

Quality Review Report 2008-2009

Abraham Lincoln Intermediate School

Middle School 171

**528 Ridgewood Avenue
Brooklyn
NY 11208**

Principal: Yolanda Fustanio

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Lead Reviewer: Georgie Beasley

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Abraham Lincoln Intermediate School is a middle school with 899 students from grade 5 through grade 8. The school population comprises 12% Black, 74% Hispanic, 1% grade White, and 11% Asian students. The student body includes 25% English language learners and 12% special education students. Boys account for 48% of the students enrolled and girls account for 52%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007 - 2008 was 89.3%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 83% eligibility.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

The school gathers a wide range of data about student achievement and attendance and has a secure picture of individual students' achievement. School leaders track closely the progress of special education students, English language learners and students performing in the lowest one-third and so are strategic in planning and implementing intervention strategies. The school does not analyze data by gender and ethnic groups rigorously enough and consequently has not formally actioned improvement strategies for raising the achievement of boys and Black students whose achievement is proportionately lower. School leaders do not always monitor the quality of teaching objectively to ensure the needs of all students are met in class. There are systems for setting goals at various levels. Some school goals are not always challenging enough because measures focus on incremental increases on the previous year's performance rather than being aligned closely to students' actual achievement. As a result, school leaders have an inflated view of the school's performance and effectiveness.

When asked, students and parents said unanimously, "The best thing about Abraham Lincoln School is the teachers". This is because teachers "care about the children as if they were their own and support them well in class and during extended day to help them learn". Parents value the many opportunities to talk to teachers about their children's achievement and progress. Students and parents know what students are expected to achieve by the end of the year. Students are less clear about what they need to do next to reach the goals because guidance is not always specific enough. Parents are less complimentary about the school leadership's willingness to engage them in conversations about the school's work and goals. Despite an increase in the number of opportunities for parents to visit, the school's partnership with parents is still not as strong as it should be. The school's leadership does not view parental feedback in a positive enough way and so does not always respond objectively to their views. As a result, the incorrect perception that there is a lack of respect in school and that the building is not safe prevails.

Teachers value the support they receive from colleagues during formal and informal meetings. Professional development is planned and organized well and so helps teachers improve their craft. Some teachers still rely on intervention and enrichment strategies to provide the necessary differentiated instruction and so do not give enough thought about how to meet individual student needs in class. Teachers and coaches plan the Core Knowledge program well to add relevance to learning and effectively link learning across content areas, especially in English language arts, social studies and art.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The collaborative staff team has a strong commitment to students achieving their goals.
- The school's leadership and teachers use data well to make decisions about the school's programs, staffing and resources.
- Teachers use a wide range of assessment data to track student progress closely and to adapt curriculum-pacing guides.
- A number of enrichment and intervention programs help special education students and gifted and talented students to strive to achieve their potential.
- Targeted professional development gives teachers many opportunities to reflect on and evaluate classroom practices.
- The Core Knowledge program adds relevance to learning, and gives student opportunities to apply skills and knowledge across content areas, especially English language arts, social studies and art.

What the school needs to improve

- Analyze assessment and attendance data more rigorously to identify why boys achieve less well than girls and Black students less well than other ethnic groups and initiate improvement strategies to close the gap.
- Give students more precise written feedback about their achievements and next-step learning goals so they know how to improve independently.
- Build stronger partnerships with parents by listening and responding to their views and so engage them more effectively in the school's ongoing development.
- Monitor teaching more objectively to check that goals are challenging enough and that instruction is sufficiently differentiated to meet the needs of all students in all classes.

Part 3: Main Findings

How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do and to monitor the student's progress over time.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

Every teacher has an assessment notebook in which they record assignment grades and student achievement in State and end-of-unit tests. All teachers know and use Acuity to monitor student progress, with teachers of science and social studies using student results in English language arts as indicators to plan and target tasks. The inquiry team tracks the progress of the school's lowest one-third closely to assess achievement and plan interventions. The school analyzes data for special education students and English language learners to pick up any trends in performance. However, it does not analyze assessment data by gender and ethnicity rigorously and so is unaware of the reasons why there are differences in the achievement of boys and girls and Black students.

Teachers share goals and achievements with students during class conferences and so students know whether they are on track to pass the grade. Teachers' verbal feedback during regular student conferences and comments written on work tend to be given in general rather than specific terms. As a result, students are not always clear enough about the precise steps they need to take to improve their work and make faster progress. Rubrics help students monitor their own learning, although these rubrics are used more effectively in some classes than others.

Parents have regular opportunities throughout the school year, and at other times when they request an appointment, to talk to teachers about their children's achievements and progress. Students and parents with access to a computer can log onto Acuity, which enables ongoing practice and revision of skills, knowledge and understanding outside school.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each student's learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

There is no doubt that improving student achievement and progress is the central driving force behind the school's work, reflecting a strong commitment from the collaborative staff team for all students to do well. Students feel that the school, especially their teachers, wants them to achieve as well as they can. All students know their end-of-year goals in terms of levels expected in class assignments, and in interim and State tests. When used, rubrics help them understand the expectations for reaching the next level.

Action plans for special education students, English language learners and lower-performing students provide specific details of the precise steps and interventions for improving their achievement and progress. However, action plans and next-step learning goals for other students are less precise and so many students cannot articulate clearly enough what they need to do next to improve their work.

The school sets school, grade, class and individual student goals in all subjects that focus on improving achievement. End-of-year goals detail an incremental increase on the previous year's performance at levels 3 and 4, and for special education students and English language learners. School leaders are not clear whether goals are challenging enough because they have not checked with enough rigor how closely they align to students' actual performance. There is a goal for raising attendance supported by varied strategies for encouraging and rewarding students who come to school regularly. The school is on track to reach this goal, although at only one percent above last year's attendance level, this is not as challenging as it could be.

Parents equally are confident that teachers have high expectations for their children. They feel that expectations of school leaders are not so high and that their views are not always welcome. Parents on the school leadership team are involved in agreeing what will be included as foci in the Comprehensive Educational Plan. The school looks at but does not draw conclusions or make inferences about the feedback in the Learning Environment Survey and so does not always respond objectively to parents' views.

Quality Statement 3 – Develop Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: The school uses rigorous curricula, teaching and organizational decision making to engage students and faculty in meeting all students' learning goals.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The curriculum is generally broad and, due in part to the Core Knowledge program, relevant. A small chorus has recently started which offers students some music, but there is no music teacher to offer the subject as a class. Art is most students' favorite subject and many would like to see classes continue into grade 8. Many teachers give good thought to how to present learning to engage students. Practical investigations in science and collaborative discussions in some social studies classes help students develop important negotiation and decision-making skills.

Some teachers rely too much on additional intervention and enrichment activities through push-in, pull-out and extended day supports to provide differentiated instruction. Consequently, in some classes where students do the same task, some find the work too easy and some too hard. Teachers are careful to check that everyone understands before moving on. However, this also means that some students get bored while they wait for the rest of the class to finish because they are not given additional challenges to extend their understanding or apply the learning to different situations.

Nearly all students behave well in class and are respectful of adults and each other. This is not the perception of some parents who still feel that safety and respect are issues in the school. Unfortunately, this perception prevails because the school has not done enough to communicate clearly to parents the current situation. Suspensions have

fallen this year and the small minority of students who continue to challenge the school's rules and expectations are given the supports required to help them integrate into class. Students asked all said that the learning climate is much improved this year.

Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school's goals for accelerating student learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

Professional development is organized well in the school. Each teacher has a personalized plan with individual goals setting out what each wants to achieve by the end of the year. The recommendations for training and support are not yet completed for every teacher because this year's process has only recently started. The professional development lead teacher visits classrooms regularly and is readily available to individual teachers so that they can discuss and organize personalized training needs. The resource center contains supportive materials and articles, and runs training workshops for developing specific aspects of teaching. Teachers value the support they receive from colleagues, and teachers new to the school and/or the profession feel particularly well supported.

Regular grade meetings enable teachers to discuss assessment data and make subsequent changes to pacing guides and curriculum calendars. Although teachers are not members of the inquiry team, coaches who attend grade meetings to share the outcomes. Some teachers use the information to good effect, planning and delivering differentiated learning to meet the needs of all students. However, this practice is still inconsistent across the school because teachers have different levels of expertise.

Academic intervention services, deans and guidance counselors give effective support to students who need extra help to learn. This ranges from encouraging and finding ways for over-age students to attend school every day to providing ongoing support for special education students and English language learners. Partnerships with feeder elementary and receiving high schools are developing well. Partnerships with parents are not as strong. Many parents feel that their views are not taken seriously and at times are unwelcome. The school does not communicate clearly enough or act positively to change this perception.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and evaluating each student's progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

There are suitable systems in place for setting long-term and interim goals with regular checkpoints to monitor whether the school is on track to reach its goals. This is especially strong in the tracking of attendance data. The tracking of student progress has resulted in adjustments in the way the school plans and delivers interventions. Additional extended day sessions focus on all students and not just on those performing below grade level. The English as a second language teacher is pushing into classes to

work with English language learners in class rather than pulling students out for targeted support. This is resulting in a clearer picture of this sub-group's needs, leading to greater focus on teaching vocabulary and accelerating progress this year. Following an analysis of this year's Progress Report, the school noticed a dip in the number of students reaching levels 3 and 4 and so introduced enrichment programs this year to enhance the learning of this sub-group. Teachers constantly check interim assessments to adjust pacing guides and refocus curriculum content.

The principal and assistant principals visit classes regularly to evaluate the quality of instruction. Feedback focuses on instructional practice and is used to identify individualized professional development goals. However, feedback is not always objective enough to ensure goals for improvement are as challenging as they could be because school leaders consider the school is doing better than it is. Outcomes of data analysis are not always used well enough to identify interim goals that build precisely on what specific students have achieved previously.

School leaders are clear about what they want to achieve this year and communicate this clearly to students and teachers. The vision is articulated to parents through newsletters and teacher conferences.

School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

School name: Abraham Lincoln Intermediate School	△	➤	✓	+
Overall QR Score			X	
Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do, and to monitor the student’s progress over time.				
<i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty regularly...</i>	△	➤	✓	+
1.1 collect and analyze actionable information, including assessment results and attendance data, to provide a complete view of the learning outcomes and needs of individual students and groupings of students?			X	
1.2 focus analysis on the learning outcomes and needs of all sub-groups of students?		X		
1.3 engage in an open exchange of information with students and families about students’ learning needs and outcomes, including assessment results and attendance data?			X	
1.4 design or adapt tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize and analyze student performance, identify trends and inform instructional and organizational decisions, and to enable students and their families to assess and track each student’s progress?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 1			X	
Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student’s next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each student’s learning.				
<i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty...</i>	△	➤	✓	+
2.1 use collaborative and data-informed processes to set measurable, actionable and differentiated learning goals in core subjects for individual students and groupings of students and develop differentiated plans and timeframes for reaching these goals?			X	
2.2 use collaborative and data-informed processes to develop the school’s Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP)?			X	
2.3 ensure that the achievement of learning goals, and the implementation of plans and timeframes for reaching these goals, is the central focus of school leaders, faculty, students and families?			X	
2.4 communicate high expectations to all students and families, and involve students in developing their learning goals and plans and in taking their next learning steps?		X		
Overall score for Quality Statement 2			X	

DEFINITIONS

“**Analyze**” or “**analysis**” includes, but is not limited to, comparisons of:

- the current and past outcomes of . . . individual students, administrative groupings and sub-groups of students and the school itself in core subjects;
- the outcomes of different classrooms and sub-groups in the same grades and core subjects; and
- the school’s Progress Report and other outcomes to those of peer/other schools

“**Assessment results**” include student outcomes on summative assessments (e.g., state ELA, math, science and social studies tests, NYSESLAT, Regents Exams, and Performance Based Assessment Tasks) and formative assessments aligned to the school’s curriculum (including Periodic, DYQ, and teacher-developed Classroom Assessments).

“**Core subjects**” are ELA, math, science, social studies/history, the arts, foreign language, and physical education/health.

“**Data-informed processes**” include analysis of Progress Report, Quality Review, Learning Environment Survey, Inquiry Team findings, assessment results and attendance data

“**Groupings of students**” include classrooms, grade levels and high school cohorts.

“**Organizational decisions or strategies**” refer to a school’s use of budget and resources, staffing, planning, scheduling, grade structure, departments and teacher teams and other aspects of the school’s structure and organization that can affect student outcomes.

“**Sub-groups of students**” include special education students, English Language Learners, the other NCLB sub-groups, boys, girls, and other groups significant to the school.

Quality Statement 3 – Develop Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: The school uses rigorous curricula, teaching and organizational decision making to engage students and faculty in meeting all students’ learning goals.

To what extent do ...	Δ	➤	✓	+
3.1 school leaders and faculty deliver challenging and engaging curricula in core subjects, including the arts, that are aligned to state standards?			X	
3.2 teachers plan and teach lessons that are differentiated to meet the needs of individual students and student groupings and are designed to enable all students to reach their learning goals?		X		
3.3 school leaders make strategic organizational decisions to support a coherent and rigorous instructional approach that enables students to reach their learning goals?			X	
3.4 school leaders maintain a culture of mutual trust and respect and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 3			X	

Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals for accelerating student learning.

To what extent do school leaders...	Δ	➤	✓	+
4.1 use their own observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of student outcomes to implement an explicit, differentiated strategy to improve each teacher’s instruction, with a special focus on new teachers?			X	
4.2 encourage teachers to take part in Inquiry Teams and other structured professional collaborations (informed by the examination of student work, assessment outcomes and their own peer observations) and share in the instructional leadership of the school with the goal of improved student learning?			X	
4.3 provide professional development that encourages teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve student outcomes?			X	
4.4 utilize youth development, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations 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 each student’s progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.

To what extent do ...	Δ	➤	✓	+
5.1 the school’s plans for improving student outcomes and its strategies for improving each teacher’s instructional practices include measurable interim goals and suitable time frames for evaluating success and making adjustments during the year?			X	
5.2 school leaders and faculty use interim checkpoints and data to inform lessons, improve curriculum, differentiate instruction and revise student learning plans throughout the year?			X	
5.3 school leaders use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of and modify organizational decisions, structured professional collaborations and teacher improvement strategies?		X		
5.4 school leaders and the school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to support academic, personal and professional growth?			X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 5			X	

Quality Review Scoring Key

Δ	Underdeveloped	➤	Underdeveloped with Proficient Features	✓	Proficient	+	Well Developed
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