

# Quality Review Report 2011-2012

**Thurgood Marshall Academy**

**Middle School-High School M670**

**200 West 135 Street  
New York  
NY 10039**

**Principal: Sean Davenport**

**Dates of review: May 31 – June 1, 2012**

**Lead Reviewer: Gale Reeves**

## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

Thurgood Marshall Academy for Learning and Social Change is a middle – high school with 569 students from grade 6 through grade 12. The school population comprises 77% Black, 20% Hispanic, 1 % Multiracial, 1% White and 1% Asian students. The student body includes 1% English language learners and 11% special education students. Boys account for 44% of the students enrolled and girls account for 56%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2010 - 2011 was 93.0%.

### Overall Evaluation

**This school is developing.**

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The school sustains outstanding range of partnerships with community organizations that have a positive impact on students' social-emotional and academic development. (4.4)
  - Morning announcements, school bulletin boards and regular town hall meetings and assemblies acknowledge and celebrate students' academic achievements. School leaders recently hired an additional guidance counselor at the middle school level in order to better address students' social-emotional needs. Guidance counselors provide professional development to staff during faculty meetings on topics such as discipline and adolescent needs so that teachers are able to service challenging students. As such, teachers are well prepared to utilize strategies that meet the social-emotional needs of these students, resulting in the reduction of the referral rate to citywide children's services.
  - School leaders frequently review attendance, guidance and referral reports to note trends, areas of need and identify students who would benefit from targeted programming. The school is the recipient of an Expanded Learning Time grant that provides additional learning time until 6:00 pm, five days weekly for students across all grade levels. Students who have been identified as being in need of supplemental academic support not only receive homework assistance but they also experience enriching cultural experiences that support their social-emotional development such as dance with Alvin Ailey, culinary arts and visits to museums. School leaders recognize that students need these experiences so that they may apply what they learn in school to the real world and remain excited about school. As such, they ensure that added supports from external organizations such as Columbia Presbyterian, which has a comprehensive health facility, integrate well with school-based guidance services to meet the needs of targeted students and their families. Additionally, a review of scholarship and incident reports revealed the need for school leaders to continue two gender-specific initiatives that provide mentoring to specific students. These structures have high levels of involvement and help foster students' moral development, thus bolstering their self-esteem and their excitement about and performance in school, leading to increases in the number of students on the principal's honor roll and in the Junior Honor Society.
- Parents are kept informed of students' personal and academic development, resulting in an open exchange between staff and parents, increased parental support and a shared commitment to the school's goals. (2.4)
  - School leaders and staff use phone calls, emails, progress reports, instructional student conferencing and parent conferences to continuously engage families in ongoing reciprocal dialogue about their children's social and academic progress. Families have access to an online grading system where they are able to review student progress. Students receive feedback on student work products that are displayed on classroom and hallway bulletin boards. Parents report that they appreciate the curriculum workshops as well as those on the use of ARIS. These structures help to

deepen their understanding of the instructional expectations and build their capacity to help their children at home with a focus on narrowing the achievement gap between the neediest and highest achieving students.

- A broad based level of support results in the active involvement of parents on the School Leadership Team. Parents indicated that some of them are always available to support the school and they readily volunteer to chaperone school trips or assist individual teachers. They actively participate and attend school celebrations, monthly Parent Association meetings and other important school activities. Families report that the principal and staff listen to the parents' voice and they view the school community as a "family." For example, after they voiced their concern that some of the young men in the middle school needed someone with whom to establish a personal connection, school staff promptly responded by providing individual mentoring that is serving to meet those students' needs. Throughout the parent meeting, parents indicated that this level of responsiveness makes them feel valued as partners in the process, resulting in a shared commitment to the school community as demonstrated by their participation in school initiatives.
- School leaders communicate high expectations to staff and students in order to promote adult learning and prepare students for college and careers. (3.4)
  - The administrative team consistently shares its expectations with staff faculty conferences and weekly cabinet and planning meetings. As a result of a school based option, students are released early four times throughout the year, giving staff time for professional development by their peers and network personnel. Teacher teams are granted tremendous autonomy and teacher leaders prepare and share meeting minutes and agendas with the administrative team. The continuous and transparent cycle of support contributes to the professional tone which emanates throughout the entire school and fosters a high level of individual and team accountability as noted in team meetings and individual conversations with staff.
  - Breakfast with the principal, letters of recognition, phone calls, student awards and certificates, as well as school bulletin boards are some of the ways high expectations are communicated to families and students. The Junior Honor Society and the Principal's Honor Roll recognize students who are performing at high academic levels. The dedicated college office, funded by the Robin Hood Foundation, in addition to the middle school guidance counselor, facilitate workshops for families on the high school application process, assist with financial aid applications to college and proactively coordinate tours during the summer to rigorous and academically challenging colleges for entering middle school students. As stated by parents during the parent meeting, this results in more families and students having increased aspirations for college enrollment.
- Leaders and staff utilize data to analyze student performance, then design and implement targeted instructional adjustments that improve student outcomes. (2.2)
  - Grade and department teams create monthly common benchmark assessments that identify strengths and needs as well as promote ongoing conversation and reflection. This leads to revision of specific areas in the curricula that align with the State indicators for informational reading,

mathematical reasoning and problem solving. Consequently, teachers identify gaps and re-teach particular aspects of the curriculum to solidify learning. Additionally, teacher teams organize and review assorted streams of data including scholarship reports, Acuity, student work products, Regents exam results, item skills analysis and benchmark exams in varied content areas. Selected students are strategically grouped and their classes are reprogrammed based on assessment results or credits accumulated, with a focus on strengthening specific skills. Teachers assemble data binders to track the progress of specific groups of students, resulting in targeted extended learning time supplemental support and small group tutoring during lunch, which leads to these students' achievement gains as noted on formative assessment tracking logs.

- School leaders' support of teachers reflects the school's commitment to build coherence at all levels in order to improve teacher capacity. (4.1)
  - Frequent informal walkthroughs using a school-developed protocol and formal observations by school leaders enable teachers to receive timely feedback. Support is tailored to meet the needs of specific teachers via individual classroom visits, peer-to-peer critical friend feedback and attendance at off-site conferences. As a result, several newly assigned teachers exhibit understanding of strategies that elicit basic student understanding. Additionally, after identifying pedagogic trends, administrators plan for future supports facilitated by the International Baccalaureate (IB) coordinator, teacher leaders and assistant principals. This prompts teachers to refine their pedagogy and fosters teacher growth.

### **What the school needs to improve**

- Further refine the curriculum in order to consistently emphasize rigorous tasks so that higher order skills are elicited to cognitively engage all learners. (1.1)
  - The IB curriculum is well aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards and English language arts, math and science teachers deliberately adjust the curriculum in order to integrate standards into units of study. However, fine arts teachers do not consistently use the Blueprint for the Arts to guide their curricula and students across all grades and core content areas are not equally engaged in the types of research-based projects and tasks that apply knowledge. As such, their retention of content is not solidified. Moreover, performance based tasks that probe for deep understanding and application of learning do not coherently extend across all content areas or grade levels so that all students, especially higher achieving students, are suitably challenged, are able to make personal connections to themselves and the world and are able to transfer their learning to new contexts.
- Develop coherent teaching strategies to support rigorous instruction that encourages deep thinking so that all students are fully engaged. (1,2)
  - Although teachers model for students and ask general questions to encourage student to student collaboration, questioning strategies do not effectively provoke deep levels of student thinking, thus limiting all students' ability to engage in classroom tasks and discussions. The workshop methodology with mini lesson, modeling and independent practice is used across classrooms. However, not all lessons are equally rigorous so that

all students are not engaged in higher order thinking. Additionally, extension activities that stretch the thinking of higher achieving students are not yet the norm across grades and subjects, and, as a result, these students do not perform to their maximum levels of ability.

- Some teachers utilize differentiated strategies, such as using specific technology resources, to accommodate students' learning styles. However, as noted in instruction and displayed student work, differentiated tasks and extension activities that consistently challenge varied ability groups are not yet standard practice. As such, students' opportunities to learn at high levels, apply their learning to new situations, persist in the face of difficulty, self-assess and accelerate their own progress is not yet the norm.
- Streamline the alignment of resources so that all students have the opportunity to undertake research and produce rigorous work products. (1.3)
  - The principal's budgeting, coupled with staff input, result in the strategic use of resources aligned to the school's goals. Technology is available in most classrooms, however, all teachers, especially teachers of the arts, do not yet integrate this valuable resource into their long-range plans to enable students to publish or produce end-of-unit projects. Additionally, although teachers meet weekly in grade or department planning teams, the integration of the arts, media specialist and library resources are not embedded into the team structure. As such, research strategies aligned with project-based learning are not yet consistent across all classrooms, precluding students from producing higher leveled work.
- Refine and deepen the work of teacher teams in order to maximize teacher collaboration and improve teacher practice and student outcomes. (4.2)
  - Grade and department teams meet weekly to discuss specific skills and strategies. However the development of an inquiry approach is not well defined across all teams. As a result, team members across grades and departments do not consistently note trends and sufficiently reflect on instructional strategies, thus missing opportunities to further develop and evaluate the effectiveness of their classroom level instructional decisions on their practices and student outcomes.
  - While teams are teacher led, teachers are not receiving sufficient support to develop their skills as facilitators of adult learning. Consequently, teams do not reflect together on their facilitation techniques in order to deepen their leadership skills and refine tested theories to improve teacher practice and, in turn, further accelerate students' growth and achievement.
- Refine action planning so that interim targets and benchmarks across the school are developed, enabling timely adjustments to instruction. (5.3)
  - Some grade and department teams set appropriate long- and short-term goals and review progress. Additionally, the school's Comprehensive Educational Plan includes measurable long-term outcomes and school leaders revise plans based on student performance data. However, school leaders and teacher teams are at the beginning stages of measuring progress toward the attainment of interim targets. As such, quantifiable interim progress indicators do not align across all systems, leaving school

leaders and teachers less able to accurately determine the extent to which they are on track to achieve their goals for targeted groups of students.

## Part 3: School Quality Criteria 2011-2012

<b>School name: Thurgood Marshall Academy</b>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
<b>Overall QR Score</b>		<b>X</b>		
<b>Quality Statement 1 – Instructional and Organizational Coherence: The school has a coherent strategy to support student learning that aligns curriculum, instruction and organizational decisions.</b>				
<i>To what extent does the school regularly...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
1.1 Design engaging, rigorous and coherent curricula, including the Arts, for a variety of learners and aligned to key State standards?		<b>X</b>		
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?		<b>X</b>		
1.3 Make strategic organizational decisions to support the school's instructional goals and meet student learning needs as evidenced by meaningful student work products?		<b>X</b>		
1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes toward learning that support the academic and personal growth of students and adults?			<b>X</b>	
<b>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.</b>				
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
2.1 Gather and analyze information on student learning outcomes to identify trends, strengths, and areas of need at the school level?			<b>X</b>	
2.2 Align assessments to curriculum, use on-going assessment practices and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom level?			<b>X</b>	
2.3 Use grading policies and tools to enable school leaders and teachers to organize, aggregate, and analyze student performance trends to inform instruction and curriculum?			<b>X</b>	
2.4 Engage families in school decision-making, activities and an open exchange of information regarding students progress toward school and class expectations?			<b>X</b>	
<b>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.</b>				
<i>To what extent does the school ...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>
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?			<b>X</b>	
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?			<b>X</b>	
3.3 Ensure the achievement of learning goals by tracking progress at the school, teacher team and classroom level?			<b>X</b>	
3.4 Communicate high expectations to staff, students and families, and support students and families to achieve them?			<b>X</b>	

<b>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.</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>			
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?			<b>X</b>				
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning?		<b>X</b>					
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?			<b>X</b>				
4.4 Integrate child/youth development, guidance/advisement support services and partnerships with families and outside organizations with the school-wide goals to accelerate the academic and personal growth of students?				<b>X</b>			
<b>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.</b>							
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	<b>UD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>WD</b>			
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, with particular attention to the CCLS?		<b>X</b>					
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?			<b>X</b>				
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?		<b>X</b>					
5.4 Use data to regularly evaluate the effectiveness of structured professional collaboration, capacity building and leadership development strategies?			<b>X</b>				
<b>Quality Review Scoring Key</b>							
<b>UD</b>	<b>Underdeveloped</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>Developing</b>	<b>P</b>	<b>Proficient</b>	<b>WD</b>	<b>Well Developed</b>