

Quality Review Report 2012-2013

ABRAHAM LINCOLN

K171

**528 Ridgewood Avenue
BROOKLYN
NY 11208**

Principal: Dr. Barbara Kendall

Dates of review: May 1-2, 2013

Lead Reviewer: Joyce Stallings-Harte

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Abraham Lincoln School is a middle school with 871 students from 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 15% Black, 74% Hispanic, 1% White, and 9% Asian students. The student body includes 23% English language learners and 10% special education students. Boys account for 50% of the students enrolled and girls account for 50%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2011 - 2012 was 92.0%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is developing.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- School leaders make strategic decisions regarding staffing and use of technology that are supportive of a professional learning community and increasing instructional resources. (1.3)
 - Budgetary decisions support the school's goal of providing access to technology as a means of providing differentiated learning opportunities for all students. To address the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) and provide informational and expository texts, the principal used school funds to purchase additional non-fiction books for all classrooms. Technology purchases have also been made and included laptops for all teachers, interactive whiteboards, and laptop carts for English language learners (ELL's) to access computer-based programs. Data shows that these acquisitions have already begun to increase instructional rigor and impact student learning as evidenced by increase in language acquisition. Additionally, the school hired a library media specialist to increase library access time and to offer full use of the newly acquired non-fiction books purchased. The principal hired an additional assistant principal so that there is now an administrator for English language arts, Math and Social Studies. Administrators meet with teacher teams vertically and horizontally and this distribution of responsibility allows for close supervision and generalization of increasing rigor in instructional practices observed across subjects and grades. The school created English as second language self-contained classes across grades to provide targeted instruction. Classes use the laptops with newly purchased Achieve 3000, a literacy intervention program, which is used with students with disabilities (SWD's) as well. This structure has begun to impact the performance of some ELL's as evidenced by improved work products in work folders and portfolios.
- The school is beginning to build a safe culture in alignment with school community partnerships that support social-emotional learning and youth development. (1.4)
 - The school community voiced concern regarding the safety of the school as expressed on past Learning Environment Surveys (LES). The schoolyard is undergoing construction that has lasted over a year, and is still in process, which has led to hallways that are congested during change of classes. To address these concerns, the principal hired two additional school aides to supervise students during outdoor recess. They also monitor hall passing along with the assistant principals who are posted on each floor along with two deans and teachers who monitor students during hall passing and receive students as they enter the classroom. This structure is beginning to alleviate incidents and the congestion has started to ease in the hallways. Students comment that they feel the school is becoming safer over the past years because Security personnel makes sure they move students along to class so that they are not in the hallways; they "rush you to class". Parents state that the present principal has started the process to create a safer school environment and that several parents accompany the deans, who go out 15 minutes before the end of the school day to patrol the school parameters, in order to ensure student safety. According to data from the Online Occurrence

and Reporting System (OORS), there has been a 33% decrease in the number of suspensions compared to this time last year.

- The school community is beginning to make a concerted effort to increase the engagement of students and families through the addition of afterschool programs and workshops. The school offers an academic extended day program in addition to hiring tutors from City Year, a community-based organization to support students identified in need of additional instructional time and those who want to attend for enrichment. To address the need to offer extra-curricular options for adolescents, the school partnered with Cypress Hills Community Development Corporation, a community-based organization that provide performing arts and visual arts programs. Students report that this partnership helps them improve their grades and parents state that their children want to attend these extra programs because it helps them get along with other people and helps them 'meet people and make friends'. As a result, students and parents are beginning to demonstrate positive attitudes about the learning experiences and support of academic and social behaviors.
- School leaders are in the process of integrating the CCLS into their curriculum and integrating the citywide instructional shifts with rigorous tasks which are beginning to increase student achievement (1.1)
 - The school is in the process of updating curriculum maps and calendars designed by the curriculum team and teachers, which are then uploaded onto Rubicon Atlas across grades and content areas. They include a focus on reading non-fiction text, increased text complexity and citing textual evidence. The principal notes that, "every teacher is now a reading teacher". Grade level teacher teams were observed reviewing two student writing pieces using a rubric that included evaluation of language skills in addition to social studies content knowledge. The performance task required students to read complex text and write an essay using domain specific language, cite textual evidence and discuss important ideas. Student sub-groups including students with disabilities and English language learners are frequently engaged in these higher-level performance tasks with modifications such as visual aides and graphic organizers. As a result of curriculum initiatives student writing scores are beginning to show improvement as measured by teacher designed rubrics.

