

Quality Review Report 2008-2009

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

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

Principal: Watfa Shama

**Dates of review: May 12 – 13, 2009
Lead Reviewer: Geri Taylor-Brown**

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

47 The American Sign Language and English Secondary School is a middle-high school with 211 students from grade 7 through grade 12. The school population comprises 37% Black, 47% Hispanic, 13% White, and 3% Asian students. The student body includes 2% English language learners and 25% special education students. Boys account for 30% of the students enrolled and girls account for 70%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 88.6%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 67% eligibility. The new school principal was assigned in September.

Overall Evaluation

This school is underdeveloped with proficient features.

47 The American Sign Language and English Secondary School is a middle-high school that is going through a miraculous transition. As the school phases out its middle school grades to become exclusively a high school, there have been numerous changes. The new school principal has begun several initiatives that have really taken the school “by storm” and transition it into a place where students feel safe and teachers have a revived and renewed energy for teaching. The principal is a dedicated and passionate leader who is strategically working for and with her students, staff and parents to provide the best education for students. Evidence of her success in this venture came about as the school showed a drastic reduction in incidents, from an annual number of 222 incidents to the current 11.

The school has begun a turnaround, adopting solid practices beginning with the gathering, analyzing and usage of student data in the areas of English, math and social studies. This thoughtful work emanates from the high energy and high interest teachers show in explaining and exhibiting the strategies they learn during professional development. There is an electric eagerness also from the students. One student stated why their school is special, “Because you can interact with deaf, hearing and hard of hearing students all in the same class.” This was also a school improvement noted by parents. The school is struggling with finding the right outreach mechanism or venue that will result in improved parental involvement. Low parental responses on the Learning Environment Survey continue to plague the school. However, the parents who have a longstanding involvement with the school are assured that their children are in a learning environment that is safe and nurturing. The school is currently working hard to develop a solid parent outreach and response.

The school has not yet achieved consistency in the practice of student goal setting. While everyone has a clear understanding of the larger school goals, translating this clarity to the process on a student level has not been reached. Coupled with this is the challenge the school faces to establish timeframes for monitoring the step-by-step student progress.

While teacher enthusiasm is high for continued growth, links between student achievement and teacher preparedness have not yet been clearly established. English and math teachers have developed some consistency in utilizing differentiated instruction. While there are promising developments of differentiation in social studies, there is still considerable work that remains to be done in this area.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal provides inspirational and positive leadership keeping all school stakeholders focused on the goal of continually improving academic achievement for all students.
- The school collects a wide range of student data across all subject areas and does a good job of analyzing and using student data in the areas of English, math and social studies.
- Teachers are excited about their opportunities to learn and develop as reflective professionals working collaboratively toward improving student learning.
- Students are eager to learn in this inclusive environment where students with varying abilities and gifts are offered the same learning opportunities in the same classes.
- Parents are assured that the school is a safe learning environment for their children and they appreciate the nurturing and support services that the school gives in developing the whole child.

What the school needs to improve

- Extend parent outreach and communications to garner parental involvement in both school-wide ventures, and as true partners in their child's education.
- Establish deeper goal setting practices school-wide that continue to include connections to the larger school goals and also incorporate individual student learning goals that are clearly understood by students and their parents.
- Expand school structures that provide checkpoints for incrementally monitoring student progress and making the appropriate instructional adjustments to ensure student success.
- Ensure that lessons are differentiated to provide all students with varied instructional methods that are directly linked to their learning needs.
- Continue to develop individualized teacher growth plans that show direct connections between teacher improvement and student improvement.

Part 3: Main Findings

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

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do and to monitor the student's progress over time.

This area of the school's work is underdeveloped with proficient features.

All teachers in this revived school are solidly involved in the process of data collection and examination. Their access to a wide range of data sources is a point of pride for many. Recent training in electronically accessing student transcripts, checking student attendance and understanding the purpose and functions of ARIS have empowered teachers to do first-hand data checks. This information has also served as a springboard for accountable talk conversations during teacher meetings. Most notably, the teachers of English, math and social studies are leading the way as they forge ahead in using this student data to design and redesign class lessons. For example, one English teacher develops reading and writing workshop lessons based on her needs analysis of student scores. However, this good practice is not yet firmly embedded throughout the school.

