



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Thurgood Marshall Academy Lower School

Public School 318

**282 West 151st Street
New York
NY 10039**

Principal: Sean L. Davenport

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Reviewer: Cheryl Baker

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

The Thurgood Marshall Academy Lower School is an elementary school currently serving 100 students in grades kindergarten through 2. Ninety-two percent of the students are Black, 5% are Hispanic, and 3% represent other backgrounds. None of the school's students have been identified as English language learners, while 3% are special education students. The school is Title I eligible with the percentage of qualifying students falling slightly below that of schools across the City.

The school was created in 2005 to serve as a feeder school for the Thurgood Marshall Academy High School for Learning and Social Change. The Thurgood Marshall Academy Lower School plans to add one grade each year through grade 6. As an empowerment school, it has flexibility in making decisions and has greater control over resources. It is free to purchase professional development services, choose which schools to affiliate with and benefits from reduced reporting and paperwork requirements.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The school is succeeding in growing from kindergarten through grade 2.
- Strong relationships with outside agencies support the school's development and connections to the community at large.
- The principal provides strong leadership for addressing the needs of every child with the deeply held belief that all children can achieve at high levels.
- High expectations for student achievement and quality teaching are clearly communicated to all members of the school community.
- The school provides a supportive and nurturing environment in which students and their parents or caregivers feel respected, valued and cared for.
- Teachers at the school are empowered to participate in leading the school forward as it evolves year by year.
- The curriculum supports alignment with State and City standards and reflects expectations for differentiated teaching practices.
- The visual arts are an integral component of the educational program, providing students with access to skills and learning experiences that foster their creativity and deepen their knowledge of their cultural heritage.

What the school needs to improve

- Develop teachers' skills in analyzing assessment data in order to diagnose what each student knows and is able to do, and where to target additional support.
- Ensure that goals in the Comprehensive Education Plan have measurable success criteria with interim targets to enable progress to be tracked.
- Establish consistency among all teachers in differentiating instruction to meet the identified needs of all students.
- Expand training in Understanding by Design to support the development of the curriculum by a range of practitioners knowledgeable in standards-based, assessment-driven curricula.
- Formalize processes for identifying students in need of academic interventions and for implementing, monitoring and revising intervention plans as necessary.
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the current periodic assessment tool with respect to the breadth of information it provides about student learning.

Part 3: Main findings

Overall Evaluation

This is a proficient school.

The principal was requested to lead the founding of the Thurgood Marshall Academy Lower School in February 2005. With the assistance of the school's lead partner, the Abyssinian Development Corporation, and others, he has successfully marshaled its growth since it opened its doors in September 2005. September 2006 brought yet another beginning as the number of new staff doubled and the school was moved to a site some distance from its original location. The principal and teachers rose to these challenges and have created a warm, academically challenging and artistically rich learning environment for its young learners. As a growing empowerment school, the Thurgood Marshall Academy Lower School continues to explore the best assessment tools to employ in diagnosing the discrete learning needs of its students and it is too early to identify any direct impact on student progress. Curriculum and instruction are increasingly informed by the available quantitative and qualitative data and the school has capitalized on its small size by creating a family-like atmosphere in which students are well known by those who teach and care for them.

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

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor student progress over time.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The school uses qualitative data, such as that generated by the Early Childhood Literacy Assessment System and the Dynamic Indicators of Early Basic Literacy Skills to understand the progress each student is making in gaining proficiency in English language arts. Mathematics understanding is measured through a staff-designed assessment based on the grade 3 State mathematics test. Qualitative data gleaned from the analysis of students' projects, daily performance in class and homework completion broaden the understanding of each student, classroom and grade level. The small size of the student population and the personalized nature of the school culture contribute to the principal's and teachers' capacity to know the strengths and weaknesses of each student in depth.

Informal comparisons of the progress of students by ethnicity are conducted by the principal, who knows each student by name. Thus far, relative performance by ethnic group shows no disparity. At present, there is little difference in the overall progress of the identified special education students and the population at large. The principal and his staff did note an increase in behavioral referrals among young boys from single-parent homes. As a result, he and a male teacher formed a boys club to provide guidance and encouragement to these students. Subsequently, their behavior has improved, as has their learning.

The school's relative youth and unique status as a growing institution make comparisons over time and between similar schools difficult. Comparisons of the progress of students from one grade to the next indicate progress. For instance, analysis of first grade

students' performance on the Early Childhood Literacy Assessment System test indicated that over 50% of students were at grade level. As these students have progressed into the second half of grade 2, analysis of qualitative data indicates an increase of over 10%.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student's next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student's learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The school leadership team used the available assessment, attendance and survey data to create the Comprehensive Education Plan. The plan reflects the unique characteristics of the school and sets targets for annual performance growth and continued curricular development towards the preparation of students for the International Baccalaureate program being instituted at Thurgood Marshall Academy for Learning and Social Change. The principal's annual goals are reflective of the evolution of the school and are focused on infusing project-based instruction and continuing to integrate literacy and the arts. These plans and goals reflect annual targets and are well understood by all constituencies, including a very active parent group and the school's partners. These goals presume observable progress but are not specific with respect to timelines and concrete measures of progress.

