Quality Review Report
2017-2018

Thurgood Marshall Academy for Learning and Social Change
Secondary School 05M670
200-214 West 135Th Street
Manhattan
NY 10030

Principal: Sean Davenport

Dates of Review:
November 1, 2017 - November 2, 2017

Lead Reviewer: Edward Hazen
The Quality Review Report

The Quality Review is a two-day school visit by an experienced educator. During the review, the reviewer visits classrooms, talks with parents, students, teachers, and school leaders and uses a rubric to evaluate how well the school is organized to support student achievement.

The Quality Review Report provides a rating for all ten indicators of the Quality Review Rubric in three categories: Instructional Core, School Culture, and Systems for Improvement. One indicator is identified as the **Area of Celebration** to highlight an area in which the school does well to support student learning and achievement. One indicator is identified as the **Area of Focus** to highlight an area the school should work on to support student learning and achievement. The remaining indicators are identified as **Additional Finding**. This report presents written findings, impact, and site-specific supporting evidence for six indicators.

Information about the School


School Quality Ratings

### Instructional Core

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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 Framework for Teaching, aligned to the curricula, engaging, and meets the needs of all learners so that all students produce meaningful work products</td>
<td>Area of Focus</td>
<td>Developing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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</tbody>
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### School Culture

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.4 Maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that supports the academic and personal growth of students and adults</td>
<td>Area of Celebration</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 Establish a culture for learning that communicates high expectations to staff, students and families, and provide supports to achieve those expectations</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
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### Systems for Improvement

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<th>To what extent does the school...</th>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Rating</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>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</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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<td>3.1 Establish a coherent vision of school improvement that is reflected in a short list of focused, data-based goals that are tracked for progress and are understood and supported by the entire school community</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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<tr>
<td>4.1 Observe teachers using the Danielson Framework for Teaching along with the analysis of learning outcomes to elevate school-wide instructional practices and implement strategies that promote professional growth and reflection</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.2 Engage in structured professional collaborations on teams using an inquiry approach that promotes shared leadership and focuses on improved student learning</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Well Developed</td>
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<tr>
<td>5.1 Evaluate the quality of school-level decisions, making adjustments as needed to increase the coherence of policies and practices across the school, with particular attention to the CCLS</td>
<td>Additional Finding</td>
<td>Proficient</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### Area of Celebration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.4 Positive Learning Environment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
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#### Findings

The school’s approach to culture-building, discipline, and social-emotional support is informed by the school’s belief statement. Support services allow staff, students, and families to collaborate in addressing all students’ academic and social-emotional needs.

#### Impact

The school leaders maintain a culture of mutual trust and positive attitudes that contributes to a personalized learning environment, promoting academic and social-emotional learning that supports the growth of students and leads to college and career readiness.

#### Supporting Evidence

- Systems are in place, rooted in the school’s “What We Believe” vision statement and shared by all school community members, to create a safe and inclusive school culture that promotes positive interactions among students and between students and staff members. Teachers and support staff reported on several initiatives implemented to sustain a positive schoolwide learning environment, such as monthly town hall grade level meetings with students, student of the month celebrations, and restorative circles. These initiatives have resulted in students’ taking ownership of their behavior, being accountable for completing academic tasks, and engaging in classroom discussions and activities. Students acknowledged that they are becoming more motivated to participate in class and improve their personal behaviors since having access to social-emotional programs such as Brothers on a New Direction (BOND), an enrichment program for young men of color.

- Students reported that the administrative staff and faculty continuously encourage them to become involved in school and the community by participating in various activities such as student government, community service, and internships. Students and support staff both report that the school leader strongly encourages student voice in the decision-making process. Consequently, in lieu of a homeroom, monthly town hall meetings with students were structured to be held by grade level to encourage greater student voice. Students reported that school leaders have an open-door policy in which they are welcome to discuss concerns with leadership at any time.

- Structures are in place to ensure that each student is known well by at least one adult who helps to personalize attendance and offer guidance and advisement to pupils. The school emphasizes the importance of daily attendance by celebrating perfect attendance at its monthly recognition ceremony. In addition to personalized support from the parent coordinator, school leaders utilize a mobile application to notify parents immediately via text message if their children are tardy or absent, thereby allowing families to monitor their children’s attendance in real time. Parents report that the mobile app also allows them to keep in direct contact with teachers regarding their children’s behavioral and academic progress. At the high school, the guidance department ensures that students are staying on track with credit accumulation via a monitoring system that students and parents use to track students’ progress toward graduation. Likewise, school leaders and faculty can monitor students at-risk of not meeting graduation requirements. During an interview, sophomore and senior students reported that school personnel have been extremely helpful in assisting them with all aspects of preparing for college and career readiness.
**Area of Focus**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.2 Pedagogy</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Developing</th>
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**Findings**

Limited use of scaffolds and differentiation of academic tasks minimize opportunities for all learners to engage in challenging performance tasks. The levels of student participation and thinking are uneven across classrooms.

**Impact**

Inclusive teaching practices, such as the provision of multiple entry points into lessons, result in uneven student engagement in high levels of thinking and discussion as they develop work products across grades and disciplines.

**Supporting Evidence**

- In some classrooms, teachers provided students with opportunities to engage in tasks which required strategic thinking, analysis of textual evidence, and reasoning. In an English class, students were required to participate in a silent conversation carousel activity in which they had to silently move through stations to analyze excerpts from a variety of texts and determine the authors’ purposes. Students were directed to draw specific evidence from the texts, such as the authors’ choice of words, and record this on shared poster paper prior to discussing their reasoning with their classmates. In an Advanced Placement Literature class, students participated in a Socratic seminar to deepen their understanding of the prevailing themes within the novel they were reading. Students used their annotated notes to cite textual evidence as they discussed their claims while the teacher took participation notes. However, this level of engagement and understanding was inconsistent across other classrooms.

- In a science class, students were required to work with their groups to construct graphs using sets of data provided in worksheet form. When asked if students understood the required steps of the task, some replied “no,” but the teacher had students transition to their group work anyway. Although the students were directed to work collaboratively, most students chose to complete the work independently, while others failed to complete the task because they were unsure of next steps to formulate their graph. Many waited for assistance from the teacher rather than asking their peers, as directed. Some students were observed copying other students’ work, even though the answers were incorrect. Consequently, the learning objective of the lesson was not achieved for the majority of the students.

- Across classrooms, teachers inconsistently provided multiple entry points into lessons or differentiated academic tasks to support a variety of learning styles and/or meet students at their level. In an Integrated Co-Teacher (ICT) math class, students were grouped by ability to allow them to assist one another while the teachers circulated among the groups to provide direct assistance with the task. However, all groups were provided with an identical task. While some teachers identified entry points in their lesson plans, they were not implemented in the lesson itself. A math teacher stated in his lesson plan that the students would engage in a “talk it out” activity with a partner as a means of providing a scaffold for students; however, students were not observed participating in collaborative peer hurdle help during the lesson.
Additional Finding

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>1.1 Curriculum</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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Findings

School leaders and faculty make purposeful decisions to ensure the curricula are aligned to the Common Core Learning Standards. Curricula integrate the instructional shifts and consistently emphasize rigor in tasks across grades and subject areas.

Impact

Planning and effective decision-making promote coherence for student sub-groups to ensure their engagement in rigorous academic tasks and build a pathway for college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and teachers identified use of the Hess Cognitive Rigor Matrix when planning to align curricula to the Common Core and ensure the level of rigor in curriculum maps and lesson plans promotes college and career readiness for all students. A review of curriculum documents reveals that essential questions and academic tasks reflect alignment with Webb’s Depth of Knowledge scale for rigor. For example, in a plan for an Advanced Placement English Language Arts class, essential questions to promote critical thinking, peer critiquing of ideas, and higher-level discussion during a Socratic seminar included, “What is the individual’s obligation to society?” and “How much of one’s values must one compromise to live in a society?”

