

# Quality Review Report

## 2013-2014

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

**Secondary School 047**

**223 EAST 23 STREET  
MANHATTAN  
NY 10010**

**Principal: Watfa A. Shama**

**Dates of review: October 22 - 23, 2013  
Lead Reviewer: Jacqueline Gonzalez**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

47 The American Sign Language and English Secondary School is a high school with 189 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 27% Black, 64% Hispanic, 5% White, and 4% Asian students. The student body includes 10% English language learners and 38% special education students. Boys account for 44% of the students enrolled and girls account for 56%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2012 - 2013 was 87.6%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is proficient.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- Classroom practices across grades and content areas reflect the school wide belief in equitable access to rigorous and engaging learning experiences and consistently provide opportunities for students to demonstrate their thinking. (1.2)
  - The school's vision for equity undergirds its instructional program, which is implemented by a faculty that includes hearing and Deaf teachers and eleven American Sign Language interpreters who collaborate to develop lessons and assessments. Thus, instructional strategies are inclusive in all subjects. Teachers work seamlessly with one another in team teaching partnerships and ensure that interpreters and students are interacting continually during lessons, which are aligned to Common Core Learning Standards, providing all students timely opportunities to contribute to discussions, ask questions, and complete tasks. In classes where there are more than two teachers, students demonstrate levels of engagement, free from distraction by the movement in the room. All lessons reflect the instructional shifts as students are required to present evidence for their responses and higher order questions are posed visually and in American Sign Language, For example, in a physics class, the teacher presents a graphic on the Smart board of a hammer and two other objects and asks students to use Newton's Law of motion to explain why the hammer is at rest. The American Sign Language interpreter engages a student in participation as the rest of the class listens to his contribution. There is a clear acceptance of the unique learning environment throughout the school and a culture for learning that embraces diversity in ways that attest to the maturity of all students. Tasks and discussions are reflective of relevant and rigorous topics of study such as discussing conformity, analyzing quotes, finding strategies to solve inequalities, and inferring author's point of view. Thus, students consistently participate in critical thinking and evidence based discussions.
- School leaders purposefully utilizes instructional and operational resources to support prioritized goals and create personalized student schedules yielding increased credit accumulation and graduation rates for diverse students. (1.3)
  - The schools' goals to increase college and career readiness and graduation rates influence decision making at the school. After a careful analysis of student lateness and attendance that showed increased lateness and absence to first period classes, especially amongst the upper class students, the principal decided to structure the school using a multisession approach with the ninth and tenth grade students starting at 8:00 AM and eleventh and twelfth grades at 8:50 AM. As a result of the split session, lateness has been reduced and students state they are more motivated to attend morning classes. Additionally, a shortened student schedule on Wednesdays allows for extended teacher meeting time in the afternoon and small group and one-to-one extra help for students in every subject. Each summer the principal analyzes each student transcript to determine student progress towards graduation, specifically reviewing credit accumulation, and makes clear suggestions to the guidance counselor via notations about student needs, matches to specific teachers, and programming students for sections that offer the appropriate supports. Due to the school's high percentage (38%) of special education students, the principal strategically used funds to hire

more special education content area teachers and an assistant principal to oversee the Individualized Education Plan review process, resulting in improved instructional support and over 60% of students earning ten or more credits each year, including students performing in the lowest third. The principal is proud to say that last year the school had the honor of graduating 83% of their senior class, including the first Deaf student in the history of the school to attain an advanced Regents diploma.

- The school's vision for equity is reflected in collaboratively developed school improvement goals that are effectively communicated with students, parents, and faculty, resulting in community support and improved teacher practice. (3.1)
  - The focus on American Sign Language instruction attracts general education students without hearing impairments but with an interest in ASL, Deaf students, children of Deaf adults, and students who have Deaf siblings or family members. In light of this unique diversity, the school's goals for student achievement, increased graduation rates, college and career readiness, and increased passing rates on Regents exams, clearly and concisely embody the school's belief that all students should graduate on time with sufficient confidence in their skills to access and succeed in the college or career of their choice. Administrators and staff use the school's Progress Report data, graduation rates, credit accumulation, and Regents scores data to design goals for overall school improvement. Goals that are captured in the school's Comprehensive Educational Plan as well as in newsletters to parents, displays in hallways and offices, are well known by students, teachers, and parents, who describe their involvement in the development of the goals as authentic and ongoing. The school's leadership team includes students and families who discuss, question, and weigh-in on the decisions that define the school's focus and priorities. All parents interviewed indicated that they trust the school is supporting their children in attaining college and career readiness, citing the college summit program, which includes college visits, and the hands-on approach of the entire staff in keeping students focused on their goals. Students state that they feel the goal setting process has enabled them to make suggestions about how the school can support them towards their own college goals and as a result of this involvement, the college preparation program which served only seniors in the past was expanded to include juniors this year. Student progress towards goals is tracked by the administration, guidance, and faculty at the end of each marking period and linked to the long-term goal of 100% graduation and college and career readiness. As a result of this strategic school wide effort, stakeholders feel accountable to attaining the goals. Additionally, 20 of the current 38 seniors are already on track to graduate in 2014.
- School leaders strategically use data from classroom observations based on the Danielson framework and analysis of student work to provide meaningful feedback that supports teacher development and improves pedagogy. (4.1)
  - Teachers have received substantial professional development over the past few years on the expectations of practice based on the Danielson framework for teaching. In line with the Citywide Instructional Expectations and the new State teacher evaluation system, all teachers have met with the principal and assistant principals in 45 minute conferences to collaborate on their personal goals and the format for evaluations. One hundred percent of the teachers have agreed to use videotaped lessons as the process for observations and each 15-minute

video is placed on a thumb drive that teachers receive, and are given an opportunity to view for self-reflection, prior to the post observation discussion. Administrators then meet to collaboratively decide on next steps for each staff member by assessing strengths and gaps in the lessons. All 13 non-tenured teachers meet with instructional coaches one to two times per week to view model lessons and receive targeted support in planning instructional strategies. Support is also aligned to teachers' professional goals, which are submitted by each teacher at the beginning of the year and include measurable objectives, a rationale for selecting particular goals, action plans, and indicators of success for each goal. Feedback on lessons takes teacher's goals into account and is provided in verbal immediate reflections, email communication, and formal conferences. Teachers state that they feel supported by administration and that the actionable feedback given to them has made them aware of the necessary pedagogical moves that they need to implement in their lessons. A review of written observation reports revealed that feedback addresses the effectiveness of teachers' use of questioning, engagement strategies, grouping of students, and modification of tasks for diverse students. Next steps and specific strategies are also provided. The strategic use of the observation process has increased teacher self-reflection across the school and resulted in improved teacher practice in questioning that prompts students' critical thinking and in the facilitation of higher level discussions in all subject areas.

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

- Refine the aligned Common Core Learning Standards curricula and academic tasks so that lessons and assessments cognitively engage and accelerate learning for all students, including lowest and highest achieving students. (1.1)
  - The principal and teachers have thoughtfully aligned all units of study across content areas to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS). This work began prior to the 2013-2014 Citywide Instructional Expectations (CIE) for full integration of the CCLS. All teachers use a lesson plan template which was developed collaboratively and reflects shared best practices for planning. Specifically, units of study are built around the instructional shifts that require students to engage in rich and rigorous evidence-based conversations utilizing academic vocabulary. For example, a lesson specific question in ninth grade English language arts is, "What can you infer about the author's opinion of conformity in humans?" In geometry, discussion question includes, "What conjecture can we make about the measure of an angle inscribed in a semi-circle?" The coherence of curricula across subjects and through grades is built in to what the school has coined as Anchor Projects. Within each subject area across grades, students complete a minimum of two CCLS aligned tasks per term. Teachers collaborate using Hess' Criteria for High Quality Performance Assessment Tasks to design projects that ensure high Depth of Knowledge levels for questions and activities. The principal also provides regular feedback for revisions to these tasks as needed based on ongoing analysis of student work, resulting in higher level questioning and rigorous tasks. The carefully designed school wide lesson template also includes a section for teachers to indicate modification of tasks and accommodations for individual and groups of students. Some teachers check off categories and describe how they will make adjustments for English language learners, and students with disabilities or for individual students that require additional supports for language development based on their Individual Education Plans. For example, a math lesson specifies that students will complete tiered

