

# Maryland School Review

## Expert Review Team Report

### Booker T. Washington Middle School

Maryland State Department of Education

Office of Teaching and Learning

December 14, 2023



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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 Expert Review Team 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 three 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 BOOKER T. WASHINGTON MIDDLE SCHOOL

Booker T. Washington Middle School, located in Baltimore City, serves a total of 157 students in grades 6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup>. The enrolled population is made up 97% African American students. The school's population includes approximately 87% of students that receive free or reduced meals and 27% 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](#).

Schools identified as Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) Low Performing and/or CSI Not Exiting in the 2022-2023 school year and selected for an ERT visit, received a differentiated visit to avoid duplication of data requests and integrate into the school improvement process in collaboration with the Office of School Improvement and Transformation at MSDE.

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The following table summarizes the school's ratings on each domain. The school scored its highest rating of Accomplishing with Continuous Improvement in Career Growth and its lowest rating of Accomplishing in Opportunities and Access. 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	84%	Accomplishing
Classroom Instruction	73%	Accomplishing
Assessment and Timing	75%	Accomplishing

Domain 2: Student Support		
Indicator	Percentage	Rating
Multi-Tiered Systems of Support	78%	Accomplishing
Community Schools	79%	Accomplishing
Opportunities and Access	71%	Accomplishing

Domain 3: Educator Support		
Indicator	Percentage	Rating
Observation and Feedback	75%	Accomplishing
Professional Learning	72%	Accomplishing
Career Growth	96%	Accomplishing with Continuous Improvement

## 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.

- Implement professional learning opportunities that enable teachers to deliver grade-level writing instruction, incorporating a writing workshop model, explicit success criteria for writing, and genre or content-specific writing strategies.
- Develop and execute strategies aimed at expanding the enrollment of students in advanced courses. Assess and enhance course availability by involving stakeholders and offering teacher training in advanced coursework.
- Implement programs aimed at enhancing students' self-esteem, interpersonal skills, and access to mentorship, particularly focusing on those students with significant behavioral and social-emotional challenges.
- Monitor and share student data about academic and attendance to parents more frequently and through a variety of ways. Engage parents, guardians, and caregivers in informational meetings on how student data is accessed, shared, and used to support student learning throughout the year.

## 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 is aligned with the LEA documents provided to MSDE.

In teacher focus groups, teachers stated that they participate in daily specific and intentional Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) tailored to their challenges and that the school provides additional PLCs based on the individual needs of teachers. Additionally, both the LEA and the school organize bi-monthly academic and social-emotional learning sessions as needed.

- The LEA provided documentation that shows that curriculum materials “meet expectations” according to EdReports. The school provided clear and ongoing checkpoints to regularly monitor math and reading through regularly scheduled formative assessments.
- During teacher focus groups, teachers stated that they participate in daily specific and intentional PLCs that are based on their individual needs and that additional PLCs are available for individual teachers.
- The teacher focus groups revealed the availability of bi-monthly academic and Social Emotional Learning (SEL) content sessions at both the LEA and at the school.

During focus group discussions with parents, teachers, and school leaders, it was stated that the administrative team's efforts to foster a culture shift at the school in promoting academic improvement have resulted in increases in enrollment, improved school functions, and increased students' academic performance.

- During the teacher and school leaders focus groups, it was mentioned that daily discussions regarding student academic data had improved the academic focus and school functions.
- The teacher focus group stated the strategic use of i-Ready Reading and Math assessments throughout the academic year has effectively identified and addressed student academic deficits.
- In the parent focus group, it was stated that a cultural shift initiated by the school leadership team has led to increased student enrollment.



## AREAS FOR GROWTH

During focus groups with teacher and school leaders, it was stated that the use of student data in reading and math, along with ongoing assessments, had addressed students' academic challenges and led to an improvement in students' academic achievement. However, there is still a need to provide additional support for writing and advanced coursework.

- While school leaders and teachers stated that writing tasks conducted at the start of the year are used to assess student needs, teachers mentioned the need for additional support in teaching writing.
- During teacher focus groups, it was stated the importance of offering extra support to new teachers at the school, including both novice and experienced teachers, was underscored to increase overall teacher retention.
- In student focus groups, students suggested the implementation of "honors" and "advanced classes" to continue to support students academically.

## 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

Implement professional learning opportunities that enable teachers to deliver grade-level writing instruction, incorporating a writing workshop model, explicit success criteria for writing, and genre or content-specific writing strategies.