- Instructional shifts such as citing evidence from a variety of sources, writing from primary sources, and analyzing writers’ use of language to develop plot and characterization, are integrated within lesson plans, unit plans, and curriculum maps. In a seventh-grade science unit plan, learning objectives required students to make observations using scientific inquiry, use reasoning to support a hypothesis, and analyze the main idea and supporting details presented in a variety of media and formats to develop an argument. Similarly, a seventh-grade English Language Arts (ELA) unit plan focuses on making connections to American history through analysis of a variety of sources. Consequently, these shifts integrate writing into the curricula across grade levels and subject areas.

- Teacher lesson plans emphasize higher-order thinking skills and rigorous tasks that engage learners in authentic tasks. Across grade levels and content areas, teachers have adopted Universal Design for Learning that serves as a methodology for teachers and departments to consistently emphasize access for all students to high levels of discourse and higher-order tasks. In a sixth-grade ICT humanities lesson plan, the academic task required students to analyze sources to make a claim and then to support their arguments while taking part in a debate over whether or not students should be paid for their performance in school. Students needed to connect and synthesize knowledge and information of different types in order to formulate an opinion. Consequently, there are engaging, challenging curricula and tasks for all students.
**Additional Finding**

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<tr>
<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>2.2 Assessment</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Proficient</th>
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**Findings**

Across classrooms, teachers use a variety of common assessment data to set classroom and individual student achievement goals and to plan next steps for instruction.

**Impact**

Students are provided feedback with actionable next steps, leading to improvement in student achievement. Assessments are used to make adjustments to curricula, determine students’ progress toward meeting classroom and individual goals, and plan supports for students.

**Supporting Evidence**

- Teachers use rubrics and assessments to monitor student progress and provide actionable feedback with next steps for improvement. A review of student work samples showed evidence that most students receive rubric-based feedback with next steps to improve their writing. For example, on an opinion writing essay in which students had to analyze a claim, a student had received actionable next steps that stated, “For instance, you could embed quotes and edit out vague or repetitive information.” The student stated that he has started using quotes to further legitimize his claim when writing an argumentative essay as a result of this feedback. Other students acknowledged that similar feedback from teachers has helped them improve their writing as well.

- Teachers regularly administer common assessments such as baseline and end-of-unit assessments. In most classes, teachers create on-demand writing assessments and use exit tickets as a formative assessment to determine adjustments to instruction. Additionally, Diagnostic Reading Power (DRP) assessments are administered at the middle school level three times per year to assess students’ reading levels and comprehension of text passages. The results are used to measure student progress toward individual goals and determine instructional groups. Assessments are also used to provide feedback to students and families, plan next steps for improvement, and make ongoing adjustments to curricula and lesson plans, such as the inclusion of scaffolds for students with disabilities and English Language Learners (ELLs).

- Teachers use a structured looking at student work (LASW) protocol to analyze assessment data to identify gaps in proficiency. Data is used to develop strategic learning groups within classes and supports for specific students at-risk of not meeting proficiency. Moreover, when data reveals students have not yet mastered concepts and/or content, teachers re-teach to ensure that skills needed for future lessons will be learned. A sixth through eighth grade vertical team was observed analyzing a weekly writing assessment to determine what additional supports should be provided for a student with a disability and an ELL to improve their writing. After analysis of the constructed responses, it was determined that the students could benefit from the use of academic vocabulary study cards and use of a “stop and think” strategy to formulate their thoughts prior to starting the writing process.
Additional Finding

<table>
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<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>3.4 High Expectations</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
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Findings

The school leaders and faculty consistently communicate high expectations to students and their families. A culture for learning is maintained that is unified and communicated across the school community.

Impact

Systems of accountability for students and partnerships with families ensure that all students and their families are aware of their progress toward graduation and college and career readiness.

Supporting Evidence

- School leaders and staff members implement effective strategies for communicating high expectations regarding college and career readiness and partner with families to ensure that all students are challenged to meet those expectations. The principal hosts “Coffee with the Principal” sessions to engage parents in discussions about curricula, pedagogy, and college and career readiness. Students and parents reported that school leaders’ expectations to prepare all students for college and career have been clearly articulated to families and that they receive regular updates on their children’s progress through a variety of means, including traditional report cards and parent-teacher conferences. Moreover, parents and students stated that the use of various online and mobile resources has resulted in more efficient ways to monitor and track progress toward graduation and college preparedness than traditional means because they can monitor students’ academic status toward those expectations in real time.

- The school's leadership team and faculty are committed to not only communicating high expectations to students but also to providing the ongoing support that is required for them to meet those expectations and take ownership of their academic work. Parents and students at the middle and high school level reported that school leaders and faculty effectively communicate high expectations to families through the use of social media in addition to traditional means such as newsletters and school-sponsored events. They noted that the expectation of all students to prepare for college and career is embodied in the school motto, “Grow and strive.” Parents and students reported that students are being adequately prepared for the next level, as evidenced by the school's four-year graduation rate of 77 percent in 2015-2016, which was three percent higher than the Borough and four percent higher than the citywide average.

- School leaders and support staff use software to track student progress toward graduation by monitoring course credit accumulation and Regents exam accretion to ensure that all students, including those at-risk of falling behind, receive the support they need to stay or get back on track. The vast majority of students and parents stated that they regularly use the school's online grade reporting system to monitor academic progress. Parents expressed appreciation that they can access information about upcoming school events and college readiness workshops online via the social media applications school leaders and faculty use to communicate with families.
**Additional Finding**

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<th>Quality Indicator:</th>
<th>4.2 Teacher Teams and Leadership Development</th>
<th>Rating:</th>
<th>Well Developed</th>
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**Findings**

The vast majority of teachers are engaged in structured, inquiry-based collaborations that ensure the implementation of the Common Core Learning Standards across grade levels and content areas and build instructional coherence. Teacher teamwork aligns with the school leaders’ goals, promoting professional growth and improvement in student achievement.

**Impact**

The increased instructional capacity resulting from teacher team inquiry, including systemic analysis of teacher work, has strengthened and improved teachers’ pedagogy, positively affecting student learning across grades and content areas and increasing the number of students meeting proficiency on common grade level and New York State (NYS) assessments.

**Supporting Evidence**

- The vast majority of teachers are engaged in frequent inquiry-based professional collaborations using a Professional Learning Community (PLC) structure. PLCs identify a problem of practice and determine next steps to improve pedagogy and make revisions to curricula. The work products generated by the collaborative teacher teams, such as curriculum maps, lesson plans, unit plans, pacing calendars, and student materials, are shared at grade level and department meetings. Support staff and content teachers reported that significant time is allotted for co-planning with the teachers that they co-teach with, making it easier to support the ELLs, students with disabilities, students in need of intensive intervention, and students that can be accelerated. Teachers further reported that grade level meeting time is also used to embed into the curricula common literacy practices across grades and content areas to build coherence. Teachers overwhelmingly agreed that the teacher team collaboration and professional learning time have improved their professional practice as well as student achievement levels, as evidenced by an 18 percent increase in the four-year graduation rate for black males from 53 percent in 2015 to 81 percent in 2017.

- A review of various team agendas and meeting minutes show that teachers use this time to analyze trends in achievement data and work products, informing strategic changes to curricula and instructional practice and determining next steps for targeted intervention for groups of students performing below proficiency. For example, the sixth-grade team analyzed the Degrees of Reading Power (DRP) assessments from incoming sixth-grade students and determined that specific strategies such as using context clues to determine word meaning and vocabulary study cards could be used across classes to improve their reading levels. Similarly, the high school math and science team revised the scope and sequence of their curricula to increase the number of students reaching mastery on the Living Environment and Geometry Regents exams.

- A sixth through eighth-grade vertical inquiry team meets weekly to analyze student work products and assessments. Following these meetings, they make revisions to curricula and identify instructional strategies to improve their teaching of the content and concepts they expect students to be able to master by the end of the unit of study. During an observed meeting, teachers used a LASW protocol to analyze constructed responses from an online program that teachers use weekly to generate common writing assessments (WordGen). Their focus was to determine the strengths and weaknesses of ELLs and students with disabilities in their classes and to identify possible supports that could be used to improve their language development.