

Quality Review Report 2008-2009

Abraham Lincoln High School

High School 410

**2800 Ocean Parkway
Brooklyn
NY 11235**

Principal: Ari Hoogenboom

Dates of review: April 27 - 29, 2009

Lead Reviewer: Jeffrey Soloff

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Abraham Lincoln is a high school with 2628 students from grade 9 through grade 12. The school population comprises 38% Black, 22% Hispanic, 24% White, and 16% Asian students. The student body includes 14% English language learners and 8% special education students. Boys account for 59% of the students enrolled and girls account for 41%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 83.7%. The school is not in receipt of Title 1 funding.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Despite a student population of 2500 students, Abraham Lincoln High School has a family feel to it. Administrators, staff and students enjoy coming to school every day. There is a sense of the past along with a sense of change for the future in this 76-year old-building. The principal's enthusiasm has changed the culture of the school during his five years in the position. As one student said, "He cares about each of us." He has engineered great strides in safety and security, curriculum development, technology and the use of data. Teachers and students feel that the administration hears their voice. The strong, cohesive administration meets weekly to discuss school issues and data. Their frequent formal and informal lesson observations with feedback are instrumental in improving teachers' instructional practices. Some teachers differentiate their instruction well and use group activities in the workshop part of the lesson. Differentiated learning is not however, consistent practice throughout all subjects and grades. While firmly established in the ninth grade academy, goal setting is not consistent school wide in all core subjects. Specific learning objectives for each student with interim checkpoints to assess progress are not yet in place.

The establishment of a ninth grade academy three years ago has improved the quality of instruction, as well as attendance. Teachers work in teams, using a block schedule. The teams collaborate during their common planning time. The locating of offices for the ninth grade guidance counselors within the team office has facilitated successful delivery of guidance services. The school is finalizing its plans to expand the academy concept to the tenth, eleventh and twelfth grades to bring its benefits to these grades.

The school offers a wide variety of extra-curricular opportunities that greatly enrich student experiences. Students value their teachers, the course offerings, and the range of clubs and sports teams. They also welcome the time that teachers give to providing lunchtime and after-school tutoring. The principal communicates high expectations for achievement to students, parents and faculty. Parents are enthusiastic about the school and many chose Lincoln for their children instead of a neighborhood high school. Improved communication strengthened the relationship between parents and teachers. Teachers are readily available for parent conferences and keep parents informed about their children's progress throughout the year. A strong relationship with community-based organizations has provided additional support, resources and materials for the school. A relationship with Kingsborough Community College gives students an opportunity to take college level courses. Guided by the principal's vision, Lincoln expects to excel in the near future.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal's diligent leadership has had a positive impact on safety and security, scheduling and instruction, and has been the driving force behind engaging the faculty in a culture of change.
- The innovative ninth grade academy delivers a strong, well-developed curriculum that features collaborative planning, instruction and guidance services and serves as a model for the proposed academies in the other grades.
- The principal's student-centered vision for the future of the school has resulted in a high level of staff collaboration and intervisitation, an improvement in the quality of instruction and an increase in teachers' use of technology.
- The school communicates high expectations about attendance, behavior and academic performance and fosters a calm, respectful and supportive climate for learning.
- The school has developed effective partnerships with community based organizations and colleges that provides worthwhile programs, resources and support for students.
- The comprehensive observation process provides constructive feedback for teachers and incorporates the scrutiny of achievement data into the post-observation discussion.

What the school needs to improve

- Introduce a consistent school-wide approach to setting goals with students and parents, identifying the actions they need to take to achieve them.
- Set out clear expectations of how instruction should be differentiated, provide differentiated training and support for teachers and ensure implementation throughout the school.
- Establish a systematic approach to the gathering, analysis, dissemination and use of data at whole-school, department and individual student levels and extend the analysis to examine patterns and trends in all relevant sub-groups in order to take timely action.
- Use interim checkpoints that enable the principal, administration and faculty to modify student and faculty goals in a timely manner in order to optimize the impact of actions and to celebrate success along the way.

