



The University of the State of New York  
The State Education Department

**DIAGNOSTIC TOOL FOR SCHOOL AND DISTRICT EFFECTIVENESS (DTSDE)**



<b>Name of principal:</b>	Rebecca Groat
<b>Name/number of school:</b>	Lincoln Middle School
<b>School address:</b>	1613 James Street / Syracuse, NY 13203
<b>School telephone number:</b>	315-435-4450
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## School Information Sheet

School Configuration (2014-15 data)					
<b>Grade Configuration</b>	6-8	<b>Total Enrollment</b>	539	<b>SIG Recipient</b>	Yes
Types and Number of English Language Learner Classes (2014-15)					
<b># Transitional Bilingual</b>	0	<b># Dual Language</b>	0	<b># Self-Contained English as a Second Language</b>	0
Types and Number of Special Education Classes (2014-15)					
<b># Special Classes</b>	4	<b># SETSS</b>		<b># Integrated Collaborative Teaching</b>	4
Types and Number of Special Classes (2014-15)					
<b># Visual Arts</b>	1	<b># Music</b>	1	<b># Drama</b>	0
<b># Foreign Language</b>	6	<b># Dance</b>	0	<b># CTE</b>	1.6
School Composition (most recent data)					
<b>% Title I Population</b>	81		<b>% Attendance Rate</b>	99	
<b>% Free Lunch</b>	77		<b>% Reduced Lunch</b>	4	
<b>% Limited English Proficient</b>	21		<b>% Students with Disabilities</b>	19	
Racial/Ethnic Origin (most recent data)					
<b>% American Indian or Alaska Native</b>	2		<b>% Black or African American</b>	47	
<b>% Hispanic or Latino</b>	13		<b>% Asian or Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander</b>	1	
<b>% White</b>	23		<b>% Multi-Racial</b>	3	
Personnel (most recent data)					
<b>Years Principal Assigned to School</b>	4 months		<b># of Assistant Principals</b>	1	
<b># of Deans-1 acting administrator</b>	1		<b># of Counselors/Social Workers</b>	3	
<b>% of Teachers with No Valid Teaching Certificate</b>	0		<b>% Teaching Out of Certification</b>	0	
<b>% Teaching with Fewer Than 3 Years of Experience</b>	20		<b>Average Teacher Absences</b>	3.6	
Student Performance for Elementary and Middle Schools (2013-14)					
<b>% ELA Performance at levels 3 &amp; 4</b>	6.1		<b>% Mathematics Performance at levels 3 &amp; 4</b>	2.0	
<b>Science Performance at levels 3 &amp; 4 (4th Grade)</b>	N/A		<b>% Science Performance at levels 3 &amp; 4 (8th Grade)</b>	32.4	
Student Performance for High Schools (2013-14)					
<b>ELA Performance at levels 3 &amp; 4</b>	N/A		<b>Mathematics Performance at levels 3 &amp; 4</b>	N/A	
Credit Accumulation <u>High Schools Only</u> (2013-14)					
<b>% of 1st year students who earned 10+ credits</b>	N/A		<b>% of 2nd year students who earned 10+ credits</b>	N/A	
<b>% of 3rd year students who earned 10+ credits</b>	N/A		<b>4 Year Graduation Rate</b>	N/A	
<b>6 Year Graduation Rate</b>	N/A				
Overall NYSED Accountability Status (2013-14)					
<b>Reward</b>			<b>Recognition</b>		
<b>In Good Standing</b>			<b>Local Assistance Plan</b>		
<b>Focus District</b>			✓	<b>Focus School Identified by a Focus District</b>	
<b>Priority School</b>			✓		

### Accountability Status

Met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in ELA (2012-13)			
American Indian or Alaska Native	–	Black or African American	X
Hispanic or Latino	X	Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	–
White	✓	Multi-Racial	–
Students with Disabilities	X	Limited English Proficient	X
Economically Disadvantaged	X		
Met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in Mathematics (2012-13)			
American Indian or Alaska Native	–	Black or African American	X
Hispanic or Latino	X	Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	✓
White	✓	Multi-Racial	–
Students with Disabilities	X	Limited English Proficient	X
Economically Disadvantaged	X		
Met Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in Science (2012-13)			
American Indian or Alaska Native	–	Black or African American	X
Hispanic or Latino	–	Asian or Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	–
White	X	Multi-Racial	–
Students with Disabilities	–	Limited English Proficient	–
Economically Disadvantaged	X		

**Tenet 2 - School Leader Practices and Decisions:** Visionary leaders create a school community and culture that lead to success, well-being and high academic outcomes for all students via systems of continuous and sustainable school improvement.

#	Statement of Practice	H	E	D	I
2.2	The school leader ensures that the school community shares the Specific, Measurable, Ambitious, Results-oriented, and Timely (SMART) goals/mission, and long-term vision inclusive of core values that address the priorities outlined in the School Comprehensive Educational Plan (SCEP).			X	
2.3	Leaders make strategic decisions to organize programmatic, human, and fiscal capital resources.			X	
2.4	The school leader has a fully functional system in place aligned to the district's Annual Professional Performance Review (APPR) to conduct targeted and frequent observation and track progress of teacher practices based on student data and feedback.				X
2.5	Leaders effectively use evidence-based systems and structures to examine and improve critical individual and school-wide practices as defined in the SCEP (student achievement, curriculum and teacher practices; leadership development; community/family engagement; and student social and emotional developmental health).			X	
<b>OVERALL RATING FOR TENET 2:</b>				<b>D</b>	

**Tenet 3 - Curriculum Development and Support:** The school has rigorous and coherent curricula and assessments that are appropriately aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) for all students and are modified for identified subgroups in order to maximize teacher instructional practices and student-learning outcomes.

