

Quality Review Report 2009-2010

Abraham Lincoln Intermediate School

Middle School 171

**528 Ridgewood Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11208**

Principal: Yolanda Fustanio

Dates of review: May 18-19, 2010

Lead Reviewer: Nancy Gannon

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Abraham Lincoln is a middle school with 855 students from grade 5 through grade 8. The school population comprises 1% White students, 11% Black students, 10% Asian students, and 78% Hispanic students. The student body includes 24% English language learners and 12% special education students. Boys account for 49% of the students enrolled and girls account for 51%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2008 - 2009 was 90.4%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is underdeveloped with proficient features.

Abraham Lincoln Intermediate is led by a second-year principal who works with a committed staff to develop goals that are based on current data around student achievement. To that end, she works closely with the data specialist to understand an array of data, including annual assessments, periodic assessments, and attendance statistics. Although goals are well chosen at the school, the leadership is still developing ways to align those goals to the daily work of the school. As a result, the school has a professional development plan for the year, but that plan never explicitly links the professional learning to the school goals. Similarly, the school has developed an effective system for tracking teacher growth over time through their observations. However, the recommendations in observations do not explicitly connect to school goals. As a result, the areas where the school targets and supports teacher growth are disconnected from the specific goals they have set for themselves as a school.

Currently, the school is in the midst of creating a strong, thoughtfully mapped curriculum that emphasizes rigorous work and critical thinking, and is linked to clear assessments. That curriculum is complete in some grade levels within some subject areas. Consequently, some classes have more engaging curriculum than others do. Similarly, there are classrooms where strong teachers differentiate instruction so that students have multiple paths to find success and are clear of their own learning goals. However, other classrooms offer undifferentiated instruction where a portion of the students cannot engage at an appropriate level. As a result of uneven classroom practice, opportunities for learning on high levels are inconsistent. One student remarked, "Some kids won't get the help they need because all teachers teach differently at this school."

The school has created high expectations for students and has developed an array of opportunities to push advanced students. In addition, the principal has developed strategies for ongoing conversations with families about student progress, with a strong safety net of social supports for children and families who are struggling. Teachers have begun to meet a few times a month to learn from student work and from their own investigations, although this work needs to be more data-infused and more directly aligned to school goals. The school is still developing systems for effectively monitoring progress toward school goals, and so at this time, they cannot accurately assess where they are strongest and weakest in their practice. Similarly, because they do not yet have systems to evaluate professional growth at the school, they cannot yet identify which teacher supports have been effective and which have not.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- By creating a variety of opportunities for young people, the school has engaged parents and students in the school community.
 - High achieving students have a range of opportunities to be academically challenged during the school day, after school, and on Saturdays. The school offers math Regents classes to grade 8 students, and chess classes to other students during the regular day. In addition, the Saturday academy offers specialized academic experiences for younger students in an attempt to prepare them for an advanced Regents path in high school. These opportunities strategically convey high expectations to a population of students and have resulted in greater numbers of acceptances to specialized high schools this year.
 - In addition to plays, concerts, and other evening events, parents are invited to awards assemblies and dinners to celebrate students' achievements. By including families in the celebration of academic growth, the school builds relationships that will help students succeed.
- The school provides internal professional development and collaborates with outside agencies to ensure that students and families are well supported and can focus on learning.
 - By collaborating with local community based organizations, the school has expanded its capacity to offer a wide array of youth development supports to students. Several parents highlighted the partner-sponsored after school activities like drama and music as strengths of the school, and New York Psychotherapy and other organizations have stepped in to support students and families in deep crisis. By providing this variety of supports for the disparate student and family needs, the school frees up teachers to focus specifically on moving student achievement.
 - The school has provided professional development around class environment, and that support has allowed teachers to create a positive culture in the classroom. As a result, teachers are able to work on academic learning without distractions.
- School leaders develop specific and measurable goals that push the school community to focus on the most urgent data around student learning.
 - The school has clear and actionable goals that are targeting their neediest populations based on most recent data. For example, they have set targets around making gains for the bottom third of students in math and English on all grade levels, which aligns directly with their most recent Progress Report. By choosing relevant goals based on current student progress, the school provides the first step in creating opportunities for students to achieve at greater levels.
- The school clearly analyzes an array of data to understand trends and determine next steps to move student outcomes.

- Administrators, in conjunction with the data analyst, have carefully looked at a variety of school data, including ACUITY scores, annual assessments, and attendance, in order to better understand where the school has moved and where it still needs to develop strategies for effectively supporting students. This process results in specific actions that are based on the data they have seen. As a result of one round of data study, the school adjusted the Saturday academy to target a different group of students based on the results of recent periodic assessments. The school is now better able to target its energies toward the neediest students.
- The school's new efforts around parental involvement have resulted in closer ties with students' families, and that communication better supports student learning.
 - In addition to regular progress reports, the principal holds "Second Cup of Coffee" meetings where families are invited to come in and have more substantial conversations with school leaders about issues, concerns, or ideas they might want to share. Parents mentioned that this new initiative provided them with better access to information about their child's progress.
 - The school has provided ARIS training workshops throughout the year. As a result, parents can easily access information about their child's academic growth and use that information to support learning.

