

Quality Review Report 2009-2010

Hostos-Lincoln Academy of Science

Middle/High School 500

475 Grand Concourse

Bronx

NY 10455

Principal: Nicholas Paarlberg

Dates of review: March 23 - 24, 2010

Lead Reviewer: Yolanda Torres

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Hostos-Lincoln Academy of Science is a middle/high school with 551 students from grade 6 through grade 12. The school population comprises 27% Black, 71% Hispanic, 1% White, and 2% Asian students. The student body includes 15% special education students. Boys account for 44% of the students enrolled and girls account for 56%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2008 - 2009 was 92.8%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Hostos-Lincoln Academy of Science is a middle/high school located within a community college in the South Bronx. With an 89% graduation rate and 98% of its students attending college, the school surpasses the citywide percentage. The College Readiness Program is a great incentive, and students and families are well supported through the informational and planning processes for college preparedness and beyond. Upon entry in sixth grade, students meet with counsellors and social workers to set up their profiles. Students are well supported to engage them in self-advocacy in reaching the expectation for graduating high school with an associate's degree. Students and families appreciate these meetings and are aware of the school expectations for attendance, behavior, academics, and their alignment to performance and maturation. The Middle Grades Initiative provides middle level students multiple entry points for a smooth transition and preparation for successful high school and college-level work. Parents appreciate the work and the relationships with the program staff as well as the information and support offered to them and their children. Students attend overnight college trips with staff and parents to expand their understanding of their educational responsibilities. Students attend after-school programs and clubs for leadership development. In balance with the academics, preventative intervention services are in place to help students cope with the societal challenges they encounter in their daily lives. They know that staff members are there to help them succeed academically, socially, and emotionally.

Teachers attend weekly content meetings where they make decisions on curriculum development and course design. As teachers make instructional decisions and choices that work for their own teaching, they also offer tutoring sessions during their own time to provide students in the lowest third with instructional strategies for academic improvement. The school is not yet up-to-par with the expectation for teacher involvement in collaborative inquiry teams, leading to inconsistent strategic analysis of data and incongruent focus on the specific needs of student groupings at the classroom level. In addition, the lack of content-specific teacher feedback on student work and inconsistent differentiated instruction deprive student sub-groups of receiving targeted instruction to meet their individual academic needs. Staff stability and teacher empowerment contribute to an environment where all students have equal access to learning and growing. Students see themselves "growing and being productive" thanks to their principal and teachers. The principal uses the budget to maintain classes at a low number to support students' needs. In order to achieve the school-wide goal of moving to the next level, students understand the importance of learning and keeping that focus. However, the lack of established interim benchmarks for students to set goals and checkpoints by subjects hinders the school's ability to empower students in the self-monitoring of their academic progress and to adjust their learning during the school year.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school is a safe, small, close-knit learning environment where everyone is acquainted and students feel cared for and supported.
 - Students clearly voice that there is a sense of community and support from the adults and their peers. Teachers and other support staff have office hours for students and parents in need of information or simply someone to reach out to in moments of distress.
 - Parents express their satisfaction with the school climate and know that if their children reach out to the adults in the building, they will receive the support needed. They deem that a small setting is a 'plus' due to their children being safe in an environment where they can focus on their education.
- Parents are clear on the school-wide expectations and appreciate the learning opportunities offered to their families through meetings and workshops.
 - Parents appreciate the school arranging training sessions for families to receive computers to take home. This has been possible through a partnership with a well-known community-based organization that provides families with computers at low cost. Having a computer at home, affords families the opportunity to access school information such as ARIS Parent Link, the school website and the ability to email the staff. Internet access has been possible thanks to the school's partnership with a leading telephone company. Parents see this as a way of closing the achievement gap and establishing a communication bridge between the home and school.
 - The school celebrates student achievements by planning breakfast and/or dinner meetings with families. Students and their families enjoy the programs and workshops offered to continue supporting student and family learning. Recently, the junior class, alongside their family members, participated in a school dinner to celebrate their achievement thus far. The school is closely monitoring the progress of this particular group of students because this will be the first class to graduate from high school with an associate's degree.
- The College Readiness Program offers academic, social, and emotional support to all students in preparation for their college years and beyond.
 - Counselors and social workers work with all students on an individual basis to develop a meaningful academic plan to help them help them achieve academically and transition smoothly through their student years. This college awareness program affords students the opportunity to set their mind frame on their academic journey with individualized support and preventative services. In addition, students participate in experiential activities outside the school to help them make real-life connections.
 - Students see learning and growing on a college campus as a "huge plus" and a great opportunity. Students interact with college students to learn about their goals and the factors leading to college success. Sophomore students with

high averages can take English and Math Regents. The school reports that its top eighth grade students are historically accepted to specialized high schools.

- The school consistently communicates high expectations on attendance, behavior, and academic achievement so that students understand that failure is not an option.
 - o High school students taking college-level courses understand the importance of attendance and its impact on their academic achievement. They receive course syllabi that describe course requirements and expectations. Students fully understand the maturity needed to continue attending these classes as well as adherence to work timelines. Teachers and counselors stress to students and families on an ongoing basis the importance of attending their classes regularly and the percentages they must achieve to pass their coursework.
 - o Early in the year, the academic team conducts an extensive review on how students are doing academically and socially. During the summer, excelling students have the opportunity to take internships in museums, theaters and colleges to enhance their skills.
- The school has a myriad of partnerships with community-based organizations and after-school clubs to support the academic and social needs of students.
 - o The school offers clubs initiated by school-based organizations to enhance student learning alongside extracurricular interest in music, drama, and science. Small groups meet regularly to explore processes and experiences based on their readings, writings, and research. This type of exchange lends students to develop their academic discourse and critical thinking skills to accelerate their learning.
 - o Some of the community-based organizations in the school provide students with tools and strategies to develop leadership qualities and how to handle difficult situations in the outside world. Organizations such as Safe Horizon sponsored by Joe Torre, Middle Grades Initiative/Gear Up, and Vineyard Theatre provide preventative services as well as academic interventions for students' meta-cognitive and emotional improvement.
- School leaders and coaches track students' school-wide needs to make systemic and organizational decisions to provide students with suitable instructional support.
 - o The school uses a database for school-wide data analysis to determine how classes are structured and organized. While the school assesses the middle level students three times a year to earmark their needs, they also trace the lowest third students' pattern of achievement to assess the reasons for their lack of progress and provides appropriate supports.
 - o College liaison and administrators look at the high school graduation rate and course grades to evaluate the effectiveness of the college-level coursework. They assess the effectiveness of the courses by assessing the syllabi during the summer in alignment with the grade results and student work. After this analysis, the school administrators and college staff meet to discuss the outcomes to make adjustments for future classes.

What the school needs to improve

- Build on the school-wide tracking and goal-setting process by enabling teachers to develop interim benchmarks for all students, to challenge them in the monitoring and self-assessment of their work.
 - Students understand that the yearlong goal is to achieve a high percentage grade on their coursework and Regents. However, students are unable to indicate what their short-term goals are, and are unable to set benchmarks to help them monitor their learning and make adjustments accordingly.
 - Teachers are beginning to re-focus their efforts on collaborative data-driven dialogue and analysis of student work to gain a deeper understanding on how to support individual students' learning needs. At present, teacher-student discussions do not all include SMART goals and tracking processes to engage students in taking ownership of their learning.
- Ensure that all students consistently receive differentiated instructional support to accelerate their academic learning.
 - There are pockets of sound instruction where teachers differentiate their lessons to some extent. However, there is inconsistency in differentiated instruction which denies all students lesson challenges to further their learning. Teacher feedback is currently not clear enough to assist students in developing their understanding of precisely how to improve, and to take ownership of their learning.
 - Ongoing data analysis and individual conferences with students lead to a clear picture of their learning styles and academic needs. However, the outcomes of these processes are not shared during collaborative teacher team meetings to enable strategic and differentiated planning aligned to students' needs.
- Develop teacher inquiry-based processes to use data to identify relevant student groupings and appropriate learning activities.
 - Collaborative teacher meetings lack inquiry-based discussions and data-informed processes for planning lessons that address students' proficiency needs. In addition, the lack of a consistent goal-setting process, leads to decreased understanding of how to accelerate student learning in specific subgroups.
 - Although teachers meet to plan curriculum and discuss key standards, there is a lack of substantial dialogue on how to leverage change on the teaching practice to improve student achievement.
- Refine the systems for aggregating and sharing results of student assessments to ensure a cohesive focus on student needs.
 - While there are school-wide practices to share overall student data, this practice has yet to consistently influence at the classroom level. The school lacks consistent protocols to measure the effectiveness of student assessments and organizational tools or to make adjustment for coherence in data-driven teaching practices that meet students' needs.

School Quality Criteria 2009-2010

School name: Hostos-Lincoln Academy of Science	△	➤	✓	+
Overall QR Score			X	
Quality Statement 1 – Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: 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>				
	△	➤	✓	+
1.1 Design and deliver rigorous and coherent curricula, including the Arts, 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>				
	△	➤	✓	+
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 its 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
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