What the school needs to improve

- Deepen the consistency of assessments and grading policies that align to key standards, monitor ongoing student comprehension and provide feedback to students in order to improve achievement. (2.2)
 - The school uses New York State English language arts and mathematics assessments to group students for instruction. Additionally, pre and post assessments across classrooms are used to measure student progress after engaging in unit-of-study instruction. However, the use of grade level data to identify areas of students' strengths and needs across classes, is inconsistent and in some classrooms there is inconsistent use of rubrics to assess student performance. For example, students in some classrooms report that they are given a writing task and then the teacher uses the rubric to grade their work. In other classes, teachers use a check mark to grade rubrics, while others use

a scale of 1-4 and some translate the 1-4 scale into a percentage, creating an inconsistency in the grading policy. Students have begun to use data journals to monitor their progress, but observation by this reviewer indicates uneven levels of usage by students and monitoring by teachers, thereby limiting their effectiveness. Additionally, classroom observations indicated limited checks by teachers for students' understanding of skills and content. The inconsistent use of assessment practices impairs the ability of individual and teams of teachers to track and monitor student progress and make the necessary instructional adjustments to improve student learning.

- Continue to develop and monitor teacher capacity based on beliefs of how students learn best and provide entry points for all learners so they engage at higher levels and produce meaningful work products. (1.2)
 - The school's expressed beliefs are that students learn through active engagement where they are grouped according to need and expected to question and challenge each other in discussion with peers. Teachers are expected to facilitate student interactions and monitor high level student conversations and provide scaffolds for students as necessary, but this structure is not always implemented. For example, ELL's in a math class worked on computational math problems from a workbook as the rest of the class engaged in work that required them to read and solve two and three-step problem. Across classrooms, students move to multiple teacher designed center activities. However, instructional practice is uneven across the school, leading to inconsistent access to high levels of questioning, student discourse and critical thinking among students and groups of students. For example, in some classrooms, teachers engage students in small group discussions with critical thinking questions such as "Can the Death Penalty Ever Be Humane? However, in other classes, discussions are whole class and questions do not consistently engage students in critical thinking. Students report that they basically remain in the same instructional groups and move to "center" activities with the same students. As a result, student work products and samples in work folders do not consistently demonstrate higher levels of cognitive engagement, thinking and participation for all students.
- Enhance support of teacher pedagogy with feedback from short cycles of observations and student work/data that articulate clear expectations and monitor teachers' professional growth to increase student outcomes. (4.1)
 - School leaders are beginning to support teachers and monitor instructional practice through the use of a research-based framework that provides teachers with feedback on their performance. The observation of teacher practice is distributed across the three assistant principals and the principal has oversight of the observation cycles through discussion with administrators and one-on-one conversations with teachers. While the feedback largely aligns with the school's goals for improved teacher practice and student learning, it is not always time bound, actionable or descriptive of immediate expectations. Recommendations are sometimes lacking and low inference transcripts do not always indicate student learning or areas for teacher growth and time for follow-up. Therefore, in the absence of timely feedback aligned to student data with clear expectations, the use of the classroom observation as a tool for monitoring and improving classroom instruction is limited. Thus, hindering teachers' professional growth and student's academic improvement.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2012-2013

| School name: ABRAHAM LINCOLN | UD | D | P | WD | | | |
|---|-----------------------|----------|-------------------|----------|-------------------|-----------|-----------------------|
| Overall QR Score | | X | | | | | |
| Instructional Core | | | | | | | |
| <i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i> | UD | D | P | WD | | | |
| 1.1 Design engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula, including the arts, physical and health education, 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 that is informed by a research-based, common teaching framework and is aligned to curricula, engaging and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products? | | X | | | | | |
| 2.2 Align assessments to curricula, use on-going assessment and grading practices, and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom levels? | | X | | | | | |
| School Culture | | | | | | | |
| <i>To what extent does the school ...</i> | UD | D | P | WD | | | |
| 1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults? | | X | | | | | |
| 3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve them? | | X | | | | | |
| Systems for Improvement | | | | | | | |
| <i>To what extent does the school ...</i> | UD | D | P | WD | | | |
| 1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet students' learning needs as evidenced by meaningful student work products? | | | X | | | | |
| 3.1 Establish a coherent vision of school improvement that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are tracked for progress and are understood and supported by the entire school community? | | X | | | | | |
| 4.1 Use the observation of classroom teaching with a research-based, common teaching framework 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 | | | | | |
| 5.1 Evaluate the quality of school- level decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school, with particular attention to the CCLS? | | X | | | | | |
| Quality Review Scoring Key | | | | | | | |
| UD | Underdeveloped | D | Developing | P | Proficient | WD | Well Developed |