



NYCDOE

Quality Review: Final Report

The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

The Success Express

Public School 168

**3050 Webster Avenue
Bronx
NY 10467**

Principal: Yvonne Tavares

Dates of review: February 12 – 13, 2007

Reviewer: Alvin Jeffs

Content of the report

Part 1: The School Context

Background information about the school

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

What the school needs to improve

Part 3: Main Findings

Overall evaluation

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

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Public School 168X is a pre-kindergarten through grade 12 special education school with six sites housed inside other schools. It serves students who have been identified with emotional and behavior difficulties, autistic spectrum disorder, multiple disabilities, hearing impairments and complex learning difficulties. It offers programs to address these disabilities as well as programs of inclusion at all grade levels. Most of the 388 students live in the Bronx. Over 12% are English language learners.

During the 2004/2005 school year PS 168X was nominated and selected as a New York City Collaborative Community of Practice School. The school was selected because it demonstrated strong leadership, good implementation of the New York City Department of Education core curriculum, strong professional learning communities, a high student performance outcome, and, a culture of continued growth and sustained improvement.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Students and their parents see the school as a “second home” and express deep gratitude for the excellent improvements in both behaviour and achievement.
- All staff are committed to the best possible care and achievement for every student.
- The principal is highly respected by staff, students and parents, who appreciate her enthusiasm, expertise and openness.
- She leads a management team experienced in and committed to the practical use of data to inform attendance, professional development and teaching strategies.
- Staff expertise has been significantly increased by the very effective work carried out by the literacy and autism coaches and the ‘datafolio leaders’.
- The school has good levels of attendance, the second highest in the Bronx, and continually strives to improve within this area.
- Despite the fragmented nature of the six sites, communication and morale are very good.
- The very close involvement of the union representative in all decisions affecting staff means that staff concerns are invariably addressed.
- The culture within classrooms is calm, respectful and enthusiastic.
- Inclusion initiatives have been very successful and impressive results have been obtained for many students.

Areas for improvement

- Ensure that targets are consistently well set within all classrooms throughout the school.
- Principal and assistant principals to visit other schools to ensure that good practice is continually shared.
- Improve management of the large quantity of data
- Continue the good communication with parents and the parent workshop formats in an attempt to encourage more families to become involved in their children’s education.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a well-developed school.

There is a high mobility rate as students move from homes to shelters, to foster care, to relatives and back. Many move between hospitals, residences and group homes. The current school population has 92 students (24%) who have only been in the school since September 2006. As a result achievement figures do not fully identify the academic success of the school. This has been accepted and PS 168X is recognized by the Department of Education as within the top 25% of all schools for one-year gains in achievement.

Since its designation as a Collaborative Community of Practice school PS 168X has opened its doors to general as well as special educators, from throughout the City, who are interested in implementing exemplary aspects of the school program. By focusing on teachers' professional development and by adopting and adapting research-based programs the school has been able to provide its students with a curriculum that explores and expands their educational potential. This, in turn, complements the very effective work that secures better attendance, improves concentration and raises motivation in all students.

A significant statistic that encapsulates the drive for achievement is the fact that in the academic year 2005/2006, 52 students (12% of the school population) moved to a less restricted environment.

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 student progress over time.

This area of the school's work is well developed.

The Success Express is a school that can rightly be described as 'data driven'. Data is gained from external sources, such as Automate the Schools (ATS) and Decision Support System (DSS), internal information, including Read 180 and Orton-Gillingham Reading program scores. Every aspect of the school's life is assessed and its development reviewed in the light of outcomes. This is a very positive characteristic as the drive that the data represents is the universal desire to improve standards. Student achievement, staff training, classroom practice and the attendance of both adults and students are carefully monitored so that the highest educational and professional standards can be achieved.