What the school needs to improve

- Align professional development offerings with school goals and then continuously measure the impact of that professional development on student learning.
 - Currently, the professional development plan includes staple offerings like "class environment" and "summarizing" but does not focus explicitly on school instructional goals. In addition, outcomes of professional development are not formally monitored to measure implementation or impact on student learning. Because this teacher support is not aligned or regularly evaluated, it is difficult to assess whether it is supporting the school in moving student learning.
 - At this time, the school offers some teachers limited opportunities to lead professional development. However, some teachers that the school identified as particularly strong said that they had not had any opportunity to lead their peers in developing strong pedagogical practices. As a result, the school is not effectively harnessing internal strengths or building leadership capacity within the school.
- Build on current curriculum mapping efforts to ensure that in every subject area, there is rigorous, standards-based curriculum that pushes students to higher levels of thinking.
 - Recently, the literacy coach and teacher center leader, along with teachers, have begun efforts to revise and enrich the curriculum using a backward design process that aligns state standards to essential

questions and rigorous assessments. However, at this time, not every teacher has access to this rich curriculum and therefore, some lessons are less rigorous or offer limited opportunities to engage in the learning.

- Support teachers in implementing a consistent pedagogy that emphasizes differentiation, critical thinking, and meaningful dialogue so that students on every level have an opportunity to strengthen their skills.
 - A few teachers demonstrated strong ability to offer a thoughtful lesson with multiple entry points and a clear sense among students about the purpose of the work. However, in other classrooms, teachers offered undifferentiated lessons that only engaged some students or work that was not rigorous and did not push students at high levels. For example, one teacher offered multiple activities in a class, but they included an exercise where students matched a word and definition by drawing a line across the page and an activity where six students were assigned to copy definitions from one shared dictionary. It is not yet evident that all teachers know how to engage students in a variety of meaningful work.
- Harness the energy of teacher teams to participate in a clear, data-rich inquiry process that investigates instructional strategies, implements changes, and documents impact on student learning.
 - Although all teachers are engaged in teams that meet three times a month, those teams are not consistently using a rigorous inquiry process. For example, one team just began their work in the last few months and teachers have been employing a new instructional strategy in classes. However, they have not collected any pre- or post-implementation data and thus are unable to accurately assess effectiveness of the new strategy.
 - Cabinet members lead all of the inquiry teams at this time. Because teachers are not able to lead any of the teams, the school cannot currently use the inquiry team structures to build leadership capacity throughout the school.
- Develop an action plan to reach school goals, along with benchmarks to measure progress, and align that plan with all other initiatives, including professional development and inquiry, to ensure academic growth.
 - Currently, the school has meaningful goals but they are seemingly distinct from the everyday work of the school, including the professional development and the inquiry work. There are no structures to measure progress toward goals and no identified benchmarks along the way. As a result, the school cannot accurately assess how much progress they have made toward year-end goals around student learning.
 - Similarly, some teachers set goals for some students, but many goals are too broad to be measurable. For example, one student's goals were "to get better in reading, writing, and spelling." That goal had no interim benchmarks or ways to assess progress.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2009-2010

School name: Abraham Lincoln Intermediate School	Δ	▷	✓	+
Overall QR Score		X		
Quality Statement 1 – Instructional and Organizational Coherence: The school has a coherent strategy to support student learning that aligns curriculum, instruction and organizational decisions.				
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	Δ	▷	✓	+
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous and coherent curricula, including the Arts, 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, and ensure that it is: aligned to the curriculum, engaging, and differentiated to enable all students to produce meaningful work products?		X		
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs?			X	
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 1		X		
Quality Statement 2 – Gather and Analyze Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, analyze and share information on student learning outcomes to understand school and student progress over time.				
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	Δ	▷	✓	+
2.1 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the school level?			X	
2.2 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the team and classroom level?			X	
2.3 Use or develop tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize and analyze student performance trends?			X	
2.4 Engage in an open exchange of information with students and families regarding students' learning needs and outcomes?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 2			X	

Quality Statement 3 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently engage the school community and use data to set and track suitably high goals for accelerating student learning.							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
3.1 Establish a coherent vision of future development that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are understood and supported by the entire school community?			X				
3.2 Use collaborative and data informed processes to set measurable and differentiated learning goals for student subgroups, and students in need of additional support?		X					
3.3 Ensure the achievement of learning goals by tracking progress at the school, teacher team and classroom level?			X				
3.4 Communicate high expectations to students and families, engage them in decision-making, and promote active involvement in the school community?			X				
Overall score for Quality Statement 3			X				
Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals and student learning and emotional needs.							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
4.1 Use the observation of classroom teaching 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 inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?		X					
4.3 Provide professional development that promotes independent and shared reflection, opportunities for leadership growth, and enables teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve learning outcomes?		X					
4.4 Integrate child/youth development, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations with the school-wide goals 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 progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	△	➤	✓	+			
5.1 Evaluate the quality of curricular, instructional and organizational decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?		X					
5.2 Evaluate systems for assessing students, organizing data, and sharing information with student and families, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?			X				
5.3 Establish and sustain a transparent, collaborative system for measuring progress towards interim and long term goals and making adjustments during the year and over time?		X					
5.4 Use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of structured professional collaboration, capacity building and leadership development strategies?		X					
Overall score for Quality Statement 5			X				
Quality Review Scoring Key							
△	Underdeveloped	➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed