

Quality Review Report 2011-2012

Abraham Lincoln

K171

**528 Ridgewood Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11208**

Principal: Dr. Barbara Kendall

Dates of review: January 26-27, 2012

Lead Reviewer: Mary Barton

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

I.S. 171 is a middle school with 883 students from grade 5 through grade 8. The school population comprises 15% Black, 74% Hispanic, 1% White, and 8% Asian students. The student body includes 23% English language learners and 11% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 91.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The principal has created a learning community that is focused on student outcomes resulting in a shared effort of the community to increase student success. (3.1)
 - When the current principal assumed the position in September 2011, she reflected thoroughly on the school's data in all areas. She communicated the need for strategic school goals and action planning for this school year to the School Leadership Team, the Parent Teacher Association and to the school at large through the Comprehensive Educational Plan process as well as at faculty conferences. These groups had opportunities to contribute to the development of the school's planning. Teachers also attended a data day where representatives of the school's Children First Network conducted a presentation for teachers on the state of the school by grades in the areas of English Language Arts and Math. One teacher commented that they had never had the opportunity before to learn about the school's data and that "the principal has been very upfront with faculty concerning the school's progress and performance." Action plans have been put into place including a partnership with the United Federation of Teachers, who opened a teacher center in the school with the school providing a two day a week coach to work with teachers on teaching strategies. This transparency on the part of the principal has resulted in all school constituencies working towards the same goals and expected outcomes.
- The principal makes informed and effective organizational decisions across many aspects of the school to support improvements resulting in a school culture focused on learning. (1.3)
 - The principal envisioned having a school library where her students could research and have exposure to a variety of genres of literature. The principal invited the community's elected officials to the school early in the year to forge relationships and support and took them to the library renovation. One official remarked that the library had "more bagels than books". Through a Reso A grant from the local councilman, the library now has books, computers, and Emu boards. The principal prioritized the need for a full time school librarian in the school's budget and she is spearheading efforts to make the library a central focus of the school. Student now come to the library to conduct research, borrow books and the librarian has initiated the use of Facts on File and TrueFlix offering all students exposure to non-fiction texts. In addition, after studying school level data and setting instructional goals aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards, the principal structured instructional time so that all students have English Language Arts and Math taught to them in 90 minute blocks each day with teachers of these subjects having fewer students in their classes. As a result of these types of decisions, students now have exposure to more academic resources and are working toward meeting the citywide instructional expectations in English Language Arts and Math as evidenced by increasingly rigorous work products displayed throughout the school building.
- The school community has demonstrated their commitment to elevating school wide instructional practices resulting in increased professional collaboration and growth in teacher practice. (4.1)

- Supervisors are conducting frequent cycles of observations of all teachers using the Danielson framework with new and untenured teachers receiving additional visits. One veteran teacher spoke of "being renewed in his practice" as a result of the feedback from and the support of his supervisors. New teachers spoke of frequent assistance from supervisors as well as having a mentor from their department who they visit and have conversations with around their practices. Teachers stated that they are aware of the supervisors' focus and act on next steps that typically come with supports such as video clips and educational articles. Teachers are collaborating more this year with each other in teams through their work with the literacy coach as well as with a United Federation of Teachers coach who is focusing on instruction for English Language Learners. This improved focus on instructional practices has resulted in improvements in teachers' instructional practices.
- The principal, faculty and staff have worked as a unified team to create a respectful and orderly environment so that students are able to prioritize learning. (1.4)
 - After analyzing school data and having conversations with teachers, parents and students, the principal placed an emphasis on consistently communicating high expectations to students that they must come to school each day on time and that learning is most important. These messages are presented through monthly assemblies held by school administrators and guidance counselors. The principal has stressed that teachers should compliment positive behaviors and make phone calls home when this takes place. Students are now recognized with a student of the month award. In addition, the principal adjusted the hours of the school's deans who are present to assist with entry and dismissal and assigned one school safety agent to be present on each floor of the school at all times. One student stated that "It is a miracle. I feel safe in school now and it is much quieter here." Other students said they now have the opportunity to have more discussions in their classrooms around their learning. This change has resulted in students attending class more consistently and a less disruptive school environment this year where students feeling good about coming to school each day.
- School leaders have communicated high expectations to faculty, parents and students while providing supports so school constituencies are on the path to meeting those expectations. (3.4)
 - The principal has instituted a monthly "second cup of coffee" program with parents to hear concerns and to answer questions. The principal attends and speaks at the monthly Parent Teacher Association meetings taking the opportunity to emphasize the school's expectations around attendance, punctuality, academics and behavior. Parent workshops are offered by the school as well as the school's Community-based organization partner, Cypress Hills. Progress reports reflecting students' grades and attendance go home in English and Spanish between the report card cycles. All of this enables parents to be informed of their child's progress as well as to have supports to assist them.
 - Students in all grades keep a data notebook in which they list their standardized testing grades, Acuity results, classroom grades and their goals which are updated monthly. Students stated that they are given time to write in their notebooks to think about their work and their goals. One student stated

that “the notebook helps me to know if I am doing better in school.” This focus on student expectations has resulted in students’ being more interested in their progress and in developing improved work products.

