



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

**The 47 American Sign Language and English
Lower School**

**Public School 347
225 East 23rd Street
New York
NY 10010**

Principal: Rebecca Marshall

Dates of review: January 11 - 12, 2007

Reviewer: Mary Ayala

Content of the report

Part 1: The School Context

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

The 47 American Sign Language and English Lower School PS 347 is a unique school in midtown Manhattan. It serves a student population of 184 students in grades pre-kindergarten through 5, 94% of whom are deaf or have deaf family members. Within this population, 6% are Asian, 40% are Hispanic, 23% are Black and 30% are White. Students come from all five boroughs. The school is a dual language model providing instruction in American Sign Language and English. Attendance for this school year is at 85%.

The majority of students have individual education plans for general education with related services. Consequently, the number of students identified as special education, general education, or English language learners has not yet been established with accuracy.

Prior to its opening as an independent school, the staff were part of a program operating independently but sharing space in a school with grades kindergarten through 12. The school opened officially as PS 347 in September 2005 but still shares building space with the secondary school.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal sets and models high expectations for learning on behalf of staff and students alike.
- The principal makes decisions about staffing, budgeting, and scheduling based on school goals for improved student performance.
- Staff developers play an active role in helping teachers assess students, align curriculum and acquire new teaching strategies on behalf of improved student outcomes.
- A culture of trust and collaboration supports an environment where teachers conference frequently about student needs, suggest interventions and share best practices.
- Teachers are encouraged to take risks with teaching and learning approaches on behalf of improved student outcomes.
- Related service providers take an active role in classrooms in order to address a variety of issues or barriers that might impede student progress.
- A variety of data is collected, analyzed and used to make decisions about what is taught and what methodologies best support improved student outcomes.
- Parents are kept informed about school activities, workshops and their children's progress.
- Professional development occurs primarily through staff engagement in action research projects and is directly related to school-specific challenges.
- Small class size and two teachers in each classroom create a highly personalized and individualized learning environment where accelerated learning can occur.

What the school needs to improve

- Continue the development of assessments for American Sign Language so that the school can demonstrate student progress over time.
- Continue the initiatives to provide assessment results to parents and family members through the use of visual and audio tools.
- Integrate the external information on students' achievement and education plans with internal assessments to create a comprehensive student profile record.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a well-developed school.

Students, staff and parents are uniform in their praise of this school. They appreciate the opportunities to learn and grow in a collaborative community where everyone's input is valued. They also appreciate the firm resolve of the principal to secure success for all students.

Students are grouped heterogeneously in classes that include deaf and hard of hearing students, hearing peers, Spanish-speaking students and students who have deaf family members. Almost all classrooms have two teachers, typically one hearing and one deaf. With small classes and two teachers in each classroom, students are well known to both teachers and service providers. Classrooms are well resourced, especially with print materials and the library is a hub of activity for teachers and students.

The school faces the challenge of how best to measure academic progress for students who use American Sign Language as their primary means of communication since no assessment tool for American Sign Language currently exists. Consequently, the school has identified a range of alternative assessments and is using a pilot program in the use of The Oral Language Acquisition Inventory and the Oracy Instructional Guide.

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 with some well-developed features.

With less than two full years in existence as an independent school, there is no record that captures the achievement performance of the school or its subgroups of students over time. Nor has it been possible to compare the school's work with that of similar schools, given its unique identity. However, a system that draws from a variety of sources in order to understand what each student knows and is able to do is already in place and is used to good effect to inform decision-making. The principal maintains a binder on each student that includes standardized test results, guided and independent reading levels, details of progress from reading and writing workshops, running records, all individual education plans, interventions and report cards. At the end of each school year, selected pieces of the student's work are added.

In classrooms, teachers maintain assessment binders with conference notes and running records while students document their work in writing portfolios and reading and mathematics journals. Informal assessments are used to determine what skills may need to be re-taught.

Staff have developed a number of ways to generate their own data to understand each student's strengths and challenges. A number of teachers have been trained to identify and remediate struggling early readers while the librarian has developed a variety of ways to assess student reading behaviors and interests. In addition, after much research,

selected teachers will be piloting the use of the Developmental Reading Assessment-second edition in the near future.

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.

Using the data gathered, school leaders and faculty collaboratively set goals for individual students, classes and the whole school. Although improving the abilities of all students to use American Sign Language and English is a major focus, improving the performance of deaf and hard of hearing students is of particular significance. The school is creating individual DVDs of students using American Sign Language to describe items in a dollhouse. This activity serves is used to measure language acquisition over time and to set realistic goals for each student. In addition, the school has identified its work with struggling students who aren’t formally classified as a key priority.

The staff add their expertise and perspective to goal setting and planning. External literacy and mathematics consultants are used strategically to ensure lesson quality, the on-going use of assessments and curriculum alignment. Related service providers work primarily in classes alongside the students providing additional insight into their progress.

High expectations are communicated more easily to students than to parents/caregivers. Students are clear about what they are expected to learn and as one student said, “We are expected to always get better.” The school is exploring ways to strengthen parental engagement through visual access using DVDs made in American Sign Language to communicate about issues such as school safety and helping students at home.

Improving student performance drives the activity of all members of this school community. All of the collaborative relationships that exist within the school and with external partners focus on equity and excellence for all students.

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 makes curriculum choices based on the needs of its unique population. In the early grades, the school has implemented a project-based program whereby students are taught to be researchers and thinkers as they learn reading and writing skills. For example, because the principal uses a service dog, one kindergarten class decided to do a study of dogs. Students selected the topic out of personal interest and pursued it with enthusiasm. This high level of engagement is evident throughout the school, with students actively involved in their own learning and supported well by teachers and related service providers.

Teachers are accountable for improving instruction and student outcomes. External literacy and mathematics consultants help them with lesson planning and in developing the curriculum to determine what gets taught. When assessment data indicates a problem,

adjustments are made so that better outcomes are secured. With small classes and two teachers, students receive a considerable amount of individual attention and differentiated instruction. Related service providers such as social workers and occupational therapists work alongside classroom teachers so that the students' academic and personal needs can be addressed quickly before they impede progress.

The principal uses staffing, the budget and the schedule to ensure improved student outcomes. Literacy is an especially strong focus and there are well stocked classroom libraries. The staff plan together and make good use of the time to share best practices and discuss individual students and overall class progress.

Students know that adults in this school care about them as individuals and they can identify staff to help them with an academic or personal problem.

Improving students' attendance remains a challenge for the school. For the first part of this school year, average daily attendance has been just over 85%. Good systems for checking and monitoring are in place in order to raise attendance further.

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 teachers feel highly supported in their efforts to identify quality assessment tools, analyze data and improve the teaching and learning for all students. When an opening occurs, the principal and a hiring committee look for teachers who have areas of expertise than can be shared and who see themselves as learners. Potential candidates are also observed as they interact with students. The principal and staff work together to identify barriers to progress and implement new approaches. Teachers feel they all have something to contribute to school improvement and find ways to share their expertise. For example, a number of staff has been trained in how to assess phonemic awareness and the comprehension skills of early, struggling readers.

Staff participate in a range of professional development opportunities to help them assess students' progress and make adjustments in their teaching and learning practices. External consultants provide in-class support for Balanced Literacy and mathematics and a partnership with the Center for Emotionally Responsive Practice at Bank Street College helps everyone focus on the whole child.

The principal visits classrooms on a regular basis and knows what kind of quality she is looking for as she observes. She routinely shares suggestions for improvement and also encourages teachers to observe each other. A number of teachers participate in action research projects that emerge from data analysis. Findings from the research are shared with all staff and frequently result in school-wide improvements.

Looking at data, planning and revising takes place in teams comprising grade level teachers, related service providers and literacy and mathematics consultants. As a result of the school's culture of trust, staff are comfortable holding their practice up for scrutiny and are adept at making changes that improve the learning environment.

The principal is regarded as the chief learner of the school and is credited with building a community of learners among all staff and students. With her guidance and the input of all staff, the school runs smoothly and responds to identified needs effectively and efficiently.

This school uses partnerships well to support their efforts. Volunteers are used as academic tutors to support various activities and to maintain the school's Museum and Archive. The NY Pops also provides a 'Symphony in our School Program' where students work alongside professional musicians to write their own lyrics and music.

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.

Staff use an array of diagnostic tools throughout the year to measure progress and identify barriers to learning. Learning teams of grade level teachers and related service providers, use information from periodic assessments to make decisions about "next steps" for students' learning. These teams analyze patterns in data and make necessary revisions to curriculum plans three times a year. These learning teams, in concert with their literacy and mathematics consultants, also monitor the curriculum to ensure rigor, consistency, and alignment with state standards. The students' progress in learning American Sign Language is measured three times a year. The leadership team analyzes whole school data in order to ensure that each student's progress is tracked and monitored.

Many of the students at this school have individualized education plans. These plans are monitored regularly and related service providers make appropriate adjustments to the levels of support they provide. The school has encountered difficulties with securing individual education plans and standardized testing data from other schools. Once these pieces are in place, comprehensive student profiles are developed and updated to show students' progress over time.

A very positive feature is the school's efforts to identify diagnostic tools that are most appropriate for their unique population of students. To that end, the teachers research, pilot, and adapt different ways of monitoring students' progress with language acquisition from a diversity of sources. They have undertaken a major initiative to pilot the use of a reliable testing tool to assess students' progress with American Sign Language. For some students, this is their first formal language. For others it is a second, third, or possibly fourth language. Monitoring this aspect of the school's work will provide a more complete picture of students' progress.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: The 47 American Sign Language and Lower English School (PS 347)	∅	✓	+
---	---	---	---

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.

** This data is not yet available for the school.

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