

# **Quality Review Report 2008-2009**

**Thurgood Marshall Academy**

**Middle-High School 670**

**200 West 135<sup>th</sup> Street  
New York  
NY 10030**

**Principal: Dr Sandye Johnson**

**Dates of review: October 23 and 27, 2008**

**Lead Reviewer: John Collings**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Thurgood Marshall Academy is a middle and high school with 577 students from grade 7 through grade 12. The school population comprises 73% Black, 25% Hispanic, 1% White, and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 10% special education students. Boys account for 46% of the students enrolled and girls account for 54%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2007-2008 was 90.2%. The school is in receipt of Title 1 funding with 70% eligibility.

### Overall Evaluation

#### **This school is proficient.**

This is a school with a strong climate for learning. Students are well behaved, feel safe and want to do the very best they can, not only for themselves but also for their teachers. Students say, "Teachers are always there for us." There is a strong culture of mutual respect between students, and also between students and their teachers. There are effective relationships between community-based organizations and the school. These make a significant contribution to the school community and to the academic and personal development of students.

The school has developed a range of good systems to identify the performance of students in English language arts and math. These are used systematically to monitor student progress through the setting of goals based on their prior attainment. However, although in place, analysis is not as rigorous in other subjects, such as social studies and science.

The middle school has recently been awarded accreditation for the International Baccalaureate. This curriculum places significant importance on broadening students' knowledge through a broad range of subjects including other languages. The curriculum is relevant to students and allows planning of cross-curricular links to enable application and consolidation of knowledge and understanding. Students enjoy this approach and are mature and articulate with high aspirations for the future.

Some teachers differentiate their instruction to meet the learning needs of individual students. However, overall they lack sufficient clarity about student progress as defined by the New York City Department of Education's progress reports. Teachers do not systematically set student goals based on prior progress and differentiated instruction is insufficiently targeted to student needs in some subjects. The school is identifying good practice through systematic intervisitations and using the data to help focus professional development.

Administrators use a good range of data from the past Quality Review, environmental survey and the progress report to identify the school's strengths and weaknesses. Whole-school goals are in place including some measurable targets with timescales.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- Because of the positive learning environment in the school students are well behaved, show mutual respect, are engaged in their work and want to succeed, resulting in a positive learning environment.
- There are effective relationships between the school and a good range of community based organizations, enhancing the curriculum and giving academic and personal support.
- The school uses a range of data to inform the curriculum and to establish the next learning steps for students in English language arts, mathematics and to a lesser extent in social studies and science.
- The school is extending a system for identifying students' learning goals, with appropriate reviews points, in subjects other than English and math and these goals are shared effectively with students.
- The school provides many challenging curricular opportunities, including the International Baccalaureate, to extend students' experiences, enabling them to become articulate, mature young people.
- The school uses data to increasingly good effect in evaluating interventions and curriculum and instructional changes.

### What the school needs to improve

- Make more rigorous use of data across a wider range of core subjects to identify individual students' strengths and weaknesses, enabling teachers to differentiate instruction to meet student goals.
- Improve understanding of evaluating student progress, as identified by the Department of Education Progress Report, to set expectations and goals for teachers, students and the school.
- Improve the rigor through which school wide long-term goal goals are identified, and the interim goals to reach them are monitored and revised.
- Develop individual professional development plans and improve the range of formal opportunities for intervisitations between teachers to enable them to develop their ability to differentiate instruction more effectively.

## Part 3: Main Findings

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

**Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do and to monitor the student's progress over time.**

**This area of the school's work is proficient.**

The school is trialing a number of different computerized data systems. These are designed to inform students and their families of grades given for every assignment in a wide range of subjects, including social studies and science. Expectations, curriculum content and deadlines are also included. Students are able to articulate their next learning steps, particularly in English language arts and math, but increasingly in social studies and science. Parents and students find the immediacy of this information helpful and constructive, enabling them to take advantage of the good support the school offers to promote progress and improvement of performance. The information is enabling subject and grade staff to work together to identify curricular issues, including the strengths and weaknesses of individual students across subjects. This also assists useful helps with cross curricula planning.

Teachers use data from a wide range of subjects to identify the performance and progress of different groups of students. This is most consistently practiced in English language arts and mathematics. Detailed analysis across the remaining subjects, although in place, is not well embedded. Historically there has been a significant emphasis on setting student goals based on past performance. The school is beginning to identify gaps in student progress as indicated by the Department of Education progress report to set expectations for teachers and students. As a result, very explicit goals are set for English language arts and mathematics and are becoming more focused in social studies and science. This emphasis on student progress is improving teachers' ability to differentiate their instruction based on students' prior progress.

**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 proficient.**

The school is currently refining its goal-setting procedures for students. There is a very good goal-setting procedure for English language arts and math, and goals are systematically shared with students and their parents. There are also goals in other subjects, such as social studies and science, but these tend to be based on class and grade expectations and are less individualized. These goals often have a cross curricular focus where, for example, math goals support science and English language arts goals support social studies. However, this process is not fully embedded across other core subjects.

School leaders meet every two to three weeks to analyze the detailed information held by all teachers across all subjects in the computerized grade book systems. Subject and grade team teachers review students' progress and modify the curriculum and expectations accordingly. The advantage of the computerized grade book system is that the senior leadership team, students and their parents have easy access to the information and are fully aware of the goals and expectations set.

There are high expectations in the school. Student attendance is improving, behavior is good and expectations of performance and progress are increasing year-to-year. The school is no longer satisfied with a 75% pass rate and now offers students advanced placement courses in the high school. The leadership team includes a significant number of active parents who are becoming increasingly informed about data, particularly through the progress report. They are also currently involved in revising the Comprehensive Education Plan in line with the Department of Education expectations.

**Quality Statement 3 – Develop Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: The school uses rigorous curricula, teaching and organizational decision making to engage students and faculty in meeting all students' learning goals.**

**This area of the school's work is proficient.**

The school has an innovative curriculum. It is the first middle school in New York to be given accreditation for the International Baccalaureate. This approach emphasizes the interrelationships between subjects, respect for the environment, the requirement to learn a foreign language and respect for human ingenuity locally and across the world. The Baccalaureate curriculum has been well integrated into the State standards. The motivating curriculum results in very well behaved students who really enjoy learning and want to succeed and make good progress. They show mutual respect for each other and all adults at the school.

The school is using the previous quality review, the environmental survey and particularly the results from the inquiry team, to inform and adapt the after-school program in science, technology, engineering and mathematics. This practically-based approach is encouraging students to improve their grades and become more involved in a wide range of subjects.

Teachers are making increased use of the progress report to analyze student progress. This is having a beneficial effect on the identification of student goals based on their prior progress and differentiating instruction to enable students to meet goals. However, the approach is not well embedded and is a significant focus for professional development.

The school uses its budget well to resource support for middle school mathematics, the International Baccalaureate, professional development to improve differentiation and to give teachers opportunities to develop student goals more precisely. The school recognizes that progress, particularly in mathematics in the middle school, has not been good enough in the past. There are intervisitations between high school and middle school teachers to review the curriculum. This ensure expectations are high enough, positively influencing student performance.

**Quality Statement 4 - Align Capacity Building to Goals: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school's goals for accelerating student learning.**

**This area of the school's work is proficient.**

Teachers are given many opportunities to take part in the work of the inquiry team, and the school has made good use of the findings. Students identified in the bottom third of achievement are given well focused support, in a nurturing environment to improve their self-esteem. This is having a positive impact on their performance. Teachers also have significant opportunities for cross-curricular planning, ensuring there is integration wherever possible between subjects. There is significant co-operation between middle school and high school teachers.

The senior leadership team has a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of different teachers by using formal and informal classroom observations, in combination with performance and progress data from classes. There is a generalized professional development plan that aims to increase the amount of differentiated instruction in classes. However, there is inconsistent implementation of differentiated instruction across a range of classes. Consequently, different teachers need different levels of support to enable the strategy to be fully implemented. Planning is not sufficiently clear to guide differentiated strategies that meet the needs of individual teachers.

A good range of support services assist students and their families. The use of the computerized grade book has kept parents and families well informed. This has had a positive effect particularly on increasing rates of attendance. The school enables parents to understand the next steps in their children's learning and to provide help at home that ensures success.

**Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and 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 proficient.**

The senior leadership team reviews available data on each student at least twice per marking period. They do this through grade and subject meetings to ensure curricular decisions and organization are effective. There is systematic monitoring of assessment procedures, particularly in English language arts and mathematics, through use of computerized grade books. Very clear goals are being set in English language arts and mathematics. Where goals are set in social studies, they are well aligned to goals in English as a consequence of cross-curricular planning. Goals in other subjects are underdeveloped.

Data from the quality review, environmental survey and particularly the inquiry team is being used to evaluate interventions and curriculum and instructional changes. However, the school's self-evaluation is not sufficiently focused on ensuring teachers fully understand their accountability for closing gaps in student progress based on the Department of Education's definition in the progress report. Although the senior leadership team has a clear understanding, some teachers do not. As a result, there is

a lack of clarity for the need to differentiate instruction to ensure all students make progress year-to-year, regardless of their prior achievements.

The school is currently working on the Comprehensive Education Plan, reviewing goals, expectations and timeframes to ensure there is a rigorous focus on improving student progress across all grades and achievement levels.

# School Quality Criteria 2008-2009

<b>School name: Thurgood Marshall Academy</b>	△	▷	✓	+
<b>Overall QR Score</b>			<b>X</b>	
<b>Quality Statement 1 – Gather Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, generate and analyze information on student learning outcomes and use it to understand what each student knows and can do, and to monitor the student’s progress over time.</b>				
<i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty regularly...</i>				
	△	▷	✓	+
1.1 collect and analyze actionable information, including assessment results and attendance data, to provide a complete view of the learning outcomes and needs of individual students and groupings of students?		<b>X</b>		
1.2 focus analysis on the learning outcomes and needs of all sub-groups of students?			<b>X</b>	
1.3 engage in an open exchange of information with students and families about students’ learning needs and outcomes, including assessment results and attendance data?			<b>X</b>	
1.4 design or adapt tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize and analyze student performance, identify trends and inform instructional and organizational decisions, and to enable students and their families to assess and track each student’s progress?			<b>X</b>	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>			<b>X</b>	
<b>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.</b>				
<i>To what extent do school leaders and faculty...</i>				
	△	▷	✓	+
2.1 use collaborative and data-informed processes to set measurable, actionable and differentiated learning goals in core subjects for individual students and groupings of students and develop differentiated plans and timeframes for reaching these goals?		<b>X</b>		
2.2 use collaborative and data-informed processes to develop the school’s Comprehensive Educational Plan (CEP)?			<b>X</b>	
2.3 ensure that the achievement of learning goals, and the implementation of plans and timeframes for reaching these goals, is the central focus of school leaders, faculty, students and families?			<b>X</b>	
2.4 communicate high expectations to all students and families, and involve students in developing their learning goals and plans and in taking their next learning steps?			<b>X</b>	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>			<b>X</b>	

## DEFINITIONS

“**Analyze**” or “**analysis**” includes, but is not limited to, comparisons of:

- the current and past outcomes of . . . individual students, administrative groupings and sub-groups of students and the school itself in core subjects;
- the outcomes of different classrooms and sub-groups in the same grades and core subjects; and
- the school’s Progress Report and other outcomes to those of peer/other schools

“**Assessment results**” include student outcomes on summative assessments (e.g., state ELA, math, science and social studies tests, NYSESLAT, Regents Exams, and Performance Based Assessment Tasks) and formative assessments aligned to the school’s curriculum (including Periodic, DYQ, and teacher-developed Classroom Assessments).

“**Core subjects**” are ELA, math, science, social studies/history, the arts, foreign language, and physical education/health.

“**Data-informed processes**” include analysis of Progress Report, Quality Review, Learning Environment Survey, Inquiry Team findings, assessment results and attendance data

“**Groupings of students**” include classrooms, grade levels and high school cohorts.

“**Organizational decisions or strategies**” refer to a school’s use of budget and resources, staffing, planning, scheduling, grade structure, departments and teacher teams and other aspects of the school’s structure and organization that can affect student outcomes.

“**Sub-groups of students**” include special education students, English Language Learners, the other NCLB sub-groups, boys, girls, and other groups significant to the school.

**Quality Statement 3 – Develop Coherent Instructional and Organizational Strategies: The school uses rigorous curricula, teaching and organizational decision making to engage students and faculty in meeting all students’ learning goals.**

<i>To what extent do ...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+
3.1 school leaders and faculty deliver challenging and engaging curricula in core subjects, including the arts, that are aligned to state standards?			X	
3.2 teachers plan and teach lessons that are differentiated to meet the needs of individual students and student groupings and are designed to enable all students to reach their learning goals?		X		
3.3 school leaders make strategic organizational decisions to support a coherent and rigorous instructional approach that enables students to reach their learning goals?			X	
3.4 school leaders maintain a culture of mutual trust and respect and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?				X
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>			X	

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

<i>To what extent do school leaders...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+
4.1 use their own observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of student outcomes to implement an explicit, differentiated strategy to improve each teacher’s instruction, with a special focus on new teachers?		X		
4.2 encourage teachers to take part in Inquiry Teams and other structured professional collaborations (informed by the examination of student work, assessment outcomes and their own peer observations) and share in the instructional leadership of the school with the goal of improved student learning?			X	
4.3 provide professional development that encourages teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve student outcomes?			X	
4.4 utilize youth development, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students?			X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>			X	

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

<i>To what extent do...</i>	Δ	➤	✓	+
5.1 the school’s plans for improving student outcomes and its strategies for improving each teacher’s instructional practices include measurable interim goals and suitable time frames for evaluating success and making adjustments during the year?			X	
5.2 school leaders and faculty use interim checkpoints and data to inform lessons, improve curriculum, differentiate instruction and revise student learning plans throughout the year?			X	
5.3 school leaders use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of and modify organizational decisions, structured professional collaborations and teacher improvement strategies?			X	
5.4 school leaders and the school community have a clear vision for the future development of the school and implement procedures and systems to support academic, personal and professional growth?		X		
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>			X	

<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
Δ	<b>Underdeveloped</b>	➤	<b>Underdeveloped with Proficient Features</b>	✓	<b>Proficient</b>	+	<b>Well Developed</b>