

Quality Review Report

2008-2009

The Success Express

Elementary - High School 168

**339 Morris Avenue
Bronx
NY 10451**

Principal: Rosa Nieves-Greene

Dates of review: May 4 - 6, 2009
Lead Reviewer: Helen Donnellan

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Success Express is an elementary-high school with 398 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 12. The school population comprises 37% Black, 56% Hispanic, 5% White, 1% American Indian and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 16% English language learners and 100% special education students. Boys account for 83% of the students enrolled and girls account for 17%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007-2008 was 88.6%. The school is not in receipt of Title 1 funding.

The principal took up her appointment in August 2008. This district 75 school has one main site and five off-sites, in buildings shared with other schools across the Bronx. Students are taught in inclusive settings and self-contained classes with student to teacher to paraprofessional ratios of 6:1:1, 8:1:1, 8:1:2, 12:1:1 and 12:1:4 and includes some classes with students from different grades. Students' disabilities include autism, mental retardation, hearing impairment and emotional problems. At the start of this academic year, the main site moved to the site where most classes are located.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

The principal has lost no time in introducing a data-driven approach to staff at all sites. They now place high value on analyzing formal and informal data and most teachers use this to plan and monitor their instruction so that it closely matches the needs of their students. Data is used well to pinpoint the school-wide goals within the Comprehensive Educational Plan. Extensive professional development supports teachers in improving how they analyze and use data to plan instruction that matches the needs of their students and monitor their progress. Most teachers routinely use data and the majority, but not all, show increasing confidence in interpreting and using a range of assessment tools. As a result they gain a clear picture of the knowledge and skills of students in all service categories across all core subjects and plan instruction matched to each student's needs. These teachers use creative and effective ways of sharing these goals with students, who understand what they need to achieve. However, practice is inconsistent, so some students are not clear about their next steps for learning. In contrast, all are clear about how to improve behavior through improved systems to promote positive behavior and encourage students to take responsibility for their actions.

The quality of instruction is variable, but includes some highly effective and creative practice closely matched to student needs. The principal addresses weaker teaching through intensive support. She uses the professional teaching standards vigorously to evaluate instruction and set individual development goals for each teacher. Teachers and students now have access to extensive resources and materials to support instructional methods matched to the diverse needs of students. However, some teachers do not make full use of these to deliver differentiated instruction.

The principal delivers a strong message about the need for further improvements, saying, "This is work in progress". Currently the school has not reviewed its vision and mission to provide an easily recognized statement of the school philosophy.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal understands the school well, shows no complacency and makes secure, evidence-based judgments about its strengths and priorities for improvement.
- The majority of staff members have a clear understanding of assessment data, which gives them greater insights into students' strengths and areas of need.
- The principal uses the professional teaching standards to set suitable individual teacher goals and identify effective support so teachers achieve their goals.
- Ongoing professional development helps teachers use data successfully to implement change and encourages creativity in their instruction.
- A wide-range of resources and materials for instruction and learning align well to the diverse range of students in all service categories.
- Students are rightly proud of their improved behavior and develop skills to help them become more responsible for their own actions.

What the school needs to improve

- Work with the whole school community to update the school vision to reflect accurately a student centered and data-driven approach to working with students, families and staff.
- Develop systems so all teachers and providers use data to set and, monitor progress towards, individual, short-term student goals in all subjects and intervention programs.
- Ensure all teachers plan and deliver instruction that matches closely student's needs and reflects best practice.
- Implement systems so all students know and understand their goals in every subject and are involved in monitoring their progress towards these goals.

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 proficient.

Across all sites, the school gathers extensive data on the progress and performance of students on standardized and alternate assessment programs. This includes a broad range of formal and informal assessments to provide a comprehensive picture of students in all service categories for all core subjects. Following extensive professional development and a school-wide focus on data interrogation and analysis, teachers have a clear understanding of students' strengths and areas for development. They use a wider range of assessment tools successfully, including the on-line version of the Brigance Inventory of Skills, to gather information systematically and gain more detailed insights into student progress and performance. Staff gather data on attendance and student behavior data diligently to form part of the rich information bank at student, class and whole-school level.

The principal leads the analysis of data to show patterns and trends in learning, behavior and attendance. This shows differences in performance by boys and girls in math and English language arts, which teachers address through specific work. However there is no significant difference in the performance of students from different ethnic groups. The school is starting to assess the progress students make as a result of focused intervention programs, but currently it is unable to evaluate the impact of these on learning.

Parents receive detailed information about their child's progress and performance through formal report cards and informal communication. These range from home-school communication logs to giving students and their parent's daily feedback sheets on the student's behavior in class. Some, but not all, teachers share data with their students in meaningful ways, so not all students or their families have a thorough understanding of their short-term academic achievements.

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 proficient.

Wide-ranging and detailed assessment information is a fundamental element of the school's systematic, established and effective goal-setting approach for learning. The school, subject and student goals for improvement are clearly directed at issues generated by external feedback, assessment data and observations of instruction. For instance, the principal's in-depth analyses of student performance highlighted that for three successive years results in math were lower than those in English language arts. Consequently, improving math is now one of the clearly set out goals of the Comprehensive Educational Plan. The instructional cabinet and school leadership team

systematically scrutinize formal and informal assessment data in detail at least once each month to monitor the impact of actions towards the achievement of the Comprehensive Educational Plan goals.

The system for setting and reviewing goals in each student's Individual Educational Plan (IEP) has been revised so that goals reflect data, are based on student needs and include clear and measurable outcomes. Teachers review and update every student's IEP carefully to comply with this school-wide system. They break down the annual goals in core subjects into measurable medium-term goals, which are routinely assessed by a combination of informal and formal data. Some teachers analyze these goals further and create shorter-term goals to be achieved during classes and this allows them to update their on-going information about each student's learning. However, this is not yet consistent across the school, as not all teachers have measurable, individual student goals in all subjects.

Some teachers share goals diligently with students who are clear about their next steps in learning so they can achieve their goals. This includes precisely written reminders stuck to their desks, highly visible notices using pictures, symbols and words and prompt cards. However, this valuable practice is not established in all classes, so some students are unclear about what they need to master. In addition, at times, formative feedback to students about their work is ineffective and sometimes negative, providing little incentive for students to continue to work or improve.

The school has well-planned programs to increase parent involvement in learning and as a result more parents attend workshops and events held at all sites. This helps parents to be more informed about their child's progress, prepares them to support learning at home and establishes links with other agencies

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 curriculum meets mandated requirements for students on standardized and alternate assessment programs. This is achieved through careful modifications of content areas so students have sufficient time to master skills and knowledge. For example, in physical education opportunities to develop gross and fine motor skills form the basis for activities matched to each student's particular needs. The school does not overlook the needs of its smaller population of girls and provides additional support that is especially effective in enabling them to deal with issues related to puberty.

Teachers modify curriculum maps in English language arts, math, science and social studies carefully and are adapting them in all other subjects to ensure that the curriculum meets the diverse needs of all students. While many teachers plan and deliver instruction that closely matches the needs of students and reflects the latest assessment information, this is not consistent in all classes and subjects. As a result, work in some classes is either too challenging, too easy or does not match students' learning styles so learning opportunities are not maximized. In these classes teachers place greater emphasis on different levels of support, rather than matching their instructional approach or lesson content to the needs of each student.

Students at all sites benefit from an increased range of resources with the capacity to support successful learning in creative and exciting ways. The principal ensures that staff and students make full use of previously unused or under-used equipment and materials to support both teaching and learning. Some teachers show initiative in seeking grants to implement innovative and successful instruction. For instance, in one class observed during this Review, the students developed their spoken and sight vocabulary, reading skills and practiced gross motor control in a fun-filled lesson delivered by a highly creative teacher. The teacher used a mini-trampoline and materials obtained from an external sponsor, along with songs and pictures, in her animated instruction that resulted in all students making progress as they laughed, sang and learned together.

The new administration uses data on incidents of poor behavior effectively to understand what triggers incidents and develop strategies to stop them occurring. This has led to a steady decrease in the numbers of incidents and contributes to a positive climate that is highly conducive to learning. Students value the positive approach to behavior management and are justly proud of having more effective skills to control their behavior and take responsibility for their actions. Most teachers and support staff provide students with suitable levels of support for learning and their personal needs at the same time as encouraging independence and self-reliance. As a result, some of these students make sufficient progress to move to less restrictive educational settings, including some outside of the school, each year.

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 principal uses the professional teaching standards document exceptionally well as the basis for whole-school professional development and individual plans for every teacher. This provides a basis for identifying professional development closely matched to teachers' individual needs and linked to school-wide priorities. At the start of the year teachers evaluated their performance against these teaching standards. They use a five point continuum of 'beginning, emerging, applying, integrating and innovating' and outcomes of observations to identify areas for improvement and plot their progress through the year. New teachers also receive support from mentors and a teacher-buddy and with this support adapt to school systems and approaches quickly. The principal identifies staff under-performance at all levels through observations and data analyses. She uses this to provide suitable professional development and support to the identified areas. This gives staff opportunities to develop and grow, has helped to improve the quality of instruction and raise student learning outcomes. Teachers place high regard on their professional development and one expressed the benefit of this as, "Educate yourself so you can educate students".

The inquiry team is established and helping to build the capacity of staff across the school's sites. The team is currently evaluating the impact of different instructional approaches for problem solving in math with standardized and alternate assessment students in grades 3 to 6. They share their work with colleagues across the school sites and use ARIS successfully to spread their learning with colleagues from schools across the City.

Students benefit from the effective working partnerships with the host site schools. They share facilities and opportunities for social and learning experiences with general

education students which supports their academic and personal growth. The school's extensive team of related service providers works closely with teachers to support students, both in classes and during one-to-one sessions. While they give informal verbal information to teachers about short- and medium-term progress made by students, this does not provide teachers with precise information to show progress against each student's interim goals.

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 proficient.

The culture of planning, monitoring and reviewing within the school is clearly apparent in regular administrative, faculty and team meetings. Administrators and teachers use the school's extensive data to identify the progress towards school-wide plans and make carefully considered modifications to overcome barriers to progress or slow progress. School leaders routinely monitor whole-school goals in the Comprehensive Educational Plan and, when required, make changes promptly so that progress to sustain or improve progress towards the desired outcomes is uninterrupted.

The formal requirements for interim reviews within each student's IEP goals ensure that assessments are used to monitor progress in academic subjects, life skills and behavior. Teachers make changes where these are indicated to modify plans and instruction, intervene with suitable support or consider moving students to less restrictive educational settings.

At the start of her appointment, the new principal analyzed and interrogated data about learning outcomes, gathered feedback from the whole school community and observed to gain secure understanding of the school. She updates her knowledge of the school regularly and carried out a realistic evaluation of progress and areas to improve in preparing the self-evaluation for this Review. The principal is moving the school successfully towards a student-centered culture. This is reflected in the many motivational messages in the school sites and statements about mission, vision and philosophy. However, the members of the school community have not yet explored and agreed an easily understood statement of the school's vision to underpin the current approach to instruction and learning and unite all members of the school community.

School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

School name: The Success Express Elementary - High 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, DYO, 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