's determination, skill at networking, and high level interpersonal skills in building a team of staff who support his vision, the capacity for improvement is good. He has already demonstrated that decisive actions result in 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 gathers a wide range of external test and internal assessment data to provide teachers with a detailed picture of each student. The American Sign Language baseline data ensures that instructional programs are tailored to students needs and provides a good benchmark against which to monitor progress over time. Good analysis of achievement data for deaf students with additional needs results in realignment of the curriculum and instructional programs to maximize support to meet the needs of the individual. For example, based on data indicating that a deaf student had a very low level of functional language his instructional program was realigned and his writing skills were improved.

Based on an in depth analysis of data the school has identified that a significant proportion of deaf students find word solving problems very difficult. This is compounded, all too often, by the difficulty they experience in accessing the text because of difficulties with reading. Once a student is identified with these difficulties there is immediate intervention, and a tutoring program is put in place to pull him or her up to the required standard for the City tests.

Analysis of data about the progress of the two main populations (deaf students and codas) is robust and regular. It is used to realign the curriculum and instructional programs well. Some teachers are much more skilled at using this data to plan specific learning outcomes for students on a lesson by lesson basis than others. However, this does not consistently filter through to the planning of each class teacher. Data is not analyzed in respect of gender or ethnicity to establish the impact of the planned curriculum and instructional practice on boys and girls or the different ethnic groups represented in the school's population. There is no analysis of performance between different classes following the same curriculum or similar schools.

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 proficient.

Recently introduced organizational structures enable collaborative working between teachers, administrators and therapists. Cohorts of teachers (based on a faculty structure) meet regularly to review the curriculum mapping in their subjects. Based on how well students are doing they make robust recommendations to the cabinet about realignment of the curriculum and instructional programs for groups of students. For example, evidence indicated that the mathematics 'A' program was far too difficult for a certain group of students. Following collaborative discussion change to the program was effected and as a consequence student learning accelerated.

The setting of goals for students with additional needs and who struggle is a strong feature of this school. This is best illustrated by the example of a High School student who failed

the social studies Regents Test. He was interviewed by the principal and as a result he was provided with a tutoring program that focused on his specific difficulties. His progress over time was carefully monitored and an interim test was used to realign his instructional program once again. He went on to pass the test with flying colors and graduated successfully. This illustrates just how successful this school is in accelerating the learning of the individual.

The school communicates effectively with parents but does not sufficiently involve them in setting the learning goals for their children. Students are not sufficiently involved in setting their own learning goals. Too many students interviewed were not clear about precisely what they need to do to improve their work. Some teachers sit down with students and spell out to them what they need to do to get the points to improve their performance, but there is significant inconsistency in this practice.

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 proficient.

Flexible planning based on student progress data ensures that the mandated curriculum is aligned to meet students’ needs. Teachers discuss student performance weekly. Their concerns about students’ lack of progress are fed back to cabinet and decisive actions are taken to accelerate student learning and raise achievement. For example, the mathematics program was changed mid course for a whole group of students and as a consequence their learning was accelerated. Interventions using tutoring programs are put into effect and pull students up to the standard required in the tests.

As a dual language school all students follow an American Sign Language program. Instructional practice for this program is skillful. Students gain confidence in signing accurately and also make rapid gains in their understanding of sentence structure. This accelerates the learning for deaf students who are able to sustain deep and confident conversations in American Sign Language. It benefits codas as they become more effective communicators with their deaf siblings and parents. The principal’s vision to broaden the curriculum is impeded by poor accommodation. Physical education does not take place because of a hole in the gymnasium floor. Budget decisions and staff deployment are driven by student need as seen in the decision to provide collaborative team teaching to a mathematics class where students joined the school late in their school career. Overall, instructional practice is good and accelerates student learning, but it is inconsistent. Typically it is based on good subject knowledge, effective use of questions and signing. The instruction of American Sign Language is consistently good. However, pace and behavior management are not always consistent and deaf students say, ‘The quality of our interpreters varies’.

Students say that they feel safe in what they describe as, ‘a family school’. They have a trusted adult they can talk with about any difficulties they experience. The principal monitors absences to establish patterns and takes a personal interest in any student who does not attend school. As appropriate he ensures additional guidance counselor support is provided for students with an attendance problem.

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 proficient.

Teachers are recruited on the basis of their knowledge of the mandatory tests and their skill in using American Sign Language, or their willingness to learn. Teachers' skill in using data to raise achievement and plan specific learning outcomes for students is at an early stage of development, but the cohort leaders are becoming increasingly confident with this model.

Professional development involves all teachers in aligning the curriculum mapping and the instructional practice to the needs of the students. Current professional development links to the Comprehensive Education Plan. Workshops are used to demonstrate effective collaborative team teaching to support students who struggle with their work.

The principal visits classes daily and gives teachers regular feedback about the quality of their instruction. However, his monitoring of lessons does not focus sharply enough on the impact of instruction on learning outcomes for students. His monitoring of performance of groups though results in action to hold teachers to account. Cohort leaders frequently visit classes to model and share good practice, but funding constraints make it impossible to schedule a program for class teachers to visit each others classes. There is a program of structured meetings between teachers, administrators, paraprofessionals and therapists to revise plans and realign goals for students based on data about their performance. This is a strong feature of this school.

The principal is respected by all stakeholders in the school's community. They perceive him as flexible and skilful in managing change to ensure that the school runs smoothly. Networking and the strategic action to expand coda provision ensures that the capacity for improvement bodes well for the future. Partnerships with external counseling and social services agencies are effective and accelerate student 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 proficient.

This is a self-critical and reflective school with a strategic plan to ensure survival in the context of falling numbers. Self-evaluation is thorough, detailed and reveals very considerable knowledge and understanding of the needs of the deaf community. However, analysis of performance data does not yet focus sharply enough on cause and effect. The question, what is the positive or negative impact of instructional practice on student outcomes lesson by lesson and class by class is not posed sharply enough. But the school is beginning to think about how it can better use data to improve goal setting and raise achievement outcomes for students. It is certainly not afraid to change its improvement plans and instructional practices mid term to accelerate student achievement. There is clear evidence that it takes such action and that it benefits students.

The Comprehensive Education Plan involves all staff in the decision making process to raise student achievement, but it is at a very early stage of using assessment data to inform improvement in respect of student outcomes. The evaluative tools to measure the success of priorities on the plan are not sufficiently linked to learning outcomes for students in the classroom. For example, in respect of the ASL program it states that progress will be measured by examining the percentage of time all students are exposed to and use ASL and English separately, rather than the percentage that will become more accurate and confident signers and structure better sentences in their writing.

The cabinet is determined to hone its monitoring and revision of planning skills to improve standards for deaf and coda students. An excellent example of its commitment to flexibility is the manner in which planning for successful transition is managed for each student.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: "47" The American Sign Language and English Secondary School (47)	∅	✓	+
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	