



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

The Success Express

Elementary School - High School 168

**3050 Webster Avenue
Bronx
NY 10467**

Principal: Yvonne Tavares

Dates of review: November 7 - 8, 2007

Lead Reviewer: Corinne Brown

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Success Express is an elementary school - high school with 370 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 12. The school population comprises 35.5% Black, 56.91% Hispanic, 4.34% White, 2.44% Asian students and 0.81% American Indian. The student body includes 11.6% English language learners and 100% special education students. Boys account for 81% of the students enrolled and girls account for 19%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 88.3%. The school is in not in receipt of Title 1 funding.

The Success Express serves students who have been identified with emotional and behavioral difficulties, autistic spectrum disorder, multiple disabilities, hearing impairments and complex learning difficulties. It offers programs to address these difficulties and inclusion programs at all grade levels. The school is on six sites housed inside other schools. The school was a New York City collaborative community of practice school and is now a self-management school.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The highly effective principal leads with clear, comprehensive vision, respect and an open attitude and shares school goals with the whole school community extremely well.
- The assistant principals ably support the principal with consistency and share in strategic planning.
- The school interrogates and uses all available data sensitively, which complements staff expertise and knowledge of individual students.
- Teachers, paraprofessionals and all staff are highly dedicated role models who demonstrate excellent teamwork and set very high expectations.
- The school works strenuously to involve parents, notably through the tireless parent coordinator.
- The school engages students in a relevant and accessible curriculum, including the arts.
- Parents and students truly appreciate the positive differences the school makes in their lives through its careful planning and review process.
- A continual drive for improvement permeates all school work, evident in multi-faceted professional development programs.
- The school is well organized at all levels with clear systems and procedures in place across all six sites.
- The school offers a nurturing, calm and clean environment which reflects its inclusive ethos.

What the school needs to improve

- Explore and map cross-curricular opportunities to consolidate learning and enhance achievement.
- Extend the use of technology across all classes as an integral part of the learning experience, for example in the use of Smart Boards.

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.

Parents and students truly appreciate the positive differences this school makes in their lives. There is considerable mobility in the student population as many move between homes, care providers, hospitals or shelters. Students are also continuously admitted during the year. Also, due to the quality of education provided at The Success Express which helps students to achieve, there is significant movement from the school to less restrictive environments, currently 46 students this year. The high quality instruction presently offered at the school would be enhanced by refining cross-curricular links and by increasing the use of Smart Boards and other technologies into the students' learning experiences.

This school is highly effective at assessing and meeting student need. All recommendations made in the last Quality Review have been suitably implemented, which shows its continual refinement of practice to improve quality further. Many programs, based on data and research, are firmly established and are used as exemplary models of good practice. The school has had a data inquiry team in place for eight years, prior to the recent Department of Education requirement. The collegial and selfless approach of staff mean that all aspects of a student's complex needs, which includes physical, social, emotional and educational, are comprehensively addressed.

The leadership of the principal is of the highest order. Her structured organization and successful delegation of responsibility utilizes and builds staff strengths, while giving stability and constancy to students. She maintains sharp oversight of the six sites to ensure consistency of provision and is an assertive advocate for the school and its constituents. The new designation as a self-management school gives greater autonomy as a result of its exemplary track record for improving student outcomes.

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 outstanding.

Data has long been a key to school improvement for this school. Regular interrogation of all available data from outside sources, alongside school-based assessments, is solidly embedded practice and helps the school to understand the impact of past instruction and services and to have an exceptionally clear understanding of current student performance and progress.

Since 2003 the school has looked at the progress that students have made at the school to measure student performance. They see this "value added" approach as a more accurate measure of the impact of instruction on learning. External data is examined,

such as student performance on State and City tests, and includes NYSESLAT. In addition, relevant comprehensive reports are generated internally and systematically scrutinized alongside anecdotal evidence to gain a deep understanding of student progress. For example, the school uses Brigance assessments, Datafolio performance and data from programs such as Orton Gillingham Reading Program. As a result of the close matching of data with instruction, students make significant progress. Based on data from English language arts and math tests, over the last two years there was a decrease of 27.2% in students at level 1 in English language arts. The school rigorously compares its performance to similar schools and is able to show, for example, that it had the highest number of students scoring at levels 2 and 3 last year. Its performance also compares well with general education schools.

In the battery of data, the school looks for patterns and trends, for individuals, classes, groups, such as English language learners, and subjects. Attendance data analysis and associated action has had a positive impact. The school uses data to compare its performance over time and also has notable success in raising achievement for its special population of students.

The Success Express is very experienced in using computer systems to access and create data. It embraces suitable new opportunities, with appropriate training, as they become available. Last year the school was one of few schools to pilot the Princeton Review online. Several staff are also trained to use the new ARIS system. The School Wide Information System (SWIS) is used to great effect in analysis of behavior incidents. A consequent school wide behavior program shows dramatic and ongoing results in the reduction of different types of incidents, which impacts positively on student progress.

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 outstanding.

Planning and goal setting is firmly rooted in data within this school. The Comprehensive Education Plan clearly indicates long- and short-term goals, with associated timeframes. Alongside this, the inquiry team identifies focus areas, makes plans for improvement, and uses data to set long- and short-term goals by grade, subject and specific groups of students on a cyclical basis. All data examined by the administration and inquiry team is shared with faculty across all sites. Each of the six sites has an assistant principal, who also have cross-site responsibilities. They most ably support the principal, ensure consistency and share in strategic planning.

