

Community and School Profile

Lincoln High School, one of eleven public high schools in the Portland Public School District (PPS), is the oldest public high school in Portland and one of the oldest in the nation, founded ten years after the first public school was opened in Boston. Originally located in the Northwest Portland, it has moved several times before settling in its current location at 1600 SW Salmon Street, located in the west area of downtown near PGE Park. In the last few months, a number of citizens have proposed rebuilding or moving the school. Although still in very early stages, the school and community appear receptive to planning for an expansion or move.

Due to its downtown location, Lincoln is nearby a multitude of businesses and residences. Diagonal to the football field is the Multnomah Athletic Club, which has a membership list containing the city's wealthiest families. During breaks and lunch, students avail themselves of the many eating establishments, including Subway, Starbucks, West End Market, Bellagio's Pizza and Olé Olé. Other local businesses include the studios of local news channel KGW, Oregon Culinary Institute, a multitude of salons, and several small restaurants and pubs. Lincoln's location also puts it in close proximity to many cultural spaces including the Portland Art Museum, the Forestry Center, and the City Center.

There are four TriMet bus stops on school corners and there is a MAX light rail stop within a block of the school. Public transportation is widely used by the students for their commute. The TriMet system is also used for field trips and outings.

As it currently stands, the school is a large, three-story brick building with four portable classrooms and an adjoining football field. The main entrance is located off a large cement patio which overlooks the football field. There is an additional main entrance on the street side of the school, yet there is little parking along the street so that entrance is not as frequently used. In addition, there are many smaller entrances into remote hallways and auditoriums, but for security reasons they are kept locked during most of the day.

While Lincoln is literally an inner-city school, the student population does not reflect the racial and ethnic diversity Americans typically associate with that designation. Although Portland is increasing in its racial and ethnic diversity, Lincoln draws its population primarily from the West Hills which is still a predominantly white neighborhood. Although PPS has a school transfer option, due to overcrowding Lincoln has closed its transfer option, increasing the similarity between the school's demographic profile and its neighborhood demographic profile.

Lincoln is in the zip code of 97205. U.S. Census data from 2000 lists 6,212 persons living in the area. Of those, 83% are white, 5% are black, and 5% are Asian. In addition, 5% of the population reports being Hispanic. The neighborhood is also relatively old, with more than half of the 4,854 housing units were built prior to 1939, according to the website <http://www.citydata.com>. The website also lists the median house/condo value of the zip code at \$341,259, while the median house/condo value for all of Portland is \$225,900.

Lincoln started the 2007-08 school year with 1415 students, according to data provide in the school newsletter. Although more specific data for this school year is not yet available, based upon 2006-07 numbers posted on the PPS website, 80% of students are attending their neighborhood school. The remaining 20% have applied and been accepted from other neighborhoods, although as mentioned, beginning with the 2007-08 school year, Lincoln is no longer accepting additional transfer students. This decision will likely fluctuate yearly. While many students attend Lincoln in an effort to flee their (failing) neighborhood schools, others apply to Lincoln to take advantage of the International Baccalaureate (IB) program, the International Studies Center (ISC), or the Spanish Immersion program. The school does not

receive Title 1 funds, and only 10% of the student body qualifies for free or reduced lunch (compared with the 57% I witnessed while student teaching at Benson Polytechnic High School last year). Only 5% of the students are on Individualized Education Plans (IEP) and 1% are English Language Learners (ELL), while 28% of the students are identified as Talented and Gifted (TAG).

The students at Lincoln closely mimic the racial profile of the neighborhood, with 79% of the student classified as white, 8% Asian, 6% as African American, and 6% Hispanic, as reported on the PPS website. Lincoln has 74 FTE staff, although, like the student body there is little diversity among them. An informal survey identifies a Spanish teacher from South America, one African American teacher, and two security guards among a sea of white faces. The staff has an average of 15 years experience, more than 72% have Master's degrees, and 95% meet the highly qualified standard.

Lincoln was one of two PPS high schools making Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in 2006-07 under No Child Left Behind (NCLB) guidelines. However, a comparison of scores from 2005-06 to 2006-07 shows an interesting change: while students with disabilities did not meet AYP in 2005-06, there were not enough students with disabilities enrolled at Lincoln in 2006-07 for their scores to be counted. In addition, there were not enough ELL students, Hispanic students, or American Indian/Alaskan Native students enrolled in 2006-07 for their scores to be counted, and yet Lincoln has the highest enrollment of any PPS high schools. Surely, Lincoln is doing a good job of educating its students, but its lack of diversity—and the socio-economic problems all too often associated with such diversity—must certainly be adding to the mythology of Lincoln as PPS's "best" high school.

This does not imply that Lincoln does a poor job providing opportunities for all students. Lincoln provides a large array of co-curricular activities. Although a comprehensive list of clubs is not posted on the Lincoln website, the daily bulletin shows a range of clubs, from Model United Nations, Drama, and Mock Trial to Latino Club, Asian Club, Table Tennis, and Gay Straight Alliance among many others. The school-created website lists 14 sports including football, soccer, wrestling, dance, track, basketball, and baseball. The girls' soccer team recently won the 2007 State Championship title. The school also maintains a fully staffed counseling center. Finally both IB and ISC have community service requirements, involving the students in the greater Portland community.

Although Lincoln spends less per student than other schools in the district, it has managed to maintain a wide variety of elective courses and co-curricular activities. This alludes to the Lincoln high parent involvement and contributions to the Lincoln Foundation. Currently, the Lincoln High School Foundation funds three FTE positions and is planning on raising money to fund six positions in order to prevent cuts due to changes in enrollment. Other factors indicate high parent involvement, including attendance at Back-to-School night and parent volunteers at dances, school activities, and field trips. The school-created website also notes that "the majority of parents are college educated, often with graduate degrees". The underlying assumption is that Lincoln students have home lives where education is valued and encouraged, which we know is a key factor in student success.

Note: Keri Rose contributed to the writing of this profile.

Classroom Profile

The classroom where I teach first period is located in portable classrooms along 14th Avenue. The room is large, but has the stale, over-warm air of a temporary building. The walls are a dull off-white, with two windows along one wall and the door along the opposite wall. Most of the day it is used as a math classroom, and the walls are covered with various student assignments as well as posters relating to math. Along one section of the wall is a collection of personal collages that the students in my language arts class completed at the beginning of the year. Although the wall decorations show some planning and grace of design, the rest of the room can be best described as squalid.

The room has two whiteboards at the front of the room separated by a projection screen. The only instructional technology in the room is an overhead projector is always located in front of the screen. The room has 33 desks arranged in groups of four around the room, with the one remaining desk near the front of the room. Many of the desks are covered by pencil and ink drawings done by (presumably) bored students. There are two teacher's desks along the wall with the windows, each with a desktop computer. Both desks are covered by piles of paper and books as well as marginally operational computer equipment. Various piles of old computer parts and boxes of old instructional materials litter the floor of the room. The piles have been slowly disappearing over the course of the semester. During fall, the floor of the room was consistently covered with piles of leaves and yard debris that blew in through the door. There are a number of cupboards and bookshelves around the room, as well as two filing cabinets, in varying states of use. In general, the room is disorganized and dirty. One bookshelf holds a class set of the language arts textbook and another holds a few dictionaries and thesauruses.

Students in the class have at various times commented on the unsuitability of the room for learning, although I suspect they were parroting the opinions expressed by my Cooperating Teacher (CT). Regardless of the sincerity of those students' opinions, they are right. It is not an environment that shows respect for the business of learning. It is certainly not a room that lives up to Lincoln's reputation as a well-funded school with a big emphasis on academics.

Regardless of the environment, we do go about the business of learning. There are 24 students in this sophomore language arts classroom (there were 25 at the start of this work sample, but one student moved out of Portland). In general, the students are talkative and social and appear to know each other by name. Although the room is predominantly white, there is at least some diversity of race, ethnicity, religion, primary language, and special learner status. Not all of the distinctions are clear from the school's demographic data, but classroom discussions have alluded to various religions practiced by students in the room as well as ethnicities that are not apparent with the blanket racial description "white". According to data provided by PPS, the make-up of the students in this class is as follows:

- Race/ethnicity
 - 15 white
 - 4 African American
 - 2 Asian
 - 3 Hispanic
- Gender
 - 13 males
 - 11 females

- Special Education
 - 1 TAG student
 - 1 Autism Spectrum Disorder
 - 1 Emotional Disturbance
- ELL Status
 - 3 students receive or have received ELL instruction
- Of languages other than English spoken at home
 - 2 speak Spanish
 - 1 speaks Mandarin
- Other
 - 1 student is in the Spanish Immersion Program
- Free/Reduced lunch
 - Of the general Lincoln student body, 10% qualify for free or reduced lunch. If the ratio holds true for this classroom, about 2 students qualify.

This class is as homogeneous as I have ever experienced in a classroom. Most students are white, most students speak English as their first language, most students do not qualify for any special services. However, while observing this class, I noticed that many students showed a resistance to class work and home work. Because of this, I modeled my instructional strategies on the accommodations and modifications I developed while teaching at Benson last year. Although those students showed much greater diversity on paper, I find that my students at Lincoln react to their schooling in much the same way. These accommodations include the following:

- providing teacher- or student-created graphic organizers where appropriate;
- providing visual (through the overhead or chalkboard) cues for class activities whenever possible;
- providing students with a calendar of daily activities and reading assignments;
- providing written directions for assignments with clear deadlines;
- breaking large projects into smaller steps;
- reviewing answers to all assignments through whole-class discussion;
- frequent cooperative learning activities;
- and providing students with IEPs extra time and assistance for tests and exams.

In addition, I have attempted to give students time to complete assignments in class. This provides students with the chance to begin an assignment and ask any questions, while giving the teacher a chance to assist those students who are struggling with material. It also sends a clear signal to the students that assignments are not mere “homework” and are valued by the teacher. Furthermore, in-class activities stress cooperative learning and discussion, giving all students a

chance to practice information and access correct information before they are asked to turn in assignments for a grade. Because of the flexible and student-centered nature of classroom instruction, many separate accommodations and differentiations are not used.

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