What the school needs to improve

- Develop curriculum maps in all subject areas incorporating the Common Core Learning Standards so that teachers will have the tools to provide all students with opportunities to participate in engaging and rigorous tasks. (1.1)
 - While the school has worked on developing curriculum maps in all grades in ELA and Math incorporating the CCLS, curriculum maps are not in place in all grades in all subject areas. With this omission, students are not assured of receiving consistent and purposeful instruction aligned to the standards in all areas.
 - In studying curricula and academic tasks, there is an inconsistency in meeting the needs of English Language Learners and students with disabilities with specific supports and entry points. While there was differentiation and engagement seen particularly in some English Language Arts classrooms through the use of technology and research assignments, other classrooms typically had students working on the same assignments with lower level thinking required. As a result, these students are not afforded opportunities to have their specific learning needs met.
- Ensure that instruction is differentiated across all classrooms so that all students are afforded educational opportunities that meet their learning needs. (1.2)
 - While a school wide initiative around the use of accountable talk by students was apparent in many classrooms visited, there were some teacher dominated classrooms where all information was presented by the teacher with discussion questions primarily at the recall level. This unevenness of student participation and thinking does not allow for students to fully participate in the learning process.
 - Teaching strategies and routines allowing for differentiation of instruction, particularly for current and former English Language Learners and students with disabilities, was inconsistent among the classrooms visited. While there were some English language arts classrooms where teachers probed students about their work and a math classroom where the teacher did have students work on different problems, these routines did not take place across all classrooms. This circumstance does not allow all students to have entry points into their learning and to have their needs met.
- Refine and ensure that all goals include precise short and long term measurable outcomes to monitor students' progress effectively and to reinforce ownership and accountability. (3.3)
 - While school wide goals were developed in the early part of the school year, the school’s leadership has not developed a system to track the progress of those goals and/or adjustments made to them. This does not allow for a check in the effectiveness of action plans that are in place.

- In viewing student work and in speaking with students, feedback to students with clear next steps was inconsistent across the school. Some students receive check ins on their goal process from teachers and others do not. In addition, while parents receive a progress report between the report cards, they do not receive information on the goals that teachers have set for their children or the goals that students have set for themselves. In this case, some students are not afforded the opportunity to master their learning and parents are not informed or afforded the opportunity to assist their children in meeting specific learning goals.
- Embed assessments into curricula and use the data generated to provide information so teachers adjust instructional decisions to meet student learning needs. (2.2)
 - While most teachers stated they analyze student data from the item skills analysis from the summative state tests and Acuity, many teachers could only speak to grouping students by having a stronger student work with a student who has more learning needs. While administrators and teachers stated that exit slips are used to check for understanding, this was not apparent in many classrooms visited. With these practices, teachers are inconsistently using available data, including formative data, to make adjustments that ensure that all students are having their individual needs met.
- Expand the use of data analysis to evaluate and revise processes and programs within the school that lead to effective professional collaboration. (5.4)
 - Administrators and teachers reported that administrators sit in on teacher team meetings. While administrators can get a sense of what is occurring at these meetings, protocols for some teams are not in place and there is no formal system in place at this time to evaluate the effectiveness of the teacher teams and the impact of their work toward integrating Common Core aligned tasks. This missed opportunity results in teachers not being provided with feedback on their team work as well as not fully being able to measure the impact of this work on student outcomes.
 - While some teachers have indicated that they act as teacher team leaders and technology leads, there is no system in place to evaluate the effectiveness of those who take on leadership roles. Therefore, it is difficult to ascertain the effectiveness of this work and its impact on developing future leaders within the school.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

School name: Abraham Lincoln/ K171	UD	D	P	WD
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>	UD	D	P	WD
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 as evidenced by meaningful student work products?			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	
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>	UD	D	P	WD
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 Align assessments to curriculum, use on-going assessment practices and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom level?		X		
2.3 Use grading policies and tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize, aggregate, and analyze student performance trends to inform instruction and curriculum?		X		
2.4 Engage families in school decision-making, activities and an open exchange of information regarding students progress toward school and class expectations?		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>	UD	D	P	WD
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 staff, students and families, and support students and families to achieve them?			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>	UD	D	P	WD			
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, guidance/advisement support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations with the school-wide goals to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students?		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>	UD	D	P	WD			
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, with particular attention to the CCLS?		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					
Quality Review Scoring Key							
UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed