

# Maryland School Review

## Expert Review Team Report

### Century High School

Maryland State Department of Education

Office of Teaching and Learning

November 29-30, 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 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 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 CENTURY HIGH SCHOOL

Century High School, located in Carroll County, serves a total of 1120 students in grades 9<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup>. The enrolled population is made up 79% White, 7% Hispanic, 6% Asian, 4% African American, and 3% students of 2+ races. The school's population includes approximately 16% of students that receive free or reduced meals and 11% 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 ratings on each domain. The school scored its highest rating of Accomplishing in Classroom Instruction and its lowest rating of Accomplishing in Curriculum and Instructional Materials. 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	63%	Accomplishing
Classroom Instruction	79%	Accomplishing
Assessment and Timing	75%	Accomplishing

Domain 2: Student Support		
Indicator	Percentage	Rating
Multi-Tiered Systems of Support	71%	Accomplishing
Opportunities and Access	69%	Accomplishing

Domain 3: Educator Support		
Indicator	Percentage	Rating
Observation and Feedback	75%	Accomplishing
Professional Learning	66%	Accomplishing
Career Growth	64%	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 teachers with comprehensive professional learning opportunities on differentiation and student-centered instruction, including training on how to differentiate instruction based on student proficiency levels.
- Provide teachers with professional learning opportunities focusing on collaborative learning best practices and classroom management techniques. Facilitate peer observation, feedback, and coaching to enable teachers to learn from experienced colleagues.
- Develop a comprehensive professional learning series on mental health supports that provides teachers and leaders with tools for addressing post-crisis follow-up, addressing complicated mental health concerns, and making accommodations for students with mental health concerns.
- Develop professional learning on how to use assessment data to differentiate instruction for all students by incorporating systems such as school-based peer-to-peer learning and coaching to ensure shared understanding and support of the strategies.

## 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 submitted is aligned with the LEA documentation.

During classroom reviews, it was evident that teachers provided direct support to students, consistently checked for understanding, and explicitly taught content-specific vocabulary.

- In sixteen out of seventeen classrooms, teachers were providing teacher-directed guided notes and/or direct instruction on content.
- In fifteen out of seventeen classrooms, teachers were consistently circling the room to check for understanding and provide feedback for students. It was also observed that a co-teacher/supporting adult circled the room to provide direct support to students, when applicable.
- Reviewers noted instruction focused on content, skills, vocabulary, and concepts. In sixteen out of seventeen classes, teachers were explicitly teaching concepts and content-specific vocabulary.

In reading and math classes, there is clear evidence of students receiving literacy instruction aligned with current research-based reading strategies and math instruction using evidence-based instructional strategies.

- In four English Language Arts (ELA) classes reviewed, explicit instruction included literary terms, exploring character traits, structured essay composition techniques, and reading comprehension strategies that involved inferring from textual details and prior knowledge.
- In four Math classes reviewed, teachers fostered a positive math mindset and perseverance among students while engaging them in diverse activities like guided notes, station rotations, and varied exercises to explore mathematical concepts.

The school leadership team conducts ongoing professional learning for teachers focused on improving instruction. Assessments are used to adjust the student groupings in the classroom, the pace of instruction, and the content taught.

- During teacher focus groups, it was mentioned that the school leadership team provides ongoing professional learning opportunities that are focused on and improve teacher practice.

- During teacher focus groups, teachers stated that they use a variety of formative strategies to adjust instruction. (e.g. intentional check-in times with students on a calendar, exit tickets, mid-lesson checks, and student-driven reflections on progress).

## AREAS FOR GROWTH

During classroom reviews, it was evident that there is a need for a shift toward additional differentiation and student-driven learning.

- In fourteen out of seventeen classes reviewed, students were not given ownership over the time, place, pace, and path of their learning and were not able to make decisions about what or how they learned.
- In most classrooms reviewed, students completed the same assignments with little evidence of modified resources or text based on individual student needs.

Offer professional learning to teachers on how to create collaborative learning opportunities for students.

- In the majority of classes reviewed, students had minimal peer interaction, primarily engaging in teacher-led or independent work, with most classes showing no peer interaction during reviews.

## 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 teachers with comprehensive professional learning opportunities on differentiation and student-centered instruction, including training on how to differentiate instruction based on student proficiency levels.

#### ACTION STEPS:

As a result of this school review:

- Identify areas for improvement in differentiation and student-centered instruction through surveys or classroom visits.
- Develop professional learning covering:
  - Differentiation Strategies: Variations in time, place, pace, or path.
  - Student-Centered Instruction: Adapting methods to student proficiency levels.
- Conduct professional learning focused on hands-on activities and model lessons showcasing effective differentiation and/or student-centered techniques.
- Provide teachers opportunities to observe peers and provide/receive feedback on differentiation and student-centered instruction.
- Implement regular assessments and feedback mechanisms to evaluate the impact of professional learning.
- Provide ongoing support, follow-up sessions, and access to resources for sustained professional development on differentiation and student-centered learning.

#### RESOURCES:

1. [Divergent Questions](#)
2. [Differentiating up](#)

## FOCUS AREA 2

Provide teachers with professional learning opportunities focusing on collaborative learning best practices and classroom management techniques. Facilitate peer observation, feedback, and coaching to enable teachers to learn from experienced colleagues.

### ACTION STEPS:

As a result of this school review:

- Provide concrete strategies for implementing collaborative learning in the classroom.
- Arrange opportunities for teachers to observe experienced colleagues conducting collaborative learning sessions.
- Establish structured feedback protocols so teachers provide and receive feedback on their teaching practices.
- Provide coaching sessions to guide teachers through the implementation of collaborative learning strategies.
- Provide follow-up professional learning sessions based on evaluation feedback.

### RESOURCES:

1. [Using Collaborative Learning Effectively](#)
2. [Big List of Class Discussion Strategies](#)
3. [Peer Assessments](#)
4. [Making Cooperative Learning Better](#)

## 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 has developed a well-structured plan supported by qualified personnel to proactively approach students' mental well-being.

- All participants in the focus groups indicated that they were aware of the mediation room, mindfulness and "Sources of Strength" program in supporting student's mental health.
- During the principal interview it was stated, "students feel they have at least one adult they can go to, if needed. We always have students go to the counseling department, mindfulness room, meeting with students in a room for crisis support, and a school therapist every week." Additionally, it was stated, "while there are two different programs through Carroll County to support students through hospital inpatient and outpatient programs, there is not enough support provided."

Students in focus groups express appreciation for the different opportunities available for supplemental tutoring and College and Career Pathways. Parent and student focus groups also valued the sense of purpose and career guidance provided.

- All focus groups highlighted the value of supplemental tutoring in supporting students' academic success. During the student focus group, students mentioned that they have direct support from teachers through the "FLEX" and "Knight's Support" supplemental tutoring programs.
- During the principal interview, when asked about recent successes the principal stated, "One of the successes would be that we have several students signed up for AP testing. We have a great school environment. Students are resilient. We have a strong school and a strong community. Our sense of school community shared with the staff is that we support each other".
- During the principal interview the topic of addressing student academic performance concerns was highlighted. It was stated that "teachers look for trends of missing work and analyze and compare information in collaborative planning and department meetings. The Student Services Team (SST) meets every other week. Teachers share the information to see what they can do differently."

The LEA has developed a robust career education program that starts in middle school and receives positive feedback, indicating the LEA's proactive approach in introducing career choices to students and parents.

- Students discussed the various career education information that starts in middle school, receiving ample opportunities and guidance for career choices. Additionally, parents stated that the post-college and career pathways at the school provide students with a sense of purpose.

## AREAS FOR GROWTH

While all focus groups participants indicated that they were aware of the mediation room, mindfulness and “Sources of Strength” program in supporting student’s mental health, focus group participants stated a lack of follow-up for student mental health after an incident occurs. Focus group participants cited counseling and inadequate crisis intervention follow-ups, and not receiving appropriate accommodation for specific needs.

- School leaders in focus groups stated that following up with students after a crisis intervention needs improvement.
- During teacher focus groups, teachers mentioned feeling ill-equipped to manage the complex mental health challenges that students face.
- During the parent focus group, it was stated that there are challenges in getting appropriate accommodations for specific mental health needs.

Additional support and training are needed for teachers and leaders to engage in a cycle of learning that is job-embedded, aligned to research-based practices, and addresses students’ academic and mental health.

- During the principal interview, it was stated that professional development is offered to teachers at the beginning of the school year and on each Monday afternoon and is teacher-driven. However, it was shared that while there is a leadership team in place to provide support, professional development is not structured by the LEA.

## 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

Develop a comprehensive professional learning series on mental health supports that provides teachers and leaders with tools for addressing post-crisis follow-up, addressing complicated mental health concerns, and making accommodations for students with mental health concerns.

#### ACTION STEPS:

As a result of this school review:

- Survey staff to identify specific needs and gaps in mental health support and develop an action plan based on the results.
- Create a structured system for addressing post-crisis follow-up, mental health concerns, and accommodations for students.
- Communicate objectives, schedule sessions, and establish feedback mechanisms for crisis intervention.

#### RESOURCES:

1. [Mental Health in Schools](#)
2. [What Educators Should Know about Mental Health](#)
3. [Safe Spaces](#)

## 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

Teachers are regularly observed and receive actionable feedback from their supervisor to support growth and improve student outcomes.

- During focus group discussions, three out of three staff in the focus groups mentioned that they received informal walkthroughs monthly with teacher-reported useful feedback from administrators. While two out of two teacher focus groups concluded that feedback from supervisors was "usually" actionable and useful.

Teachers and leaders engage in a cycle of learning that is job-embedded, aligned to research-based practices, and grounded in data.

- During teacher focus groups, three out of three staff described most of the professional development (PD) plan as being set by the School Improvement Team and grounded in data from the previous year.
- Three out of ten teachers expressed support for PD initiatives like peer observation bingo as a good way to encourage collaboration while allowing teachers to create a toolkit of research-based teaching practices.