The school appropriately identified a sub-group of students who were underperforming in Regents exams. However, intervention strategies are primarily focused on changing behavior. There has been a slight impact on student behavior, but no change in student achievement has occurred.

The school provides parents with information about their child through the dissemination of report cards six times a year and a progress report four times a year. Parents are extremely appreciative of the services their children receive from the school. They support the efforts of the new principal and have noted some changes since her arrival. One parent stated, "It's a work in progress. Things are getting better." However, increasing parental involvement is a challenge. Parents respond to calls and letters from the school when issues involve their own child. However, parent attendance to school-wide events, such as the Parent Teachers Association meeting, is still extremely low.

School leaders have made great strides in identifying trends in student data and developing plans and systems that help support student learning. Noting the low passing rate on the Global Studies exam, a school goal for this year is to increase the percentage of students who pass this exam. The school implemented five intervention strategies, including the purchase of new resources and tutoring, to improve student learning. While classroom data has indicated progress, staff anxiously await the test results this June.

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 underdeveloped with proficient features.

The principal has set very high expectations for all stakeholders. This message resonates throughout the school as students and staff applaud her leadership for changes which have directly impacted the morale of children and adults. Consistent and on-time class attendance and high academic achievement are the focus. All stakeholders are aware of the school-wide goals of an increased graduation rate, increased passing on social studies Regents exams and increased professional learning.

This good work has begun a movement of change in the school. However, the strategy of goal setting is not yet sufficiently developed. Teachers and students have begun to utilize a goal-setting form which offers direction in this process. All students are clearly aware of the greater goal of graduation from high school. All teachers are clearly aware of class goals to increase passing percentage rates. However, the goal setting practice is not precise in helping students clearly understand their next learning steps as they move towards achieving their long-term goals.

The school’s efforts to establish firm timeframes for reaching goals is also, “a work in progress”, as stated by the principal. The school established Grade Level Leadership Teams this year. These teams meet regularly and have begun a work that is moving the school closer to implementing plans that connect their practice of data collection to using this data to create learning goals for all students. This initial work shows promise of the establishment of a good practice in this area.

School leaders worked diligently to include multiple stakeholders in the development of the Comprehensive Educational Plan. However, participation by all stakeholders was not fully realized. Participation was ancillary. However, all stakeholders are currently aware of the annual goals, their connection to the Comprehensive Educational Plan and their alignment with the Principal’s Performance Review goals.

Quality Statement 3 – Develop Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: The school uses rigorous curricula, teaching and organizational decision making to engage students and faculty in meeting all students’ learning goals.

This area of the school’s work is proficient.

The school has established a curriculum which is aligned with the State standards across all core subjects. Course offerings are varied and include the arts and College Now courses for students to accumulate college credit. The school made an excellent decision recently to develop inclusion classes which place deaf and hearing students in the same learning environment. Students and parents applaud the school’s decision to provide a highly rigorous curriculum for all students. One student stated, “Last year I felt as though we were dummies. This year is way better.” Parents echoed this sentiment, “Both hearing and hearing impaired students in the same class. No one feels left out or alone.” Class attendance records and teacher exam data are showing increased student achievement with this new design. Additionally, the school is part of the national movement to establish an effective and workable American Sign Language curriculum.

In concert with this upgraded curriculum, teachers are working hard to upgrade the delivery of instruction. There are some strong pockets of teaching where differentiated instruction is beginning to show signs of consistency of usage. However, this practice is sparse and has not yet fully impacted teaching throughout the school.

The principal's fiscal shrewdness is the solid support for the innovative changes that have taken place in the school this year. Even with a lean budget she has been able to maintain small class size, equip a weight room, provide classroom libraries in English, math and social studies classrooms, and establish course offerings in concert with the Children's Museum of Manhattan. The impact of these interventions is beginning to be evident as students accumulate credit towards graduation at an increased rate.

There is a warm climate of mutual trust and respect between students and adults. Parents referred to the school as "a home away from home" for their children. Teachers spoke about the "deep cultural change with the change of principal." Students are confident that they are heard as their challenges and issues are expediently resolved.

Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school's goals for accelerating student learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The school has done a very good job in developing and implementing a school-wide inquiry process movement. The school has five inquiry teams. These committed teams use their targeted student groups as examples for the work they extend to other students in their classes. Using lessons learned from last year as a starting point, these teams immediately implemented formal meeting and working protocols, committed to working with the whole child, learned how to read student transcripts using the HSST system, and promptly involved parents. Positive results are seen as inquiry process teachers lead the school in integrating information from this student data into their lesson plans.

This good practice of using data to inform instruction mirrors the school's efforts to provide individualized professional development for all teachers. The journey to this point began with generalized professional development in the fall in the form of book studies. Present professional development practices involve individual written plans, conferencing with the principal and assistant principals, daily informal observations, scheduled formal observations and usage of the Teachers' Center for Professional Development. The school has made good and steady movement in implementing personalized professional development. Teachers are excited about growing professionally. They are eager to participate in both in-school and off-site professional development events. The school has begun to facilitate the thinking around consistently connecting teacher skills improvement with increased student achievement.

The school has a guidance plan which rightly includes all staff in educating the whole child. The recent hiring of a deaf guidance counselor provides deaf students with direct contact to support personnel without having to use an interpreter. Students say that their school is "a forgiving school." They specifically noted that staff are willing to help them "work through" their problems. This sentiment is echoed by parents. Parents are confident that their children receive the academic and social nurturing from caring adults. This has moved some parents to maintain their child's attendance at 47 even though the travel time takes more than one hour. All stakeholders are proud of the school's reduction in student incidents. One student proudly stated, "We are changing how people see us."

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and 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 underdeveloped with proficient features.

The principal is clearly focused on continual student improvement. She has done well in rallying the full support of students, staff and parents in this endeavor. The recent improvements that she has led serve as a platform for the continued trust by all stakeholders. She has effectively moved staff to realize the importance of student data as they regularly examine and analyze results on State exams, as well as their individual class data. The staff are grounded in the practice of looking through multiple data sources to see possible correlations between student academic progress and behavioral indicators such as attendance, lateness, or even untoward behavior. All stakeholders are keenly aware of the annual school goals and the school's long-term goals, which they call "Marathon Goals." All staff are committed to move the teaching and learning in this school to new heights. One teacher states, "All we needed as staff was the student centered reasons for changing." The principal has done well in providing this evidence.

The school has not sufficiently embedded the practice of establishing and using clear timeframes and benchmarks for examining data. The principal has already begun conversations with staff, students and parents about a summer retreat to develop clear processes for setting student goals and establishing a solid cycle for the thorough review of data to plan for increased student achievement. There is a strong commitment amongst this school community to continually strive for improvement. One student states, "You not only get a good education here, but you have a new social life."

School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

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|--|---|----------|----------|---|
| School name: 47 The American Sign Language and English Secondary School | Δ | ➤ | ✓ | + |
| Overall QR Score | | X | | |
| Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do, and to monitor the student’s progress over time. | | | | |
| <i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty regularly...</i> | | | | |
| | Δ | ➤ | ✓ | + |
| 1.1 collect and analyze actionable information, including assessment results and attendance data, to provide a complete view of the learning outcomes and needs of individual students and groupings of students? | | | X | |
| 1.2 focus analysis on the learning outcomes and needs of all sub-groups of students? | | X | | |
| 1.3 engage in an open exchange of information with students and families about students’ learning needs and outcomes, including assessment results and attendance data? | | X | | |
| 1.4 design or adapt tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize and analyze student performance, identify trends and inform instructional and organizational decisions, and to enable students and their families to assess and track each student’s progress? | | | X | |
| Overall score for Quality Statement 1 | | 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. | | | | |
| <i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty...</i> | | | | |
| | Δ | ➤ | ✓ | + |
| 2.1 use collaborative and data-informed processes to set measurable, actionable and differentiated learning goals in core subjects for individual students and groupings of students and develop differentiated plans and timeframes for reaching these goals? | | X | | |
| 2.2 use collaborative and data-informed processes to develop the school’s Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP)? | | X | | |
| 2.3 ensure that the achievement of learning goals, and the implementation of plans and timeframes for reaching these goals, is the central focus of school leaders, faculty, students and families? | | X | | |
| 2.4 communicate high expectations to all students and families, and involve students in developing their learning goals and plans and in taking their next learning steps? | | | X | |
| Overall score for Quality Statement 2 | | X | | |