The database developed from external assessments, teacher records and on-line tests contribute to the knowledge teachers possess about their students. Senior staff have a clear picture of attendance and achievement between sites, between grades and between classes. From the moment a student enters the school, all adults are aware of their personal and academic needs. This greatly assists planning for, and with, individual students.

Senior staff use the data well to look at sub-groups within the school. It is currently considering the performance differences between boys and girls and, on a regular basis, it reviews the achievement of short- and long-stay students. It is this use of data that has allowed the school to highlight the progress of 'home grown' students avoiding the

distortion that occurs when other schools refer large numbers around testing times. The database has also allowed the school to derive a more accurate picture of the sub-group of students who are English language learners.

In addition to the large amount of data requested from outside, the school is generating information that is both practical and helpful in addressing individual student needs. Thus, the data developing from the new 'Reading 180' program and that derived from internal reading and mathematics assessments are ensuring that all discussions of students are grounded in data. Case meetings have a good range of objective data to run alongside the equally important observations and feelings of teachers and paraprofessionals. This, in turn, assists in answering the question 'where do we go next?'

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student's next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student's learning.

This area of the school's work is well developed.

To ensure that all groups of students are well taught and that there is continuity of teaching, detailed records are required. This applies to staff as much as students. The school has very detailed records of staff proficiency in areas such as the teaching of autistic students, classroom management and time spent with the literacy coach.

The culture of data collection and analysis is just as rigorous at the classroom level. Teachers, and paraprofessionals, are very informed about each individual student. This knowledge includes attendance and behavior profiles and full details of key areas of academic development. Each student's teacher is clear where progress is being made and where extra thought and attention is necessary. It also means that if a student has some form of crisis it is quickly picked up and addressed. Many data-driven discussions take place around the need for some higher achieving students to have a better attendance record or the failure of 'over-age' students to flourish in classes of less mature children.

Students agree that staff discuss their progress with them on a regular basis. This means that they are clear about where they need to go next. They also observe that "it makes you more mature." Some classes are developing visual prompts that indicate levels of attendance and areas of development for each student. By using the data collected as a teaching tool, the school ensures greater engagement on the part of the student and a stronger chance of progress. There is a similar openness in discussing students with parents. Those parents who are actively engaged in their child's education find the detail of performance levels and behavior patterns extremely useful. However, parent involvement is still a weakness despite very good work by the parent coordinator, including workshops that assist parents to work with their children at home.

Although the collection of data and the setting of goals are well established, not all staff have the fully honed skills with regard to using data to set and review sharply focused targets. The school is aware of this and is producing professional support materials to ensure that the work of all teachers is up to that of the best

The school has developed many good partnerships, including those with the Teachers' College, with the Herbert Birch School and Clinton High School.

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.

This area of the school's work is well developed.

The school is keen to ensure that its students, many of whom lack self-confidence, receive the broadest and most stimulating experiences at school. Consequently, much effort is put into the development of a music curriculum with performance at its heart and an activity-based curriculum which introduces swimming, golf and movement work. Current discussion of a vocational curriculum for under-achieving students arises from data showing the poor motivation of students who are held back. Overall the curriculum is age appropriate for students and made accessible to all through the use of Mayer Johnson symbols and the Picture Exchange Communication System.

All staff attend regular conferences where their students are discussed. The clear expectation is that they have the responsibility to set realistic targets, modify these in the light of performance, but ensure that students are given tasks that will move them on.

Senior staff assist in this by sensitive scheduling, to ensure, for example, that older students have access to the larger, but limited, gym facilities. Teachers speak highly of the resources they receive. Within the school requests for resources will be met as long as they further the school's drive for higher achievement. This means that the music curriculum, the need for increased technology and the enrichment of class libraries have all taken place within a short space of time. The effective involvement of the union representative at the highest level ensures that new initiatives take into consideration staff as well as student interests and concerns.

Overall, teaching is good with some exemplary lessons. Students know the objectives of each lesson, they receive informed and sensitive support from good paraprofessionals and their work is celebrated around the school. Work within the inclusion classes is of a very high quality and this is a key factor in securing the high standards that some students' reach. Relations between the Success Express and its mainstream partners are good.

Students respect staff. They testify to a real concern for them as people and appreciate the effective work undertaken by counseling staff. They see the school as a place of safety where there is a real understanding of the difficulties that they experience in many aspects of their lives. The steadily improving attendance rates, now 88.8% over the six sites, are testimony to the motivation of students as much as the efficiency of the checks and procedures that have been put in place. These initiatives include attendance awards, personal home visits and a weekly review of attendance figures.

Quality Statement 4 - Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

This area of the school's work in well developed.

The principal is highly respected within the school and also by parents. Her emphasis upon only accepting the best for the school's students is one that all understand and seek to implement. "She's tough," say the parents, "but she listens to us and our kids." Day-to-day management of the school sites is excellent, with a good combination of friendliness and humour together with an efficient use of time and a no-nonsense approach that sorts problems out with the minimum distress and acrimony.

Staff have been recruited and trained to ensure that each group of students receives a relevant education. Thus, all staff working with students with autism now have a good background in the Treatment and Education of Autistic and Related Communication-Handicapped Children approach. Those working with students with the most complex learning difficulties have had good training in the use of symbols. All staff are very well supported by the literacy and the autism coaches, who provide high quality training and advice within the classroom and are ably assisting the development of planning and targeting skills. Data collection is well supported by 'Datafolio' Leaders.

Many senior staff are involved in classroom observations and walkthroughs on the part of the principal, assistant principals and coaches. Staff appreciate the prompt and positive comments that arise from these contacts. The school is a pioneer in the development of an imaginative use of video for peer assessment and this is already making a strong contribution to both classroom teaching and collaborative discussion.

While the school does what it can, there are time limits to collaborative work and staff sometimes feel that demands for data restricts the opportunities they have to plan together. Similarly, senior staff identify lack of time as a reason that prevents them from visiting other school sites in a bid to share and bring back good practice.

There are strong partnerships with outside agencies, such as the Jewish Board for Counselling, Montefiore Hospital and the Hunts Point Multi-Disciplinary Unit for medical assessments. Good networking by senior staff helps to enlarge the contacts and facilities available.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerated learning.

This area of the school's work is well developed.

The school's Comprehensive Education Plan is a detailed document that has been compiled with wide staff involvement. Clear targets are identified relating to, amongst other things, curriculum, data usage and attendance. These targets are matched with success criteria and deadlines. Resource issues are identified, but financial implications are not yet spelled out in detail.

Once the Comprehensive Education Plan goals have been identified by the leadership team, staff are presented with all of the scores within the mandated curriculum grade by grade. This leads to discussion of why the results are what they are and what can be done to improve them. This comparison of scores across grades and classrooms is a powerful tool to assist teachers develop their own skills in the use of data for target-setting and evaluation.

Many assessment instruments are used within the school and the results during the year establish areas for the modification of goals. They also suggest areas where external data is confusing or distorted or where a reconsideration of practice needs to take place. At whole-school level, this has happened with regard to short- and long-stay students and English language learners. At the classroom level, the use of the Brigance assessments provides checkpoints for reviewing the progress of students with complex learning difficulties. The investment in 'Read 180', 'Achieve 3000' and access to the Princeton Review scores provides ongoing data for progress in literacy, which will often trigger the

purchase of new materials or the review of an individual student's targets.