#	Statement of Practice	H	E	D	I
3.2	The school leader ensures and supports the quality implementation of a systematic plan of rigorous and coherent curricula appropriately aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) that is monitored and adapted to meet the needs of students.			X	
3.3	Teachers develop and ensure that unit and lesson plans used include data-driven instruction (DDI) protocols that are appropriately aligned to the CCLS and NYS content standards and address student achievement needs.			X	
3.4	The school leader and teachers have developed a comprehensive plan for teachers to partner within and across all grades and subjects to create interdisciplinary curricula targeting the arts, technology, and other enrichment opportunities.				X
3.5	Teachers implement a comprehensive system for using formative and summative assessments for strategic short and long-range curriculum planning that involves student reflection, tracking of, and ownership of learning.			X	
<b>OVERALL RATING FOR TENET 3:</b>				<b>D</b>	

**Tenet 4 - Teacher Practices and Decisions:** Teachers engage in strategic practices and decision-making in order to address the gap between what students know and need to learn, so that all students and pertinent subgroups experience consistent high levels of engagement, thinking, and achievement.

#	Statement of Practice	H	E	D	I
4.2	School and teacher leaders ensure that instructional practices and strategies are organized around annual, unit, and daily lesson plans that address all student goals and needs.				X
4.3	Teachers provide coherent, and appropriately aligned Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS)-based instruction that leads to multiple points of access for all students.			X	
4.4	Teachers and students work together to implement a program/plan to create a learning environment that is responsive to students' varied experiences and tailored to the strengths and needs of all students.			X	
4.5	Teachers inform planning and foster student participation in their own learning process by using a variety of summative and formative data sources (e.g., screening, interim measures, and progress monitoring).				X
<b>OVERALL RATING FOR TENET 4:</b>				<b>D</b>	

**Tenet 5 - Student Social and Emotional Developmental Health:** The school community identifies, promotes, and supports social and emotional development by designing systems and experiences that lead to healthy relationships and a safe, respectful environment that is conducive to learning for all constituents.

#	Statement of Practice	H	E	D	I
5.2	The school leader establishes overarching systems and understandings of how to support and sustain student social and emotional developmental health and academic success.			X	
5.3	The school articulates and systematically promotes a vision for social and emotional developmental health that is aligned to a curriculum or program that provides learning experiences and a safe and healthy school environment for families, teachers, and students.				X
5.4	All school stakeholders work together to develop a common understanding of the importance of their contributions in creating a school community that is safe, conducive to learning, and fostering of a sense of ownership for providing social and emotional developmental health supports tied to the school's vision.			X	
5.5	The school leader and student support staff work together with teachers to establish structures to support the use of data to respond to student social and emotional developmental health needs.			X	
<b>OVERALL RATING FOR TENET 5:</b>				<b>D</b>	

**Tenet 6 - Family and Community Engagement:** The school creates a culture of partnership where families, community members, and school staff work together to share in the responsibility for student academic progress and social-emotional growth and well-being.

#	Statement of Practice	H	E	D	I
6.2	The school leader ensures that regular communication with students and families fosters their high expectations for student academic achievement.				X
6.3	The school engages in effective planning and reciprocal communication with family and community stakeholders so that student strength and needs are identified and used to augment learning.				X
6.4	The school community partners with families and community agencies to promote and provide training across all areas (academic and social and emotional developmental health) to support student success.				X
6.5	The school shares data in a way that promotes dialogue among parents, students, and school community members centered on student learning and success and encourages and empowers families to understand and use data to advocate for appropriate support services for their children.			X	
<b>OVERALL RATING FOR TENET 6:</b>					I

<b>Tenet 2 - School Leader Practices and Decisions:</b> Visionary leaders create a school community and culture that lead to success, well-being, and high academic outcomes for all students via systems of continuous and sustainable school improvement.	<b>Tenet Rating</b>	<b>D</b>
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The school has received a rating of *Developing* for Tenet 2 – School Leader Practices and Decisions.

- The school’s SMART goals, mission and vision were created with some stakeholder input and steps to achieve the SMART goals are in the process of being implemented and monitored. The school leader said that Lincoln school staff created the school’s mission and vision during the 2013-2014 school year, prior to her assignment to the school. She noted at the time of development, staff members were very proud of the mission and vision, which lists elements of the mission aligned to each letter of “Lincoln.” However, she said that staff and students really have no consistent interaction with the mission except for it being posted on the school’s website, while the vision is more known by the school community and is printed on monthly newsletters home. Teachers explained that the vision and mission are not really “living” statements, meaning that aside from being posted on the school’s website, “nothing is really done with them beyond that.” Teachers called the mission “bulky” and said, “it is hard to understand and really know how to enact [the mission] or to know our role in how to make it happen.” Both the school leader and teachers indicated a desire for the school team to revise the school’s vision and mission to make it something more understandable, student-friendly, and clear in how to enact. Parents expressed that they don’t know the vision of the school or its goals, though teachers said the vision and mission were shared in a PowerPoint presentation during orientation at the start of the year. Students were unable to speak to the vision or mission, though teachers noted that they are sometimes referenced at bi-weekly whole-school behavior meetings led by the school leader. Additionally, the school leader was able to identify and talk through her assessment of progress towards the school’s SMART goals; she said there is currently no specific goal around student achievement; rather, the three SCEP goals for the school include providing professional development for staff around addressing students’ social-emotional developmental health needs, using the PBIS system to elicit common responses to student behavior, and having teachers implement the common lesson planning template and planning for higher order questioning. The school leader explained that the school leadership team reviewed these goals in October. In terms of progress towards achieving each of the three SMART goals, she indicated that she believes about 90% of teachers have implemented the lesson planning template. She said they are reviewing discipline data each month and looking for common infractions but need to improve on implementing this goal, and that the professional development around students’ SEDH needs has more been around helping teachers interpret the new code of conduct and will now shift to learning to interpret the schools’ new PEAR assessment results and how to move students into intervention groups. The school leader noted that she has been working to adopt and implement the vision, mission, and SMART goals that had been established prior to her placement at the school four months ago and that she was eager to adjust each of these elements for the 2015-2016 school year to be aligned with her own ideas for progress. Thus while a vision, mission, and SMART goals (though not necessarily targeting the most critical areas for growth) do exist at Lincoln MS, critical stakeholders have a limited understanding of what these are/or their role in achieving them, greatly limiting the school community’s ability to focus its efforts on working together to achieve necessary progress.
- The school leader is beginning to make strategic decisions to organize school resources through the use of systems and by communicating the school’s needs. Interviewed teachers indicated that the

enrichment program (MOST – Museum of Science and Technology) has impacted the master schedule by allowing for consistent grade-level collaboration, though teachers noted they inconsistently use this time for planning due to behavioral concerns that must be addressed. Additionally, the school leader, teachers, and the master schedule show that teachers have team meetings three times a week and daily planning time. The school leader noted that other systems in place are PBIS for incentivizing good student behavior, the informal meetings that take place between coaches and teachers as needed, as well as content area meetings through which teachers analyze students' A-Net data. The school leader also mentioned that she put into place two meetings a month with Contact and MOST and separate meetings with the student support staff, indicating that she needs to focus on re-organizing how outside support agencies and internal support staff are being utilized in the building to address students' SEDH needs. While the Student Support Team said they are in desperate need of more bodies to support students' social and emotional development health needs and disruptive behaviors, they also noted that they are not always able to focus on their true responsibilities due to being assigned daily lunch duty, transporting students to and from in school suspension or the BIC (behavior intervention center) room, meeting with students for interventions, or providing teachers with in-class support. The school leader explained that an additional administrator is needed in order to help balance out all the duties being covered by the vice principal, student support staff, and herself; she noted that she'd asked for an additional vice principal, was given an interim support, and expected approval soon for the hiring of an additional full time vice principal. In terms of fiscal resources, the school leader said she has a budget for extended learning time, which has been implemented and has put in a request for funding for computers in support of the school's use of Project Based Learning. She said that each core areas team received the same money allocation while special areas teachers received a lower amount. She said she urged teams to consider giving more money to newer teachers on their teams but that this decision was ultimately up to them. Therefore, available resources are meeting some but not all immediate needs of the school community and spending is inconsistently aligned to the school's SMART goals.

- The school has some pieces of a plan for observing and providing feedback to teachers aligned to APPR criteria and is partially implementing and monitoring that plan and subsequent observation data to provide professional development and support to teachers. According to the school leader, the first round of required observations and evaluations are almost complete (two left to conduct in January) and that she has seen these as opportunities to sit down with teachers one on one and build rapport. She also said she's seen "some improvement" from teachers since completing these evaluations, though did not specify how many teachers or what specific improvements. Additionally, she said that informal observations are not scheduled but may happen sporadically when she is popping her head into a class or returning a student to class; likewise, no formal plan for providing feedback is in place. The school leader said she "needs more consistency in the office functioning before she can implement a schedule for informal observations." She noted that most walkthroughs are conducted on newer teachers rather than with experienced teachers and said that once she gets an additional vice principal she believes she'll be able to put into place a more formalized plan for informal observations and feedback and wants to be able to focus these on instruction, not just behavior management. The school leader explained that teachers are given instructional support mainly through their instructional coach and the content meetings; coaches also provide some feedback on lesson plans and may offer professional development in content-area groups. She added that in August the staff had professional development on the CCLS shifts but other whole-staff professional development has been behavior management/PBIS oriented as informed by behavioral data. Teachers reported that they have received



few or no informal observations so far this school year and indicated that they know a plan for this exists but has been held up due to the administrative team being preoccupied with addressing student behaviors. Interviewed teachers who did receive an informal observation noted no similarities in the type or delivery of feedback they received; while some received an email, others received sticky notes or verbal feedback only. Teachers noted that informal feedback in past years had not followed a similar format. As a result, the school's observation and feedback system is not effective at holding both administrators and staff accountable towards growth and continuous improvement.

- The school leader is beginning to think through systems to track and monitor individual and school-wide practices related to improvements in key areas such as student achievement, behavior, and instruction; however, these systems are not yet in place. The school leader said that the school intervention team meets every Thursday and relies upon data from the Educator's Handbook to make decisions around student intervention placements, topics for bi-weekly behavior assemblies, as well as focus areas to use in conjunction with PBIS. The school leader also encourages instructional coaches to support grade level teams in the analysis of data during team collaboration, though no formal schedule or routines for consistent data analysis were observed in document review or mentioned by the school leader or teachers. The school leader reflected that in the future, informal classroom observation data could be shared with coaches to inform their coaching and could drive professional development topics to occur in content meetings or whole-staff, once the new vice principal is on board and a formalized plan for informal observations is put in place. The school leader also commented that a system to have teachers formally share best practices is needed at Lincoln. Thus, measurable progress toward critical school-wide goals is only partially achieved.

**Recommendations:**

- The school leader and team needs to develop three SMART goals (one addressing parent engagement, another around climate, and one addressing academic achievement) and benchmarks that will be accomplished by June; these goals need to be effectively communicated to staff, students, and families. A mechanism and consistent time and space for monitoring the progress towards each of the goals should be established, posted in a visible space for staff, and communicated to all stakeholders.

<b>Tenet 3 - Curriculum Development and Support:</b> The school has rigorous and coherent curricula and assessments that are appropriately aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards (CCLS) for all students and are modified for identified subgroups in order to maximize teacher instructional practices and student-learning outcomes.	<b>Tenet Rating</b>	<b>D</b>
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The school has received a rating of **Developing** for Tenet 3 – Curriculum Development and Support.

- The school leader is working towards ensuring that professional development for staff, the students' class schedule, collaborative planning time and access to pedagogical support for teachers are in place to support the implementation of CCLS-aligned curricula. The school leader and teachers noted that time has been built into the master schedule for teachers to meet and collaborate around planning and students have been scheduled for double blocks of ELA and math to increase core instructional time. In addition, the school leader said that the two instructional coaches are responsible for the teacher focus on CCLS via their content meetings, where lesson plans may also be reviewed and given feedback; she also said that teachers are all using the district curricula which is aligned to the CCLS. She also commented that there was an August professional development on CCLS shifts for ELA, math, and science; other pedagogical support comes from instructional coaches in 1:1 meetings or content meetings, optional after-school professional development, optional Saturday Academies, optional summer professional development, and advanced degree classes (the school leader noted several teachers currently enrolled). The school leader explained that she's "not expecting much differentiation in the classroom beyond what is required by students' IEPs/504s" but that it is something she would enforce next school year. She noted that this aligns to the flow of A-Net implementation (year one is learning the functionality of A-Net, year two is the actual implementation of testing and learning to read the data, and year three is about using the data to differentiate). Indeed, while some observed lesson plans called out student-specific accommodations or differentiation, most lesson plans listed generic differentiation (i.e. "students can have extra time) and few examples of differentiation in delivery were observed. As a result, while time and some supports do exist for teachers to meet to plan and receive support for implementing CCLS curricula, implementation is inconsistent and is not supporting teachers in meeting the needs of all students.
- Teachers are beginning to develop unit and lessons plans that incorporate the CCLS instructional shifts and data-driven instruction into English Language Arts (ELA), math, and science curricula. While no unit plans were observed, lesson plans listed basic teaching points, the standard number, and in few cases, general modifications for groups of students and usually a general description of the assessment for the lesson. Based upon lesson plan review, planning that adapts to meet the different learning needs of students or is in response to student data occurs infrequently. Few lesson plans indicated ELL-specific modifications or adaptations to the lesson, though the school has a high percentage of ELL students. Additionally, few lesson plans indicated pre-planned questions for students to respond to; those lessons that did include pre-planned questions, most were low-level who, what, and when questions. Although the school has developed some systems to gather and utilize data for instructional planning, there is not a clear and continuous process in place to follow this process regularly. For example, the school leader and teachers indicated that they use the results of A-Net testing (given every ten weeks) to determine what standards they will reteach. Likewise, teachers mentioned that most classes start with a Do It Now and end with a Ticket Out the Door, though they said there is no expectation or general practice that these formative assessment tools are regularly reviewed and used to modify or

adjust planning. As a result, instructional plans do not yet consistently demonstrate data-informed instruction designed to meet the demands of CCLS instructional shifts, and teachers are missing key opportunities to plan for the needs of all students.

- Interdisciplinary planning is largely absent across all grades and subjects. Discussions with teachers indicated that they do not discuss interdisciplinary curricula planning during team meetings; the school participates in Project Based Learning, though teachers expressed that it “is not truly PBL as it could or should be” and that it only addresses ELA and math. Additionally, teachers indicated that the MOST enrichment block provides an opportunity for more interdisciplinary learning, though teachers noted that one main lesson was being delivered to all students regardless of grade level. And, while the master schedule indicated there is time for interdisciplinary team planning during any of the three weekly team meetings, teachers said that most meetings are spent discussing behavior and the code of conduct and doing content-specific planning. Thus, students have limited opportunities to engage in meaningful, cross-curricula activities that increase their abilities to be academically successful.
- Teachers use some assessments, those of which provide mostly summative data such as A-Net, to gather information on student progress and inform curriculum planning, but feedback is not provided to all students based on this data. Teachers noted that they look at A-Net data in content meetings and use it to drive re-teaching; they also administer AimsWeb for math, SRI, quizzes, unit tests, science benchmarks (monthly), daily Tickets Out the Door, and quarterly DBQs for social studies. Although interviewed students indicated that their graded assignments usually include numerical scores, they reported that they did not receive specific feedback from teachers beyond those scores. Posted student work samples throughout the school and classrooms were minimal and of those, few had teacher feedback provided beyond a score. Additionally, lesson plans seldom indicated how or when students would be provided feedback on their performance or to what set of academic expectations/evidence of mastery that feedback should be aligned. Teachers stated that some teachers were using rubrics to give general feedback to students and that most teachers update e-School with grades as a form of feedback to students (though parents noted that e-School is not updated as frequently as would be helpful). Furthermore, while DINs (Do It Now) and Tickets Out the Door were observed in most lesson plans and in classroom observations, most were low-level, recall-based questions and did not always align to the learning required by the stated objective and/or the standard being taught. As a result, the alignment between the curriculum and assessment is weak and feedback does not adequately lead to increased student achievement.

#### **Recommendations:**

- The school leader should set the expectation that lesson plans clearly delineate scaffolded skills for all groups of students in the classroom and include the CCLS shifts in all content areas (including special areas).
- Provide professional development and ongoing support on how to design multiple types of assessments (specifically formative) to gather frequent, concrete data on student achievement aligned to a) the daily objective, b) how to track that data towards short and long-term goals, and c) how to then communicate progress to students for their own reflection and understanding of and engagement with their own learning. Provide teachers with development and models of how to then develop specific, actionable feedback to students aligned to the outcomes of the formative assessments.

<b>Tenet 4 - Teacher Practices and Decisions:</b> Teachers engage in strategic practices and decision-making in order to address the gap between what students know and need to learn, so that all students and pertinent subgroups experience consistent high levels of engagement, thinking, and achievement.	<b>Tenet Rating</b>	<b>D</b>
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The school has received a rating of **Developing** for Tenet 4 – Teacher Practices and Decisions.

- Lincoln’s instructional coaches are engaging teachers in some conversations about aligning plans to data and providing basic structures to support these conversations. According to the school’s master schedule, there is time built into the schedule for teams to meet weekly, during which they can conduct data analysis and discuss re-teaching needs. The school leader commented that instructional coaches are responsible for the teachers’ focus on CCLS and that she wants team leaders to “look at reports to determine who is falling behind and to create interventions accordingly to support them.” However, the school leader also said that she’s not expecting much from teachers this school year in terms of differentiation. Additionally, the school leader and teachers noted that there are not student-specific academic or growth goals at this time beyond the idea to “always do better” and teachers mentioned that some teachers may use SRI data to create individual student goals but this is far from a school-wide practice. Interviewed teachers indicated that the primary source of student data analysis is A-Net test results for ELA and math, unit benchmarks for science, and DBQs for social studies. They said there is not a specific process or protocol for how data is analyzed and that next steps for individual students/subgroups as well as when re-teaching may take place is at the discretion of the teacher. In observations, almost all instruction was delivered to the class whole group with few instances of differentiation. Thus, the school’s instructional practices minimally promote high levels of student engagement or inquiry leading to increased student achievement.
- Some teachers are beginning to develop instruction that reflects the CCLS shifts and higher-order thinking questions and learning activities. During observations, reviewers noted that most grade and subject level classes were engaged in learning activities that were not complex or rigorous (i.e. completing a worksheet independently, watching a teacher interact with a Eno Board without having to co-produce any evidence of learning, and many instances of lecture-style instruction). Likewise, while questions were posed to students, they seldom required higher-level thinking from students, and teachers infrequently asked students to explain their answers. Interviewed students commented that instruction is not too hard but not hard enough; they mentioned that teachers don’t talk about why what they’re learning is important and said that teachers can’t give harder work because it may cause other students to misbehave. As a result, instructional practices inconsistently lead to high levels of deep engagement and achievement for all students.
- The school has several structures in place to communicate and support student expectations at Lincoln though they are largely absent in classroom implementation. Lincoln’s matrix of behaviors aligned to their PBIS system, voice level expectations, and class rules were observed in almost all classrooms, though classroom observations revealed that teachers all used their own unique language around redirections, addressed behaviors inconsistently, and oftentimes lacked follow-through on their own expectations (i.e. teachers would ask students to raise their hands to respond but frequently accept answers from students who were calling out). The school leader asserted that Lincoln is getting “safer for students every day;” however, staff and parent representatives generally agreed that while the school is working hard to make the Lincoln a positive and safe learning environment, there seems to be an increase in disruptive student behaviors. Parents commented that they always feel welcome at

Lincoln, though they often times question their children's safety. Likewise, teachers and support staff commented that they often times do not feel safe due to extreme and repetitive student behaviors. Interviewed students indicated that they do not always feel safe at school and that bullying is an ongoing issue. They explained that while they feel comfortable asking questions if they have to but that they would likely be made fun of if they asked a "dumb question." During classroom observations, students asked mostly directions-based questions or for supplies, whereas they asked content-specific questions as teachers circulated to individual students or small groups. Additionally, most classrooms observed showed that teaching was taking place from bell to bell with redirections seldom detracting from learning time. Learning tasks in general were lower level (i.e. fill in the blank worksheets, teachers reading with students following along, students completing math problems in groups and the teacher providing the answer whole group) and students seemed very comfortable completing the work asked of them; very few students had to grapple with the learning before they were given support from the teacher or students who had already completed their work. Therefore, while some structures are in place to promote a positive and safe learning environment, additional work is needed here in order to provide an intellectually and physically safe space in which all students are held accountable for learning [and in which the diverse needs of all students are being addressed.](#)

- Teachers use minimal strategies to gather data through summative assessments to inform instructional practices and student groupings, although they are seldom providing feedback to students on their achievement. Most data sources referred to by the school leader, teachers, and students were district-required assessments, including benchmark assessments, SRI, AimsWeb and A-Net. Teachers mentioned that in addition to A-Net data, SRI and some other assessments "could be used" to inform re-teaching, though few teachers were able to speak specifically to how they use data to drive weekly or daily instructional planning adjustments and very few examples of formative assessments were observed in practice. Moreover, students were not able to speak to their performance goals and there was no obvious use of grouping in observed classrooms (outside of Special Education classrooms, which had students placed in flexible groups for ELA, math and science with work differentiated by skills). In addition, both students and the parent representatives indicated that they do not receive consistent feedback regarding students' progress and that grade reports are the primary communication about student growth. Teachers noted that some teachers may choose to use rubrics to provide more specific feedback to students since they can't meet with all kids due to time constraints. Moreover, interviewed students indicated that their graded assignments mainly include numerical scores and the feedback that was given on assignments was general (i.e. "Good job", "Nice work," "Great!"). As a result, data-based instruction is being minimally implemented and a lack of purposeful feedback to students [is not resulting in](#) higher levels of student achievement or engagement.

