



**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 135 Street  
New York  
NY 10030**

**Principal: Sandyre Johnson**

**Dates of review: February 8 - 9, 2007**

**Reviewer: Candido DeJesus**

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## Part 1: The school context

### Information about the school

The Thurgood Marshall Academy serves students from the 7th grade through the 12th grade. It is a combined middle school and high school. Approximately 85% of the students and faculty live in Harlem. There are 567 students in total, of whom about 4% special education students and 2% are English language learners. Black students make up about 80% of the student body and Hispanic students make up about 20%. The school receives Title 1 funding, with approximately 68% of students eligible, higher than similar and City schools. Attendance is equal to similar schools and higher than the average for City schools. All students wear uniforms.

The school was originally created in 1993 after a proposal was accepted by the Department of Education for it to become one of the first New Vision schools. The chief collaborator was the Abyssinian Development Corporation. At the time, families seeking a quality education often sent their children to schools outside of Harlem. Opened with a great deal of enthusiasm, the school faced numerous challenges in its first few years. In 1996 a new and visionary school leader was hired and the school finally obtained a desirable building leased to it by the Abyssinian Development Corporation.

## Part 2: Overview

### What the school does well

- The principal, with the support of her assistant principal and staff, provides inspirational and effective leadership.
- The school maintains a very effective and flexible intervention program, in particular servicing students most in need.
- Budgeting decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and the school's focused plans for the improvement of each student and groups of students throughout the school.
- The staff consistently engage in professional development activities as a team process using data and assessments to set rigorous goals for planning and student improvement.
- Scheduling decisions provide time for teachers to plan collaboratively and opportunities for students to be engaged in academic improvement activities before school, after school and on Saturdays.
- There are youth development initiatives developed collaboratively with outside partners that provide comprehensive services to adolescents and align with the academic and social programs of the school for improvement.
- There is a positive tone to the school environment that makes a strong community which emphasizes high expectations for each and every student.

### What the school needs to improve

- Develop consistency in generating and gathering data in a systematic fashion by all teachers and use the data to improve all student outcomes.
- Implement strategies for the differentiation of instruction in order for all teachers to meet students' learning needs more closely.
- Increase the amount of writing expected in all content areas across the school to provide more rigor and improve literacy.
- Expand professional development opportunities for teachers to plan collaboratively in teams and for teachers to evaluate themselves and each other.

## Part 3: Main findings

### Overall Evaluation

**This is a proficient school with some well developed features.**

Thurgood Marshall Academy is best described as a school that has turned the corner, after many growing pains in its first years. The principal is highly regarded by the school community for her caring and nurturing style of leadership. In addition, the administration of the school, with the assistance of its community partners, has put in place excellent interventions for its most needy students.

The staff have become efficient at collecting student data and generating their own information on each student to develop plans and goals for academic and social development. The principal has become deft at using her budget, scheduling, and staffing to address particular needs of her student population. There are now strong accountability systems in place to monitor and revise instructional practices and resources. There are high expectations, not just for each student to achieve, but for staff members and parents to provide support. Professional development is becoming a strong tool for improving teachers' capacity to use interim assessments effectively. Assessments are being used more efficiently to measure the success of instructional strategies and interventions. The staff is proficient at measuring its own efforts to sustain academic and social improvement.

### 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 student progress over time.**

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

The school has widened the range of student data collected and has acknowledged the importance of collecting data periodically. Data can be found in well-organized binders that are used by the principal and her cabinet to make comparisons across classes, grades, and groups of students. Data is analyzed and used as part of the strong focus on improving the performance of all ethnic groups in this school, including English language learners, special education and all categories of interest. The principal is known for her relentless efforts to improve the performance of her most needy students. She is enthusiastic about using student data to compare outcomes and revise plans and methods. Her current interest is the low achievement levels and dropout rates of young Black males and what the school will do to improve them.

The school has also become stronger at using a variety of school-generated data to capture a broad range of information on how students are progressing. Teachers examine subject notebooks, portfolios, projects, unit tests and confer with each student. A number of teachers use graphic organizers to chart student data. Another innovation in using student data and examples of work is the implementation of digital portfolios in the 11th grade. In these ways, the academic progress of individuals and groups of students is clearly seen. The information is used to look at skills that need particular attention. It is also used to drive instructional efforts and focus on particular curriculum units as evidenced by the lesson plans teachers had developed.

The staff has also become proficient at making comparisons across grades, subject areas, and similar schools. Great attention is paid to results from Regents examinations and cohort comparisons. Based on analysis of test results, there are programs in place to allow students to improve their test taking skills and accumulate enough credits to graduate on time. Regents preparation, held on Saturdays, improves opportunities to pass Regents and accumulate the necessary credits to ensure that students graduate on time. A Kaplan Scholastic Aptitude Test program prepares seniors to get higher scores and gain admittance to college.

**Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student’s next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student’s learning.**

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

The principal has put in place several accountability measures to ensure that teachers are intensifying their use of periodic assessments to change instructional approaches and interventions immediately. There are checkpoints at least monthly when the administration inspects lesson plans, collects protocols and samples of student work from the teachers. Common meeting times have been scheduled to facilitate the staff’s efforts to plan lessons in teams using data accumulated throughout the school year. This new focus on data has enhanced the effectiveness of the six reporting periods scheduled during the school year. Different subject area teachers are now implementing reading and writing strategies in all classes. Students are improving their writing particularly in non-fiction genres because of the added writing demanded in all content area subjects, and this continues to be an area for development for the school.

Goals and plans focus on making Thurgood Marshall Academy the best middle/high school in the community of Harlem. The school is ambitious to continue making improvements over other schools and their own past results by focusing on each student and groups of students. Particular attention is being given to improving the performance of those students most in need. Teachers are becoming well practiced at using periodic assessments to pinpoint specific skills, in all content areas, to be targeted for special attention.

Assessments are used frequently not only to inform students of their own progress but to challenge them to acknowledge their strengths and areas of need in each subject area. Students are expected to develop their own action plans for improvement. Through a computer program named “Think Wave”, the staff provide daily access to grades, attendance and the quality of work for parents and students at home. Students and parents can email teachers daily. Parents are kept well informed of the progress of their children and are sent frequent memos, flyers and emails to keep them abreast of the activities and meetings at the school. The school is kept open every evening and just about every Saturday for a range of school and community activities. The staff is now planning strategies to increase parent involvement and hopefully offer more courses and incentives directed at parents and caregivers.

**Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity and resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.**

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

Teachers acknowledge that the emphasis on using interim data has highlighted the previous disconnection between the established curriculum and the instructional strategies teachers commonly use. Teachers collaborate to modify their teaching strategies and develop pacing calendars for the scope and sequence of the curriculum. Pacing calendars have become important and there is more attention paid to engaging students in developing their critical thinking skills. The use of data to plan differentiated work for students at different levels is not yet consistent practice.

Common preparation times are scheduled at least once a week for teachers to work in teams across grades, schools and subject areas, and two hours are set aside every Monday after school for professional development. Budget decisions are driven by the goals and the needs revealed by the student data and the focused plans developed to improve academic achievement and appropriate social development. There is a push to use money for more direct services to students. The administration has been streamlined to have fewer official supervisors and more lead teachers. Some administrative positions are funded by outside partners and free up more money for direct services to students.

The overall behavior of students is good and all students wear uniforms. Students are actively engaged in every class with students and teachers treating each other respectfully. Attractive artwork adorns most of the wall space in the building and there is zero tolerance for graffiti. Students take pride in their work, including in presentation. In one class, students could be observed meticulously transferring science notes from rough written drafts into well maintained notebooks. Student attendance and engagement are high priorities as demonstrated by the steady improvement in attendance rates for students which are now equal to similar schools and higher than City schools.

**Quality Statement 4 - Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school’s collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.**

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

The principal is seen as visionary and is well respected in the school and in the community. She expects everyone to share that vision. The principal is specific about the necessary attributes candidates must have to be considered for teaching positions. Her expectations are that teachers be self-reflective, collaborative and invested in the academic and social development of each of their students. She takes pride in stating that this is a true community school and that 85% of the students and teachers live in the community.

The two hour session on Mondays after school set aside for professional development is being well used in a six-week cycle. The current theme is “using student data for differentiation of instruction”, although this has not yet had time to have a full impact on classroom practice. Other professional development activities include workshops and discussions on planning, revision of plans and working in teams to set new goals. This fairly young staff are encouraged to attend profession development outside the school and

have begun to turnkey best practices observed at other schools or learned at specific workshops.

Staff also collaborate to learn from each other. Teachers have begun to visit more frequently in the classrooms of their colleagues to observe each other's lessons, in order to evaluate their colleagues and themselves, and share best practices. Conversations among teachers frequently include discussions on the achievement and progress of their students.

Formal lesson observations are done as mandated, but much time is dedicated by the administration to doing informal visits and spot checks to ensure consistency of approach and to ensure that standards of instruction are high. Overall, the school runs smoothly, and all staff members and students are polite to visitors and each other. Procedures are clear, communicated to all, and are generally followed.

Partnerships with outside agencies are given great importance especially since this is a New Visions school, which must be sponsored by a community organization. The Abyssinian Development Corporation sponsored the school, leased it the building it currently occupies and continues to sustain its partnership with funding and personnel. Another effective partnership is the full-service clinic that offers medical, dental and social services for adolescents on site. As an example of these partners aligning academic efforts with the school, students who sustain passing grades throughout the school year are guaranteed summer employment with one of the schools many partnerships. The ability of students to demonstrate sustained growth in academics is now tied to incentives and rewards. In addition, the higher the grade average, the higher the rate of pay.

**Quality Statement 5 - Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerated learning.**

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

There are ample opportunities at the school to set checkpoints that include frequent interim goals and diagnostic assessments, an example being the six marking periods held during the school year. A number of interim assessments based on standardized tests are also administered throughout the school year. The Princeton Review, as another example, is computerized and administered three times a year.

Monitoring of school practice is developing well. The principal attests that the priority is now to see the use of student data "as a critical lens to evaluate our plans and goals." "We are discovering things that we didn't know were going on," she states. As comparisons are made of student progress across classes, grades and schools, plans and goals are modified. There is a student data binder present in the teachers' lounge to facilitate teacher discussions. Changes in instructional approaches, interventions and groupings are dealt with immediately.

Teachers recognize the importance of using student data as a tool which makes them flexible at realigning their practices and sustaining student progress through successful planning and goal setting. As a final example, teachers are gaining experience on using the large amount of student data being collected to develop individual profile sheets that are being made available to all members of the school community.

## Part 4: School Quality Criteria Summary

<b>SCHOOL NAME: Thurgood Marshall Academy (IS/HS 670)</b>	∅	✓	+
<b>Quality Score</b>		X	

<b>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 student progress over time.</b>	∅	✓	+
1.1 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• each student, classroom, grade level,</li> </ul>		X	
1.2 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ethnic groups, English Language Learners, special education students*</li> </ul>		X	
1.3 The school uses available data and generates its own data to provide an objective, constantly updated understanding of the performance and progress of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• all other categories of interest to the school*</li> </ul>		X	
1.4 Performance and progress are measured based on comparisons with similar schools, with the school's own past performance, and among students, classrooms, grade levels, academic subject areas, ethnic groups, and other groupings of interest within the school.		X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 1</b>		X	

\* These criteria are partially aspirational as of now because schools do not have routine access to all of this data. The NYC DOE plans to provide schools with enhanced access to the necessary data in 2007.

<b>Quality Statement 2 – Plan and Set Goals: School leaders and faculty consistently use available data to understand each student's next learning step. Through collaborative planning and student and parent engagement, they set high goals for improving teaching practice and accelerating each student's learning.</b>	∅	✓	+
2.1 Using data, school leaders and faculty engage in a collaborative process to set demanding, objectively measurable goals for immediate and long-range improvement, and to develop plans and timeframes for reaching those goals.		X	
2.2 Goals and plans focus on the school as a whole and 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 Particular attention is given to improving the performance and progress of students in greatest need of improvement.			X
2.4 High expectations are conveyed to students and parents/caregivers. Students and their parents/caregivers are regularly invited to provide information about each student's performance and how to improve. This information is central to setting challenging goals and developing, evaluating, and revising plans.		X	
2.5 Goals and plans for improving student performance and progress drive the activity of all members of the school community: leaders, staff, students, parents, and other partners.		X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 2</b>		X	

<b>Quality Statement 3 – Align Instruction: The school aligns its instructional activity, resources, and student engagement around its focused plans for accelerating learning for each student.</b>	∅	✓	+
3.1 The school selects the curriculum based on how well it aligns with or implements the mandated curriculum and on the curriculum's capacity to generate meaningful interim data about progress towards goals and to support the school's high expectations and improvement plans.		X	
3.2 Teachers are accountable for improving instruction and student outcomes. They plan and differentiate their instruction based on the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.		X	
3.3 Budgeting decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.			X
3.4 Staffing decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes.		X	
3.5 Scheduling decisions about the use of teacher and student time are guided by the needs that emerge from examining student data and by the focused plan the school develops to improve student outcomes.		X	
3.6 Instructional programs actively engage students.		X	
3.7 Staff know and respect students and respond to their academic needs, as well as their personal needs that affect academic performance. Each student knows and trusts an adult on the staff who is concerned about him or her.			X
3.8 Student attendance and engagement are high priorities. High rates and patterns of absences trigger immediate intervention.		X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 3</b>		X	
<b>Quality Statement 4 – Build and Align Capacity: The development of instructional leadership, staff, and capacity are aligned around the school's collaboratively established goals for accelerating the learning of each student.</b>	∅	✓	+
4.1 Leaders, faculty, and staff are selected based on their high expectations for student performance and progress and based on their commitment and capacity to use data, compare outcomes within and across classrooms and schools and develop and revise plans and methods to improve performance and progress.		X	
4.2 Professional development decisions are driven by the needs revealed by student data and by the focused plan the school has developed to improve each student's and group of students' outcomes. Professional development is designed to help leaders, faculty, and staff use data, self- and peer-assessments, and collaboration with peers to achieve goals for improved school and student outcomes. Professional development and self- and peer-evaluation are aligned and overlap.		X	
4.3 The principal frequently observes classroom teaching and has a considered strategy for improving the quality of each teacher's instruction. Teachers frequently observe and support each other's classroom instruction with the goal of improving student outcomes.		X	
4.4 Planning, evaluation of results, and revision of plans takes place in teams. Leaders and faculty inform each other of their goals and results, candidly evaluate themselves and each other, and use what is learned to drive improvement.		X	
4.5 The principal is respected and has capacity to effect change.			X
4.6 The school runs smoothly. Procedures are clear, communicated to all, and are generally followed.		X	
4.7 The school aligns youth development and support services around stated academic goals. Partnerships with outside bodies are routinely used to achieve academic goals.			X
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 4</b>		X	
<b>Quality Statement 5 – Monitor and Revise: The school has built-in structures for evaluating each student's progress throughout the year, recognizing weaknesses in its improvement plans and teaching practices, and flexibly adapting plans and practices to meet its goals for accelerating learning.</b>	∅	✓	+
5.1 All school plans and other interventions include frequent interim goals and diagnostic assessments of progress designed to reveal in objectively measurable ways whether the plan is being effectively implemented and reaching stated goals.		X	
5.2 Comparisons of student progress within and across classrooms and schools are used in making interim diagnostic assessments and measuring the progress of plans and interventions.		X	
5.3 Information generated by periodic assessments and diagnostic measures of progress and comparisons is used to revise plans immediately in order to reach stated goals. Interim and final goals are modified when data objectively demonstrate that revision is required.		X	
5.4 Each plan's interim and final outcomes drive successive phases of goal setting and improvement planning, and each successive phase is characterized by agile and flexible realignment of practices and resources to improve student academic outcomes.		X	
<b>Overall score for Quality Statement 5</b>		X	