Quality Review Report

2014-2015

Abraham Lincoln
Intermediate School K171
528 Ridgewood Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11208

Principal: Indira Mota

Date of review: April 21, 2015
Lead Reviewer: Rosemary Stuart
## The School Context

Abraham Lincoln is an intermediate school with 634 students from grade 6 through grade 8. The school population comprises 16% Black, 74% Hispanic, 1% White, and 6% Asian students. The student body includes 21% English language learners and 15% special education students. Boys account for 51% of the students enrolled and girls account for 49%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2013-2014 was 92.1%.

## School Quality Criteria

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Core</th>
<th>Area of:</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To what extent does the school…</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.1 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards</td>
<td>Additional Findings</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the instructional shifts and Danielson Framework for Teaching, aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products</td>
<td>Focus</td>
<td>Developing</td>
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<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Findings</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School Culture</th>
<th>Area of:</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
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<td>To what extent does the school…</td>
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<td>3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations</td>
<td>Celebration</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Systems for Improvement</th>
<th>Area of:</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
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<td>To what extent does the school…</td>
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<td>4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning</td>
<td>Additional Findings</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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Findings
There is a consistent focus on communicating expectations for college and career readiness throughout the school to students and their parents.

Impact
Families are supported in understanding the progress their children are making and students are prepared for success in high school and college.

Supporting Evidence
- The Middle School Student Success Center (MSSSC) provides counseling to students and offers tutoring during lunch hours through the Cypress Hills Local Development Corporation. The MSSSC works with teachers to integrate college and career interdisciplinary topics into the curricula enhancing the awareness and preparedness of students in all grades. Selected students prepare to become peer tutors for incoming students, helping them to adjust to middle school and begin to prepare for the transition to high school. The MSSSC coordinates the high school admission process and helps students and their families begin to think about college choices. The center accomplished 100% completion of high school applications.

- The school celebrates academic achievement with congratulatory assemblies for the Student of the Month and invites families of students who will be honored for improvement, not only those with high achievement. The school holds Student Data Assemblies to inform students and their parents about the aggregated results of the State exams, including the performance of all sub-groups of students, and to discuss ways to improve their scores and continue to develop skills needed for high school and college. At one data assembly for the sixth grade there was a presentation that illustrated how baseline assessments are used by comparing them to the way video games measure performance against the highest score on a previous game. When these assemblies are held, the school makes the computer lab available so parents can learn how to access the online information about their child.

- The school holds an "I will graduate from high school" rally every year for all grades and all students. The focus of the rally is to discuss what students need to do to be successful at each step of the way from grade 6 to graduation. The school offers high school credits and students have the opportunity to take the Algebra I, U.S. History and Spanish Proficiency Regents exams.
Area of Focus

Quality Indicator: 1.2 Pedagogy  Rating: Developing

Findings
Teaching strategies to provide access to all learners are not consistent across content areas and grades and student work products demonstrate uneven levels of rigor.

Impact
Not all students are fully engaged in challenging tasks and student discussions do not reflect high levels of thinking and participation.

Supporting Evidence
- In some classes, specific groups of students are assigned specific tasks, but in other classes it was not clear how the students were grouped or how the task assigned to them was differentiated to meet their needs. One teacher indicated that students are matched to promote “cohesive group work” and are selected in part to avoid behavior problems. This lack of a consistent practice to group students for differentiated activities limits the effectiveness of individualized access to the curricula.

- In one class students were looking at primary source depression-era pictures. Students were highly engaged in a discussion of how they interpreted the photographs. For example, they used accountable talk stems to agree or disagree with each other. The teacher posed open-ended questions such as “How can it be proven that this family used to have money?” However, in another class, the teacher struggled with displaying the instructions for the activities on the interactive white board. While she and some students worked on resolving the situation, the other students in the class were not engaged in learning activities. When the students began the activity, they found that some of the laptops were not working resulting in more lost instructional time.

- In a visit to an English as a second language (ESL) class, students were grouped according to their New York State English as a Second Language Assessment Test levels and assigned tasks of graduated difficulty. The materials for this class included images that illustrated the meaning of the vocabulary words. For example, an image of a thumbs-down to accompany the word “oppose” and a person bowing and tipping his hat to indicate “respect.” ESL teachers include the word of the week in their lessons and post the list of words online for students and families. This practice was not consistently seen in all classrooms.

- Most classrooms display aggregated test results of formative and summative assessments on a data wall. These data walls are integrated into the instruction of the classes in order to make meaning and understand what the data shows. For example, students created a video to explain and illustrate the data that is displayed on the data walls.
Additional Findings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.1 Curriculum</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings
School leaders ensure curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and address the instructional shifts. The curricular materials are planned and refined to address the diverse needs of students.

Impact
The curricula promote college and career readiness for all students and tasks are designed to cognitively engage all learners.

