

Quality Review Report 2010-2011

**Thurgood Marshall Academy
Intermediate School - High School 670
200 West 135th Street
NYC 10039**

Principal: Sandye P. Johnson

Dates of review: April 4 - 5, 2011

Lead Reviewer: Jodi Radwell

Part 1: The school context

Information about the school

Thurgood Marshall Academy for Learning and Social Change serves students at the Secondary School (General Academic) level. The school has 586 students enrolled in grades 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, SE. The school population comprises 1% white students, 70% black students, 1% Asian students, 25% Hispanic students, 1% Native American students, 1% multiracial students, 45% boys, and 55% girls. Currently, 2% of the student body are English language learners. The school enrolls 11% students with Individual Education Plans (IEP's). The average attendance rate for the 2010 school year was 97%.

Overall Evaluation

This school is proficient.

Part 2: Overview

What the school does well

- The curriculum offers a wide range of rigorous and relevant learning experiences across disciplines including the arts during and after school to facilitate students' ownership of learning.
 - The school has the prestigious honor of being an International Baccalaureate school, so subscribes to much of their philosophy regarding rigorous assessment with authentic application, resulting in diverse student projects such as seniors' lesson plan design for 9th graders on statistics, a healthy pastries recipe project and a Presidential briefing on the legacies of imperialism in various parts of the world, resulting in high levels of student engagement and critical thinking.
- Leaders make informed and effective organizational decisions across all aspects of the school to support improvements in learning.
 - Upon diligent analysis of student achievement data, school leaders made several organizational decisions for the current school year including: rescheduling teachers to allow for collaborative planning, thus advancing the Inquiry Team work; the preservation of small class sizes despite widespread budget cuts, thus remaining true to the school's philosophy of how students learn best; and providing extended time for middle school students to address their continued inability to make adequate progress academically. These decisions represent the principal's priorities and have resulted in a higher percentage of students graduating on time.
- The school is a safe place where students are engaged in learning and they appreciate the diversified support they receive which reinforces their socio-emotional and academic development.
 - Students dressed in collared shirts with vests bearing the Thurgood Marshall emblem interact with all school community members and visitors with resolute respect and dignity. This indication of clear expectations for decorum and academic behavior has resulted in a steady decline in the number of suspensions over the past year.
 - The school houses a comprehensive health clinic fully staffed by Columbia Presbyterian Hospital which services students on a full-time basis, ensuring a holistic approach to educating children in that their physical and socio-emotional well-being are a clearly established priority.
- Teacher teams work collaboratively to share good practice, develop tools to analyze data, resulting in thoughtful curriculum and effective instruction.
 - The school's inquiry teams, expertly facilitated by teacher leaders are well represented using well-ingrained processes where the analysis of data, sharing of student work and best teaching practices has impacted student learning for the lowest performing student population in the school.
 - The school has established several Professional Learning Communities with specific foci aligned to areas of work within the scope of the school's

mission. One such collaborative team is focused on improving “Parent Engagement” and has evidenced an increase in participation in Parent Teacher Association meetings by more than 50%, thus creating “parent partners” in support of their children’s learning.

- The school works closely with parents and shares relevant information with both parents and students to encourage good attendance and academic achievement with a focus on future college readiness.
 - There are numerous systems in place for engaging families in the life of the school. Use of online grading systems, mid-marking period progress reports and a newly posted homework website keep families connected to their child’s progress and the school’s expectations for their learning. The school’s frequent workshop offerings on topics such as the use of ARIS and the school’s adherence to the IB assessment process ensure that parents are not alienated by technical aspects of school life.
 - Parents raved about the school’s continued commitment to student exposure to a wide array of colleges and universities through ongoing trips from as early as 6th grade! Parents’ most recent proposal to rename teacher classrooms with names of prestigious universities upholds the high expectations of the school community on college awareness and preparation. Several parents claimed that their child, having had no previous awareness or incentive to go to college, was now very focused on that goal.
- Faculty members take on leadership responsibilities that provide colleagues with professional learning opportunities and support the school’s goals, fostering a culture of collaboration among teachers.
 - Five teacher leaders trained in the Scaffolded Apprenticeship Model (SAM) through New Visions and Baruch College act as Inquiry Team facilitators, demonstrating leadership efficacy and utilizing a protocol to ensure a targeted and focused approach to Inquiry on each grade team.
 - Teacher leaders have turn-keyed professional development offered through the International Baccalaureate program on key elements of school life such as use of uniform rubrics and through New Visions on the Common Core State Standards ensuring a more coherent approach to curriculum and instruction across grade teams and curriculum teams.

Areas for improvement

- Promote greater consistency in differentiated instruction based on data so that all students are challenged, with tasks that accommodate different learning styles and extend thinking to maximize student learning.
 - Some of the staff use a teacher-developed tool they refer to as “Student Tracker,” which allows for the continuous aggregation of performance data and can be used for instructional decision-making on the classroom level. The school has used this data to target students for after-school interventions, but limited use of this tool across classrooms impedes teachers from making more informed curricular decisions that accommodate all of the learners in their classes.

