

# **Quality Review Report**

## **2009-2010**

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

**High School 47  
225 East 23<sup>rd</sup> Street  
New York  
NY 10010**

**Principal: Watfa Shama**

**Dates of review: April 22 – 23, 2010**

**Lead Reviewer: Elaine Gorman**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

47 The American Sign Language and English Secondary School is a high school with 159 students enrolled from grade 8 through grade 12. It serves deaf and hearing students in the same classes. The school population comprises 31% Black, 56% Hispanic, 9% White and 4% Asian students. The student body includes 9% English language learners and 30% special education students. Boys account for 38% of the students enrolled and girls account for 62%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2008 - 2009 was 91.6%.

### Overall Evaluation

#### This school is proficient.

47 The American Sign Language and English Secondary School has a passionate principal, who is thoughtful in planning for improvement. The school will complete its grade reconfiguration this year, serving only high school students from the beginning of the 2010-11 school year. The instructional team and caring staff regularly collaborate, resulting in incremental progress toward higher graduation rates and Regents scores for students. With most safety concerns resolved, the school is in a position to realize its unique binding belief “that every student has the right to learn in an equal and barrier-free environment where they and their families can receive on-going language and communication support.” This includes access to American Sign Language and deaf culture for the school’s entire population.

The school continues to incorporate the recommendations from last year’s Quality Review and makes instructional and organizational modifications informed by accountability measures. However, the school has not yet fully analyzed the root causes for either its improving areas of student performance or those which lag behind. Goal setting occurs by school, team, classroom, teacher and student, with clear links across all areas of the schools. However, goal setting still lacks precise short-term and long-term measures for student expectations at graduation and beyond. Substantive professional development and good teacher team collaborations are resulting in the identification and emerging implementation of instructional strategies. Administrative and peer feedback support improvements in the classroom. As many efforts are new or newly revised, there remains a high degree of uneven practice and insufficient rigor in some classrooms.

Parents and students express appreciation for the caring staff that both push and support them. They feel they have a voice in school decisions. There are good communications with the school through web-based applications, phone, email, and regular mail. The school is still working to engage more parents in their children’s education and now provides a weekly series of workshops. External partnerships also support parents.

The school has structures in place to regularly monitor the implementation of recent action plans but have not yet refined interim measures or fully embedded the findings of their work into instructional practice.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal and assistant principal provide substantive and actionable feedback to staff that is resulting in a common instructional vision and a coherent school culture.
  - The principal and assistant principal make frequent classroom visits that result in observation reports with specific recommendations for the improvement of instruction. Teachers write personal and professional goals aligned to school goals. Pre- and post-observation conferences reference and reflect on these written goals in order to improve instruction.
  - The director of the United Federation of Teachers (UFT) Teacher Center provides scaffolded support to new teachers by co-planning lessons, modeling strategies, and providing feedback on teacher practice. School and teacher goals inform the coaching of teachers, with improvement of practice found in mid- and end-of-year reflections and evaluations.
- The self-reflective staff collaborate frequently to analyze summative and interim data, examine student work, plan together and visit classrooms to share ideas and best practice, through a desire to improve student outcomes.
  - Teacher team leaders meet regularly with administrators and the director of the UFT Teacher Center. Through these discussions, the core team collaborates on school goals and team processes, allowing teacher leaders to make a direct input into school decisions. This is resulting in team involvement without limiting team autonomy.
  - Teacher teams include the vast majority of the staff and meet twice a week. Although some mid-course restructuring of teams delayed the first cycle of interventions, the English and social studies teams have agreed upon targeted students and strategies to improve essay writing. Deepening collaborations are having a positive impact on teacher practice and on the proficiency of student writing as measured by rubrics.
- The school is a safe place, where students appreciate the support they receive for their personal and academic development from caring staff and through well-selected partnerships.
  - The school is providing professional development through *Kidz Talk: Developing the Whole Child*, and is using a mentor text, *Lost at School*. These approaches have moved the school to a lower-risk environment that the parents and students rank as safe on the Learning Environment Survey.
  - All staff have bi-weekly classes to improve instructional practices in American Sign Language, which is resulting in more students receiving direct instruction and engaging students more deeply in their learning.
- School leaders and faculty make informed and effective organizational decisions across all areas of the school to further continuous improvements in adult and student learning.

- The school has made an intentional financial decision to have smaller classes, supported by teachers and interpreters, to serve more effectively the students who need visual access to sign language. The physical positioning of clusters of desks also facilitates group work. This is leading to greater ownership by students of their learning and educational progress.
- The investment in smaller classes, the UFT Teacher Center and summer professional development means that the school brings in external support to supplement the curriculum with art and music. Additionally, the librarian teaches a “reading buddies” program where students illustrate children’s books for art credits and read to elementary school students, supporting students’ own literacy goals.
- The school community collaborates to identify focused goals to set high expectations for short-term and long-term student learning outcomes. These thread through all documents and inform school practices.
  - The school community collectively agrees that the school’s long-term goal is to have all students graduate with a broad perspective on language and deaf culture and be ready for college. A short-term goal of increasing the graduation rate from 45% to 55%, and specific action plans to achieve this, hold the administration, teachers and students accountable for improvement.
  - Parents and students articulate that the school expects students to achieve at least 75% in courses and on Regents examinations. Academic and personal goals for students in each class and periodic transcript reviews assure that students are aware of their progress towards four-year graduation.
- Parents have valuable opportunities to be involved in their children’s learning and to monitor their progress through regular and open communication with the school administration and staff.
  - Although a small number of parents responded to the Learning Environment Survey, 92% indicated that the school keeps them informed about their child’s progress. Community organizations, such as LearnNYC and Per Scholas help to increase parent engagement in their children’s education by providing low-cost computers and training. This means they can access school reports, including the ARIS Parent Link.
  - Parent leaders indicated that weekly family workshops promote involvement and leadership of families in school activities and school decisions.