Supporting Evidence
- Teachers use Rubicon Atlas to support unit and lesson planning and alignment to the Common Core. Lesson plans reference the Common Core or content standards and incorporate the instructional shifts by requiring students to cite text evidence, use informational and literary texts, or develop fluency in calculations. The teachers attended summer professional development led by the network to write curriculum maps, develop curricular materials and lesson plans based on the results on last year’s State tests.

- Students in all grades study Spanish language. Students in sixth grade take health and theater classes. Students in seventh grade take a technology elective, which focuses on developing skills with Microsoft Suite programs. The principal has brought in Scarsdale Strings to provide music instruction to the sixth grade students. In future years the program will be expanded to seventh and then eighth grade.

- Three assistant principals supervise English language arts (ELA), math and social studies and the principal supervises the science department. Curricular materials in all content areas are used in both general education and self-contained classes, where they are integrated with supplementary materials to ensure that students with disabilities have access to challenging tasks. The school leaders usually attend team meetings to stay informed about any changes to the curricula that are made by the teachers after reviewing data on student performance.

- Most lesson plans include differentiation such as unique tasks created for different groups of students. English language learners (ELLs) are programmed for self-contained classes so that most teachers do not need to include explicit differentiation for ELLs in their lesson plans. However, a lesson plan for ELLs differentiates the vocabulary that groups of students will use to create their own word webs. In a lesson plan for students with disabilities, students were assigned tasks at different levels of complexity, all focused on making meaning of the play, *Twelve Angry Men.*
**Findings**
Teachers create assessments, rubrics and grading policies aligned with the school’s curricula and these tools are used to analyze and track student progress.

**Impact**
Students receive actionable feedback on how to improve their performance. Teachers adjust their instruction and curricula to address student needs.

**Supporting Evidence**
- In September, teachers administer grade-wide common baseline assessments in ELA and math using a combination of teacher created and EngageNY resources. The assessments administered in December are based on the material that has been taught up to that point. In February, they conduct a full test simulation to help students develop the habits and stamina needed to be successful on the State tests. The results of these assessments are entered into the Data Driven Classroom in PupilPath, an online grade reporting program, for analysis.

- Units of study and lesson plans include pre- and post-assessments that are developed by the teachers. The results of all assessments are entered into the Data Driven Classroom in PupilPath where teachers analyze them to understand the progress each student is making in all content areas. The teachers use the results of these analyses to determine what needs to be retaught and to track individual student progress.

- Although each department determines their own grading policy, they are coherent across the school because each one reflects the school-wide focus on writing, and values the same components of classwork, homework, and tests. The principal approves all grading policies to ensure the feedback students get from their grades reflects the content area decisions. For example, the policy for the math department allots 25% of the grade for classwork and participation; in the social studies department, it is worth 20% of the grade. The grading policy is programmed into the Data Driven Classroom so the grades are calculated automatically.

- A math rubric outlines in detail the characteristics of work for each level. For example, Level 2 indicates that the work satisfies some of the requirements of the task, while a Level 4 extends the requirements of the task. Feedback observed from a teacher to a sixth grade student was precise, detailed and in alignment with the Common Core and this rubric. The comments indicated that the student knew how to “write an inequality to represent a constraint or condition in a real-world situation” and referenced the matching standard. The teacher further noted an error in a graph and reminded the student to check the graphical representations.
Findings
Teachers are engaged in teams that address the social-emotional and academic needs of targeted students through inquiry based discussions of their students’ work and habits.

Impact
Teacher teams focus on progress of targeted students and strengthen their instructional practices.

Supporting Evidence
- One period a week is programmed for teachers for common planning time by content area. During this time, teachers meet to align their lesson plans to the Common Core and identify strategies for incorporating the instructional shifts. For example, the ELA team meets every Friday and the math team meets every Tuesday to share lesson plans, explore teaching strategies, and analyze data on student performance. The meetings are structured with protocols for determining roles for each member and the minutes are submitted to the assistant principals for review.

- Agendas from teacher team meetings reflect that teachers are using protocols for looking at student work, analyzing data from baseline assessments to inform revisions to unit and lesson plans, and creating tasks to help students prepare for state exams. Math department team meeting notes indicate that the teachers created tasks for students to complete over vacations and also analyzed how well students completed those tasks. These teams share documents through Google.docs, an online document sharing site.

- There is a school-wide team for social-emotional-academic inquiry that meets once a month on each grade level. Members of one such inquiry team were observed discussing the academic and social-emotional development of three students who were chosen as subjects for inquiry because they were almost performing at Level 2. Each teacher added anecdotal observations about the students and discussed the student work, such as writing samples, they had brought to the meeting. After the discussion about one student it was determined that he needs prompting and constant, positive reinforcement to address low self-esteem. They determined that another student benefited from having questions read aloud in order to keep her focused. While the team members were clearly focused on the targeted group of students, they did not extend the analysis to include aggregate student performance.