

Lincoln Elementary

Nogales Unified District, Nogales, AZ

Lincoln Elementary in Nogales, Arizona has experienced a dramatic increase in its third grade AZM2 English Language Arts passing rate, increasing from just 16% of third graders in 2015 to 43% in 2019. Understanding what steps Lincoln has taken to unlock success can provide insight for other schools.

Four key factors are identified as impacting reading improvement:

- Professional development of staff
- Systemic, actionable use of data
- An “all hands on deck” approach to achievement
- Meaningful, action-driven parent involvement

Interviewers/Editors:

Terri Clark, Sean Ross, Sarah Bondy

Writer: Kristin Borns

Lincoln's Approach to Student Achievement

Professional Development of Staff

Every teacher at Lincoln Elementary has taken the Arizona Department of Education's *Teaching Reading Effectively* training. This training is designed to improve teacher knowledge of the science of reading by focusing instruction on the pillars of early literacy: Phonological Awareness, Phonics, Fluency, Vocabulary, and Comprehension. The principal of Lincoln attributed a measure of the school's success to the increased capacity of his staff after they completed the training.

Data-Driven Intervention

Lincoln Elementary's staff does not wait on annual statewide testing data to make adjustments in

curriculum and instruction. Three times a year, the team disaggregates data from both DIBELS and Galileo and walks through the scores, standard by standard, to identify where students are struggling. With a strong focus on raising the scores of the lowest performing cohort, nearly five hours in a given day at Lincoln Elementary are devoted to literacy.

The Lincoln team engages in whole group work as well as what instructional staff refer to as "exchanges." These occur when students travel to another room to work with the grade-level teacher with the greatest strength in the standard in which the student is struggling. Students are grouped to ensure they are mastering the specific standards they need to master.

Students also are fully engaged and understand their benchmark scores and their goals. Each student is expected to be responsible for his or her own data, and that information is shared with the student first and then with his or her parents. Each student also has an individual planner where they are responsible for entering homework and where parents indicate their review. This empowers students to understand their current levels of performance at all times and to take ownership of their learning.

Title I after-school tutoring is also a data-driven endeavor. Just as occurs in the classroom, students are grouped based on data and receive targeted intervention for 40-minute periods, three times a week. These sessions are led by current Lincoln Elementary teachers to provide consistency with classroom instruction.

Data is also critical in Lincoln's assessment and improvement of their core curriculum. Staff reviewed and analyzed the Tier 1 core reading program to identify gaps. They then found supplemental programming to fill in those gaps, especially at the foundational levels. They also have built their own curriculum map to ensure no gaps exist within or across grades school wide and use the Arizona

Lincoln Elementary: By the Numbers

27 point increase in third grade student passing AZM2 ELA (proficient and highly proficient).

26 point decrease in third grade economically disadvantaged students scoring minimally proficient.



Move On When Reading Literacy Plan: Lincoln Elementary

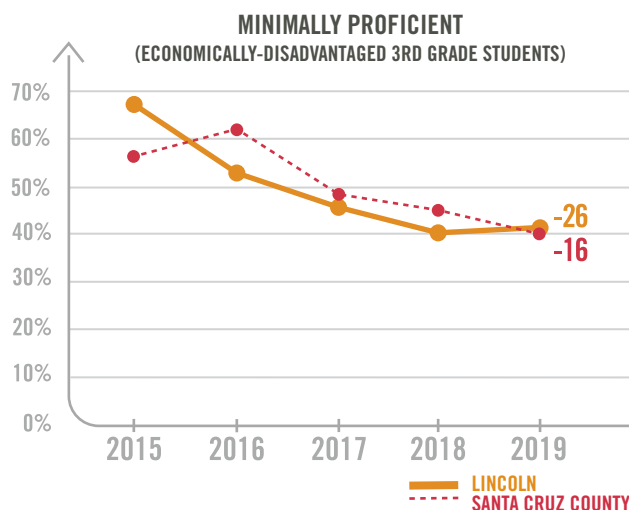
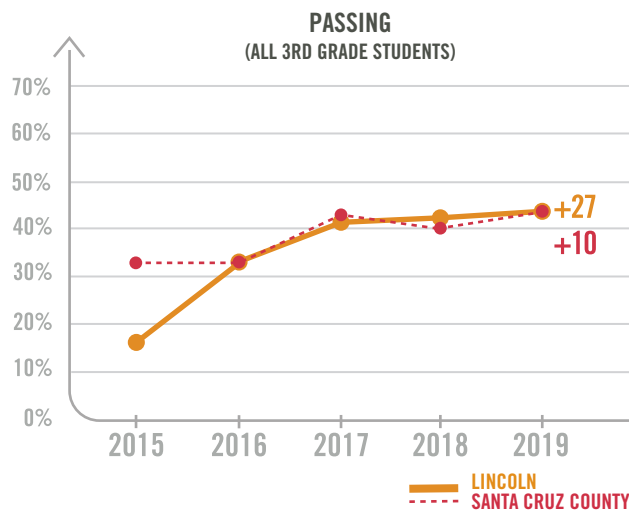
Core Reading Program (Tier 1): Houghton Mifflin Reading