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.

The school has good systems in place in some departments for collecting data about students' academic development throughout the year. This enables the school to clearly identify and address the personal, social, emotional and academic development of each student. Administrators and teachers analyze report cards and scholarship reports as well as ARIS data to identify underachieving students. The disaggregation of Regents scores provides valuable information about sub-groups. Data about struggling students is now included in post-observation conferences. The monitoring of the performance and progress of certain sub-groups such as Black males has led to improved programs for these students. However, the absence of a systematic approach to the collection, analysis, dissemination and use of data school-wide prevents teachers from taking instruction to the next level. The identification of vertical and horizontal patterns and trends leads to the development of more effective instruction for these students. As of yet, the school does not have a designated person to gather and analyze data, preventing the school from engaging in constant, up-to-date analysis of student performance.

The school effectively uses disaggregated data to identify differences in the performance of certain sub-groups. Black males, identified as under-performing and under credit, receive extra support.

The school ensures that parents receive feedback through report cards, scholarship reports and frequent meetings with teachers. Attendance feedback is provided daily through a phone messenger system. This system and diligent work by teachers has resulted in a significant increase in attendance and an improvement in punctuality this year.

Weekly cabinet meetings keep all administrators informed about current issues in the school. These meetings include analysis of interim assessments, item analysis of test results and Acuity data. These on-going discussions enable the school to ensure calibration so that effective decisions can be made.

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.

Teachers throughout the school collaborate on setting departmental and personal goals. At an administrative retreat, ambitious school-wide goals were set for the upcoming

school year. This year's goals were to increase the attendance rate, improve the graduation rate and to redesign the upper academies. However, there is no consistent approach to setting teachers' goals. The school's processes for setting student goals are more firmly in place in the successful ninth grade academy than in the rest of the school. The ninth grade students have individual action plans, which help them focus on how to improve their performance. A school-wide approach to student goal setting that is measurable and includes interim benchmarks and an action plan for each student to reach his/her goals is not yet in place. In addition, there is no mechanism to inform parents about their child's goals for the year and how they will be measured, which limits parents' ability to support their child.

Discussions about students and teaching styles are held with teachers whose passing rates are below 70% in an attempt to improve performance. The Comprehensive Education Plan, developed through a systematic process in which members of the administrative team are each responsible for developing a specific part of the plan, drives the school forward. The analysis of data from Regents' examinations, scholarship reports and No Child Left Behind testing is an integral part of the process. The assistant principals review the CEP and the principal finalizes it in collaboration with all of the constituencies involved in its development.

The school is diligent in communicating its high expectations of students through its whole-school goals. Goals are not precise and specific and thus hamper acceleration. Parent responses to the learning environment survey indicated a lack of knowledge about their child's goals. The school has high expectations for attendance, lateness and student behavior. Increased parent attendance at Parent Teacher Association meetings and at other school events resulted from the efforts of the Parent Coordinator.

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 close work of the principal with the assistant principals and team leaders ensures that the core curriculum focuses on meeting the needs of all students as well as properly preparing them for Regents' examinations. Recent curriculum revisions increased the rigor of the instructional program. A wide array of activities available after school, as well as a Saturday tutoring program, supplements the regular instructional program. Parents appreciate the efforts made by teachers to provide extra help during their lunch periods as well as after school. One student commented, "There is something for everyone at Lincoln." In addition, an evening high school serves as a "last chance" for students who cannot function well in a regular day high school. The planned addition of a school band is intended to enhance the music program. Preparation of the school's budget is the responsibility of an assistant principal. The school effectively uses its resources to ensure staff has what it needs to meet the needs of students. For example, the introduction of SMARTboards and Promethean Boards significantly upgrades the technology available to students and teachers.

Teachers are at various levels in their understanding of differentiation and inconsistent use of differentiated instruction is a concern of the principal. Examples of good practice are evident, but clear expectations of differentiation or a program of differentiated professional development to support teachers are not in place. The teachers' center has

been instrumental in providing professional development for some staff with a corresponding improvement in teaching and learning.

