



**NYCDOE**

**Quality Review: Final Report**

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



# **Quality Review Report**

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

**Elementary School 347**

**225 East 23 Street  
New York  
NY 10010**

**Principal: Rebecca Marshall**

**Dates of review: February 14 - 15, 2008**

**Lead Reviewer: Georgie Beasley**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The 47 American Sign Language and English Lower School is an elementary school with 196 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 6. The school population comprises 22% Black, 42% Hispanic, 30% White, and 6% Asian students. The student body includes 96% English language learners and 64% special education students. Boys account for 45% of the students enrolled and girls account for 55%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 90%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 76% eligibility.

Public School 347 is a school for the deaf children of deaf adults, and hard of hearing and hearing students. The home language for nearly all students is American Sign Language. Students who attend come from all five New York boroughs. The school is expanding its grades and has grade 6 students for the first time this year. Over the next two years the school will become a pre-kindergarten through grade 8 school. The plans for the school's Centennial Celebration are well underway.

The school shares a building with a middle and high school which causes serious issues with student and adult safety.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The “no secrets” open approach to reflecting and evaluating the school’s work is building a strong collaborative team of staff, parents and students.
- All staff respond positively to the principal’s clear vision and direction and are dedicated to do their best to meet the needs of all students.
- The school’s climate is extremely positive due to strong relationships between adults and students.
- The curriculum includes a range of assessments that enables the school to monitor and check closely each student’s personal and academic achievement and progress.
- Small classes and group teaching ensures learning is differentiated well at all times.
- Teachers plan a varied range of learning opportunities and present learning in different ways to respond to and engage student interest.
- The Reggio Emilia principles are highly effective in nurturing the youngest students’ developmental learning.
- Professional development is very responsive to the school’s and individual teachers’ needs and effectively informs student and teacher goals.
- Parents value the welcome and good quality information they receive about their children’s progress and achievements.
- American Sign Language effectively builds student communication skills and ensures everyone is involved in class and school activities.

### What the school needs to improve

- Establish a system for assessing student communication skills so that the school is enabled to set objectively measurable goals for this very important aspect of its work.
- Share goals formally with students in suitably child-speak language so that they are fully engaged in knowing how to improve their work independently.
- Formalize monitoring systems to include interim benchmark goals that enable the school to measure more objectively its progress towards meeting its end-of-year goals.
- Re-establish at the earliest opportunity a wider range of enrichment activities outside the school day.

## Part 3: Main Findings

### **Progress made since the last review**

The school has made good progress in addressing the issues identified in the previous Quality Review report

### **Overall Evaluation**

#### **This school is well developed.**

The principal is a very clear about what effective learning looks like and, supported well by her assistant principal, has successfully shared this vision with staff. As a result, everyone takes responsibility for, and is dedicated to, ensuring every student succeeds. The “no secrets” philosophy that enables any staff member or parent to join any meeting builds a strong collaborative team approach to school improvement planning. Parents value their involvement and always feel welcome in school. The Reggio Emilia principles of learning are highly effective in nurturing students’ developmental learning in pre-kindergarten and to some extent in kindergarten. Students are developing high levels of independence and they make informed choices about their learning. In recent years, the school has successfully followed this developmental learning philosophy in grade 1. An interesting curriculum and varied range of instructional methods keep students engaged throughout lessons. Conducting all classes in both American Sign Language (ASL) and English ensures all students are included. Detailed assessments are used effectively to tailor all learning to each student’s specific needs.

Since the previous review, the school has started to develop a system for assessing student language development but so far has focused on oral language rather than the development of wider communication skills. The inquiry team monitors carefully students who show the potential in early grades of developing the language necessary to achieve at least level 3 in State tests. The impact of curriculum and instruction on student progress is tracked carefully to ensure these students are successfully reaching their goals by the end of grade 5. The quality of information about the school’s work and student progress has improved dramatically. DVDs include ASL sub-titles and appear on the school webpage so deaf parents can access the information. The wide range of assessment information and student work has been collated into a comprehensive student profile to give a very clear picture of each student’s achievement and progress.

### **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 the student’s progress over time.**

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

Every student has an individual profile with detailed data from numerous assessments including the usual range of standardized tests and in-school rubrics, running records and conference notes. In addition, the school has introduced new assessments in math

this year. Data from conversations with individual students helps the school to identify quickly those areas where some students are more successful than others and to inform instruction and curriculum planning. Every month, staff calibrate pieces of students' unaided writing to note improvement needs and successes. The school has worked hard to develop an assessment system for ASL. Video evidence shows visually student progress in communication. The school is now focused on building assessments around these skills as they are such an important aspect of students' success.

The school disaggregates assessment data every year for ethnic and gender groups. Small numbers in each grade and class mean data analysis is not always statistically valid. The school therefore monitors the individuals' progress closely to find reasons why some students perform better in some subjects than others, and to identify emerging trends in language acquisition. It looks with particular care at the progress of hearing and non-hearing students as groups to note any differential achievement and why. Considerable thought is placed on analyzing the achievements and progress of special education students, some of whom are deaf and some who are not, to ensure they are achieving the goals in their individual education plans. The school monitors closely the great majority of students who communicate with ASL at home, in order to identify potential and so enable them to acquire the sophisticated language they need to succeed in State tests. The school compares its performance with other dual language schools and with those who have deaf students in New York and nationwide. Ongoing training of staff in the use of assessment for learning strategies ensures the needs of all students are met through small group and individualized teaching.

**Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each student's learning.**

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

The school has high expectations of students and families and does not accept deafness as an excuse. Everyone is involved in goal setting. The key goal is for every student to make at least one year's progress with a school, grade and class overall average increase of 1.6 year's progress. This is to enable students to catch up from the mostly very low starting points when they start school. Careful checks ensure every student is on track to reach this goal every year and so ensure that by the end of grade 5, many have finally acquired the levels of vocabulary and language they need to achieve at least Level 3 on State tests. As a result of focused teaching, more students are achieving at Levels 2 and 3 each year. Individual student goals are detailed in personalized learning plans and are reviewed frequently, weekly if necessary. Teachers and students together assess learning against rubrics in all subjects. As a result, students know how well they are doing in all aspects of their work. Teachers keep a detailed record of each student's reading, writing and math achievement and share smaller-step goals informally during daily conversations. Formal systems for recording and planning next steps in math are new and, as yet, there are no formal systems in reading and writing. As a result, students are not absolutely clear about what they need to do to improve their learning.

Communication with parents is good. The school constantly seeks parents' views about its work and their children's progress. At every event, meeting and workshop, parents are greeted in English and ASL and so feel at ease talking about their children's

progress and learning needs. Every parent is clear about their children's goals and value what the school is doing to help them make such good progress.

**Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.**

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

The school ensures that curriculum assessments fit the specific needs of its students and continues to develop formal assessments for ASL. The ASL lab allows teachers to model for students how to sign certain words and phrases more accurately. Cameras fitted on computer screens capture each student's attempts while the teacher stands behind signing correctly for the student to watch later and improve their skills. Rubrics for every subject enable teachers to assess students' academic and personal achievement although not in all. The physical education rubric focuses on participation and perseverance rather than on the development of specific skills. Students take part in a varied range of activities during the school day including the arts, technology and physical education. Due to changes in transport arrangements, the previously wide range of after school activities are no longer available to students. Class scrapbooks show the range of field trips and additional enrichment activities offered during the school day, including celebrations of the students' cultural diversity.

The curriculum for pre-kindergarten is excellent. Students go outside everyday to enjoy a range of apparatus and activities including opportunities to climb, balance and move over, under and through climbing frames, to maneuver wheeled toys and develop ball, skipping and batting skills. This is a daily scheduled spot rather than students being given the choice whether to learn indoors or out. There is a missed opportunity for students to learn in two classrooms and the outdoors on rotation and so to vary access to other learning environments and share staff expertise.

Students enjoy coming to school. Lessons keep them fully engaged due to the range of games, resources and enquiry-based learning. Some teachers use role-play and drama highly effectively to enliven learning and reinforce the understanding of new concepts, reading strategies and enquiry skills. Students say, "We only get bored when it rains or snows and we cannot go outside for recess." Two bilingual teachers in each small class ensure learning always takes place individually or in small groups and so is differentiated well. Due to the appointment of suitably trained staff, the school has introduced the "What's Up?" program to give students the opportunity to talk with an adult about personal issues. The opportunity to sign thoughts and feelings is a new experience for many students and is often the first time in their lives that they have been able to talk about personal issues. Students say "all staff take time to listen". Attendance is improving because of student enjoyment and the school's "strong advice to parents" to send their children everyday and to contact the school when their child is absent.

**Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.**

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

The school is constantly raising money to send staff to Italy so they can learn about Reggio Emilia learning philosophy from first hand. On return, staff share with colleagues what they have learned about the use of resources, the creation of effective learning environments and the variety of ways to facilitate child-initiated learning. Team teaching, intervisitations and regular collaborative planning meetings ensure new practices and ideas are spread effectively. New teachers who are ready and able to embrace the school's vision are brought into the fold quickly due to the considerable support they receive from administration and colleagues. All staff work extremely well together to make sure students receive the services they need to succeed.

Well-established systems ensure the school runs smoothly. Student behavior and attitudes are excellent. Classrooms are conducive to learning because relationships are strong and everyone gets along extremely well. The same cannot be said of hallways. Frequent incidents involving students from other schools on site mean this school's students feel intimidated and not totally safe without adult presence. This limits opportunities to move around the building independently and takes principal away from spending even more time in classes. Strong focus is given to improving the quality of student experiences in classes. Good support from outside consultants has resulted in improvements in the quality of curriculum and teaching and so student learning in reading, writing and math. The school plays an important role for families and deaf people in the community, being the first port of call to learn about local and national issues, such as health, social and recreational services. The "Alumni" is on site and has developed very good resources about the school's history.

**Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.**

**This area of the school's work is proficient.**

The principal's very clear vision for achieving student success is shared at every opportunity. She and the assistant principal effectively share full responsibility for overseeing the monitoring and review of aspects of the school's work. There are established systems and procedures that support this vision effectively. The school spends a considerable amount of time planning for each student's academic and personal needs. Teachers meet in teams at the end of the day, involving support staff, if necessary, to discuss each student's daily achievements and to plan the next day's learning. The focus is not only what but how effective learning should take place.

School goals focus on constantly raising the achievement and accelerating the progress of all students. Staff teams monitor class, grade and individual goals to ensure it meets with success. This highly collaborative approach ensures everyone takes responsibility for every student's specific needs. The school realized that it spent considerable amounts of time planning for future success and not enough time reflecting on what and why current practices and systems were or were not being fully effective. Whole-school, class and grade goals do not have formalized interim goals against which to measure success objectively. In response, the school has built in more formal opportunities for reflecting on the impact of its programs and practices on student learning this year. This is leading to refinements being made during the year to check whether the school is on track to reach its end-of-year goals.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

**SCHOOL NAME: The 47 American Sign Language and English Lower School**

**Quality Score**

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

To what extent do school leaders and faculty provide . . .	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
1.1 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of each student, classroom, grade level?				X	
1.2 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of special education students?				X	
1.3 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of English language learners?				X	
1.4 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of ethnic groups, gender groups and all other categories of interest to the school?				X	
1.5 a measurement of performance and progress based on the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grades and subject areas?				X	
1.6 a measurement of performance and progress based on comparisons with similar schools?				X	
1.7 training, management systems and structures that support teachers in the use of school data to inform planning and instruction and to track the progress of students?				X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>				X	

**Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each student's learning.**

To what extent do school leaders and faculty . . .	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
2.1 engage in collaborative processes to set rigorous, objectively measurable goals for improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals?				X	
2.2 focus 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 identify and improve the performance and progress of those students in greatest need of improvement?				X	
2.4 share whole school goals with all members of the school community to rigorously improve the performance and progress of students?				X	
2.5 convey consistently high expectations to students and their parents/caregivers?				X	
2.6 regularly provide students and their parents/caregivers with information about the goals set for each student, and about each student's progress and performance, and how they can improve?			X		
2.7 invite and enable parents/caregivers to provide useful information to teachers and the school about the learning needs and capacities of their children?				X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>				X	

**Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.**

To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
3.1 select core curricular approaches that facilitate and provide meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and focus on raising the achievement of students?				X	
3.2 provide a broad and engaging curriculum, including the arts, to enhance learning both within and outside the school day?			X		
3.3 hold teachers accountable for the progress and learning of the students in their charge, for making instruction interesting and compelling, and for creating a positive safe and inclusive learning environment?				X	
3.4 ensure that teachers use school, class and student data to plan for and provide differentiated instruction that meets the specific needs of all the students in their charge?				X	
3.5 make budgeting, staffing and scheduling decisions strategically, based on data, to meet the school's academic goals for all students?				X	
3.6 ensure that there is an environment of mutual trust and respect between all staff and students to support personal and academic development?				X	
3.7 ensure that there are effective and consistently applied procedures to encourage and monitor student attendance and tardiness?			X		
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>				X	

<b>Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school’s collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.</b>					
<b>To what extent does the school . . .</b>	<b>Δ</b>	<b>➤</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</b>	<b>◇</b>
4.1 use frequent observations of classroom teaching by the principal and other available information to develop a differentiated strategy for improving the quality of each teacher’s instruction?				X	
4.2 make professional development decisions strategically, based on data, to help meet the improvement goals of students and teachers?					X
4.3 provide frequent opportunities for teachers to observe each other’s classroom instruction and to meet together in teams to plan, share effective practices, and evaluate one another’s instruction in an open and reflective professional environment?				X	
4.4 develop effective procedures for the induction and support of teachers who are new to the profession or the school?				X	
4.5 align youth development, guidance/advising and other student support services around stated academic and personal development goals?					X
4.6 consistently implement clear procedures that enable the school to run smoothly and encourage effective student learning, and effectively address discipline related incidents?				X	
4.7 create effective partnerships with outside entities that support the academic and personal growth of the students?				X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>					X

<b>Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student’s progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.</b>					
<b>To what extent do . . .</b>	<b>Δ</b>	<b>➤</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</b>	<b>◇</b>
5.1 the school’s plans for improving student outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?			X		
5.2 the school’s plans for improving teacher outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?			X		
5.3 teachers and faculty use periodic assessments and other diagnostic tools to measure the effectiveness of plans and interventions for individual and groups of students in key areas?				X	
5.4 teachers and faculty use the information generated by periodic assessments and other progress measures and comparisons to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals?				X	
5.5 school leaders track the outcomes of periodic assessments and other diagnostic measures and use the results to makes strategic decisions to modify practices to improve student outcomes?				X	
5.6 school leaders and staff use each plan’s interim and final outcomes to drive the next stage of goal setting and improvement planning?			X		
5.7 the principal and school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to effect change?				X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>					X

◇	<b>Outstanding</b>
+	<b>Well Developed</b>
✓	<b>Proficient</b>
➤	<b>Underdeveloped with Proficient Features</b>
Δ	<b>Underdeveloped</b>