

# Closing the Achievement Gap

A Teacher's Perspective  
Stephanie Fritz



# Who Am I?

- ◆ Summa Cum Laude from Vanderbilt University, BS in Early Childhood Special Education
- ◆ Dean's Award for Academic Excellence, Vanderbilt University,
- ◆ Taught 1.5 years at Fairview Elementary School (FES), a public school in a suburb of Nashville
- ◆ Taught 4 years for Success Academy Charter Schools in NYC
  - ◆ Success Academy Harlem 1 (SAH1) for 2 years
  - ◆ Success Academy Union Square for 2 years, founding teacher
- ◆ Teacher Excellence Award, Success Academy Charter Schools, inaugural winner, 2014

# School Comparison

## FES

### public school

- ◆ Teachers worked hard and cared deeply
- ◆ Great principal who listened and worked long hours
- ◆ Kids enjoyed school
- ◆ Clear mission statement, working hard to meet it

## SAH1

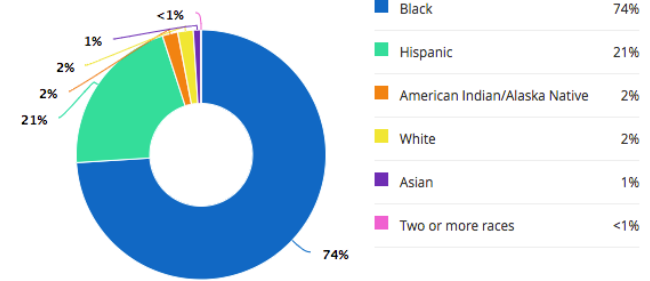
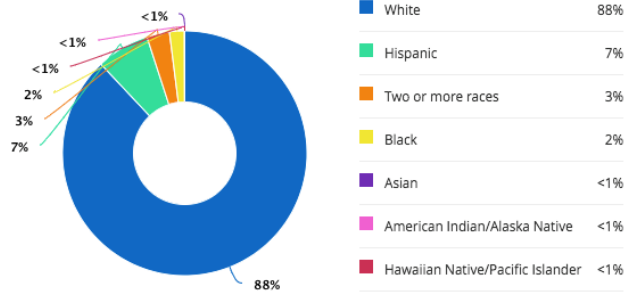
### public charter school

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- ◆ Kids enjoyed school
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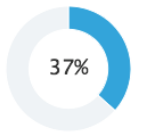
# State Test Scores

## FES public school

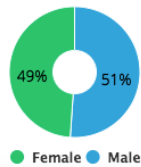
## SAH1 public charter school



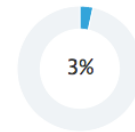
Students from low-income families



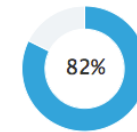
Gender



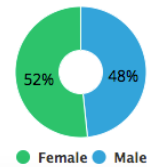
Students learning English



Students from low-income families



Gender



Grade 3, 4 English 51%, 58%

Grade 3, 4 English 87%, 88%

Grade 3, 4 Math 61%, 64%

Grade 3, 4 Math 98%, 92%

# What was different between my public school and my charter school?

- ◆ Reading Instruction
- ◆ Math Instruction
- ◆ Parent Involvement
- ◆ Classroom Behavior
- ◆ Teacher Training
- ◆ Data, Data, Data

# Reading Instruction

- ◆ Guided Reading 1 hour every morning. Entire school stopped.
- ◆ All teachers (e.g. science, gym, art) and teacher assistants and sometimes office workers were trained and taught reading groups, keeping all groups below 8 students.
- ◆ All instruction at exact reading level. Moved groups next day if needed.
- ◆ Library in every classroom.
- ◆ Full bag of books borrowed every night with books at reading level.
- ◆ Formally test reading level throughout year.
- ◆ In addition to phonics, study reading comprehension as a class where mostly students talk, not the teacher.

# Math Instruction

- ◆ More student play, less teacher talk
- ◆ Peers explaining difficult concepts, daily
- ◆ Several types of math instruction throughout day
  - ◆ i.e. counting objects, counting out loud, word problems, graphing or measuring
- ◆ Flexible grouping for instruction within class and/or across grade



# Parent Involvement

- ◆ Given teacher cell phone numbers
- ◆ Meet frequently to review progress
- ◆ Receive clear communication of any concerns and help needed
- ◆ School culture expectations for parents and teachers
- ◆ Have student read every day at home.



# Classroom Behavior

- ◆ Intense teacher training and practice at beginning of year on how to support positive classroom behaviors (e.g. listening, sitting, working).
- ◆ Observation and feedback from grade team leader and principal until all kids are learning all the time.
- ◆ Experts brought to schools for extra teacher training.
- ◆ Support from special education teacher and staff.

# Teacher Training

- ◆ School ended at lunch 1 day every week. Afternoon dedicated to teacher training.
- ◆ Some training within school and some as a network by grade level or subject.
- ◆ Possible Topics
  - ◆ Instruction
  - ◆ Assessments
  - ◆ Behavior
  - ◆ Recognition

# Data, Data, Data

- ◆ Ongoing assessments and formal assessments given frequently.
- ◆ Always use data from assessments (e.g. tests, checklists, work samples) to plan instruction.
- ◆ Be able to say what each student knows and needs to learn for each subject.
- ◆ Meet with principal weekly to review data and plan instruction to address gaps.
- ◆ Constantly tailoring class instruction to meet needs.
- ◆ Small group instruction to fill gaps.

# Conclusion

- ◆ Differences in math & reading instruction
- ◆ Leveraging parents
- ◆ Supporting positive behaviors
- ◆ Continuous teacher training
- ◆ Data dictates all instruction

# Questions?



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# References

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- ◆ <https://www.greatschools.org/new-york/new-york/8771-Success-Academy-Harlem-1/>