#### ACTION STEPS:

As a result of this school review:

- Determine teachers’ proficiency in teaching writing through the use of a survey and/or observations during writing instruction.
- Tailor professional learning to directly address teachers’ specific gap areas in teaching writing.
- Offer specific resources such as exemplars, lesson plans, and instructional materials to support teachers in addressing their identified gaps.
- Facilitate peer collaboration for teachers to share successful methods and strategies in teaching writing.
- Provide continuous support through follow-up sessions, classroom observations, and feedback to ensure sustained improvement.

#### RESOURCES:

1. [All About Adolescent Literacy](#)
2. [Providing Reading Interventions for Students in Grades 4-9](#)
3. [Writing Next: Effective Strategies to Improve Writing of Adolescents in Middle and High Schools](#)
4. [National Writing Project](#)
5. [Read Write Think](#)

**FOCUS AREA 2**

Develop and execute strategies aimed at expanding the enrollment of students in advanced courses. Assess and enhance course availability by involving stakeholders and offering teacher training in advanced coursework.

**ACTION STEPS:**

As a result of this school review:

- Identify subjects with high demand for middle school advanced coursework.
- Identify teachers certified to teach advanced coursework based on prerequisites.
- Prepare teachers through professional learning for advanced coursework.
- Establish transparent criteria using performance data and teacher recommendations.
- Offer initiatives for students transitioning to more challenging coursework.
- Assess and refine curriculum based on student feedback and academic performance.

**RESOURCES:**

1. [Scamper](#)
2. [Williams Taxonomy](#)
3. [Differentiating up. Strategies to Enhance, Extend, and Enrich Learning](#)

## Domain 2: Student Support

### Student Support

Schools use data to identify students and implement a multi-tiered approach to support all student groups.

## Findings and Recommendations

### STRENGTHS

The school demonstrates a comprehensive approach using data to identify and implement a multi-tiered system to support all student groups. Focus groups indicate the implementation of a continuum of integrated academic, social, emotional, and behavioral support across all tiers (universal, targeted, and intensive).

- School leaders, teachers, and student focus groups indicated that on "Small Group Wednesdays," students can access teachers, tutors, and mentors for additional support.
- The school leader-focused group highlighted the intake system designed to support new students to the school.
- All focus groups indicated that during "advanced blocks" in the afternoons, students have access to teachers, mentors, and/or tutors for additional support tailored to academic, social-emotional learning (SEL), and behavioral concerns.
- Focus groups shared that the School Support Team (SST) meets biweekly to facilitate the matching of students with the appropriate support staff.

The school's after-school program "Advanced Block" provides a system for students to receive support, either recommended by teachers or initiated by the students themselves. During all focus groups, the positive effects of tutoring strategies on student academic achievement were mentioned in improving students' academic outcomes.

- During all focus groups, it was repeatedly stated the positive impact that "Advanced Block" has had on academic, Social Emotional Learning (SEL), and directly addressing behavior concerns.
- In the student and teacher focus groups, it was mentioned that meeting with mentors is available during "Advanced Block" and through "coach classes".

The school has a comprehensive mental health support system in place, which includes a structured plan and skilled personnel dedicated to the student's mental health.

- Students, teachers, and leaders in focus groups stated that there are two specific guidance personnel available for students to consult.
- Teachers and school leader focus groups stated that there are character coaches assigned to each grade level who are based in the "Restorative Room," further bolstering the mental health resources available to students.

## AREAS FOR GROWTH

Although the school offers two dedicated personnel and a "Restorative Room" with grade-level character coaches, there's an ongoing need for added mental health support tailored to specific student needs.

- In the parent focus group, concerns were raised about the need for support in areas such as enhancing self-esteem, building confidence, fostering interpersonal relationships for students, and directly addressing students with severe behavioral challenges.
- Focus groups emphasized the need for a more systematic approach to directly support students, particularly an improved mentoring structure.

## 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

Implement programs aimed at enhancing students' self-esteem, interpersonal skills, and access to mentorship, particularly focusing on those students with significant behavioral and social-emotional challenges.

#### ACTION STEPS:

As a result of this school review:

- Recruit mentors from staff, local community members, or older students and pair mentors and mentees based on compatibility, shared interests, or specific needs. Establish a structured meeting schedule allowing regular interactions between mentors and mentees.
- Partner with a mentoring organization or conduct training sessions to equip mentors with specific skills of active listening, communication techniques, and problem-solving strategies.
- Encourage open communication and feedback from both mentors and mentees to evaluate the program's effectiveness and acknowledge and celebrate achievements and milestones reached by the mentor-mentee pairs.

#### RESOURCES:

1. [MENTOR](#)
2. [National Student Attendance, Engagement, and Success Center](#)

## Domain 3: Educator Support

### Educators Support

Educators at all levels are provided with support to improve results and shift instructional practice.

## Findings and Recommendations

### STRENGTHS

The school leadership team facilitates continuous improvement and instructional practice enhancement for staff members using regular and consistent feedback and professional learning opportunities that are specific and intentional and based on relevant student data. Teachers are provided with structured daily Professional Learning Communities (PLCs), ongoing observation and feedback cycles, job-embedded professional development, and additional time throughout the day for additional lesson planning.

- Teachers and leaders are engaged in a regular cycle of professional development, evidenced by both formal observations that occur twice a year and informal weekly classroom reviews. Additionally, the leadership team is directly involved in department meetings and the encouragement of peer-to-peer reviews.
- During teacher and school leader focus groups, it was stated that staff members have access to daily PLCs which are specifically tailored to be relevant and purposeful.

The Local Education Agency (LEA) provides novice teachers by providing monthly courses specifically designed to support novice teachers. Furthermore, the LEA supports experienced teachers through ongoing training on the career ladder.

- During the teacher focus group, it was stated that there are monthly professional learning opportunities to directly support novice teachers at the LEA. In the teacher focus groups, it was stated that the school leadership team regularly visits classrooms and provides actionable feedback to teachers.
- Experienced teachers stated that they are aware of the career ladder system at the LEA. Teachers are provided with ongoing support and growth through an "Achievement Unit" system that contains 4 steps (Standard, Professional, Model, Lead) that allow teachers to continually improve.
- The LEA provided the "Career Pathways" documentation and the process by which teachers can earn "Achievement Units" as they progress through the career ladder.

## AREAS FOR GROWTH

Additional support is needed for new teachers at school to receive direct support in understanding the "Booker T. Way" of teaching at the school.

- During the parent focus group, it was stated that new teachers to the school, both novice and experienced teachers, need additional support to understand the "Booker T. Way" of teaching at the school.

Although it is evident that data is consistently collected and monitored, there is an uneven understanding of how the data is to be used.

- During the teacher focus group, teachers stated that while there are data systems in place, it is not always clear how data is to be used.
- The parent focus group concluded that several parents were concerned about the lack of consistent and timely communication regarding their child's progress. Furthermore, parents stated that they are not aware of their children's progress until they receive the progress report or report card.
- Parents stated that there is uneven communication from teachers on students' academic progress.



## 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

Monitor and share student data about academics and attendance to parents more frequently and through a variety of modalities. Engage parents, guardians, and caregivers in informational meetings on how student data is accessed, shared, and used to support student learning throughout the year.

#### ACTION STEPS:

As a result of this school review:

- Implement a digital platform for regularly updated academic and attendance data.
- Initiate frequent email, text, and app notifications updating parents on student progress.
- Conduct sessions to teach parents about data access and interpretation, available both online and in person.
- Host workshops to assist parents in navigating the digital platform and data.
- Create accessible guides and video tutorials on the school's website for parent education.
- Establish a teacher outreach program for personalized updates and collect parent feedback to refine communication methods.

#### RESOURCES:

1. [Family Engagement](#)
2. [Sharing Critical Student Data with Parents](#)
3. [Family Engagement Comprehensive Guide](#)

# Appendix A

## SUMMARY OF EXPERT REVIEW TEAM ACTIVITIES

### Expert Review Team Members

1. Beverly Acors, Reading Specialist, Prince George's County Public Schools
2. James Butler, Social Studies Department Chair, Prince George's County Public Schools
3. Donna Drakeford, Academic Acceleration Specialist, Maryland State Department of Education
4. Adriene Marshall, Math Teacher, Prince George's County Public Schools
5. Staci Valbrn, Teacher, Baltimore County Public Schools
6. Dr. Eduardo Sindaco, Academic Acceleration Specialist, Maryland State Department of Education

### Site Visit Day 1

Thursday, December 14, 2023

### Number of Classroom Reviewed

Four

### Description of Classroom Visited

Thursday, November 16, 2023
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• English Language Arts (6<sup>th</sup> Grade)</li> <li>• English Language Arts (7<sup>th</sup> Grade)</li> <li>• Math (8<sup>th</sup> Grade)</li> <li>• Social Studies (8<sup>th</sup> grade)</li> </ul>

### Number of Interviews

One

- Principal

### Number of Focus Groups

Four

- 6 students
- 6 school leaders
- 5 teachers

- 4 parents

#### **Documents Analyzed**

- Site visit documentation submitted by the school and LEA.

## Appendix B

### MARYLAND SCHOOL REVIEW RUBRIC

#### Ratings for Booker T. Washington

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.