The school continually reviews its performance in order to improve further. An individual education plan manual ensures even higher quality plans. The school sees special education as “a service, not a destination”. Teachers, cluster teachers, paraprofessionals and service providers are all involved in these plans, which are revised at least annually but reviewed every 90 days. Collaboration ensures programs and placements are appropriate, with suitable challenge. As a result many students move to less restricted environments within the school or out of the school altogether. The variety of classes with varying ratios of students to staff, means that there is continuity for both students and parents. Partnerships with Clinton High School and East Bronx Academy for the Future provide inclusion opportunities in addition to those available in the school. The school is careful to address the needs of higher achievers effectively. Informal support for all continues beyond graduation if required.

All staff are highly dedicated role models who demonstrate excellent teamwork and are very available for parents. The planning and revision based on data that is pivotal to the school’s work has significant positive impact for families and students. Many parents

believe the school has achieved what was deemed impossible by other professionals, including the medical profession. One parent of an autistic child commented, "This school gave me back my son." Daily progress reports and communication notebooks reinforce high expectations and allow easy exchange of information. The school makes strenuous efforts to involve parents in the education of their child actively, as they know this greatly contributes to success. Personal and social reasons mean there are fewer parents involved than the school would like, despite the tireless efforts of the parent coordinator and all staff.

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.

As a provider of special education the school is acutely aware of the benefit of matching the curriculum to the student. It continually uses data to evaluate the different programs and placements within the school. Standardized and alternative assessment classes offer pathways to success, as is shown by the significant number of students in inclusion classes. Teachers maintain detailed and comprehensive records to monitor progress. Staff use the Treatment and Education of Autistic and Related Communication Handicapped Children program (TEACCH) and other specialized programs to meet student need based on data very well.

The school engages students in a relevant and accessible curriculum, including the arts. Music and dance opportunities mean that students have alternative means of self-expression, learn to read music, play an instrument and appreciate and enjoy music. The summer program thematic studies enhance academic skills and knowledge. Students participate in golf, tennis and swimming, which exposes them to physical experiences and enjoyment that of great challenge to physically disabled students in particular.

The school modifies and adapts the broad curriculum skillfully and in the light of in-depth knowledge of individual students. Common planning sessions now formalize the good practices in place and involve coaches. Discussions of pacing calendars, assessments, instructional targets and next steps are part of this structured, collegial and highly effective collaborative planning. The school is looking to map links across the curriculum to ensure mastery of concepts and skills further. The school recognizes that increased use of technology in classrooms will further support learning and is actively finding ways to integrate technology more widely into learning.

Teachers are intrinsically motivated and provide a nurturing environment that "feeds the whole child". Training and consistent use of the behavior management program has a major positive impact resulting in a calm, orderly environment throughout the school. However, there is rigorous accountability, including walkthroughs, memos and observations.

Attendance shows a steady upward trend and averages 89.7% so far this year across the school. This is excellent for special education students with many complex medical and behavior needs. Students trust the school and feel it is a place where you can, "Be yourself; realize yourself."

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.

A continual drive for improvement permeates all school work, evident in multi-faceted professional development programs. The school is rightly proud of its "diverse, highly trained teaching corps". The school has invested in ongoing, high quality professional development as an integral strand of the school's work. Needs analyses and data from student performance are regularly scrutinized to ensure the relevance and equitability of the training. All staff are engaged in self improvement as educators. For example, recently eight paraprofessionals completed their bachelors' degree. The school had a mentoring and induction program in place many years before it became a requirement, which has a positive impact on new teachers' instruction. The rigorous hiring procedure includes a rubric to ensure high caliber selection.

Strategic development decisions mean that teachers and students meet their improvement goals. Skillful coaches and senior teachers support colleagues, but there is also a true sense of sharing expertise among faculty, as in the flourishing peer observation initiative. The school is well organized at all levels with clear systems and procedures in place across all six sites. Equitability of resources and consistency in all areas across the school is ensured by the assistant principals and regular visits by the principal and other staff.

The school invests in strong links with Teachers' College and successfully utilizes the program, which is designed for general education, with its own students. Teachers College has embraced this school's special expertise to add to the program, such as their graphic organizers. All opportunities are explored, so that excellent links with other schools for inclusion and with service providers and agencies allow for continual exchange of expertise.

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 well developed.

The highly effective principal, with good support from the assistant principals, leads with a clear, comprehensive vision and provides good strategic planning for the school. The whole school community shares the vision. Her thorough leadership means effective organizational structures and systems at all levels are reviewed on a timely and regular basis with stringent attention to detail. The school exerts a critical lens in its drive for continual improvement to meet the varied, complex and challenging needs of each individual.

The thorough analysis of data in the school means that objective measurement of progress and performance by the school and students is intrinsic to its work. From the whole school plans to individual education plans, every aspect of the school is rigorously tracked and evaluated. Strategic planning and modification are embedded into every aspect of teacher planning. The school's structures mean it is flexible, responsive and embraces change in its drive to benefits its students. It is rightly named "The Success Express."

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: The Success Express	△	▷	✓	+	◇
Quality Score				X	

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 . . .	△	▷	✓	+	◇
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
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 students learning.

To what extent do school leaders and faculty . . .	△	▷	✓	+	◇
2.1 engage in collaborative processes to set demanding, 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 pogress 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	
Overall score for Quality Statement 2					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?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 3				X	

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.					
To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	▶	✓	+	◇
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?				X	
4.7 create effective partnerships with outside entities that support the academic and personal growth of the students?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 4				X	

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.					
To what extent do . . .	Δ	▶	✓	+	◇
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 make 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	
Overall score for Quality Statement 5				X	