The principal has been diligent in creating a positive culture and a calm, safe, orderly school that students are proud to attend. He has instilled a sense of pride in the staff and students during his tenure as principal. A teacher stated, "I went to Lincoln and it is the only place that I wanted to work." Another teacher volunteered that, "We are a family here."

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.

A comprehensive observation process provides constructive feedback for teachers in well written and thorough observation reports. Administrators perform both formal and "walkthrough" unannounced observations with a focus on improving academic rigor. The school has been quick to use ARIS printouts for the relevant class to stimulate post-observation conferences. At these conferences, administrators give teachers feedback from their lessons. They also ask about the essential questions relating to the Understanding by Design curriculum, authentic assessments and what they are doing for the high performing students and those students who need additional support. The principal joins an assistant principal for one observation of each probationary teacher. New teacher mentoring, provided by the Learning Support Organization, increases their instructional knowledge as well as providing classroom techniques and strategies for effective management.

A strong sense of collaboration exists in the school. The main inquiry team observed the 15 lowest performing ninth grade students in their classrooms. They reviewed transcripts and report cards and recommended specific learning goals to the teachers for these students. An informal sub-team studied data for those students who did well in the ninth grade, but were failing in the tenth grade, and recommended changes in the curriculum. Another sub-team looked into why students who previously passed math were failing tenth grade geometry. This team visited other high schools to observe effective instruction in geometry in an effort to strengthen their practice. However, the teams have not yet focused strongly enough on the evaluation of the impact of their work.

Most professional development in the school originates from the on-site teachers' center. This year, it assisted teachers in the use of new technology and intervisitations that enable teachers to observe colleagues who already use this new technology effectively. The center has worked with individual teachers, not the entire staff, in expanding opportunities to differentiate instruction in order to better meet the needs of all students.

The school has excellent partnerships with various community-based organizations that provide important services, materials and resources for the students. The Good Shepherd programs target truants; the Jewish Center of Coney Island provides an after-school Scholastic Aptitude Test tutoring program as well as yoga classes. The Health Corps' program focuses on nutrition and healthy living. An association with Kingsborough Community College's Liberty partnership provides an opportunity for African American students to visit college campuses to expand their choices for higher education. In an effort to present a more rigorous curriculum, Kingsborough Community

College provides college level courses in various subjects at Lincoln. The school's guidance department, in conjunction with the Good Shepherd program, offers guidance services that meet the needs of a diverse student population. The location of the ninth grade counselors in the ninth grade academy has facilitated students' smooth transition from middle to high school.

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.

School leaders examine student report cards and scholarship data regularly in order to examine individual student progress and to ensure that the school is on track to achieve its goals. This analysis leads to adjustments in the curriculum. Interim checkpoints that will improve the delivery of instruction and enable the principal and teachers to modify student and faculty goals are not however evident.

Administrators use data from the previous quality review, progress report and learning environment survey to evaluate the effectiveness of programs, curriculum and disciplinary procedures. Analyzing data closely determines whether existing interventions are effective. The recent emphasis and improvement in attendance and improved communication with parents are a result of this process. School leaders are not analyzing, interpreting, evaluating and monitoring the progress of all students in all subjects so that revisions to instructional programs occur and new learning goals with rigorous timelines are established.

Plans for student achievement are included in the Comprehensive Education Plan, which is reviewed monthly at the leadership team meetings. It is clearly aligned with the school's plan for improving student outcomes. School leaders use the progress report, last year's Quality Review and the learning environment survey to make organizational decisions. Every six weeks, the principal meets with the assistant principals to review the plan. The principal's clear vision for the road ahead bodes well for the school; his assistant principals have bought into his vision. The motivated, collaborative staff is a great asset in turning his vision into reality.

School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

School name: Abraham Lincoln High School	△	▷	✓	+
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>	△	▷	✓	+
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>	△	▷	✓	+
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, DY0, 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