Supplemental Reading Program (Tier 1): Ready Common Core

Enrichment Programs (For use at school and at home): Imagine Learning and Learning Farm

Literacy Assessments: DIBELS

Professional Development: Teaching Reading Effectively



Grades: **K-5**
 Enrollment: **423**
 Full Day K: **Yes**
 Title I:
 Free-and-or-Reduced
 Lunch: **94%**
 Read On
 Community: **Yes**



Students feel noticed,
 successful, and celebrated,
 and teachers work to
 build student relationships
 in small group settings.

Department of Education's *AZM2 Blueprints and Performance Level Descriptions* as guides.

Finally, Lincoln staff estimate 80% of their kindergarteners do not speak English when they begin school, making not only ELL instruction, but also literacy a priority.

All Hands on Deck

While Lincoln leadership and teachers are critical players in the school's test score growth, they are part of a larger team that includes paraprofessionals, a reading coach, and families.

In addition to an interventionist on staff for the current year, there are two paraprofessionals who work the entire day in the kindergarten classrooms. Additionally, Lincoln does not wait until third grade to identify students' instructional needs. The kindergarten through second grade teachers use DIBELS data to screen and identify students who are struggling. Just as in third grade, students are then grouped based on need. Maintaining the commitment to data-driven decisions, as students master skills, instructional groups are regrouped to help students progress.

The school librarian also spends 45 minutes, twice a week, with each class at Lincoln. Reading books to students that are just above their instructional level, she keeps students engaged and allows them to build their vocabularies. She crafts lesson plans that focus on theme books and activities each month, and builds in fun activities like "Flashlight Fridays" where students can imagine they are camping while at the library. She engages in read-alouds with ELL students and encourages them to write down what they understand. They can do this in either English or Spanish and share their reflections with one another, building recall and community simultaneously. In addition to all the instructional engagement the librarian provides, she also serves as the family engagement liaison.

According to the school's principal, what makes the real difference at Lincoln—more than the program or curriculum—is the people. And he is a former literacy coach, understanding how key it is to serve as a literacy leader.

Parent Involvement

Parents are active, frontline partners in building their child's literacy skills and key players on their child's literacy team. They review and sign their student's homework planner daily, keeping a daily line of communication open with their child's teacher. Additionally, parents have their own "homework" to bolster their child's reading skills. Parents are expected to read at least 15 minutes per night with their K-1 students and 20 minutes per night with their 2-3rd grade students. Parents also have access to open-source resources such as Starfall.com.

Parents also engage at one of the many parent events throughout the year. Teachers host big picture gatherings, such as a Move On When Reading Night, where concepts such as reading fluency and how to understand student scores are explained. These parent nights are often open to students as well and promote literacy activities for parents and children to participate in together. Using door prizes and incentives to encourage parent attendance, these community-building events have been occurring at Lincoln for years. Parent events are also presented in English and Spanish, and 98% of Lincoln's staff is bilingual.

The parent of two Lincoln students shared that the staff focuses on a full year's growth for all kids. His older child did not necessarily struggle with reading, so the team pushed her to read beyond grade-level. His younger child struggled with literacy basics in kindergarten, but now identifies herself as a reader. He stated, "When we drive, she reads all the signs. She reads every book she checks out from the library. She already bought multiple books from the book fair (which just started)." His view of the partnership with the staff mirrored the staff's view, sharing, "It's a team effort."

Lincoln Elementary has demonstrated measured growth in AZM2 test scores through professional development of the staff, collaborative use of data, resources and team engagement. The team continues to focus on growth in literacy and performance. As Lincoln's principal shared, while they are proud of their achievement, they are not done.

Examining Census data for the community surrounding Lincoln Elementary:

21.3%
 of the population

is between 5 and 17
 years old; compared to

20.8%
 in Santa Cruz
 County

69.4%
 of the community

population lives
 below 200% of the
 poverty level; compared to

54%
 of the Santa Cruz
 County population

Median household
 income is **\$22,333**

Source: MapLIT ACS 2013-2017, 5 year data for Lincoln Elementary and Santa Cruz County profile.



Working Together—Making an Impact

We would like to thank all the Lincoln team members above for their participation in the case study interview.

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