DEFINITIONS

“**Analyze**” or “**analysis**” includes, but is not limited to, comparisons of:

- the current and past outcomes of . . . individual students, administrative groupings and sub-groups of students and the school itself in core subjects;
- the outcomes of different classrooms and sub-groups in the same grades and core subjects; and
- the school’s Progress Report and other outcomes to those of peer/other schools

“**Assessment results**” include student outcomes on summative assessments (e.g., state ELA, math, science and social studies tests, NYSESLAT, Regents Exams, and Performance Based Assessment Tasks) and formative assessments aligned to the school’s curriculum (including Periodic, DYQ, and teacher-developed Classroom Assessments).

“**Core subjects**” are ELA, math, science, social studies/history, the arts, foreign language, and physical education/health.

“**Data-informed processes**” include analysis of Progress Report, Quality Review, Learning Environment Survey, Inquiry Team findings, assessment results and attendance data

“**Groupings of students**” include classrooms, grade levels and high school cohorts.

“**Organizational decisions or strategies**” refer to a school’s use of budget and resources, staffing, planning, scheduling, grade structure, departments and teacher teams and other aspects of the school’s structure and organization that can affect student outcomes.

“**Sub-groups of students**” include special education students, English Language Learners, the other NCLB sub-groups, boys, girls, and other groups significant to the school.

| Quality Statement 3 – Develop Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: The school uses rigorous curricula, teaching and organizational decision making to engage students and faculty in meeting all students’ learning goals. | | | | | | | |
|--|-----------------------|---|--|---|-------------------|---|-----------------------|
| <i>To what extent do ...</i> | △ | ➤ | ✓ | + | | | |
| 3.1 school leaders and faculty deliver challenging and engaging curricula in core subjects, including the arts, that are aligned to state standards? | | | X | | | | |
| 3.2 teachers plan and teach lessons that are differentiated to meet the needs of individual students and student groupings and are designed to enable all students to reach their learning goals? | | X | | | | | |
| 3.3 school leaders make strategic organizational decisions to support a coherent and rigorous instructional approach that enables students to reach their learning goals? | | | X | | | | |
| 3.4 school leaders maintain a culture of mutual trust and respect and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults? | | | X | | | | |
| Overall score for Quality Statement 3 | | | X | | | | |
| Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals for accelerating student learning. | | | | | | | |
| <i>To what extent do school leaders...</i> | △ | ➤ | ✓ | + | | | |
| 4.1 use their own observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of student outcomes to implement an explicit, differentiated strategy to improve each teacher’s instruction, with a special focus on new teachers? | | | X | | | | |
| 4.2 encourage teachers to take part in Inquiry Teams and other structured professional collaborations (informed by the examination of student work, assessment outcomes and their own peer observations) and share in the instructional leadership of the school with the goal of improved student learning? | | | | X | | | |
| 4.3 provide professional development that encourages teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve student outcomes? | | | X | | | | |
| 4.4 utilize youth development, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students? | | | X | | | | |
| Overall score for Quality Statement 4 | | | X | | | | |
| Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and evaluating each student’s progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning. | | | | | | | |
| <i>To what extent do...</i> | △ | ➤ | ✓ | + | | | |
| 5.1 the school’s plans for improving student outcomes and its strategies for improving each teacher’s instructional practices include measurable interim goals and suitable time frames for evaluating success and making adjustments during the year? | | X | | | | | |
| 5.2 school leaders and faculty use interim checkpoints and data to inform lessons, improve curriculum, differentiate instruction and revise student learning plans throughout the year? | | X | | | | | |
| 5.3 school leaders use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of and modify organizational decisions, structured professional collaborations and teacher improvement strategies? | | | X | | | | |
| 5.4 school leaders and the school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to support academic, personal and professional growth? | | | | X | | | |
| Overall score for Quality Statement 5 | | X | | | | | |
| Quality Review Scoring Key | | | | | | | |
| △ | Underdeveloped | ➤ | Underdeveloped with Proficient Features | ✓ | Proficient | + | Well Developed |