



The New York City Department of Education



Quality Review Report

Thurgood Marshall Academy Lower School

Elementary School

**276 West 151 Street
New York
NY 10039**

Principal: Sean Davenport

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Lead Reviewer: Jean McCrickard

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Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Thurgood Marshall Academy Lower School is an elementary school with 140 students from kindergarten through grade 3. The school population comprises 94% Black, 5% Hispanic, 0% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes no English language learners and no special education students. Boys account for 48% of the students enrolled and girls account for 52%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 92.6%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 61% eligibility.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- Character building, becoming a responsible citizen and member of the community are essential elements of learning within and beyond the school day.
- The principal has a clear vision for the future development of the school and students.
- This school has a rich, vibrant, stimulating environment in which students grow and are encouraged to be aware of, and take pride in, their heritage and culture.
- Staff makes good, immediate classroom use of palm pilots to collate and analyze data to inform classroom instruction.
- Teachers make the curriculum exciting and interesting through an integrated arts curriculum-based approach.
- Students feel safe and valued and are open and receptive to all the educational opportunities offered to them.
- Staff uses a wide range of data and information to inform their deep knowledge of every child.
- Students and staff are actively encouraged and supported to aim high, make mistakes and learn from those mistakes.
- There is a free flow of information between all those involved in a child's education with the sole purpose of making a positive difference.
- The school provides an exciting and engaging curriculum to enhance student learning.

What the school needs to improve

- Use existing school practices to make maximum use of data from standardized testing to make comparisons and identify patterns and trends.
- Extend the use of palm pilots to include Dynamic Indicators of Early Learning Skills data to continue differentiated instruction.
- Ensure that sufficient time is scheduled for teachers to observe each other and to share good practice.

Part 3: Main findings

Progress made since the last review

The school has made good progress in addressing the issues identified in the previous Quality Review report.

Overall Evaluation

This school is well developed.

The school was created in 2005 and each academic year is a new start as the number of grades, students and staff increase. The school has students in grade 3 for the first time and great care is being taken to ensure that the school and the students are prepared for standardized testing. Analysis of formal citywide test data is new to the school, but the data specialist is preparing herself and the staff well to use the information it imparts to inform instruction. Students are prepared in test technique but teaching is not to the test. The school maintains its close, supportive, family atmosphere where all students are valued and encouraged to achieve their best. Great emphasis is placed on character building and personal development and growth alongside academic achievement. The environment of the school is warm, friendly, safe, compassionate and consistent, with a purposeful culture that pervades every aspect of school life. Rules and judgements are fair.

The principal leads by example and has a clear vision for the school and the type of learning he wishes his students to receive. This vision is shared by staff who create a rich educational setting and exploit many opportunities to provide a wide range of activities to develop the whole child. Recently students prepared a museum project around a selection of artists. This entailed painting in the style of the chosen artists as well as carefully documented information on their lives and work. Each artist was presented in a museum setting and visitors shown round by students. Good progress has been made in addressing the data improvements outlined in the previous report. Teachers are more confident in analyzing and using data to inform their teaching and to implement interventions. Evaluation of the current assessment tool is still needed in light of standardized grade 3 testing data which is new to the school. Differentiation occurs in the level of questioning and language used by staff or by activity. The inquiry team's focus this year is test strategies for grade 3 students. They have identified their target group based on data analysis of the predictive tests. When the team analyzed student answers, they discovered that students were not used to specific timed work, multiple choice type questions and exam techniques.

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 the student's progress over time.

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

The school analyzes data in depth. The school's first grade 3 students will soon take standardized assessments, when the school will be in a position to compare results and pinpoint trends over time. The school notes no great subgroup disparity in achievement. There is no comparison of data with similar schools other than around attendance.

The data specialist analyzes the data well. There was a major rise in student performance between two tests taken in November and a significant gap between the high and low achievers. The pattern emerging is that high achievers are students who love books, belong to the after school Book Club and read enthusiastically. To capitalize on this, the school pairs up a high achiever with a low achiever to model good reading habits. The school also notes that listening scores on the tests are significantly below scores in other literacy areas. A number of strategies aimed at developing good listening skills are being trialled and the data collected to inform future instruction. Information is readily exchanged between the data specialist and staff so that there is consistency in instructional delivery. Good use is made of a data calendar and the guidelines and protocols document to ensure that standardized assessment time limits are met and tests administered correctly. Information is given to class teachers in a timely manner so they are kept fully informed of test requirements and developments.

The school has introduced technology to support teachers in their use of data. All teachers have received basic training in the use of palm pilots and they are extremely useful in compiling and tracking data and assessing student progress. At present only Early Childhood Literacy Assessment System data is stored on the palm pilots but teachers keep and use running records of other formal and informal assessments. Adding Dynamic Indicators of Early Basic Literacy Skills data to the system will give a fuller data picture of each student. Teachers have a good understanding of student levels from informal daily assessments which they use alongside data gained from the analysis of students' projects and homework. This is a small, closely knit school and there is a constant flow and exchange of pupil information. The principal and teachers know each student by name and their strengths and weaknesses in learning. This academic knowledge is used alongside personal student information to place students in appropriate working groups. Palm pilots are used to group students according to their academic achievement but teachers combine this with their knowledge of students to form more heterogeneous groups.

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each student's learning.

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

The principal believes firmly in distributive leadership and all members of the leadership team still have teaching responsibilities and therefore lead by example. The small size of the school and staff facilitates open informal discussion of plans for the school and of student progress at every opportunity. New Visions money is used to release selected staff to look at whole school development, but the school puts in extra funding for all staff to take part in a retreat towards the end of the summer term. This time is used to research materials related to the setting of whole school goals. At the start of the academic year the goal and focus is on collaboration between students and between staff, especially those new to the school. The school believes that this is essential for all the school community to be in the right frame of mind for learning. As soon as this is established, all staff is involved in the planning of more academic goals based on the analysis of school generated data.

The goal for this academic year is to raise the level of student writing. Students have writing journals which they use in daily dedicated journal writing time. Clear writing rubrics are displayed in each class room and students know the steps they need to take to improve the quality and level of their written work. Writing is seen as an essential, powerful tool of clear communication. The staff has high student behavior and attitude expectations, reinforced by example and the standard and quality of their daily language interaction with students and with each other. These expectations are communicated to parents through regular meetings, letters, the Grandmas' Club and parent workshops. Grade 3 students who have been tracked from grade 1 and are not achieving expected levels for their grade, are a focus for the 37 ½ minute after school program. Originally ten students were specifically chosen for this intervention but constant monitoring of progress has reduced the need to five.

Parent surveys and the Comprehensive Education Plans are used in the setting of whole school goals. These are communicated to parents through parent teacher association meetings, monthly calendars and workshops showing parents how to support their children to reach these goals. There is also a great deal of informal flow of information between school and parents or care givers. Parents are expected to give 20 hours support to the school which can be classroom or project based.

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.

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

As the school adds more grades, the curriculum grows and evolves. The type of staffing needed also changes to accommodate the differing requirements of the school and the student body. The principal sees the school as a work in progress which will achieve stability and a time for reflection when all grades are present. The school provides a rich and engaging curriculum through its enthusiastic, dedicated staff, monthly museum visits, a vibrant arts program and by bringing creative artists into school. Art, music and poetry are used to create a stimulating interactive educational setting, the results of which are reflected in the high levels of student understanding and communication about art. Students confidently discussed their study of the Harlem Renaissance and produced excellent art work in the style of Jacob Lawrence. They are encouraged to be proud of their background, community, culture and heritage to raise their self esteem and confidence. This, character building and becoming a responsible citizen, are essential parts of educating the whole child and is evidenced in displays, class names, curriculum projects and conversations with parents and students. The principal holds staff accountable for student progress and learning through daily class visits, informal discussions and constructive feedback.

The principal monitors attendance daily. Twenty-two students this term have perfect attendance with no tardiness and this is celebrated in a display near the entrance to encourage all students and parents. Charts and graphs are visible in classrooms and corridors and the principal sends letters home if an absence exceeds three days.

Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.

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

All members of the school community speak highly of the principal and the support he gives to students, staff and parents. He is a visible presence in the school and talks with a deep understanding and knowledge of every student. He encourages the professional development and self confidence of cabinet members by ensuring they take on multiple roles within the school including teaching classes, coaching staff and leading meetings and workshops. The principal monitors the performance of staff and students through classroom visits, student and staff discussions and scrutiny of student work. Feedback is oral, constructive and shows a good understanding of the staff. Teachers have weekly faculty meetings, plan across grades and informally visit each others' rooms. The ongoing state of change and growth in the school currently presents difficulties in allocating consistent time to staff for development, training and peer observations. The successful induction program for new staff includes visits in the term prior to starting at the school to observe class teaching and to understand and support its philosophy and culture. There is strong support for the school from the Thurgood Marshall Academy for Learning and Social Change and the Abyssinian Development Corporation. The latter works throughout the community and with students and families from kindergarten through to grade 12. They provide financial literacy workshops, medical care, creative arts programs and apply for grants to support the extra curricular work of the school. High school staff work collaboratively with the lower school and male students are used in a mentoring and role model program with younger boys.

Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.

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

Staff routinely compare student data across classes and grades and there are continuous informal discussions about student progress. This data is used to compose small working groups but these change as new data is processed or social characteristics are factored in. Detailed knowledge of each child enables staff to scaffold their instruction, adapt their instructional approach and adjust plans as needed. The school uses data to identify students who need basic skills reinforcement and the high achievers who receive additional programming through the Davenport Scholars' room. The close, collegiate working environment, combined with regular formal meetings, facilitates rigorous and regular monitoring of progress towards whole school goals and the immediate revision and review of plans and practices as necessary. There is also a broad network of entities and individuals involved in the school who ensure that frequent assessment and review of school and student goals, both personal and academic, are used to make progress. The school recognizes the use, purpose and value of collecting and analyzing data, but is not results driven. This school believes in educating students in the widest sense of the word, giving them an appetite for culture and the arts and developing clear communication skills. Staff works consistently and tirelessly to develop students as decent, responsible members of society. To facilitate this, character building is a discrete lesson built into the timetable, reinforced throughout the curriculum. This is the bed rock of the school's philosophy and influences all aspects of the school curriculum, student social and academic development, planning, reviewing and goal setting.

Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

SCHOOL NAME: Thurgood Marshall Academy Lower School	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
Quality Score				X	

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

To what extent do school leaders and faculty provide . . .	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
1.1 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of each student, classroom, grade level?				X	
1.2 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of special education students?				X	
1.3 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of English language learners?			X		
1.4 an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of ethnic groups, gender groups and all other categories of interest to the school?				X	
1.5 a measurement of performance and progress based on the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grades and subject areas?				X	
1.6 a measurement of performance and progress based on comparisons with similar schools?			X		
1.7 training, management systems and structures that support teachers in the use of school data to inform planning and instruction and to track the progress of students?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 1				X	

Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use data to understand each student's next learning steps and to set suitably high goals for accelerating each students learning.

To what extent do school leaders and faculty . . .	Δ	▷	✓	+	◇
2.1 engage in collaborative processes to set demanding, objectively measurable goals for improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals?				X	
2.2 focus 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 identify and improve the performance and progress of those students in greatest need of improvement?				X	
2.4 share whole school goals with all members of the school community to rigorously improve the performance and progress of students?				X	
2.5 convey consistently high expectations to students and their parents/caregivers?					X
2.6 regularly provide students and their parents/caregivers with information about the goals set for each student, and about each student's progress and performance, and how they can improve?				X	
2.7 invite and enable parents/caregivers to provide useful information to teachers and the school about the learning needs and capacities of their children?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 2				X	

Quality Statement 3 – Align Instructional Strategy to Goals: The school aligns its academic work, strategic decisions and resources, and effectively engages students around its plans and goals for accelerating student learning.					
To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
3.1 select core curricular approaches that facilitate and provide meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and focus on raising the achievement of students?				X	
3.2 provide a broad and engaging curriculum, including the arts, to enhance learning both within and outside the school day?				X	
3.3 hold teachers accountable for the progress and learning of the students in their charge, for making instruction interesting and compelling, and for creating a positive safe and inclusive learning environment?				X	
3.4 ensure that teachers use school, class and student data to plan for and provide differentiated instruction that meets the specific needs of all the students in their charge?				X	
3.5 make budgeting, staffing and scheduling decisions strategically, based on data, to meet the school's academic goals for all students?				X	
3.6 ensure that there is an environment of mutual trust and respect between all staff and students to support personal and academic development?				X	
3.7 ensure that there are effective and consistently applied procedures to encourage and monitor student attendance?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 3				X	

Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building to Goals: The development of leadership, teachers and other staff capacity is aligned to the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.					
To what extent does the school . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
4.1 use frequent observations of classroom teaching by the principal and other available information to develop a differentiated strategy for improving the quality of each teacher's instruction?				X	
4.2 make professional development decisions strategically, based on data, to help meet the improvement goals of students and teachers?				X	
4.3 provide frequent opportunities for teachers to observe each other's classroom instruction and to meet together in teams to plan, share effective practices, and evaluate one another's instruction in an open and reflective professional environment?			X		
4.4 develop effective procedures for the induction and support of teachers who are new to the profession or the school?				X	
4.5 align youth development, guidance/advising and other student support services around stated academic and personal development goals?				X	
4.6 consistently implement clear procedures that enable the school to run smoothly and encourage effective student learning?				X	
4.7 create effective partnerships with outside entities that support the academic and personal growth of the students?					X
Overall score for Quality Statement 4				X	

Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.					
To what extent do . . .	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
5.1 the school's plans for improving student outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?				X	
5.2 the school's plans for improving teacher outcomes include interim goals that are objectively measurable and have suitable time frames for measuring success and making adjustments?				X	
5.3 teachers and faculty use periodic assessments and other diagnostic tools to measure the effectiveness of plans and interventions for individual and groups of students in key areas?				X	
5.4 teachers and faculty use the information generated by periodic assessments and other progress measures and comparisons to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals?				X	
5.5 school leaders track the outcomes of periodic assessments and other diagnostic measures and use the results to make strategic decisions to modify practices to improve student outcomes?				X	
5.6 school leaders and staff use each plan's interim and final outcomes to drive the next stage of goal setting and improvement planning?				X	
5.7 the principal and school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to effect change?				X	
Overall score for Quality Statement 5				X	