The curriculum team develops monthly pacing guides and lesson plans to guide instruction and support the overall improvement targets in the Comprehensive Education Plan. Assessments of student learning inform teachers and the inquiry team as to the progress of students. The school provides academic interventions for students whose progress is not as rapid as others. The introduction of the Dynamic Indicators of Early Basic Literacy Skills, the school's periodic assessment tool, has provided teachers with helpful diagnostic information regarding students' literacy skills and has informed the identification of interventions specific to each student's discrete needs. The school's inquiry team has identified ten students for an in-depth longitudinal study of their progress relative to identification and the success of the interventions. Judgments with respect to outcomes are premature at this time.

The school communicates its expectations for student achievement through the application screening process and parents are made aware of the requirement that they engage with their children in the project-based learning practiced at the school. Further, the intention that students will move from the school to the Thurgood Marshall Academy sets high expectations for student achievement. Students are supported in holding high expectations for themselves by the setting of annual goals for their achievement. Parents are regularly engaged in conversations with the principal and teachers regarding the progress of their children and the school as a whole.

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The school's curriculum continues to evolve as it grows each year and a new grade is added. The curriculum coordinator, with teachers, creates lessons and pacing guides that

reflect the assessment driven format of Understanding by Design. These guides are aligned to the pertinent State and City standards and are reviewed and revised monthly to support horizontal alignment of instruction. The school's regular curriculum is broadened by the integration of the arts into all content areas and students' work reflects a sophisticated understanding of visual art and poetry, especially. The principal monitors students' and teachers' performance regularly through observation, conversation and analysis of periodic assessments. Routinely, he meets with teachers to discuss the reasons for a student's lack of progress and communicates expectations for the improvement in student achievement. Teachers are encouraged to differentiate their instruction and the school recognizes the need to support them in building their skills in this area. Differentiation at the school is currently characterized by program or level placement.

Student achievement data and the overall goals of the principal's performance review and the Comprehensive Education Plan help to inform decisions regarding budget allocations, staffing and the schedule as the school adds a grade each year. For example, when funds were available, staff were reassigned to provide support to new teachers in delivering the curriculum effectively. Funding for the arts program was driven by the positive impact the program's components have on students' and parents' growth. To equalize time-on-task for mathematics and English language arts, the school developed two schedules which operate on alternate weeks and allow each subject to be taught in the prime morning instructional block.

The school's project-based instructional program, with its rich integration of the arts, engages students as they explore new areas of interest and expand avenues for communicating their growing knowledge. They enjoy coming to school and participate enthusiastically in their lessons. They feel safe and supported in this family-like atmosphere and some teachers and administrators take on parental roles for students needing emotional support. Attendance and promptness is monitored closely and the principal personally counsels parents on the importance of regular and prompt attendance. As a result, attendance rose from 93% in 2005-2006 to the current average of 94%.

Quality Statement 4 - Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

This area of the school's work is well developed.

The principal brings a depth of administrative experience to the role. He is a respected leader in the school community and within the larger network encompassed by the Thurgood Marshall Academy for Learning and Social Change and the Abyssinian Development Corporation. The school functions smoothly and efficiently. The principal has hired all of the staff and seeks teachers who bring experience in the grades or programs the school is implementing each year. The principal and coaches visit classes daily and provide useful feedback to teachers. Teachers also have the opportunity to observe one another. With the addition of its first tested grade in 2007-2008, candidates' capacity to analyze and use data will increase in importance.

By necessity and design, planning and evaluation of results and revision of plans takes place in teams, and staff value the opportunity to participate in decision-making as the school grows. The curriculum team reviews data and incorporates findings into monthly curriculum calendars. Common planning time allows teachers to collaborate on lesson planning and assessment analysis. The cabinet, in concert with the curriculum team, has

surveyed staff and identified several areas for professional development that will support the school's continued growth. Topics include training in the differentiation of instruction, curriculum design and developing benchmark assessments.

The school's relationships with its partners, especially the high school, support the academic goals of the school. Student volunteers and study buddies help with academic support and also help to foster the image of what the students can become.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerated learning.

This area of the school's work is proficient.

The dynamic nature of the school's commitment to annual growth influences all aspects of planning and goal-setting as each year brings new students, teachers, curriculum, materials and demands for space. Structures such as the school leadership team, the school cabinet, the curriculum team, the academic intervention team as well as the school's relationships with the Abyssinian Development Corporation, the Thurgood Marshall Academy for Learning and Social Change, the Empowerment Schools Initiative and New Visions for Public Schools ensure that the goals and plans that the school develops undergo a high level of scrutiny. This broad network of individuals and entities invested in the school's continued success are constantly assessing the school's progress and contributing to its future goal-setting.

Comparisons of students' progress within and across classrooms is routinely undertaken by teachers and the principal and adjustments in student placement or programs may be made. For example, a first grade student needing development in basic literacy skills spends part of his day in kindergarten. When a wide range of progress in the attainment of mathematics skills was noted in the school's first year, higher-achieving students were placed in the same classroom the following year. The effect of these adjustments will be assessed at the end of the current school year.

While the information generated by the school's periodic assessment is providing teachers with greater insight into students' relative strengths and deficits in literacy and helping academic intervention providers to tailor interventions to specific needs, it is too soon to assess overall effectiveness. The tool is limited in its scope and the school is investigating other tools that provide information about more than literacy skills.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Thurgood Marshall Academy Lower School (PS 318)	∅	✓	+
Quality Score		X	

Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather data and use it to understand what each student knows and is able to do and to monitor student progress over time.	∅	✓	+
1.1 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> each student, classroom, grade level, 		X	
1.2 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ethnic groups, English language learners, special education students* 		X	
1.3 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> All other categories of interest to the school* 		X	
1.4 Performance and progress are measured based on comparisons with similar schools, with the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grade levels, academic subject areas, ethnic groups, and other groupings of interest within the school.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 1		X	

* These criteria are partially aspirational as of now because schools do not have routine access to all of this data. The NYC DOE plans to provide schools with enhanced access to the necessary data in 2007.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student's next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student's learning.	∅	✓	+
2.1 Using data, school leaders and faculty engage in a collaborative process to set demanding, objectively measurable goals for immediate and long-range improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals.		X	
2.2 Goals and plans focus on the school as a whole and on each student, classroom, grade level, academic subject, and group of students whose performance or progress has been identified by the school as a particular focus area.		X	
2.3 Particular attention is given to improving the performance and progress of students in greatest need of improvement.		X	
2.4 High expectations are conveyed to students and parents/caregivers. Students and their parents/caregivers are regularly invited to provide information about each student's performance and how to improve. This information is central to setting challenging goals and developing, evaluating, and revising plans.			X
2.5 Goals and plans for improving student performance and progress drive the activity of all members of the school community: leaders, staff, students, parents, and other partners.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 2		X	

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity, resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.	∅	✓	+
3.1 The school selects the curriculum based on how well it aligns with or implements the mandated curriculum and on the curriculum's capacity to generate meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and to support the school's high expectations and improvement plans.		X	
3.2 Teachers are accountable for improving instruction and student outcomes. They plan and differentiate their instruction based on the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.		X	
3.3 Budgeting decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.		X	
3.4 Staffing decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.		X	
3.5 Scheduling decisions about the use of teacher and student time are guided by the needs that emerge from examining student data and by the focused plan the school develops to improve student outcomes.		X	
3.6 Instructional programs actively engage students.			X
3.7 Staff know and respect students and respond to their academic needs, as well as their personal needs that affect academic performance. Each student knows and trusts an adult on the staff who is concerned about him or her.			X
3.8 Student attendance and engagement are high priorities. High rates and patterns of absences trigger immediate intervention.			X
Overall score for Quality Statement 3		X	
Quality Statement 4 – Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.	∅	✓	+
4.1 Leaders, faculty, and staff are selected based on their high expectations for student performance and progress and based on their commitment and capacity to use data, compare outcomes within and across classrooms and schools and develop and revise plans and methods to improve performance and progress.		X	
4.2 Professional development decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes. Professional development is designed to help leaders, faculty, and staff use data, self- and peer-assessments, and collaboration with peers to achieve goals for improved school and student outcomes. Professional development and self- and peer-evaluation are aligned and overlap.		X	
4.3 The principal frequently observes classroom teaching and has a considered strategy for improving the quality of each teacher's instruction. Teachers frequently observe and support each other's classroom instruction with the goal of improving student outcomes.			X
4.4 Planning, evaluation of results, and revision of plans takes place in teams. Leaders and faculty inform each other of their goals and results, candidly evaluate themselves and each other, and use what is learned to drive improvement.			X
4.5 The principal is respected and has capacity to effect change.			X
4.6 The school runs smoothly. Procedures are clear, communicated to all, and are generally followed.			X
4.7 The school aligns youth development and support services around stated academic goals. Partnerships with outside bodies are routinely used to achieve academic goals.			X
Overall score for Quality Statement 4			X
Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.	∅	✓	+
5.1 All school plans and other interventions include frequent interim goals and diagnostic assessments of progress designed to reveal in objectively measurable ways whether the plan is being effectively implemented and reaching stated goals.		X	
5.2 Comparisons of student progress within and across classrooms and schools are used in making interim diagnostic assessments and measuring the progress of plans and interventions.		X	
5.3 Information generated by periodic assessments and diagnostic measures of progress and comparisons is used to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals. Interim and final goals are modified when data objectively demonstrate that revision is required.		X	
5.4 Each plan's interim and final outcomes drive successive phases of goal setting and improvement planning, and each successive phase is characterized by agile and flexible realignment of practices and resources to improve student academic outcomes.		X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 5		X	