



Frequently Asked Questions Schools and School Systems

What is the Expert Review Team?

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) is launching a comprehensive school review process. The purpose of school reviews is to support school systems in assessing the effectiveness of curriculum, instruction, interventions, and behavioral health services designed to improve student learning and overall well-being. Effective practices will be identified and shared. Areas of growth will also be identified, and support will be provided to support improvement.

Recently, Maryland enacted the Blueprint for Maryland's Future legislation. The Blueprint is landmark legislation that is designed to enrich student experiences, accelerate student outcomes, and improve the overall quality of education in Maryland. The implementation of the Blueprint occurs at a time when the federal government released unprecedented funding to school systems to maximize student learning in safe environments as part of the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Fund. The Blueprint and ARP ESSER both require school reviews.

All school reviews will be facilitated by review teams led by Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE). Review teams consist of people with expertise in specific content and behavioral health areas and reflect the geographic, racial, ethnic, and gender diversity of the Maryland public school student population. Review team members participate in extensive, on-going training to ensure review protocols are being implemented as intended. All review protocols are grounded in research-based practices.

FAQS FOR SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL SYSTEMS

1. What will the Expert Review Team do when they come out to our schools?

Six members of the Expert Review Team will come out to the schools to conduct classroom visits, and conduct focus groups. Focus groups will be conducted with school leaders, teachers, students, and parents/caregivers. Interviews with School Leaders will also occur to get a better understanding of the school. At the conclusions of the visit the team will calibrate their findings and will provide the school with a brief synopsis of their findings and recommendations for improvement. The school and system will later receive a report on the findings, recommendations, and resources.

2. How and when will we expect feedback from these reviews?

Delivering feedback to schools begins after the collection of evidence during a site review. The review team meets to calibrate findings and develop a preliminary list of effective practices and areas of growth. This report is submitted to the school, and the school will deliver any factual corrections. The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) will revise the report and will submit a final report to the school. All reports will contain areas of promise, opportunities for growth, and recommendations for improvement.

3. What do I need to do to prepare for an Expert Review Team site review?

Prior to a site review, Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) will contact the school system of the school to be reviewed. MSDE will supply the school system with a document requesting data and logistical information from the school. MSDE will collaborate with the school system to ensure that the Expert Review Team has all of the needed information prior to conducting the site visit.

4. If a staff member from my school system is invited to participate on an Expert Review Team, how will I know?

Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) staff will contact school systems in Maryland to notify them if their employee has been selected for participation on an Expert Review Team. In addition, MSDE will reimburse school systems for the cost of substitute teachers to cover the absence of any Expert Review Team member.

5. Who are the Expert Review Team members?

Each review team consists of the following members:

- Teachers with experience in the grade band, content areas, or type of school being reviewed. Teachers must have experience in improving student outcomes for the identified grade band or content area.
- School leaders or central office staff with experience in the grade band or type of school being reviewed and experience in improving school performance.
- Representatives from organizations with expertise and experience in improving school performance.
- Expert Review Team members reflect the diversity of Maryland public school students and have demonstrated experience in improving student outcomes.

6. How are schools selected for participation in an Expert Review Team site review?

Schools are selected based on requirements established by federal or state law or funding requirements. Superintendents and chief executive officers will be notified in writing of schools selected to participate in the review process at least thirty days prior to the start of school reviews. School system leadership must confirm selection of schools within two weeks of initial notification. School system leadership and Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) will collaboratively select dates to facilitate reviews.