#### **Recommendation:**

- [The school leader in conjunction with the instructional leadership team should identify three high-impact instructional techniques \(that will increase overall student engagement and rigor of learning\) that are explicitly modeled for staff and implemented in all classrooms with consistent feedback on use provided by administration.](#)
- [Provide professional development and ongoing support on how to design multiple types of assessments to gather concrete data on student achievement aligned to the daily objective, how to track that data towards short and long-term goals, and how to provide substantive, specific feedback to students for their own reflection and understanding of their learning.](#)

<b>Tenet 5 - Student Social and Emotional Developmental Health:</b> The school community identifies, promotes, and supports social and emotional development by designing systems and experiences that lead to healthy relationships and a safe, respectful environment that is conducive to learning for all constituents.	<b>Tenet Rating</b>	<b>D</b>
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The school has received a rating of **Developing** for Tenet 5 – Student Social and Emotional Developmental Health.

- The school is beginning to implement several structures and systems to address students’ social and emotional behavioral health needs. In an interview, the school leader explained that there is currently no specific vision for students’ social-emotional developmental health at Lincoln; however, she commented that one change that would bring the school closer to a vision would be to reorganize resources so that the staff knows the extent of services and supports available for students. She wants to connect what the Student Support Team is doing with students into the classrooms with teachers and said the school needs better coordination between the Student Support Team, teachers, and parents; she said she wants to see this reorganization take place before the end of the current school year. In terms of student identification, the school leader said there is a referral system in place though she would like to see more teachers use the school’s referral form and follow the process that should be standard across Lincoln. The school leader also said that there are two main “early identification” techniques in place. First and foremost, she explained that she listens for those students whose name comes across the walkie talkie frequently for needing behavioral supports or by seeing the same students repeatedly in the BIC or ISS rooms. [The school leader and Student Support Team remarked that](#) the other early identification system newly in place is the PEAR assessment, [which](#) all students completed earlier in the school year. [Results](#) will be used to place students in intervention groups to target specific behaviors. According to the school leader, the School Intervention Team currently meets every Thursday and reviews data points from within Educator’s Handbook to make decisions around student intervention placements, topics for bi-weekly whole-school behavior assemblies, as well as focus areas to use in conjunction with Lincoln’s PBIS system. Furthermore, the school leader said she believes she’s beginning to see an impact of these initiatives and a slight decrease in behavior and referrals. [As](#) for SEDH needs, she reported that some students are receiving the proper supports. While the Student Support Team indicated that a plan already exists for monitoring the progress of students’ intervention, the school leader said that this type of plan is not currently in place, though needed. The school leader, Student Support Staff, and teachers all mentioned that there is “a lot of individual help for students” but not necessarily [a plan for how to address the whole-school populations’ SEDH needs](#). Thus, the current systems are not yet effectively addressing SEDH barriers for all students at Lincoln.
- The school utilizes some structures to address social-emotional developmental health needs of students, though no formal plan currently exists to develop the school staff’s capacity to address these needs. The Student Support Team indicated that they have not adopted a specific curriculum or program to address students’ social emotional and developmental health needs, though they have recently administered the PEAR assessment to identify intervention groups for students, and have [some elements of](#) a PBIS system in place. [They](#) also noted that they use data from Educator’s Handbook to drive topics of bi-weekly behavior assemblies and that numerous individual strategies for intervention are in place. [Some](#) students receiving interventions even receive behavior plans, though this is not a school-wide practice. The Student Support Team noted that while they’ve not provided any

whole-school or formal professional development to the school staff, they do meet with teachers as needed to provide SEDH techniques for the classroom; they also meet regarding specific students' needs. Teachers expressed that they don't know what strategies are being tried with various students and are rarely aware of the general plan to support individual students. Moreover, teachers noted that they need to know what interventions to try with students in the classroom and that frequent, structured communication with the SST would allow them to improve their ability to address students' SEDH needs in the classroom. The SST also reported that while there are various structures in place to support students' SEDH needs and also to reward students' behaviors aligned to PBIS, that in general the school's practices are reactionary and they spend the majority of their time deescalating students' behaviors. Therefore, while there are several pieces to the schools' approach to begin addressing students' SEDH needs, the school community is not consistently providing a safe and healthy learning environment for all students.

- Protocols and processes for identifying students' SEDH needs and engaging stakeholders in those procedures are beginning to be implemented. The SST noted that there are basic systems in place for the identification of students needing supports (mainly through the analysis of Educator's Handbook data), progress monitoring of interventions, and for communicating students' progress to teacher and helping them to know what strategies to use in the classroom to support these students. However, the SST explained that they need to focus on communicating with teachers, as there are limited conversations taking place with teachers around students' interventions or progress. This data is available, though, as the SST explained that students receiving interventions are assigned to a coach who is responsible for updating a Google .doc where students' progress and interventions are tracked. They said that changes to students' interventions are based upon this tracking and monitoring system. The school leader said that she wants to implement new procedures for the SST meetings, including the recording of minutes and providing those to teachers to keep them informed. The SST also indicated that while interventions exist for individual students, there is not an emphasis on Tier 1 classroom strategies, which the SST team believes contributes to the heavy load of students they address. The SST said they feel overwhelmed with the amount of students and daily behavioral management they are tasked with every day. In addition, the SST said the general vision for SEDH is embedded in the overall Lincoln vision, though unclear. They said once PEAR assessment results were in they would use this data to define a more specific vision for SEDH and a linked SMART goal. Parents were unaware of the supports available for SEDH at Lincoln or how to access them. As a result, not all school stakeholders are able to articulate the process for how the school community promotes and meets the SEDH needs of students or their role in that process.
- The school has begun to implement a plan to collect, analyze, and use data to identify and meet student social and emotional developmental health needs. The school leader reported that referral data is collected and assessed through Educator's Handbook primarily by the SST, though they will be looking at the results of the PEAR assessment once available. The SST noted that while there are general plans and interventions available to address students' SEDH needs for Tier 2 and Tier 3 behaviors, general classroom techniques and supports are not addressed or focused on school-wide. And, while the SST says there is some attempt to communicate with teachers around students' interventions and progress, teachers said, "We're told which kids are receiving intervention but not what it is or how they are doing...there is very little communication between the SST and teachers. We have no idea how of how their intervention is supporting the end goal of keeping them in class and peacefully learning." Teachers also commented that they are not seeing students' behavior change as a result of interventions from the SST. They said that students know there are "no real consequences"

and they ask to be taken to the BIC and/or ISS rooms to spend time with friends. As a result, the school is missing key opportunities to support the academic and social-emotional success of all students.

**Recommendations:**

- The school leader and SST should work together to create a SMART goal with measurable progress benchmarks aligned with a SEDH-specific vision for Lincoln MS. A specific target area should include three high-impact Tier 1 interventions and strategies to be used by all teachers in all classrooms.

**Tenet 6 - Family and Community Engagement:** The school creates a culture of partnership where families, community members, and school staff work together to share in the responsibility for student academic progress and social-emotional growth and well-being.

**Tenet Rating**

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The school has received a rating of Ineffective for Tenet 6 – Family and Community Engagement.

- The school has not yet revised their efforts and plans to engage parents more effectively or inform them about the expectations for student achievement. The school leader, teachers, and parents all said that there are no specific academic expectations at Lincoln that are communicated other than students becoming “college ready” and to pass their state assessments. Teachers commented that these are not true academic expectations and are too general and high-level, which leaves students without much motivation to do well. Teachers said that they communicate with families primarily via robo-calls, website updates, and the monthly newsletter, though they are done somewhat inconsistently; and there have been limited in-person engagements with parents and in the community. The school leader said, “teachers’ expectations of family involvements is very low and they [teachers] don’t really make an effort to reach out to families.” The school leader noted that parents receive interim reports and report cards and that she asks teachers to update e-School weekly. Other than these methods, the school leader said parent-teacher conferences were held earlier in the school year to discuss students’ previous year r state assessment scores, though parents, teachers, and the school leader all commented that participation at conferences was very low. The school leader also said that they had intended on sending students’ SRI scores home to families but that was not accomplished. Parents commented that the PTO is where to go to learn about ways to be involved with Lincoln, upcoming events and initiatives, the school’s progress, and to voice concerns, however there are only four regular attending members. As a result, students lack academic goals and expectations that can drive their focus and school-family relations are weak, limiting families’ ability to fully support their child’s academic progress.
- The school communicates with families about school and student issues without considering translation needs for the whole school community and has not yet begun to reflect upon more effective ways to foster communication. The school leader noted that the school communicates with families about school and student issues primarily in English only, despite a large Spanish-speaking population and other languages. Teachers said they may send home communication via mail and also give copies to students to take home, though these communications are also in English only. As a result, all families are not able to fully support their child’s academic achievement and social emotional needs.
- The school has not yet implemented strategies or professional development to create and sustain



family/community engagement to enable parents to support students' academic success. While the school leader said she knows what parent engagement should look like, training has not yet been provided to staff to establish these relationships. Teachers also indicated that they have not received training or direct support on how to engage with families. Parents said they received training on how to access e-School during orientation and they received a list of grade-level counselors so they know who to contact for their children; teachers also provided their email addresses and encouraged parents to contact them as needed. As a result, because most communication strategies are one-directional and few parents attend in-person meetings with school staff, there is little opportunity for parents to share their thoughts and to deepen the partnership between school and home.

- School staff shares some data to communicate about student progress that families can access. The school leader indicated that the primary data sent home are report cards and interim reports and that teachers may spend time explaining the data with parents during parent teacher conferences, although these are sparsely attended. She also noted that if parents want to know about their child's performance that they can make an appointment to speak to their child's guidance counselor. Parents in the focus group noted that they have access to information about their children's academic progress in E-school, though it is not consistently updated. Parents also said they can contact teachers directly or schedule an appointment with a counselor if they have questions about student progress. They noted that the communication sent home does not provide data, aside from interim and report cards. Parents also said while there is no communication around school-wide goals or progress towards them, they're not even sure of what data they should know about or be asking for. Parents showed frustration that they don't find out about important and/or dangerous behavioral instances taking place at school until their children tell them; they would appreciate a robo-call or letter home letting them know when these types of situations occur and how the school will be addressing them. As a result, all families may not be able to fully support student learning in ways to maximize achievement.

