Maryland School Review

Expert Review Team Report

Domain 1: Curriculum and Instruction

Benfield Elementary School

Maryland State Department of Education

Office of Teaching and Learning

March 6-7, 2024

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Overview of Maryland School Site Reviews

PURPOSE

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) is committed to supporting school systems in improving student outcomes. MSDE conducts comprehensive school reviews to identify promising practices and opportunities for growth in curriculum, instruction, interventions, socio-emotional and mental health services, educator support, and school management. School reviews are a collaborative process among local education agencies (LEAs), schools, and MSDE aimed at accelerating student learning, supporting the whole child, and enhancing educator practice.

SCHOOL REVIEW PROCESS AND METHODOLOGY

All school reviews are facilitated by an Expert Review Team (ERT) led by MSDE. ERT members consist of trained teachers, school leaders, and education experts with experience in improving student outcomes. Members participate in extensive training led by MSDE to calibrate the review process to ensure a consistent approach to school reviews. To identify effective practices and opportunities for growth in a school, the ERT analyzes school data, reviews documents submitted by the school, and conducts a one or two-day site visit that includes classroom observations, focus groups, and a principal interview.

The ERT uses a rubric (see Appendix B) to form a consensus rating for each measure based on student data, documents, observations, focus groups, and a principal interview. The rubric consists of three domains:

- **Domain 1: Curriculum and Instruction** - High-quality curriculum, instructional materials, teaching practices, and assessments are implemented to support student learning.

- **Domain 2: Student Support** - Schools use data to identify students and implement a multi-tiered approach to support all student groups.

- **Domain 3: Educator Support** - Educators at all levels are provided with support to improve results and shift instructional practice.

Each domain contains indicators and measures. Indicators specify criteria within the domain that will be reviewed. Measures identify the component that will be rated within the indicator. Each measure can earn one of four ratings:

- **Accomplishing with Continuous Improvement** - evidence reviewed demonstrates that a school fully addressed action(s) while implementing measures and attaining outcomes and demonstrates a commitment to continuous improvement.

- **Accomplishing** - evidence reviewed demonstrates that a school fully addressed action(s) while implementing measures and attaining outcomes.

- **Developing** - a plan and/or process is observed; however, actions towards attaining measures and outcomes have not yet been implemented.

- **Not Evident** – a plan and/or process towards implementing measures or obtaining outcomes was not observed.

In cases where the measure and/or component does not apply, it will be marked as not applicable.

MSDE will collaborate with LEAs for any school that earns a rating of Developing or Not Evident for any measure to develop recommendations, a support plan, and a timeline for the school to make progress toward the Accomplishing or Accomplishing with Continuous Improvement rating.

STRUCTURE OF THIS REPORT

The following report is organized into three different sections.

Executive Summary: In this section, you will find a summary of the school's review. This includes:

- Information about the school, with more detailed information, can be found online in the Maryland School Report Card.

- The summary of findings is a snapshot of the ratings the school received by each domain, with more detailed ratings of each measure embedded in the complete school rubric in Appendix B.

- Overall recommendations for the school to focus their school improvement work.

Findings and Recommendations by Domain: Each domain contains a section that outlines ERT findings, including strengths and areas for growth. For each domain, targeted recommendations are provided with evidence, action steps, and resources to address the recommendation. Resources are currently being reviewed for accessibility.

Appendices: Two appendices expand on information provided in the body of this report. They provide detailed information on the specific methods used by the ERT during the site visit and a deeper dive into the ratings the school received on the School Review Rubric.

Executive Summary

ABOUT BENFIELD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Benfield Elementary School, located in Anne Arundel County, serves a total of 410 students in grades PreK-5th. The enrolled population is made up of 4% Asian, 8% Hispanic, and 84% White. The school's population includes approximately less than 5% of students who receive free or reduced meals and 14% or less of the population includes either students with disabilities or students with 504 plans. More detailed information, including enrollment, attendance, demographics, and student outcome data, can be found in the Maryland School Report Card.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The following table summarizes the school's rating on Domain 1. The school scored its highest rating of Accomplishing with Continuous Improvement in Classroom Instruction and its lowest rating of Developing in Assessment and Timing. A comprehensive list of measures, indicators, and ratings can be found in the full School Review Rubric in Appendix B.

Domain 1: Curriculum and Instruction		
Indicator	**Percentage**	**Rating**
Curriculum and Instructional Materials	72%	Accomplishing
Classroom Instruction	95%	Accomplishing with Continuous Improvement
Assessment and Timing	75%	Accomplishing

OVERALL RECOMMENDATIONS

The following actions are recommended to support improvement in the areas identified as needing improvement through the School Review process. More detailed information about these recommendations, linking them to specific findings in each domain and providing action steps and resources to implement them, can be found in the following sections.

- Provide professional development to support teachers when planning for collaborative groups, to assign specific roles to each group member to ensure that all students are equitably contributing and engaging in the learning process. Consider leveraging the teacher leaders as hosts for professional learning and as models for building collaborative grouping.

Domain 1: Curriculum and Instruction

Curriculum and Instruction	High-quality curriculum, instructional materials, teaching practices, and assessment are implemented to support student learning.

Findings and Recommendations

STRENGTHS

The Local Education Agency (LEA) provided documentation supporting the high-quality curricula aligned with the Maryland College and Career Readiness Standards (MCCRS). The school documentation provided is aligned with the LEA documents provided to MSDE.

This school review highlights the LEA's emphasis on belonging, growing, and succeeding toward becoming world-class learners. This was evident in the learning environment of each classroom during the review.

- In all eleven classrooms reviewed, teacher interactions with students were positive, providing praise for responses and on-task behavior and encouragement to students needing extra support. Student interactions with their peers were positive and respectful with students providing support to each other on assignment directions, listening to viewpoints, and responding respectfully even if their viewpoints differed.

- In seven of the eleven classes, scholars were asked higher-order questions by teachers and classmates. Teachers asked probing questions to assist scholars with answering questions.

- In eight of eleven classes, scholars were asked questions that required probing, inquiring, or hypothesizing. Teachers questioned students in small and whole-group formats. There was clear evidence of support staff asking questions to students one-on-one. Also, in three of those classes, instructional adjustments were made, as needed, based on student responses.

Students were immersed in explicit instruction in language comprehension and word recognition to support the constant focus on building critical thinking.

- All classes reviewed offered instruction focused on critical content such as skills, vocabulary, concepts, and associated assessments. Teachers reinforced the main point of the lesson objectives that were grounded in "I Can" statements. Throughout the lesson, teachers normed by having students revisit the "I Can" statements in literacy and mathematics.

- The evidence in mathematics was visible in each classroom reviewed. In five of the classes, examples of scholars engaging in real-world problems were evidenced by students related a.m. and p.m. times to what they might be doing at 7 a.m. or 3 p.m.

- In two of those five classes, scholars made use of structures to help them identify and evaluate efficient strategies for solving problems. For example, one math class used a counter-building activity in pairs where there was one builder and one writer. They were making use of the tens frame structure to solve a problem.

- The schoolwide focus on building critical thinkers was evident in four of five classes. Teachers used mathematical errors as a learning opportunity.

AREAS FOR GROWTH

The school should increase the focus on collaborative learning structures for students. Providing students with collaborative opportunities develops soft skills for problem-solving, improves understanding as they use "listening to learn strategies", and increases student engagement through opportunities for them to feel valued and value the thinking of their peers.

- During classroom visits, students were assigned to perform a specific role to complete a group task in one of the eleven classes reviewed. However, none of the other classrooms had evidence of students leading the learning.

- None of the classes provided evidence of students being able to communicate short and long-term learning goals connected to the assigned lesson.

- During focus group discussions, one of the eleven parents was enraged about having a child who had not been taught the science of learning sooner. Another parent expressed frustration regarding the mathematics program, as it has moved away from fundamental math facts and principles.

- In six of eleven classes, students could make decisions about what and how they wanted to learn. For example, students were given choice board activities in one of the classes reviewed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are meant to support school leadership in improving in the areas that were identified as needing growth. Each is closely connected to the evidence presented above under "Areas for Growth," and includes specific action steps and resources to support the implementation of these improvements. Domain-specific ratings can be found in Appendix B.

FOCUS AREA 1

Provide professional development for all instructional personnel on designing collaborative groups that include assigning specific roles to each group member to ensure that all students are equitably contributing and engaging in the learning process. Consider leveraging classroom teachers who securely hold this skill and teacher leaders as hosts for professional learning and as models for building collaborative grouping.

ACTION STEPS:

As a result of this school review:

- Provide professional development in designing collaborative learning groups with specific roles.
- Consider leveraging resources to support the focus on building instructional practices using classroom teachers and teacher leaders to serve as models.
- Develop peer learning models that include learning walks for teachers to learn from colleagues within the building who successfully utilize collaborative learning with specific roles for students.

RESOURCES:

1. Learning From Instructional Rounds
2. Leveraging Teacher Leadership

Appendix A

SUMMARY OF EXPERT REVIEW TEAM ACTIVITIES

Expert Review Team Members

1. Zaharah Valentine- Director of Secondary School Support; Baltimore City Public Schools

2. Tisa Holley, Director - Student Services; Prince George's County Public Schools

3. Shawanda Spivey- Talented & Gifted Coordinator; Prince George's County

4. Tara O'Barsky- Supervisor of Family, Community, and School Program; Wicomico County Public Schools

5. Susan Huff- Gifted and Talented Instructional Coach, Cecil County Public Schools

Site Visit Day 1

Wednesday, March 6, 2024

Site Visit Day 2

Thursday, March 7, 2024

Number of Classroom Reviewed

Eleven

Description of Classroom Visited

Wednesday, March 6, 2024	Thursday, March 7, 2024
- Mathematics Grade 2 - Mathematics Grade 5 - Intervention Grade 1 - Literacy Grade 2 - Mathematics Grade K - Literacy G/T - Mathematics Grade 4 - Mathematics Grade 1	- Fundations Grade 1 - Literacy Grade PreK - Reading Grade 4

Number of Interviews

One

- Principal

Number of Focus Groups

Four

- 13 students
- 5 school leaders
- 14 teachers
- 11 parents

Documents Analyzed

- Site visit documentation submitted by the school and LEA.

Appendix B

MARYLAND SCHOOL REVIEW RUBRIC

Ratings for Benfield Elementary School

The Expert Review Team Rubric is used by the review team to form a consensus on a rating for each measure based on all collected evidence. Collected evidence includes documents submitted by the school prior to the on-site review; outcomes of classroom observations; answers to focus group questions from teachers, administrators, students, and parents; and student data. Items checked were reviewed through data documentation or during the on-site school review.