



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Abraham Lincoln Intermediate School

Public School 171

**528 Ridgewood Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11208**

Principal: Joan Beckman

Dates of review: May 9 - 10, 2007

Reviewer: Ken Bryan

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Abraham Lincoln is a large middle school serving 977 students from grades 5 through 8. The school's ethnic composition is 72% Hispanic, 15% Black, 12% Asian and others and 1% White. The proportion of students eligible for Title 1 funding is 89%, which is higher than similar and City-wide schools, and the proportion of special education students is 7%. There are 222 English language learners, 22% of the school's enrollment, whose native language is Spanish. The student attendance rate is 89%, which is lower than City-wide school averages.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school's principal is highly respected, a strong presence around the school; she demonstrates excellent operational and instructional leadership.
- Despite the school's large size, the principal, her cabinet and faculty know the students extremely well through excellent academic and personal guidance.
- The school uses data very effectively to set challenging goals for all students.
- There is a very strong focus upon continuing professional development through collaborative planning and the analysis of data.
- The students are very engaged and respectful within an extremely positive learning community.
- Data is used effectively to identify students in greatest need of improvement.
- Provision for the large numbers of English language learners is of a high quality.

What the school needs to improve

- Ensure that the analysis and presentation of aggregated comparative data is used effectively at cabinet level.
- Develop the levels of competence and confidence of the whole faculty in the use of technology for instruction, planning and data analysis.
- Use disaggregated data to set quantifiable and measurable goals for those students achieving below grade level.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a well-developed school.

Abraham Lincoln Intermediate School is one of the few middle schools which serve grades 5 through 8. Despite the poor condition of much of the building, and the lack of sport facilities, the school successfully meets the needs of its diverse learning community. The principal is highly respected by the students, the staff and parents. The school's cabinet and the faculty know the children extremely well. There is a very strong connection between the staff and the students.

The school gathers and uses data extremely well to set individualized goals for all its students. The school successfully meets the needs of its special education and English language learner populations and it places a strong emphasis upon nurturing the whole child through effective personal as well as academic guidance. One student stated, "The school is like a second home, the teachers are like parents to us." Further emphasis is placed on the professional development of the staff through collaboration and support. There is a culture of openness amongst the staff in terms of observation and peer support. The teachers plan the curriculum maps very collaboratively and the emphasis is upon interdisciplinary instructional programs.

The Abraham Lincoln Intermediate School is a calm and purposeful learning community. It sets high expectations for all students and the level of student engagement is high.

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 proficient.

The school effectively uses a variety of assessment data to inform planning, the setting of goals and the creation of differentiated individualized learning programs. Through the guidance of the principal and her cabinet (assistant principals and coaches), grade teachers effectively use objective assessments to track the progress of their students. Systems for comparing individual student performance are robust. Parents, students and teachers are actively engaged in the learning process together through the productive use of diagnostic report data. The school identifies performance trends well, it uses the formal testing process which includes the school report card, standardized test scores, grow report data, the Princeton review and other Citywide and State tests. The use of assessment portfolios has been particularly successful to track individual student progress and to store evidence. The cabinet successfully disaggregates data to identify sub-group performance.

Intervention programs for the large population of English language learners and special education students are well informed by the outcomes of assessments. In addition, data is analyzed for the different ethnic groups. The Read 180 program and speech and language support are good examples as well as the many effective bi-lingual and special

intervention programs for students whose education has been interrupted. A significant number of students are recent immigrants. Coaches meet with faculty staff to vigorously support planning for intervention and general education programs. There is on-going articulation between the classroom teacher, the testing coordinator and academic intervention specialists and counseling services using personalized intervention plans. The school is very proficient at monitoring individual student progress through the use of interim summative and formative assessments. The effective use of teacher observations, the compiling of annotated portfolios and the use of student conferences underpin the more formal City and State assessments. The performance of academic subjects is carefully compared. However, other comparative aggregated data is analyzed less rigorously at grade and whole school level. The cabinet does not analyze and present this data as effectively as other areas of data usage.

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.

Data is effectively used to drive the school’s goal-setting agenda. Data lies at the heart of the Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP), the planning for instruction, the rationales for professional development, and the formulation of intervention programs and the tracking of individual student progress. The process for constructing the CEP is very collaborative. The CEP, the curriculum maps, pacing calendars and the data analysis file clearly reflect the links between data and goal setting such as the planning for student intervention programs. Teachers meet at grade and faculty conferences and during instructional team meetings to explore cross-curricular themes continually. The school leadership team meets once a month to review the CEP.

The school successfully uses data to inform the work of the academic intervention staff who provide extended day, Saturday academy classes and ‘push-in’ programs for students with personal intervention plans. The school is using a successful technology-based reading intervention program which has resulted in improved reading scores. Provision for the large numbers of English language students is exemplary. Teachers regularly meet in grade teams to collaboratively set challenging goals for students. The school effectively uses raw score diagnostic data to set targets for improvement which is particularly successful for ‘at risk’ or ‘hot-list’ students. This information is regularly communicated to parents who are encouraged to access the data on-line. High expectations are regularly communicated and the involvement of the parent coordinator is excellent. Goals and plans for improving student performance and progress drive the activities of all members of the school community. This takes place at grade meetings, academic intervention meetings and through regular communications with the parents.

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.

Curriculum maps and pacing calendars clearly demonstrate alignment with the mandated curriculum and reflect excellent interdisciplinary modifications, linking English language

arts programs to social studies and science. All teachers work collaboratively to create differentiated content area plans based upon the available interim data. The high quality of differentiated instruction is consistent across the school and teachers are held accountable for improving instruction and for student outcomes. The school has very high expectations, not only in terms of the levels of student achievement, but also for the faculty. Classroom teachers meet these expectations by their thorough collection of data, and their use of conferencing, running records of assessment and daily observations. There is an open and transparent culture of professional development and the teachers use well developed systems for monitoring student progress and setting goals. Regular grade conferences and common planning time meetings are held to discuss academic programs and student performance. As a consequence instructional planning is of a high quality. The principal encourages creative adaptations to the mandated curriculum using interdisciplinary themes and the instructional programs actively engage the students. The faculty knows and respects the students and provides them with very good academic and personal guidance.

The principal and her cabinet make creative and pro-active use of the budget to meet the needs of all students. A good example is the way scheduling and class size decisions have been made to meet the needs of the large numbers of low performing students on entry. The school constructively uses the budget to provide professional development, extended day activities and resources. Student attendance is given a high priority by the school. The systems used to challenge absence are rigorous and consistent. The parents are kept well informed through the work of the parent coordinator and this ensures strong links between home and school.

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 is well developed.

Teachers have been selected according to their expertise, their commitment to collaborative working and upon their potential to use data rigorously. The principal is careful to select teachers who can challenge and motivate the students. The collaborative vetting process is very effective. The principal has high expectations for her faculty both in terms of pedagogic proficiency and its ability to improve student performance. There was clear evidence in the review that these expectations are being met.

The provision for staff development is a strong feature of the school. All programs carefully respond to the needs of the faculty and arise from the robust use of data analysis, classroom observations and reviews of the curriculum map. Regular grade and content area conferences effectively focus upon data and they are extremely well supported by the assistant principals and the mathematics and English coaches. There is a strong sense of collaboration and support in an open and transparent atmosphere of trust and respect. The use of frequent observations by the cabinet and the principal and opportunities to enable teachers to share good practice has added to this professional openness. The use of 'buddy' teachers to support new staff members is a very successful feature. Ideas, methods and resources are frequently shared. Differentiated workshops are provided as part of the school's on-going support in this area. The principal visits classrooms each day and she has a strong relationship with the faculty. She is highly visible around school, accessible and clearly demonstrates the capacity to manage continuous improvement. The school runs smoothly and procedures are rigorously followed.

The use of partnerships with outside bodies is another strong feature. Links with the Center for Intervention in Education has resulted in funding for programs for the highest performing students. Project booster programs and visits have significantly enhanced the education of those students aiming for college. Other collaborations focusing upon extra provision for English language learner students and for specific groups of parents, who are given support in their understanding of Princeton Review data, have been extremely successful.

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 frequently reviews its goals and plans. This is an effective and well-organized process. The Comprehensive Education Plan (CEP) is written yearly and modifications are made throughout the year by the administration. The detailed and effective CEP is seen as an intrinsic working document and it is used as an effective tool for whole school improvement. The school leadership team meets monthly to review the school's progress and alignment to its goals. The process is augmented by regular grade and content area meetings.

Student data is continuously used to inform the school self review process. Interim assessments provide the principal with evidence for well-designed modifications to the instructional programs. The school carefully uses this analysis to adjust the curriculum maps. This process is informed by rigorous comparisons within the various study groups. Interim assessment data, student portfolios, 'hot-list' student data and the outcomes of the professional development program are analyzed effectively by the cabinet team. The curriculum map, the CEP and pupil data are reviewed each May at the beginning of the review cycle when short, medium and long-term plans are set. Whole school priorities are determined at this time. This process is augmented by professional development days in August, November and June.

Information gathered from periodic assessments is constantly reviewed in light of individual and school-wide goals. Grade conferences and common preparation times are used very effectively to consider student data and to set further goals for improvement. Cohort and individual student achievement targets are set at this time. Curriculum maps are regularly modified, taking into account the achievements of the students. This is a particularly effective feature; for example the mandated curriculum has been creatively modified to plan interdisciplinary instructional programs. The school has adopted an agile and flexible strategy for school self-evaluation.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Abraham Lincoln School (PS 171)	∅	✓	+
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