#### **Recommendations:**

- The school leader in collaboration with the school leadership team should develop a family engagement plan that includes monthly communication around students' academic progress, SEDH supports and initiatives, progress towards the school's SMART goals, as well as opportunities to volunteer and/or engage at the school. Considerations for non-English speaking families should be included in this plan.

## Remarks on How to Prioritize the Recommendations:

Though there is no single way to approach school improvement, in order to achieve optimal results efficiently, here is how the Outside Educational Experts would have thought about prioritizing the provided recommendations (note: you will have to put some thought into which of these recommendations can be implemented concurrently, and which may only be able to be addressed partially for the time being given your available time and capacity):

- Recommendations for Tenet 2 focus on setting regular benchmark targets for year-end goals and creating a structure to monitor them along with how to engage stakeholders in communicating the progress. It is recommended to prioritize these actions to be acted upon first in order to see the greatest results across all tenets. When all groups clearly know the collective goals, their role in reaching them and the current progress, they will be able to better understand how to focus their efforts in order to help meet them. An ambitious year-end goal can seem overwhelming or unattainable at times, but smaller benchmarks along the way will help students, staff, and families focus on the prioritized next steps in the short-term. Once these benchmark metrics have been established in all areas, they can be tracked regularly and emphasized in all communication with each group as well as integrated into recognition structures for positive reinforcement across the school community. Also, ensure that the benchmarks you create are specific, measurable and individuals or groups can be held accountable for reaching them and that they know what key actions to take in order to achieve them.
- Moving into Tenet 5, there should be SMART benchmark targets for the social and emotional developmental health of students. You may need to take a step back in this area to develop and/or clarify your vision for the school community to promote not only a safe environment that addresses students' social and emotional developmental health needs but one in which all stakeholders own their role, thrive on achievement and celebrate successes. Along the similar mindset stated above, if the school community does not clearly understand the ideal state that you are working to achieve, then the collective efforts to have that realized will likely be inconsistent and/or incongruent with the overall vision and strategy that should be in place. This is an opportunity to focus on investment and recognition to encourage positive reinforcement centered on growth and progress towards a universally understood and appreciated learning environment. Next, in order to fully execute a plan for achieving the vision around students' SEDH, there must be a detailed, specific, written plan that includes roles for all stakeholders, processes and procedures for data collection (noting specific data), student referrals to services, progress monitoring of growth and a strategic plan for professional development that addresses the unique SEDH needs of the Lincoln community. This written plan should also include the mechanisms for collaborative communication between all outside agencies present at the school and the school's student support team (again, a concrete plan for communication (who communicates, when/frequency and specific dates or date intervals, where meetings take place, meeting goals and desired outcomes, who takes ownership of next steps, etc.). Every stakeholder involved in addressing students' SEDH needs should know or have easy access to a comprehensive list of all services the school offers and the qualifications of each services. This information needs to be strategically shared with teachers and parents as well. As with other processes and procedures, a mechanism for monitoring these processes and procedures should be implemented.
- The next suggested prioritized recommendation would fall into Tenet 3 and 4. Once benchmark targets have been set in all areas, it is recommended to next complete a deep analysis of how each teacher understands implementing data-driven, CCLS-aligned instruction and high-impact instructional strategies that hold all students accountable to learning. This step will help the leadership team identify specific needs and supports for various groups of teachers and provide additional, aligned professional development accordingly. Then, professional development and supports can be planned for differentiated groups to intentionally move staff along appropriate paths in each area, especially in how to design assessments, gather data and share academic feedback with students.

- Instruction: Designing multiple types of assessments and gathering frequent student achievement data is the next area to prioritize in implementation. Once teachers understand the utility of data, they need to also develop the mechanisms that will allow for its regular collection and ensure that it will provide concrete evidence of whether or not students are able to complete the skill aligned with the stated objective and standard. Students must be given ample opportunities to practice and demonstrate their learning in each class period, and teachers should have a clear understanding of where students sit on the continuum of learning in order to know what interventions and lesson activities need to be developed for students at each level. In addition, establish processes for this data to be communicated with students in a manner in which will invest them in their own learning as well as their families in ways that are effective for various sub-groups. While the practice of student goal-setting is a starting point in this area, it's critical that teachers know how to provide meaningful, specific, growth-centered feedback to students on their work and progress so that students have a clear understanding of how their skills or understanding must change in order improve.
- Finally, addressing Tenet 6, re-examine the structures and processes in place to communicate with families, specifically around students' individual academic progress. Ensure that information about students' academic progress is the prioritized content of communication; provide support/training to teachers to model how academic progress conversations should sound, what information to provide to parents, how to communicate this information in an easy-to-understand and "growth-centered" manner, as well as how to have difficult conversations, that can arise when discussing a student who is struggling academically. Consider family incentives for coming to school for data nights or conferences. If E-School is the primary means of communicating students' progress, then ensure that teachers are inputting information regularly (create a school-wide expectations) and set a plan for monitoring this. Likewise, it is imperative that communication to families is translated into languages they can understand; tap into the plethora of resources available from the district and community organizations to address this need. Creating a calendar for communication and monitoring this plan will help to ensure that regular communication is going home to parents; while the focus of the communication should be students' academic progress, also include information on SEDH supports, family involvement opportunities and initiatives, commentary on the progress towards the school's SMART goals, current PBIS focus and incentives, etc.