



**Department of
Education**
Carmen Fariña, Chancellor

Office of School Quality
Division of Teaching and Learning

Quality Review Report

2015-2016

**Thurgood Marshall Academy for Learning and
Social Change**

Secondary School M670

**200-214 West 135th Street
Manhattan
NY 10030**

Principal: Sean Davenport

**Date of review: May 5, 2016
Lead Reviewer: Adam Breier**

The School Context

Thurgood Marshall Academy for Learning and Social Change is a secondary school with 551 students from grade 6 through grade 12. In 2015-2016, the school population comprises 1% Asian, 74% Black, 23% Hispanic, and 0% White students. The student body includes 3% English Language Learners and 16% students with disabilities. Boys account for 47% of the students enrolled and girls account for 53%. The average attendance rate for the school year 2014-2015 was 96.1%.

School Quality Criteria

Instructional Core		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
1.1 Ensure engaging, rigorous, and coherent curricula in all subjects, accessible for a variety of learners and aligned to Common Core Learning Standards and/or content standards	Additional Findings	Proficient
1.2 Develop teacher pedagogy from a coherent set of beliefs about how students learn best that is informed by the instructional shifts and Danielson <i>Framework for Teaching</i> , aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products	Focus	Developing
2.2 Align assessments to curricula, use on-going assessment and grading practices, and analyze information on student learning outcomes to adjust instructional decisions at the team and classroom levels	Additional Findings	Proficient
School Culture		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students, and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations	Celebration	Well Developed
Systems for Improvement		
<i>To what extent does the school...</i>	Area of:	Rating:
4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning	Additional Findings	Well Developed

Area of Celebration

Quality Indicator:	3.4 High Expectations	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

School leaders and staff effectively communicate expectations connected to a path to college and career readiness. Teacher teams and staff establish a culture for learning that communicates a unified set of high expectations.

Impact

Partnerships with families support students in their progress toward college and career readiness. Supports ensure that students own their educational experience and are prepared for the next level.

Supporting Evidence

- All staff members use tools such as the school's website, social media, emails, texts, and phone calls to communicate high expectations to all students and families. Additionally, through one-to-one meetings with guidance and college counselors and other staff, families receive information on college fairs and workshops offered by outside organizations and in the school itself. One parent said, "I appreciate that college is not an option. Everyone here needs to go to college." Parents consistently volunteer at Career Expo events to share their professional career experiences, next scheduled to take place in late May 2016. Additionally, parents consistently volunteer as chaperones for college visits, allowing for the greatest number of student participants possible. One student reported, "I've been here since middle school and they've been preparing us for college and career from the 6th grade." Students also reported that career explorations at the school have helped them to refine their career goals, two stating that they intend on becoming doctors while one intends becoming a nurse. Other students spoke to intentions on becoming an engineer, computer programmer and financier.
- One grade 8 student reported that he has already passed five Regents Exams. Across grade 8 students, 23 have passed at least one Regents Exam, representing 38% of students in that cohort. More specifically, out of the 58 students in grade 8, seven have already taken and passed the Living Environment Regents Exam. Out of that same cohort, eight are currently enrolled in the Living Environment course and are preparing to take the Living Environment Regents Exam in June 2016 for a possible 26% of students transitioning to high school with at least one Regents Exam already taken and passed. Additionally, 8 students enrolled in high school Integrated Algebra and are preparing for the Common Core Algebra Regents Exam.
- All grade 11 students are enrolled in the weekly Junior Seminar course. This course guides students toward registration and preparation for the SAT, researching of college choices, visiting colleges, and completion of an application essay. During this course, grade 11 students benefit from one-to-one meetings with college counselors. Sixty-nine percent of graduating seniors from the 2014-2015 class were enrolled in college or other postsecondary programs within 6 months of graduation, representing a thirteen percent improvement upon the city average for the same year and a thirteen percent improvement upon the borough average. 90% of the graduating class of 2016 has been accepted to college. One student in this year's graduating class has been named a Posse Scholarship winner, earning a full tuition scholarship to Vanderbilt University. To date, \$275,000 in scholarship money has been awarded to this year's graduating class.

Area of Focus

Quality Indicator:

1.2 Pedagogy

Rating:

Developing

Findings

Across classrooms, teaching practices are becoming aligned to the school's instructional focus that is informed by the Danielson *Framework for Teaching*. Additionally, teaching practices inconsistently provide multiple entry points into the curricula.

Impact

Teaching practices across classrooms do not yet fully reflect the school's beliefs about how students learn best. Teaching practices result in uneven student engagement in appropriately challenging tasks and demonstration of higher-order thinking skills by all learners

Supporting Evidence

- Though professional development (PD) early in the year focused on the Danielson *Framework for Teaching* in addition to PD on connecting the *Framework for Teaching* to student performance, student-to-student discussion was inconsistently observed across classrooms. An ICT English Language Arts (ELA) class was preparing for a Socratic seminar in small groups through the design of the open-ended questions that would be used in the Socratic seminar the following day. These groups were student led and inclusive. However, across grades and subjects classes were teacher centered with the majority of questions being asked by teachers and students directing their responses directly to the teacher. In a grade 10 class, the teacher asked "Do you think it was a good idea for the Weimar Republic to allow Hitler to rise to power?" All student responses, including one student's statement that, "It was good in the short term but bad in the long term," were directed toward the teacher without subsequent discussion.
- In an Earth Science class, review of the Do Now question was teacher centered as the teacher guided students through consideration as to each of the four possible answer choices. During the same class, students were asked to turn and talk. However, students were asked to discuss the definition of sedimentary rocks, a question representing a low level on Webb's *Depth of Knowledge*. In an Algebra 2/Trigonometry class, the teacher asked questions such as "What can we do to simplify this radical?" and "What is the purpose of using the Pythagorean Theorem?" to which all students responses were directed at the teacher.
- In a grade 6 class, students worked in groups in their use of conversions to determine individual speed using different units. These students were asked to answer, make predictions and to rely on thought partners for help in completing their work. However, during a Global Studies class, students were split into pairs to discuss the promises Adolf Hitler had made in *Mein Kampf* and the role these promises made in Hitler's rise to power. During the share-out, the majority of learners did not have the opportunity to demonstrate their thinking as only the share-out was dominated by three of the student pairs. In a science class, student pairs presented the findings of their research on the topic of drugs and diseases. However, students in the audience did not have an opportunity to demonstrate their thinking as they were not engaged in any questioning or note taking task during the actual presentations.

Additional Findings

Quality Indicator:	1.1 Curriculum	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

School leaders and faculty ensure that curricula are aligned to the Common Core State Standards, integrate the instructional shifts. Curricula and academic tasks consistently emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills.

Impact

Curricula are coherent and promote college and career readiness. Additionally, curricula emphasize rigorous habits and higher-order skills across grades and subjects.

Supporting Evidence

- Review of curriculum maps revealed evidence of alignment to the Common Core Learning Standards and New York State content standards where applicable as well as integration of the instructional shifts. The first unit in the Algebra 1 curriculum map is guided by the essential question “Why is it advantageous to use and solve equations algebraically for real-world problems?” In the same curriculum, students are to deepen their understanding in that they are required to determine the best method for responding to concepts. The grade 7 humanities course curriculum map includes a balance of informational and literary texts along with detailed use of the Word Gen program to ensure students are building the vocabulary they need to access grade level complex texts.
- Review of lesson plans revealed evidence of integration of the instructional shifts. In the Algebra 1 lesson plan, students are expected to demonstrate understanding by explaining a “table of values” in narrative form. Later in the same lesson, students apply factoring and quadratic equations to an analysis of the results of a football player’s attempts to kick a football over a goal post. In a grade 9 English Language Arts (ELA) lesson plan, students are to prepare for a Socratic seminar that would take place the following day by creating questions that would result in discussion in which their respective groups’ definition of love would be compared and contrasted to representations of love in Shakespeare’s *Romeo and Juliet*. In a grade 10 Global Studies lesson plan, discussion as to why Adolf Hitler emerged as leader of Germany was to be supported by evidence from the text.
- Curricular documents provided evidence of emphasis on rigorous habits and higher-order skills for all students, including students with disabilities. A grade 10 Global Studies lesson plan has students answering high-level question such as “How did the Treaty of Versailles encourage the growth of Fascism?” A grade 9 ELA lesson plan has students creating high-level questions around the class text. This lesson contained detailed information as to adjustments for students with disabilities as well as an extension activity for high performing student groups that guides them through a “thinking about thinking” metacognitive exercise. Students are expected to “Analyze a real life situation by identifying the energy produced along with the energy transfer and speculating about the advantages of alternate energy sources in the same situation.”

Quality Indicator:	2.2 Assessment	Rating:	Proficient
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Findings

Across classrooms, teachers use rubrics and grading policies aligned with the school's curricula. Teachers' assessment practices consistently reflect the use of ongoing checks for understanding.

Impact

Students receive actionable feedback regarding their achievement. Teachers make effective adjustments to meet all students' needs.

Supporting Evidence

- Across classrooms, samples of student work products showed teacher written actionable feedback. Some examples of that feedback were, "You need to work on strategically using and showing the relationships between the topic the examples used," "You need to focus on conventions and mechanics. You have grammatical and sentence structure errors," and "Make sure to keep a formal tone and use the transitional words and phrases from the chart."
- Teachers continually check for understanding throughout daily lessons through check-ins and make adjustments or re-address instructional materials/instructions according to the results of those check-ins. In an Anatomy and Physiology class, the teacher commented to the class that after reviewing a number of presentations it was noted that not enough visuals had been utilized. In an Algebra 1 class, the teacher checked for understanding while logging findings for different student groups. In a grade 9 ELA class, the teacher redirected all students' attention so that the following announcement could be made, "As I was going around the room and checking on groups, I found that you are writing questions that connect your type of love to the love in *Romeo and Juliet*. However, I also found that you're not including references to sources." During a grade 6 math lesson, the teacher checked-in with each student group using the assignment's rubric to guide discussion.
- In a grade 9 ELA class, student groups were based on assessment data from the previous lesson. The lesson plan states "Students are grouped heterogeneously. The purpose for this grouping is based on data gathered from the previous Socratic Seminar and student self-assessments." In a grade 6 class, students were grouped for the math lesson based on data from an assessment of student work from the previous day. In addition to the grouping being based on data, the lesson was written as a response to the same data. The lesson plan included a section with photos of student work along with the teacher's corresponding notes as evidence for the particular student groupings for the current day's lesson. Some of the teacher's observations are as follows: "Most students who used a calculator were able to accurately calculate their speed in miles per hour," "some students were able to find the correct speed, but made mistakes in labeling answers," and "Other students made mistakes converting their speed from one unit to another."

Quality Indicator:	4.2 Teacher teams and leadership development	Rating:	Well Developed
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Findings

The vast majority of teachers are engaged in inquiry-based, structured professional collaborations. Across the school, grade teams meet on a consistent basis to analyze assessment data, student work products, and to share teaching strategies.

Impact

Teacher engagement in inquiry-based, structured professional collaborations has strengthened their instructional capacity and promoted implementation of the instructional shifts. Systematic analysis of student data and work products has resulted in mastery of goals for groups of students.

Supporting Evidence

- During an English Language Arts (ELA) teacher team meeting, student work samples were analyzed to assess student questioning. Current focus of this team is to improve students' questioning using high-order questions. Teachers used a protocol accompanied by a graphic organizer to guide their analysis. Discussion of student work also covered impact of use of the "See Think Wonder" graphic organizer that has been in use this school year across grades and subjects. After reading through student work samples one teacher said, "Their questioning is getting better. Their questions are more often high-level." All teachers concurred with this statement. Next steps determined at this meeting included a plan to conduct intervisitations to observe the students' use of these questions during the Socratic seminar during which these student-written questions will be used.
- The social studies teacher team reported that as a result of their team's work, all students in the target student group (all seniors still needing to pass the Global Studies Regents Exam) took and passed that exam during the January 2016 administration. Seven of the 12 students in this group scored above 70. The team analyzed past exams for target group members. They found that students consistently scored low on the thematic essay portion of that exam. Further analysis shows that students' deficiency was founded on poor understanding of key terms and academic vocabulary embedded within question stems. The team then designed instruction and follow-up activities that focused on growing students' understanding of those key terms and words. One example activity involved students using different color highlighters to color code key words and terms in question stems and aspects of sample answers that helped clarify the meaning of those key words and phrases, developing greater student understanding of thematic essay questions.
- A member of the math teacher team reported that team members are collaborating on a project that involves the posting of a check-list showing student mastery of topics. This information is then used by students, in conjunction with the teacher, to self-direct their targeted work toward building understanding in areas where mastery has not been reached. It is reported that this work has resulted in improved student performance. One teacher said, "Students can now better articulate the areas where they need help because we give them data. They haven't taken the regents exam since we began this, but their class test grades have gone up." Additionally, a member of the Special Education teacher team reported that meetings during which they compare notes on co-teaching experiences has led to the sharing of a growing set of best practices since they each co-teach with different content specialty teachers. It was also reported that intervisitations are a practice between teachers inside teams as well as across teams.