assignments, some will work in pairs, and visual demonstration using the Smart Board will support identified students. However, the intentional implementation of these modifications is inconsistent across teachers and subjects. In classes where there are higher achieving students, there are no examples of extensions for learning and in some classes with English language learners there are no explicit language scaffolds. Thus for some students, the opportunities to be cognitively engaged or participate in activities that accelerate their learning are hindered.

- Strengthen teachers' use of data from common assessments across grades and subjects to identify student needs and make adjustments to instruction so that students are aware of next steps and demonstrate increased mastery. (2.2)
  - Teams of teachers meet weekly with grade level and content specific colleagues to analyze student work, assess effectiveness of instructional strategies, and explore potential adjustments to upcoming lessons and assessments. The good use of this focused time for inquiry-based data analysis includes protocols such as "Kid's Talk" which engages teachers, guidance counselor, and support staff in a case management approach to analyze academic, behavioral, and attendance data to develop individualized action plans, supports and interventions for students. The Looking at Student Work Protocol involves teachers presenting samples of work that demonstrate a high, medium, and low work product, assessment with a common rubric, and discussion of strategies that may be used across grades and subjects to address the identified targeted area. For example, the ninth grade team identified that the vast majority of students struggled in writing in the area of inference. Thus teachers developed specific strategies to help students distinguish between description and analysis in their verbal and written responses. This was seen across subjects and classrooms. Teachers are also adjusting instruction to include Cornell note-taking processes and annotation of text. As a result, student writing is improving in this area. Teachers use common four-point rubrics for assessment of student work products. There is also a school wide practice of ongoing checking for understanding within lessons and with exit slips that not only ask what students learned but what was confusing about the lesson. Teachers have administered baseline writing assessments as well as mock Regents' exams, which will serve as the baseline for this year's Measures of Student Learning. The data will be analyzed to inform further adjustments to units of study, interventions and extensions for learning. Although teachers have rich sources of data and common practices to assess student understanding, there is little discussion by teachers of patterns or trends for some subgroups of students. For example, high achieving students that have mastered inference skills as incoming ninth graders do not have alternate or modified next learning steps. Thus, the targeted needs of some students are not met.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2013-2014

<b>School name: 47 The American Sign Language and English Secondary School</b>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
<b>Overall QR Score</b>			<b>X</b>	
<b>Instructional Core</b>				
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
1.1 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards?			<b>X</b>	
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the instructional shifts and Danielson Framework for Teaching, aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products?			<b>X</b>	
2.2 Align assessments to curricula, use on-going assessment and grading practices, and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom levels?			<b>X</b>	
<b>School Culture</b>				
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults?			<b>X</b>	
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations?			<b>X</b>	
<b>Systems for Improvement</b>				
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs, as evidenced by meaningful student work products?				<b>X</b>
3.1 Establish a coherent vision of school improvement that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are tracked for progress and are understood and supported by the entire school community?				<b>X</b>
4.1 Observe teachers using the Danielson Framework for Teaching along with the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection?				<b>X</b>
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?			<b>X</b>	
5.1 Evaluate the quality of school- level decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school, with particular attention to the CCLS?			<b>X</b>	
<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>				
<b>UD</b>   Underdeveloped	<b>D</b>   Developing	<b>P</b>   Proficient	<b>WD</b>   Well Developed	