

# Quality Review Report 2012-2013

**The Success Express School**

**75X168  
339 Morris Avenue  
Bronx  
NY 10451**

**Principal: Maureen Fullerton**

**Dates of review: May 20-22, 2013  
Lead Reviewer: Karen Anderson**

## **Information about the school**

The Success Express School is a K-12 Elementary-High School with 434 students from Kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 39% Black, 56% Hispanic, 3% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 17% 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 2011-2012 was 88.6%.

## **Overall Evaluation**

**This school is proficient.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The administration makes strategic and purposeful decisions in using resources to support teachers in meeting students' instructional needs, thus providing opportunities for students to accomplish individual goals. (1.3)
  - The school leaders strategically allocate resources to support the needs of all teachers and students within the learning community to ensure SMART boards, iPads and other technological devices are consistently evident across classrooms. Communication devices are accessible for individual students based on their individualized educational plan mandates. The school has a hiring committee comprised of administrators, teachers, paraprofessionals and related service providers which designed a process and protocol for identification of prospective positional candidates. The professional learning committee met in September to determine the focus and strategies to be utilized to promote higher academic levels, and social/emotional, and academic success for all students. All teachers complete a Balanced Literacy action plan which includes common components across grades and classrooms but with modified or adapted curricular support to address the diverse learning needs of the students. District literacy and math content specialists were secured to support and work in collaboration with classroom teachers and school-based coaches to align curricular practices to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and instructional shifts. Cluster teachers are designated space in each classroom for use during preparation periods. Administration, staff and parents commonly express the positive impact and influence the arts have on student progress across content/discipline areas, especially in development of receptive/expressive language and socialization skills, which are the most significant Individual Education Plan goals for the majority of their students. The administrative and teacher mantra is, "We meet students where they are" and teams of teachers work collaboratively to make appropriate bi-monthly adjustments to the curriculum and performance tasks that result in skill development that prepare students for functional and successful post-secondary outcomes". The school's effective use of resources and its organizational decisions have resulted in students being engaged in challenging functional tasks which prepare them for appropriate academic and life skills.
- The school curricula is aligned to the schools' key standards and provides varied challenges to afford students opportunities to acquire and apply knowledge, and skills to close the achievement gap and ensure all students are cognitively engaged. (1.1)
  - The school's coherent and engaging curriculum offers opportunities for all students to engage in focused learning experiences aligned and

connected to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) that result in increased levels of interdisciplinary achievement. The curriculum and programs provide instructional access for students across a broad range of cognitive abilities/disabilities including and those across the Autism Spectrum. For students in standardized classrooms planned activities are aligned to CCLS but differentiated to alleviate instructional barriers for the diverse group of learners. Teachers plan instruction utilizing programs such as Touch Math, EQUALS Math, and the UNIQUE Learning System as support to Common Core based learning for students in alternate assessment. The District 75 Units of Study are the foundation of the English language arts curriculum for all learners. The school has prioritized explicit vocabulary development, CCLS Language 6 and Speaking & Listening as instructional foci based on student goals as evidenced on their individual education plan. Teachers consistently plan higher order questions and utilize Thinking Maps to capture information, thus making thoughtful decisions to encourage student achievement and close the achievement gap. The school leaders have strategically chosen programs that focus on development of students' positive life skills while sustaining cognitive engagement and addressing individual education plan goals. Such programs include Emotional Literacy (EL), Everyday Arts in Special Education (EASE), Urban Advantage, Cooperative Healthy Athletic, Motivated and Positive Students (CHAMPS), and the Saturday Academy (Title III). The EASE program provides tools and resources to develop higher-order thinking skills embedded in classroom arts-based activities. The Mood Meter is a tool used during activities within the EL program to develop students' skills in recognizing and labeling feelings, and advanced activities develop skills in understanding, expressing, and regulating emotions. Teachers plan for the delivery of instruction by creating instructional materials appropriate for students of multicultural backgrounds and learning styles. The diversity of the planned curriculum meets standards and provides varied challenges for students to acquire and apply knowledge and skills, thus allows them to achieve goals within their individual education plans.

- The school's commonly practiced belief system provides multiple entry points for all students as evidenced in teacher practices that promote increased access and student engagement. (1.2)
  - The school belief is that all students learn best when they engage in learning opportunities that develop their functional and independence skills through involvement in tasks and activities that improve their social and emotional needs. Furthermore, the school states that it is the responsibility of all adults within the school community to provide an environment to foster these beliefs. Literacy instruction is interdisciplinary and implemented through the arts. Technology is an integral and purposeful tool throughout classrooms as evidenced by the use of SMART boards, iPads, computers and student communication devices. For example, teachers use the LAMP Words for Life App as an iPad tool for vocabulary development, which is an instructional focus. Consistently evident across classrooms is the utilization of Teaching Points, Thinking Maps and common thematic units across grades and student populations. Within classrooms, teachers design classroom libraries consisting of high

interest/low level informational and non-fiction texts or District 75 functional libraries to provide accessible texts for students. To enhance their effectiveness in working with diverse learners teacher use Therapeutic Crisis Intervention (TCI) methods for de-escalating atypical student behaviors which also teaches the students strategies for self-regulation, thus increasing their ability to participate in the learning. A positive change in behavior presents an opportunity for older students to mentor younger students, and also serve as their bus escorts. Visual, verbal and gestural prompts and cues are embedded strategies written into the curricula, and units, across standardized and alternate assessment classrooms. Teachers create opportunities for students to engage with a multitude of materials, which serve as guides to help them understand and apply information to known and unfamiliar situations.

