

# Quality Review Report 2011-2012

**Joseph F Lamb**

**Elementary-Middle School 206  
2200 Gravesend Neck Road  
Brooklyn  
NY 11229**

**Principal: Deirdre Keyes**

**Dates of review: November 28 - 29 2011  
Lead Reviewer: Linda Waite**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Joseph F Lamb is an elementary-middle school with 1396 students from pre-kindergarten through grade 8. The school population comprises 5% Black, 7% Hispanic, 39% White, 46% Asian students, and 2% other students. The student body includes 11% English language learners and 10% special education students. Boys account for 52% of the students enrolled and girls account for 48%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 96.4%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is proficient.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal and school leaders make effective budgetary and organizational decisions to improve student performance. (1.3)
  - School leaders judiciously allocate and utilize monies to fund the literacy and math coach, purchase eight days of school-based professional development for middle school teachers with a staff developer from Teachers' College, as well as multiple all day professional workshops at Teachers' College. Additionally, a portion of Title 1 and inquiry funds provide per-diem coverage to hire substitutes so teachers can participate in structured professional collaborative activities. As a result, teachers report that they feel well supported and they are developing the content knowledge and instructional strategies necessary to improve student achievement. Monies also finance the Envisions math program for the lower grades, an after school program for a third grade cohort, and a program to address English language learners literacy skills. Consequently, the budget aligns to the school's instructional goals, students' needs are being met, and they are making gains as noted by 83.2% meeting proficiency levels in math and 67% in English language arts.
  - School leaders use a variety of data to make instructional/scheduling decisions. The school employs a hiring committee to interview teacher candidates, review observations and ratings, and, if possible, arrange for a demonstration lesson, thereby, selecting the most highly qualified teachers. Additionally, the school utilizes State exam results, scholarship data, and data value-added reports to determine teacher assignments. This leads to changes such as looping seventh and eighth grade teachers, English language arts and social studies teachers collaborating to improve students' literacy skills, and strategically assigning faculty to build on their expertise. A decision to have an integrated team-teaching class on every grade level carefully aligns teacher strengths and student needs. Hence, the school earned 3.5 exemplary gains narrowing the achievement gap for students with disabilities and its English language learners.
- Teacher teams and classroom teachers effectively use ongoing assessments to adjust their instructional practices and promote student-learning outcomes. (2.2)
  - Teacher teams and teachers utilize a combination of reading and writing samples, conferencing notes, running records of literacy levels, as well as periodic assessment to identify students' performance levels and next steps. A review of data revealed vocabulary negatively impacted on the reading comprehension of a third grade class' English language learners sub-group. The team's decision to utilize a structural approach to decode and define vocabulary resulted in an 11.7% decrease in students reading at level 1, a 15% decrease in level 2, and a 26% increase in students reading at level 3.

- Across classrooms, teachers utilize various strategies for determining student mastery including thumbs up, questioning, stop-and-jot, and have a try. As a result, teachers are able to make “on the spot” adjustments to their teaching practices and students are able to identify what they know, do not know, and next steps and strategies for success.
- The principal and school leaders utilize classroom observations and student learning outcomes to promote professional growth and reflection. (4.1)
  - School administrators along with several teachers attended professional development on ‘A Framework for Teaching’, which provided insight into the process and practice of effective teaching. This, coupled with school-level staff development for teachers, led to a better understanding of the model and coherency of policy and practice across the school. School leaders and teacher peers, such as the coach, regularly utilize a researched-based common framework and rubric to conduct short frequent cycles of classroom observations utilizing a previously agreed upon lens. These observations, along with analysis of student work and data, result in the formation of clear next steps necessary to promote adult growth and student learning.
  - The school’s utilization of a research-based rubric and its mutually agreed upon domains, such as ‘Planning and Preparation’ and ‘Instruction’, as well as identified attributes, provide clear expectations for teachers and observers. School leaders employ informal and formative observations to provide timely, and carefully crafted verbal and written communication that outline strengths, concerns, and specific next steps that align to teachers’ professional goals. As a result, leaders schedule professional opportunities to meet the differentiated needs of teachers, and teachers have the opportunity to implement recommendations, work with coaches, and revise instruction practice prior to formal observations/evaluation. Consequently, the school is embracing this model resulting in improved teacher practice and student learning.
- The school provides a warm, safe, and inclusive environment that successfully supports students’ academic and social emotional needs.(1.4)
  - Members of the administration and faculty cordially greet students each morning as they begin their school day. The school welcomes students and latecomers, receives parents, and respectfully addresses concerns and questions. Additionally, hallways and classrooms that display student and teacher work presents a nurturing and inclusive environment that is conducive to learning. As a result, students report that they love coming to school. The principal’s organizational decision to assign each of the three assistant principals to oversee a grade specific cohort of students, as well as assigning specific grade levels to the two counselors, promotes personalization through well-established, caring relationships. In response the school’s Learning Environment Survey, the school implemented Plan B, a three-pronged approach to eliminate behaviors that negatively impact on students’ ability to resolve problems successfully and achieve academically. Thus, incidents occurring at all levels have significantly decreased. Students are more involved in their learning by setting goals, and utilizing checklists and rubrics to reflect and monitor their work, thus accepting responsibility for their learning.

- The school prides itself on providing opportunities for students to voice their opinions and share in decision making at the school level. Therefore, the school utilizes an open door policy, a suggestion box to ask questions or highlight concerns, and a student government that meets with the principal on a regular basis. Students are responsible for the return of the Pledge of Allegiance being recited on a daily basis, fundraisers, clubs, and the recent modification to school lunches.
- Teachers engage in structured professional collaborations utilizing the inquiry approach to promote leadership and student performance and progress.(4.2)
  - Teachers work collaboratively on grade-level and vertical teams, regularly reviewing student data to identify trends and focusing on areas of concern utilizing an inquiry approach to promote learning. While third, fourth and fifth grade teachers focus on different literacy and math targeted areas, the vertical team meets to discuss critical thinking and to identify grade appropriate strategies. Thus, teachers have a better understanding of the level of sophistication related to the performance skill, resulting in improved reading, writing, and math levels, as noted by grade level progress charts.
- School leaders and faculty consistently communicate high expectations to staff, students and families and provide supports necessary for achievement (3.4)
  - School leaders consistently convey high expectations to staff through a review of the school handbook, conducting presentations on Citywide initiatives, sharing annual school goals, and setting professional goals with teachers. As a result, there are clear expectations and teachers are held accountable for student learning as evidenced by observation reports. Additionally, school leaders and faculty members utilize Open Houses, curriculum meetings, parent conferences, school leadership team and parent association meetings, to communicate attendance, behavioral and academic expectations to families. These meetings, along with course outlines, contracts, a uniform grading policy and workshops, including 'How Parents Can Help their Child Become a Successful Learner', provides the tools necessary for parents to support their children's learning at home.

### **What the school needs to improve**

- Further develop rigorous curricula and tasks that will promote students higher-level thinking and problem solving skills. (1.1)
  - School leaders and faculty create curriculum maps in all content areas that align to the Common Core Learning Standards and address essential questions, content, skills, assessment, and technology integration. Student work, diagnostic tests, and item analyses, serve to identify school-specific key standards that need to be addressed to promote learning and narrow the achievement gap. There is a 3.9% special education declassification rate as compared to a 1.0% rate for all schools, and English language learners continue to make gains in proficiency levels. Teachers utilize various data sources to develop academic tasks that engage students in their learning. In an integrated team teaching math class, students were given an order of operations problem and three responses to the question

posed. Students had to explain which answer was correct and why, as well as explain why students gave the other two responses and explain their error in thinking. However, while many tasks are challenging, the level of rigor is not yet consistent across all grades and subjects areas to meet the academic needs of some students.

- Improve the consistency and deepen the level of differentiation so that all lessons engage students and offer suitable challenge necessary to promote achievement. (1.2)
  - Teachers utilize the workshop model that aligns to the curriculum and reflects the shared belief that students learn best when they are engaged, teachers make connections to real life situations, and students have multiple opportunities to practice applying newly acquired knowledge. Activities are routinely differentiated based on students ability and skill levels leading to good levels of student participation. However, questioning often includes, who, what, where type questions, which do not lead to consistently high levels of discussion and work products. Hence, not all students are consistently challenged to respond to inferential and critical level questions necessary to improve their reading comprehension.
- Refine the system for evaluating the quality of curricular and use of resources to make adjustments and increase coherence across the school. (5.1)
  - School leaders and faculty regularly review curriculum maps and use of resources to make needed curricular and instructional adjustments in response to the Common Core Learning Standards and students' needs. However, school leaders do not evaluate the quality of the implemented adjustments. Consequently, classroom level application activities, assessments, and tasks are not consistently as rigorous as the literacy and math tasks currently being implemented through the Citywide instructional initiatives, as evidenced by student work products.
- Formalize structures to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of capacity building and leadership development to promote adult growth and student achievement. (5.4)
  - The principal utilizes various data sources including ARIS, Googledocs, share-outs, and her attendance at inquiry meetings, to review agendas, minutes, student work, strategies, and outcomes. While all teams work well, some teams accomplish more, which results in some students' needs not being met. School leaders recognize teachers' skills and talents and provide opportunities for them to assume leadership roles. The coach, data specialist, individualized educational plan teacher, deans, and members of the instructional cabinet, are afforded a voice in instructional and behavioral decisions. However, as the school does not have a formalized succession plan in place for a coach position becoming vacant due to an impending leave, support for teachers is hindered as they implement school and Citywide initiatives.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

<b>School name:</b> Joseph F Lamb Elementary School	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
<b>Overall QR Score</b>			<b>X</b>	
<b>Quality Statement 1 – Instructional and Organizational Coherence: The school has a coherent strategy to support student learning that aligns curriculum, instruction and organizational decisions.</b>				
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous and coherent curricula, including the Arts, for a variety of learners and aligned to key State standards?			<b>X</b>	
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best, and ensure that it is: aligned to the curriculum, engaging, and differentiated to enable all students to produce meaningful work products?			<b>X</b>	
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs as evidenced by meaningful student work products?				<b>X</b>
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?				<b>X</b>
<b>Quality Statement 2 – Gather and Analyze Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, analyze and share information on student learning outcomes to understand school and student progress over time.</b>				
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
2.1 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the school level?				<b>X</b>
2.2 Align assessments to curriculum, use on-going assessment practices and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom level?			<b>X</b>	
2.3 Use grading policies and tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize, aggregate, and analyze student performance trends to inform instruction and curriculum?			<b>X</b>	
2.4 Engage families in school decision-making, activities and an open exchange of information regarding students progress toward school and class expectations?				<b>X</b>
<b>Quality Statement 3 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently engage the school community and use data to set and track suitably high goals for accelerating student learning.</b>				
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
3.1 Establish a coherent vision of future development that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are understood and supported by the entire school community?			<b>X</b>	
3.2 Use collaborative and data informed processes to set measurable and differentiated learning goals for student subgroups, and students in need of additional support?			<b>X</b>	
3.3 Ensure the achievement of learning goals by tracking progress at the school, teacher team and classroom level?			<b>X</b>	
3.4 Communicate high expectations to staff, students and families, and support students and families to achieve them?				<b>X</b>

**Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals and student learning and emotional needs.**

<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
4.1 Use the observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection, with a special focus on new teachers?				<b>X</b>
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?				<b>X</b>
4.3 Provide professional development that promotes independent and shared reflection, opportunities for leadership growth, and enables teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve learning outcomes?			<b>X</b>	
4.4 Integrate child/youth development, guidance/advisement support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations with the school-wide goals to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students?				<b>X</b>

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

<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
5.1 Evaluate the quality of curricular, instructional and organizational decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school, with particular attention to the CCLS?			<b>X</b>	
5.2 Evaluate systems for assessing students, organizing data, and sharing information with student and families, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?			<b>X</b>	
5.3 Establish and sustain a transparent, collaborative system for measuring progress towards interim and long term goals and making adjustments during the year and over time?			<b>X</b>	
5.4 Use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of structured professional collaboration, capacity building and leadership development strategies?			<b>X</b>	

**Quality Review Scoring Key**

<b>UD</b>	<b>Underdeveloped</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>Developing</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>WD</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>
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