The use of data, together with the very good professional development of staff means that The Success Express is now well placed to assist in the academic, attendance and behavioral progress of all students.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: The Success Express (PS 168X)	∅	✓	+
Quality Score			X

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 student progress over time.	∅	✓	+
1.1 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • each student, classroom, grade level, 			X
1.2 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ethnic groups, English Language Learners, special education students* 			X
1.3 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • all other categories of interest to the school* 			X
1.4 Performance and progress are measured based on comparisons with similar schools, with the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grade levels, academic subject areas, ethnic groups, and other groupings of interest within the school.			X
Overall score for Quality Statement 1			X

* These criteria are partially aspirational as of now because schools do not have routine access to all of this data. The NYC DOE plans to provide schools with enhanced access to the necessary data in 2007.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student's next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student's learning.	∅	✓	+
2.1 Using data, school leaders and faculty engage in a collaborative process to set demanding, objectively measurable goals for immediate and long-range improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals.			X
2.2 Goals and plans focus on the school as a whole and 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 Particular attention is given to improving the performance and progress of students in greatest need of improvement.			X
2.4 High expectations are conveyed to students and parents/caregivers. Students and their parents/caregivers are regularly invited to provide information about each student's performance and how to improve. This information is central to setting challenging goals and developing, evaluating, and revising plans.			X
2.5 Goals and plans for improving student performance and progress drive the activity of all members of the school community: leaders, staff, students, parents, and other partners.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 2			X

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity, resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.	∅	✓	+
3.1 The school selects the curriculum based on how well it aligns with or implements the mandated curriculum and on the curriculum's capacity to generate meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and to support the school's high expectations and improvement plans.			X
3.2 Teachers are accountable for improving instruction and student outcomes. They plan and differentiate their instruction based on the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.		X	
3.3 Budgeting decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.			X
3.4 Staffing decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.			X
3.5 Scheduling decisions about the use of teacher and student time are guided by the needs that emerge from examining student data and by the focused plan the school develops to improve student outcomes.			X
3.6 Instructional programs actively engage students.			X
3.7 Staff know and respect students and respond to their academic needs, as well as their personal needs that affect academic performance. Each student knows and trusts an adult on the staff who is concerned about him or her.			X
3.8 Student attendance and engagement are high priorities. High rates and patterns of absences trigger immediate intervention.			X
Overall score for Quality Statement 3			X
Quality Statement 4 – Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.	∅	✓	+
4.1 Leaders, faculty, and staff are selected based on their high expectations for student performance and progress and based on their commitment and capacity to use data, compare outcomes within and across classrooms and schools and develop and revise plans and methods to improve performance and progress.			X
4.2 Professional development decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes. Professional development is designed to help leaders, faculty, and staff use data, self- and peer-assessments, and collaboration with peers to achieve goals for improved school and student outcomes. Professional development and self- and peer-evaluation are aligned and overlap.			X
4.3 The principal frequently observes classroom teaching and has a considered strategy for improving the quality of each teacher's instruction. Teachers frequently observe and support each other's classroom instruction with the goal of improving student outcomes.			X
4.4 Planning, evaluation of results, and revision of plans takes place in teams. Leaders and faculty inform each other of their goals and results, candidly evaluate themselves and each other, and use what is learned to drive improvement.		X	
4.5 The principal is respected and has capacity to effect change.			X
4.6 The school runs smoothly. Procedures are clear, communicated to all, and are generally followed.			X
4.7 The school aligns youth development and support services around stated academic goals. Partnerships with outside bodies are routinely used to achieve academic goals.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 4			X
Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.	∅	✓	+
5.1 All school plans and other interventions include frequent interim goals and diagnostic assessments of progress designed to reveal in objectively measurable ways whether the plan is being effectively implemented and reaching stated goals.			X
5.2 Comparisons of student progress within and across classrooms and schools are used in making interim diagnostic assessments and measuring the progress of plans and interventions.			X
5.3 Information generated by periodic assessments and diagnostic measures of progress and comparisons is used to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals. Interim and final goals are modified when data objectively demonstrate that revision is required.			X
5.4 Each plan's interim and final outcomes drive successive phases of goal setting and improvement planning, and each successive phase is characterized by agile and flexible realignment of practices and resources to improve student academic outcomes.			X
Overall score for Quality Statement 5			X