- Through multiple professional development opportunities such as a New Visions retreat, Gail Reeves workshops, and teacher-led sessions by pedagogues who are effectively differentiating instruction for student groups in their own classes, the principal indicates that the school is moving toward a more uniform use of differentiated teaching practices in all classrooms, which will ultimately ensure the kind of targeted instruction that will allow for students to make significant gains in achievement.
- Initiate a collaborative approach across all subjects to help in setting student improvement goals based on benchmark data with an eye to raising student achievement.
 - Though the school has evidence of uniform rubrics, and narrative report cards outlining specific learning goals for each student, in no cases were students able to articulate their own learning goals. Omitting students in this goal-setting process impedes the acceleration of learning.
 - While teachers were able to articulate ways in which they use data to plan instruction to meet identified student need, and the school has instituted a 3-prong structure which includes “Project Step Up” to set targets, a bi-weekly assessment to check on interim progress toward goals they have set for students, and an action planning component, there is no evidence that students play an integral role in this system, prohibiting maximum ownership over their learning.
- Expand the school’s observation and evaluation tools for teacher effectiveness by providing continuous feedback to teachers with next steps for improvement to accelerate their professional growth.
 - While the school has an impressive list of opportunities made available to teachers to develop pedagogy and content knowledge, and can provide examples of teacher observation reports as well as evidence of more informal learning walks with feedback to teachers, they are not maximizing the potential each of these practices could have on the school’s instructional program if utilized in a more intentional and strategic way, for example through the use of tools (template, spreadsheets) that track the goals and next steps for each teacher, thus maximizing capacity building in the school.
- Refine action planning by developing interim goals and benchmarks so that progress can be measured, readjustments made and success evaluated.
 - While school leaders evidenced data used for teacher evaluations, there is no system for monitoring the effectiveness of professional development to determine what additional support teachers might need or to deploy staff more effectively to build teacher capacity. As a result overall development of teachers is impeded.
 - There was evidence of strong instructional staff both inside and outside the classrooms, yet there was no indication that this instructional leadership is utilized to its full potential. For example, the teacher teams implement a system of rotated facilitation and professional development is said to be “turn-keyed” but has not led to widespread capacity building.

Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2010-2011

School name: Thurgood Marshall Academy	UD	D	P	WD
Overall QR Score			X	
Quality Statement 1 – Instructional and Organizational Coherence: The school has a coherent strategy to support student learning that aligns curriculum, instruction and organizational decisions.				
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	UD	D	P	WD
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous and coherent curricula, including the Arts, for a variety of learners and aligned to key State standards?				X
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best, and ensure that it is: aligned to the curriculum, engaging, and differentiated to enable all students to produce meaningful work products?			X	
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs?				X
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?				X
Quality Statement 2 – Gather and Analyze Data: School leaders and faculty consistently gather, analyze and share information on student learning outcomes to understand school and student progress over time.				
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD
2.1 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the school level?				X
2.2 Align assessments to curriculum and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom level?				X
2.3 Use or develop tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize, aggregate, and analyze student performance trends?			X	
2.4 Engage in an open exchange of information with students and families regarding students' learning needs and outcomes?				X

Quality Statement 3 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently engage the school community and use data to set and track suitably high goals for accelerating student learning.							
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
3.1 Establish a coherent vision of future development that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are understood and supported by the entire school community?			X				
3.2 Use collaborative and data informed processes to set measurable and differentiated learning goals for student subgroups, and students in need of additional support?			X				
3.3 Ensure the achievement of learning goals by tracking progress at the school, teacher team and classroom level?				X			
3.4 Communicate high expectations to students and families, engage them in decision-making, and promote active involvement in the school community?				X			
Quality Statement 4 – Align Capacity Building: The school aligns its leadership development and structured professional collaboration around meeting the school’s goals and student learning and emotional needs.							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
4.1 Use the observation of classroom teaching and the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection, with a special focus on new teachers?			X				
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?				X			
4.3 Provide professional development that promotes independent and shared reflection, opportunities for leadership growth, and enables teachers to continuously evaluate and revise their classroom practices to improve learning outcomes?			X				
4.4 Integrate child/youth development, support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations with the school-wide goals to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students?				X			
Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has structures for monitoring and evaluating progress throughout the year and for flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	UD	D	P	WD			
5.1 Evaluate the quality of curricular, instructional and organizational decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?			X				
5.2 Evaluate systems for assessing students, organizing data, and sharing information with student and families, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school?			X				
5.3 Establish and sustain a transparent, collaborative system for measuring progress towards interim and long term goals and making adjustments during the year and over time?			X				
5.4 Use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of structured professional collaboration, capacity building and leadership development strategies?		X					
Quality Review Scoring Key							
UD	Underdeveloped	D	Developing	P	Proficient	WD	Well Developed