- All pedagogues actively engage in daily inquiry work with collaborative teacher teams resulting in purposeful strategic planning that strengthen instructional practice and optimize student outcomes. (4.2)
  - Teachers set purposeful professional goals which emphasize development of specific skills and techniques aligned to citywide expectations. Teachers and paraprofessionals participate in ongoing training to develop their knowledge of the Danielson Framework for Teaching (FfT) and its alignment and connection to CCLS for the purpose of designing classroom lessons that reflect the embedded understandings in the documents. The administrative team has designed a daily, double period schedule for teacher teams to meet in cohorts. The cohorts consist of classroom teachers, paraprofessionals and related service providers. During team meetings a structured focus evident was the use of a Smart Plan for Inquiry. Protocols such as the Tuning Protocol, a data team feedback sheet and rotating role assignments such as facilitator and note-taker was a noted practice. The focus of inquiry includes, Looking At Student Work (LASW) and assessment data. Teacher teams have designed CCLS aligned, theme-based units and rubrics across grade cohorts which are consistently evident across all classrooms. Team members participate in peer-to-peer observations and provide “glow and grow” feedback. This practice has resulted in additional professional collaborations and sharing of best instructional practices. Teachers engage in online planning and exchange of ideas across the school sites. The English as a second language teacher, speech therapist, guidance counselor and coach provide teachers with effective strategies and also participate on teams. Classroom observations and the ongoing analysis of student learning outcomes assist school leaders in identifying teacher pedagogical strengths. Four teachers in the school have been selected to participate in the Teacher Leadership Program (TLP), an annual internship which develops pedagogues’ understanding of educational leadership. Teachers engage in opportunities to lead training sessions and facilitate team meetings, resulting in development of leadership qualities, and positively impacting student achievement.

## What the school needs to improve

- Extend data collection and analysis practices to include actionable feedback and identify progress towards learning targets, thus promoting the acceleration of student achievement. (2.2)
  - The school uses several assessment tools that are aligned to the instructional focus and CCLS, such as Acuity, Foundations/Wade, Student Annual Needs Determination Inventory (SANDI), Early Childhood Assessment in Math (ECAM) and Dynamic Reading Assessment (DRA) to specifically identify and target individual student strengths and needs. However, ongoing checks for understanding that support identification of gaps in student learning and surface what students know and are able to do aligned and/or connected to CCLS and lead to strategic and purposeful adjustments to planning are not consistently evident across classrooms. Global data is collected but analysis of formative assessment data to individualize support and intervention for students and move them further towards optimal academic success is inconsistent. Teachers' use of formative assessment to improve instructional methods or to provide actionable student feedback throughout the teaching and learning process was not consistently evident. The use of student self-assessments, peer reviews, checklists and exit slips is also infrequent. Even though students have an understanding of rubric performance levels, they were unable to identify specific skills necessary to obtain better academic results across content areas. Student work accompanied by student-friendly rubrics to clearly define next steps in skill development is not yet a school-wide practice, resulting in limited specific skill development and the promotion of successful outcomes.
- Consistently communicate high expectations for students to all stakeholders and provide students with ongoing specific feedback that directs them towards achieving their instructional goals and prepares them for the next level. (3.4)
  - A monthly staff newsletter is distributed which captures pertinent information from all sites in the school community and includes professional articles and teacher tips. In alternate assessment classrooms the communication book is the primary form of communication between parents and teachers. Teachers consistently notify parents of their child's behavioral performance. Additionally, parents have direct access to administrators and staff at the school by personal phone and e-mail. Although an, Expectations-at-A Glance, document was distributed to all teachers which include criteria for such items as lesson plans, classroom environment and rubrics based on specific student populations, there is a lack of consistency in implementation and application across classrooms. Additionally, the school does not include specific skills or provide strategies that parents can utilize at home to support their children and help prepare their children for the next academic level. Developing systems to afford feedback to families regarding student achievement, lacks specificity in communication and limits their ability to discuss, the school's high expectations, content skill gaps or acknowledge any curricular expectations, thus inhibiting parent understanding and contributions to the learning and their relationship with the school.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

School name: The Success Express School	UD	D	P	WD			
Overall QR Score			X				
<b>Instructional Core</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula, including the arts, physical and health education, for a variety of learners and aligned to key State standards?			X				
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by a research-based, common teaching framework and is aligned to curricula, engaging and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products?			X				
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?		X					
<b>School Culture</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?			X				
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve them?		X					
<b>Systems for Improvement</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet students' learning needs as evidenced by meaningful student work products?				X			
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?			X				
4.1 Use the observation of classroom teaching with a research-based, common teaching framework and the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection, with a special focus on new teachers?			X				
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an <b>inquiry approach</b> that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?				X			
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?			X				
<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed