



**NYCDOE**

**Quality Review: Final Report**

# **The New York City Department of Education**



# **Quality Review Report**

**Thurgood Marshall Academy  
Intermediate School - High School 670  
200 West 135th Street  
Manhattan  
NY 10030**

**Principal: Sandyre Johnson**

**Dates of review: January 10 – 11, 2008**

**Lead Reviewer: Stephen Walker**

## Content of the report

### **Part 1: The School Context**

Information about the school

### **Part 2: Overview**

What the school does well  
What the school needs to improve

### **Part 3: Main Findings**

Progress made since the last review  
Overall evaluation  
How well the school meets New York City's evaluation criteria

### **Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Thurgood Marshall Academy for Learning and Social Change is a combined middle school and high school with 574 students from grade 7 through grade 12. The school population comprises 74% Black, 24% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 1% English language learners and 11% special education students. Boys account for 45% of the students enrolled and girls account for 55%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2006-2007 was 92%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 64% eligibility.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal provides committed, collaborative and inspirational leadership so that parents, teachers and students respect and share her clear vision for the school.
- The school has high expectations for the students and encourages all students to experience success.
- The high degree of mutual respect between students and teachers leads to a positive atmosphere in classrooms and around the school.
- The school uses assessment data well in order to track the progress of individuals and groups of students rigorously.
- Students who require additional help with their work receive valuable support from a variety of academic intervention services.
- Imaginative curriculum programs and a variety of enrichment activities prepare students well for their examinations and life after school.
- The school is well supported by very effective partnerships with a large number of community organizations.
- A comprehensive program of professional development enhances the collegial culture amongst the teachers to improve their practice.
- An good range of guidance and student services effectively supports the academic and personal development of the students.
- Parents and caregivers greatly appreciate the regular information about the progress of their children and the commitment of the school to the community.

### What the school needs to improve

- Analyze the performance and progress of schools with similar demographics in order to identify good practice that supports higher student achievement.
- Develop a system of goal setting for individual students further so that aspirational targets are based on prior attainment.
- Encourage further instructional differentiation in classes so that teachers are using assessment data fully to address the individual learning needs of each student more specifically.
- Continue to improve the quality of teaching and learning so that more lessons fully motivate and engage the students.
- Update the Comprehensive Education Plan to ensure that newly identified priorities are included across the subject plans.

## 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 Thurgood Marshall Academy is an improving and increasingly successful school in terms of academic performance, behavior and attendance. Parents, teachers and students are very proud of the school and fully support the principal's high expectations. There is a very good understanding of the performance and progress of individual students in the school. Students who require additional help with their work are well supported by the academic enrichment services. The school does not fully consider good practice in similar, higher performing schools to aid its further development. Students are encouraged to aim high although the teachers do not set specific targets based on prior attainment for the students. Communication with parents and caregivers is good and this supports student progress.

Curriculum programs and extra-curricular activities are imaginative and prepare students well for their examinations and life after school. A challenge for the school is to improve the quality of teaching and learning across the school further so that more lessons fully motivate and engage the students. There is a comprehensive program of professional development and teachers support each other well in order to improve their practice. The school is well supported by effective partnerships with a large number of community organizations. Behavior in the school is good because expectations and procedures are clear and reasonable.

The school is continually looking at new ways to improve. The Comprehensive Education Plan is not fully updated to ensure that newly identified priorities are included across the subject plans. The Principal of Excellence Award in 2007 recognizes the exceptional leadership of the principal in the school. The school's inquiry team is already established with clear terms of reference and they have successfully begun research on the identified target group of underachieving students.

The school has made good progress in addressing the key issues in the last school Quality Review. There is a more systematic approach to collecting assessment information, which it uses well to track the progress of students. There has been an audit of writing across the curriculum and all subject areas are taking more responsibility for the development of writing skills. There is an emphasis on professional development for all teachers and time is now available for cross-curricular training and sharing of good practice. The school is making a start with differentiation of instruction although this is still an area for improvement. Thurgood Marshall Academy takes an ambitious approach to improve the school continually so that there is "quality education for the students in Harlem".

## **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 has a good understanding of the progress and performance of students across the school. The analysis demonstrates that the school is sustaining considerable growth in academic achievement, attendance and graduation rates. The data specialist provides valuable assessment information for use by the school leaders and teachers. For example, data highlights a number of students in grade 9 who require additional support with their work. The principal evaluates the achievement data from the accountability and annual school reports, in order to track differences in student performance between subjects and teachers. The school analyzes the variations in student performance by gender and ethnic groups across the grades and subjects. The school highlights a significant number of underachieving Black male students and is proactive in developing the Brothers on a New Direction program to target a group of underachieving boys in grade 11. The program demonstrates considerable improvements in academic performance for many of the selected students. Effective systems are in place to record the performance and progress of special education students. The school does not fully compare performance with similar schools, missing opportunities to identify good practice of higher performing schools to improve its own practice. Members of the new inquiry team are increasing their understanding of ARIS and are communicating their expertise to colleagues.

**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.**

All teachers have an assessment folder with details of prior achievement and current performance in tests. Teachers review student progress at regular departmental meetings with the assistant principals and lead teachers. English language arts and math teachers are using the ACUITY system to examine student responses and identify areas of weakness. The school encourages students to set goals through "what color is your plan" although this is not formalized into specific targets. Students do not have aspirational targets that are based on prior achievement so teachers are not fully accountable for the progress of their students. Students who require additional help with their work receive valuable support from a variety of academic intervention services. Many students attend the academic enrichment program classes at the end of the school day. The Gateway Builders provide an extensive after-school program that includes support with work while the credit recovery program on Saturday provides help with preparation for the examinations. The school has high expectations for the students and effectively encourages all children to experience success. All new students attend a summer preparation program before entering grade 7. The principal constantly reminds students that "together, we can build strong students, empowered young adults and tomorrow's leaders".

The school mails detailed reports to parents on a regular basis. Think Wave provides internet details of students' grades, attendance, quality of work and homework. The school alerts parents quickly if their child is having learning difficulties. Parents and

caregivers greatly appreciate the regular information about the progress of their children and the commitment of the school to the community. Attendance at parent-teacher conferences is good. Parents praise the fact that teachers are easily accessible for additional discussion and are prepared “to go that extra mile to benefit the students”. Over 85% of the staff, including the principal, live in the community and so there is often access to the families because in many instances they are neighbors.

**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 proficient.**

Imaginative curriculum programs clearly focus on raising the academic performance of students. The introduction of the International Baccalaureate Middle Years Program is an innovative step to encourage academic stamina and perseverance in preparation for the higher level courses. The school does not offer sufficient advanced placement courses in order to challenge the more able students. Creative arts are valued in the school and all students take part in the arts and music program. A number of students took part in the Rite of Spring project with the Berlin Symphonic Orchestra at Carnegie Hall. There is a variety of enrichment activities that provide considerable enjoyment for the students and prepare them well for life after school. For example, a group of students visited New Orleans and helped clean up a school after hurricane Katrina.

The majority of the teaching actively engages students and provides a stimulating learning environment. Many teachers are good practitioners and students demonstrate high levels of concentration and attention. There are a variety of activities that develop the thinking skills and learning of the students. However, in some lessons, teachers give insufficient attention to the management of students and effective instructional techniques. The school acknowledges the need to further improve the quality of teaching and learning in some classes so that more lessons fully motivate and engage the students. There is little attention paid to the different learning styles of boys and girls. Instructional differentiation in classes is at an early stage and teachers are not using assessment data fully so that they can address the individual learning needs of each student more specifically.

The high degree of mutual respect between students and teachers leads to a positive atmosphere in classrooms and around the school. All students wear an attractive uniform and they are very proud to be part of “Thurgood Marshall family”. Attendance of students is well monitored and current attendance rates demonstrate a significant improvement on previous years.

**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.**

A comprehensive program of professional development enhances the collegial culture amongst the teachers to improve their practice. The school is using Grayson and Martin training, “Generating Expectations for student achievement” as a vehicle for training. Twilight professional development sessions take place every two weeks for teachers. Over half the staff are paired with colleagues for peer observations and video recording of lessons in order to share good classroom practice effectively. New teachers receive

ongoing support through coaching and mentoring via New Visions and Teach For America. All teachers have a formal observation by the principal or assistant principal with detailed, diagnostic feedback at least once per year. In addition, there are regular “walkthroughs” by the principal and senior leaders and teachers adopt a very open approach to advice and support. Teachers are encouraged to be reflective and improve their instructional skills.

The school is well supported by very effective partnerships with a large number of community organizations such as the Abyssinian Development Corporation. There is a comprehensive health service on site that is sponsored through the Colombia Presbyterian Hospital. An exceptional range of guidance and student services supports the academic and personal development of the students effectively. The school provides effective mentoring services through partners such as Oprah Winfrey’s Ambassadors and Big Brothers and Big Sisters. Student support services provide very good support for the students and families. The school runs very smoothly on a day-to-day basis because expectations and procedures are clear and reasonable. The school successfully teaches students to resolve conflict through mediation and students appreciate the “zero tolerance” regarding inappropriate behavior, feeling “the school is a very safe place”. It was one of the first high schools to remove security scanning because of a decrease in behavioral incidents. One parent said, “The school is unique safe haven and I am very comfortable about sending my child here.”

**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.**

The principal provides committed, collaborative and inspirational leadership so that parents, teachers and students respect and share her clear vision for the school. Her enthusiasm is infectious and “she treats the students as if they were her own family”. The instructional and organizational cabinet teams work well with all the staff in order to put the school’s vision into practice. A rigorous process of school evaluation and analysis of assessment information drives strategic planning and school improvements. There are clear targets and success criteria within the Comprehensive Education Plan. The plan is guided by the analysis of assessment data and is a very good working document that provides clear direction on the action points for each subject area. However, the plan is in need of updating in order to ensure that newly identified priorities are included across the subject plans. There is a good understanding of the performance of individual students and there are imaginative incentives to raise levels of achievement. The school identifies students who need extra support and addresses these needs through a variety of intervention strategies. The senior team regularly monitors the effectiveness of intervention strategies. The school is continually evaluating its performance and is effective in seeking new ways to improve the learning and progress of the students.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: Thurgood Marshall Academy</b>	Δ	➤	✓	+	◇
<b>Quality Score</b>				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.**

<b>To what extent do school leaders and faculty provide . . .</b>	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		
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>				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.**

<b>To what extent do school leaders and faculty . . .</b>	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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>				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		
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>			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	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>				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
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>				X	