Quality Review Report

2016-2017

I.S. 171 Abraham Lincoln
Junior High-Intermediate-Middle 19K171
528 Ridgewood Ave.
Brooklyn
NY 11208

Principal: Indira Mota

Dates of Review:
February 8, 2017 - February 16, 2017

Lead Reviewer: Margaret Iandolo
The Quality Review Report

The Quality Review is a two-day school visit by an experienced educator. During the review, the reviewer visits classrooms, talks with parents, students, teachers, and school leaders and uses a rubric to evaluate how well the school is organized to support student achievement.

The Quality Review Report provides a rating for all ten indicators of the Quality Review Rubric in three categories: Instructional Core, School Culture, and Systems for Improvement. One indicator is identified as the Area of Celebration to highlight an area in which the school does well to support student learning and achievement. One indicator is identified as the Area of Focus to highlight an area the school should work on to support student learning and achievement. The remaining indicators are identified as Additional Finding. This report presents written findings, impact, and site-specific supporting evidence for six indicators.

Information about the School

I.S. 171 Abraham Lincoln serves students in grade 6 through grade 8. You will find information about this school, including enrollment, attendance, student demographics, and data regarding academic performance, at http://schools.nyc.gov/Accountability/tools/report/default.htm.

School Quality Ratings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instructional Core</th>
<th>Area</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 Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<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>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Developing</td>
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<tr>
<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>Area of Focus</td>
<td>Developing</td>
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### School Culture

**To what extent does the school...**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>Area of Celebration</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults

#### 3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations

### Systems for Improvement

**To what extent does the school...**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.3</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
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<tr>
<td>3.1</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
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<td>4.1</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
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<td>5.1</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
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#### 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

#### 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

#### 4.1 Observe teachers using the Danielson Framework for Teaching along with the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection

#### 4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning

#### 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
Area of Celebration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.4 Positive Learning Environment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
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Findings

The schoolwide practice of recognizing and embracing the diversity of the school community informs the approach to culture building, discipline, and social emotional support. Structures to support the learning environment have been put in place.

Impact

Students feel safe, respected, and have a voice in school improvement decisions. Each student is known well by at least one adult who helps to personalize attendance supports and coordinate social-emotional learning, child development, and guidance supports that impact academic and personal behaviors.

Supporting Evidence

- Students feel respected and safe in school, which is evident in the school goals and practices of welcoming all students from all cultures. Students have a voice in decision making through student government. Student government meets regularly and makes decisions to support a senior center during Thanksgiving, improve lunch selections, and upgrade the mirrors in the girls’ bathrooms. The students have decided on a spelling bee, and have spoken to school leaders to approve the date. In a student meeting, students voiced that they feel safe in the school. One student stated, “We get a sense of unity no matter what our background.” Another student responded to the previous statement with, “That helps us get along.” Still another student responded, “I’d like to add on, you are not being disrespected because of your cultures. People do not judge anyone [here].” All students agreed that this school takes bullying very seriously. The guidance counselor stated, “As a counselor I get to know the students, on a personal level. We have an open-door policy”. Staff members wear tags supporting all students in expressing gender identity or sexual orientation.

- The school has an attendance teacher who reviews absenteeism and lateness. The parents and the students understand that attendance is important to a positive learning experience. The students are celebrated for attendance, and academics during monthly assemblies, attended by their parents. Students know that they can go to the administration and guidance team to speak about concerns and the adults will listen and understand. Each teacher has focus students that they track for both academic and behavioral concerns.

- Students, parents, and staff agreed that the school is a safe place to learn. To decrease the number of incidents occurring, the staff instituted procedures to create a safe environment. The SIT team supports students, both academically and with social-emotional needs to de-escalate occurrences. A staff member stated, “Most of the time you will hear from another adult about a student who is in need of support.” There is a partnership with the police precinct that conducts workshops on anti-bullying. The guidance counselor or the psychologist help with issues, so students feel supported, safe, and comfortable in school. One student stated, he went to the principal and told her that he was being bullied and the issue was addressed immediately. As a result, the number of incidents decreased from 160 occurrences in the 2014-15 school year, to 112 occurrences in the 2015-16 school year, and in the 2016-17 school year there is a decrease to 41 occurrences.

- The pupil personnel team meets monthly to support teachers to effectively instruct students and share newsletters. Focus students are discussed and the team offers strategies to support these students to improve learning. Using the common readings of Growth Mindset and Habits of Highly Effective Teens for students, staff support students to make good decisions. Additionally, anecdotal incidents are noted in the online program, that all staff have access to support students. Several staff members explained, “If it is behavioral, the dean [intercedes], or if it is personal then guidance supports to de-escalate, because every adult is responsible for student success.”
## Area of Focus

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>2.2 Assessment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Developing</th>
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### Findings

Some teachers use common assessments. Across classrooms, teacher’s assessment practices do not yet consistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding and student assessment.

### Impact

Assessment results are inconsistently used to adjust curricula and instruction and not all teachers are consistently making effective adjustments to meet students’ learning needs.

### Supporting Evidence

- Teachers and administrators review and analyze some results from common assessments and make adjustments to curriculum maps and unit plans. In addition, adjustments are also made for small-group instruction and re-teaching. During instruction, some teachers indicate which students need more support to master the concepts, but this is not consistent across classes. Usually, these findings are hand written on the maps and reviewed at the team meetings. There is little to no notation showing that these adjustments supported student achievement or growth.

- Although staff are provided with computer generated analysis from Performance Series, common assessments and chapter and unit exams, pre-, mid-, and post- instructional assessments, this does not yet demonstrate how teachers use analysis to adjust instruction and curricula.

- Checks for understanding and feedback throughout instruction are developing across classrooms. Although some teachers employ a performance tracker during instruction to determine which students are in need of clarification and or re-teaching, this was inconsistently used across classes. A math teacher circulated throughout the room supporting those students who did not understand. In another math class, the effective use of a chart strategy to check for understanding, resulted in some students who were ready to move forward with an extension, while others needed support to complete the task. In other classes, some teachers checked in with groups, focusing on misconceptions, or directions, but did not adjust instruction to support students’ learning needs.
## Additional Finding

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator: 1.1 Curriculum</th>
<th>Rating: Proficient</th>
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### Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and integrate the instructional shifts. Curricula and academic tasks consistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher order thinking skills across grades and subjects and for English Language Learners (ELLs) and students with disabilities.

### Impact

Purposeful curricular decisions build coherence and promote college and career readiness through rigorous curricula and academic tasks that are accessible to all students.

### Supporting Evidence

- The school leaders have implemented *Codex* for the English Language Arts program, as well as anthologies, and Newsela, which consists of current articles, with Lexile levels, that align to the Common Core. The administration and the math teachers voiced that the math program used was not supporting students towards mastery of the math standards and so the program was changed to *GO Math!*, which staff supplement with *Key Elements from Math* (KEM). At that time, the school leaders also invested in Mathletics. In one self-contained sixth grade class, the students were working in groups on tiered tasks, engaging in conversation, producing meaningful student work. This program incorporates manipulatives and enrichment to support students. *Passport to Social Studies* is the program used in all grades. Teachers attend training workshops and return to the school to turnkey the program to other teachers. Curricular resources for science are aligned to the New York City scope and sequence. English as a New Language (ENL) teachers use the National Geographic Program to build vocabulary and real-life experiences for the English Language Learners. All programs are aligned with the Common Core, as well as incorporating the instructional shifts.

- Both administration and faculty stated that they build coherence using the Common Core Learning Standards and instructional shifts to promote college and career readiness. Lessons include strategies for comprehending complex text, and *Depth of Knowledge* (DOK) levels of questioning for level three and four. Across subjects, DOK level questions are incorporated in lesson plans, whether for social studies or math. Staff share curricula using an on-line program called Atlas Rubicon, which supports them in ensuring the standards are being addressed.

- The school’s population has 22 percent ELLs and 19 students with disabilities. Evidence of rigorous tasks in the curricula is inconsistent across the grades and content. Across classes, differentiation and scaffolding are also inconsistent. Of the lesson plans reviewed, only a few demonstrate the use of grouping. In many of the lesson plans the differentiation provides non-specific options for potential students, such as, “Verbal sharing and hands-on with objects to promote discussion.” In many lessons, groups of students who need support such as ELLs, students with disabilities, or those in the lowest third, have the same assignment but are in cooperative pairs with a teacher or paraprofessional. Most lessons do not provide extensions for those ready for a challenge, but instead students are expected to independently complete the assigned task. Most lesson plans included DOK levels of questioning to promote higher-order student thinking.
Additional Finding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.2 Pedagogy</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Developing</th>
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Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are becoming aligned to the curricula and beginning to reflect a set of beliefs that students learn best from experience and with opportunities to work collaboratively with a chance for student voice. Across classrooms, teaching strategies inconsistently provide multiple-entry points into the curricula.

Impact

There is uneven engagement in appropriately challenging tasks and inconsistent demonstration of higher-order thinking skills in student work products for ELLs and students with disabilities.

Supporting Evidence

- The 2016-2017 Instructional Focus is to increase student comprehension of text and their ability to articulate the meaning of the text through the exposure and engagement to higher-order questions from Depth of Knowledge (DOK) level three and four questions. Teachers believe that students will learn best as a result of the opportunities to engage with the curriculum through these multiple-entry points. This belief is informed and reinforced through professional development, observations, and feedback to teachers.

- Administration and staff focus on instructional strategies that provide students with opportunities to talk about their learning with each other, including the use of accountable talk stems in discussions using think-pair-share, and small group work activities. In some classes, groups of students discuss and debate using the accountable talk stems and also use DOK level three and four questions with each other. For example, in an Integrated Co-Teaching (ICT) history class, the teacher was reviewing with students and had them discuss the essential question, “Did the revolutionary war accomplish its goals?” One student told her partner, “I think that when they got independence, they finally got freedom from taxation without representation.” Yet, this level of higher-level discussion and engagement was inconsistent across the class visits. In a math class, it was teacher-centered, whereby the low-level DOK, teacher-generated question moved from teacher to student and back again in a rapid-fire fashion with little wait-time for thinking. There were little opportunities for student-to-student discussion.

- The school leaders believe that student voice promotes student learning. There were some instances of student voice to promote engagement in learning. In an ENL science class, students worked cooperatively in groups to create questions using DOK levels. Each student had to fill out a post-it note in response to what they saw in their picture. Students asked each other questions, and made connections to their own countries. In this class, the students had the opportunity to think critically, and get and give feedback to each other. The teacher moved from group to group, facilitating instruction. Scaffolding was provided as the tasks were tiered to support learning. Yet, this practice was inconsistent across classes. For example, in a math class the students with disabilities were provided groups with tiered tasks, however, there was little to no evidence of student discussion, as the paraprofessionals working with the group only provided clarification and at times instruction, but the students were not asked if they understood or to explain their answers.

- Differentiation strategies for scaffolding among the groups in a self-contained math class were evident, yet this level of differentiation was unevenly implemented in other classes. In an English Language Arts class and in an ICT math class, the teacher circulated through the room assisting students. However, all students were completing the same assignment, leading to an uneven demonstration of higher-order thinking skills.
**Additional Finding**

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<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>3.4 High Expectations</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
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**Findings**

School leaders consistently communicate high expectations to the entire staff. School leaders and staff effectively communicate expectations that are connected to a path to college and career readiness and offer ongoing feedback to families.

**Impact**

Administration provides training to staff and has a system of accountability resulting in a mutual accountability for those expectations. School leaders and staff successfully partner with families to support student progress toward high expectations.

**Supporting Evidence**

- The administration has a set of uniform high expectations. Expectations include that teachers meet regularly for department-wide common planning and professional learning sessions. Common planning meetings occur weekly including grade, content, and whole staff meetings for planning and preparation of instruction. These opportunities helped teachers to ensure alignment of instructional shifts and Common Core. During these meetings, teachers make purposeful connections between the instructional shifts and the topics they teach during common planning and professional learning. These expectations create sustainable coherence among the grades and content areas. Staff have met administration’s expectations to collaborate in making these connections. The impact of these efforts is evidenced through a 100 percent participation in curriculum mapping across departments, resulting in increased rigor in tasks, higher-level thinking, and coherence across content areas. The results also include the creation of embedded higher-order skills and cognitively challenging classroom instruction and academic tasks.

- The administration provides consistent communication to all staff through a multitude of measures, including bulletins, emails, staff handbook, and professional development (PD). Support from the administration to implement expectations comes through a consistent cycle of observations and actionable feedback aligned to the Danielson Framework for Teaching. Data collected from the observations informs the PD plan. Teacher PD is an integral part of the development of effective strategies. The PD calendar is created through teacher surveys, what has been observed in teacher observations, as well as conversations with teachers, and what they need to move the practice forward. Teachers hold themselves accountable as they determine what supports and training is needed to improve their teaching practice and research and conduct professional developments.

- The school is in daily contact with parents, through phone calls, email, or in-person meetings. Communications with the parents are made through parent newsletter, in both English and Spanish. The newsletters provide families with information about the instructional focus in all subjects, what students are learning, important dates to remember, expectations, and ways to support their children at home. A school community has been created both inside and outside of the school. To support transparency, the school leaders provide staff and parents with an online portal, to review students’ grades and assignments, and contact teachers regarding homework assistance or projects. Parents articulated that they are pleased with the level of communication from the teachers and the administration. Several parents shared that the school has an open-door policy. The teachers have developed a partnership with families, and engage parents through individual help and workshops. *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective Teens* is the vehicle for parents to support their children toward success and to reinforce these expected habits. Parents Workshops are conducted for students and parents, for example to understand the criteria for specialized high schools. Also, these workshops are conducted so that students understand how they are meeting the standards, their goals, and understand their responsibilities as learners knowing what classes they need to pass to graduate.
Findings

The majority of the teachers are engaged in organized, inquiry-based professional collaborations. Distributive leadership structures are in place.

Impact

Professional collaborations promote the achievement of school goals, the implementation of the Common Core, and strengthening the instructional capacity of the teachers who have a voice in key decisions that affect student learning across the school.

Supporting Evidence

- Teachers are involved in several teams, including grade teams, content teams, horizontal and vertical teams, and data teams. Grade team teachers use protocols for looking at student work and use the information to determine next steps in their teaching. The teachers review student work and analyze trends in areas of strengths and growth for target students.

- During a team meeting, the ELA teachers used and agreed upon a protocol to review student narrative writing and discussed the patterns and themes which emerged across the tasks. One teacher presented student work, and the other teachers shared that across writing tasks completed, there were areas of improvement as evidenced in the results from the pre-test where 14 percent of students were proficient to the post-test where 68 percent of students were proficient in the second unit. To further improve, the team provided additional instructional strategies for the presenting teacher to use next time, including using different types of graphic organizers, as well as the use of student models.

- Some distributed leadership is evident. The principal sent out an invitation to all teachers to join the cabinet meetings and two teachers responded. Teachers now have a voice in making decisions that affect instruction across the school. Additionally, the social studies teachers decided that they needed an effective quick assessment tool to use. After some research on formative assessment, the teachers’ decided on Plickers, which allows teachers to use a camera to instantaneously scan and display student responses to a question. The social studies teachers spoke to the administration and were then sent for training on the assessment tool. Teachers then turn keyed the training to the team members which is now used in the classrooms.

- Teachers spoke about how looking at student work has improved their instructional practice. One teacher stated that the teacher team members are essential to learning new strategies to ensure increased student achievement. Another teacher stated, “The ENL teacher shares strategies for ELL students and it positively impacts my teaching.” As discussed in the team meeting the other teachers agreed and added that classrooms are opened for inter-visitations, as well as conversations around groups of students and their specific needs. The teachers agreed that this improves their growth as educators.