### **What the school needs to improve**

- Refine school, class, and student goals to include precise short-term and long-term outcomes to support monitoring of progress towards student learning outcomes, furthering ownership and accountability by adults and students.
  - Although there is a purposeful connection of goals written in all documents, the school has yet to take full advantage of the student learning outcomes from Gallaudet College that are posted throughout the building to define what competencies students should possess by graduation.

- Currently the school is highly focused on improving outcomes on accountability measures, for which there is ownership by the majority of the school community. Insufficient accountability for college and career readiness blunts the development of student independence.
- Enhance the curriculum and deepen differentiation of instruction so that all lessons offer suitable challenge for each student and effective questioning elicits higher-order thinking, resulting in the production of high quality work.
  - While developing curriculum maps offer a framework from which to build, the vast majority do not detail the overarching ideas, concepts and skills, for students to demonstrate proficiency and mastery. The school has not yet linked concept and skill development consistently across grades or content. As a result, instruction and student products in some classrooms remain at too low a level.
  - Classrooms reflect consistent structures, which include the use of classroom and student goals and the increasing use of rubrics. Modeling of work for students, at times verbally and in sign language, and intentional student groupings are accepted practices. However, goals in many classrooms and some rubrics lack the necessary rigor, which is resulting in highly uneven levels of student work.
- Build on current data systems to enable teachers, administrators, parents and students to analyze the impact of interventions and track student progress toward their achievement goals, across content areas and grades.
  - Administrators and teachers use ARIS, transcript reviews, student work, and conferencing to identify students' performance. The school is beginning to analyze trends in student performance. This work is emerging but is not yet systemized, and it remains inconsistent.
  - The school is working hard to improve student outcomes, and specifically very low graduation rates. The English language arts and social studies teachers are currently focusing on essay writing with evidence. They implement strategies and use student work to measure progress against a rubric. However, without more precise analysis and specific short-term and long-term plans, the school cannot draw a direct link between interventions and progress at the school, classroom, or student level.
- Deepen the connection between the developing curriculum and the expanded work of the inquiry team to evaluate the coherence between what is taught and how it is taught and its impact on learning.
  - Although team meetings offer a strong structure, the school does not yet have a robust plan for teams to work on revising curricula and unit plans, based on the results from interim assessments and inquiry work. Without this additional cycle, the impact of the inquiry teams on school improvement is limited.
  - Based on an early review of the work of inquiry teams, teacher facilitators were identified and teams restructured to refocus their work. Structures are in place to share best practices among teams, but the school has not yet fully embedded their findings to improve curriculum and instruction.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2009-2010

<b>School name: 47 The American Sign Language and English Secondary School</b>	<b>Δ</b>	<b>➤</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</b>
<b>Overall QR Score</b>			<b>X</b>	
<b>Quality Statement 1 – Instructional and Organizational Coherence: The school has a coherent strategy to support student learning that aligns curriculum, instruction and organizational decisions.</b>				
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	<b>Δ</b>	<b>➤</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</b>
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous and coherent curricula, including the Arts, for a variety of learners and aligned to key State standards?			<b>X</b>	
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best, and ensure that it is: aligned to the curriculum, engaging, and differentiated to enable all students to produce meaningful work products?			<b>X</b>	
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs?			<b>X</b>	
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?				<b>X</b>
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>			<b>X</b>	
<b>Quality Statement 2 – Gather and Analyze Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, analyze and share information on student learning outcomes to understand school and student progress over time.</b>				
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	<b>Δ</b>	<b>➤</b>	<b>✓</b>	<b>+</b>
2.1 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the school level?			<b>X</b>	
2.2 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the team and classroom level?			<b>X</b>	
2.3 Use or develop tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize and analyze student performance trends?			<b>X</b>	
2.4 Engage in an open exchange of information with students and families regarding students' learning needs and outcomes?			<b>X</b>	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>			<b>X</b>	

<b>Quality Statement 3 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently engage the school community and use data to set and track suitably high goals for accelerating student learning.</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
3.1 Establish a coherent vision of future development that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are understood and supported by the entire school community?			X				
3.2 Use collaborative and data informed processes to set measurable and differentiated learning goals for student subgroups, and students in need of additional support?			X				
3.3 Ensure the achievement of learning goals by tracking progress at the school, teacher team and classroom level?			X				
3.4 Communicate high expectations to students and families, engage them in decision-making, and promote active involvement in the school community?			X				
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>			X				
<b>Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals and student learning and emotional needs.</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
4.1 Use the observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection, with a special focus on new teachers?				X			
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?				X			
4.3 Provide professional development that promotes independent and shared reflection, opportunities for leadership growth, and enables teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve learning outcomes?			X				
4.4 Integrate child/youth development, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations with the school-wide goals to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students?				X			
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>				X			
<b>Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and evaluating progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
5.1 Evaluate the quality of curricular, instructional and organizational decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?			X				
5.2 Evaluate systems for assessing students, organizing data, and sharing information with student and families, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?			X				
5.3 Establish and sustain a transparent, collaborative system for measuring progress towards interim and long term goals and making adjustments during the year and over time?		X					
5.4 Use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of structured professional collaboration, capacity building and leadership development strategies?			X				
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>			X				
<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
△	<b>Underdeveloped</b>	➤	<b>Underdeveloped with Proficient Features</b>	✓	<b>Proficient</b>	+	<b>Well Developed</b>