Teachers and leaders participate in ongoing job-embedded professional learning on how to use data to improve student outcomes.

- Educators in focus groups all agreed peer observations provide grounding for organic conversations and encourage peer collaboration; and two out of ten educators in the focus group suggested that teachers have opportunities for peer collaboration via staff meetings, academy meetings, and collaborative planning meetings.
- Additionally, three teachers in the focus group touted the efficacy of their instructional focus on peer observations as a good way to spur organic conversations and encourage peer collaboration.

The school day provides teachers with peer collaboration time.

- During the teacher focus group, teachers agreed they have an 80-minute planning period to engage with data and this also occurs during monthly staff meetings and monthly department meetings.
- A confirming statement made during the principal's interview supported that teachers are provided time daily in our planning rooms and can share "best practices" with other teachers. The

academy and department meetings provide time for teachers to pull data from various sources and share data relating to student outcomes.

On the topic of mentoring, coaching, and support for new teachers, it was clear that teachers are aware there are opportunities provided with job-embedded induction and support.

- Three out of ten teachers in the focus groups identified that non-tenured teachers are formally observed four times per year with monthly informal walkthroughs by administration and occasional visits by county-level content experts; they are also assigned county-level mentors who visit, provide practice observations, and take new staff to tour other buildings and visit other teachers.

A career ladder is implemented to support the growth and advancement of teachers and leaders.

- During the focus group discussion, two teachers explained that the teacher pay scale increases with each additional increase of college credits or continuing professional development (CPD) credits.
- One teacher in the focus group claimed that there are many positions available for staff to earn stipends through leadership roles and this was confirmed by the principal during the interview stating, "We do have a diverse and interactive team. We have growth and advancement opportunities provided by encouraging teachers to complete their "intention" form provided by the county to be considered for positions through central office".

## AREAS FOR GROWTH

Teachers and leaders are regularly observed and receive actionable feedback from their supervisors designed to support professional growth and improve student outcomes.

- During the teacher focus group, three out of three teachers agreed that tenured staff are only observed twice every three years, per state requirements.
- The School Leadership focus group suggested that follow-up on school-provided PD to address social-emotional concerns is an area for improvement.

Teachers and leaders participate in ongoing, job-embedded PD on how to use data to improve student outcomes.

- The school leadership group suggested that the success of PD offerings is measured anecdotally.

Mentoring and coaching for new and non-tenured teachers is inadequate.

- Three out of three teachers in the focus groups mentioned that non-tenured staff are not assigned in-building mentors, only district-level content specialist mentors, which is a change from years past.

Teachers believe that the career ladder is equitably possible; however, it is currently not being fully implemented.

- Two out of two teacher focus groups suggested that there is a career ladder, but there aren't many rungs on the ladder.

- Participants in the school leadership focus group stated, "The Career Ladder will be available July 1st".
- The principal interview offered insight into teacher vacancies stating, "Right now I have six positions filled by long-term subs and a handful of teachers that needed to leave for family reasons or pay for a better opportunity". The principal explained that teachers love working at Century and teachers did not indicate the school environment as a reason for leaving.

## 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 tenured staff with training on conducting peer-to-peer classroom visits to increase the frequency of opportunities to improve instructional practices and build teacher capacity toward becoming teacher-leaders.

#### ACTION STEPS:

As a result of this school review:

- Create structures and systems within the building to encourage teacher-to-teacher learning during the instructional day to promote the use of data to improve instructional practices.
- Partner with local and state universities on building teacher-leaders.
- Create teacher cohort(s) to begin the preparation and development of teachers that will be ready for the county-start-up for Career Ladder.

#### RESOURCES:

1. [Teacher Leader Standards](#)
2. [UMD School Improvement Leadership Certificate](#)

# Appendix A

## SUMMARY OF EXPERT REVIEW TEAM ACTIVITIES

### Expert Review Team Members

1. Dr. James Berry, Retired Administrator, Montgomery County Public Schools
2. Jacob Goldberg, Data Coach, Prince George's County Public Schools
3. Brooke Gardner, Data Coach, Frederick County Public Schools
4. Diana Sung, Dual Enrollment Coordinator, Frederick County Public Schools
5. Howard Franklin, Pupil Personnel Worker, Baltimore County Public Schools
6. Dr. Holly Hatton, Supervisor of Special Education, Wicomico County Public Schools

### Site Visit Day 1

November 29, 2023

### Site Visit Day 2

November 30, 2023

### Number of Classroom Reviewed

Thirteen

### Description of Classroom Visited

November 29, 2023	November 30, 2023
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ESOL</li> <li>• Intervention/SpEd Earth Science</li> <li>• ELA 9/Gifted &amp; Talented</li> <li>• Intervention/SpEd Critical Reading</li> <li>• ESOL Academic Foundation</li> <li>• Intro Physics &amp; Chemistry</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• World History (self-contained)</li> <li>• ELA 10</li> <li>• Algebra 1</li> <li>• Algebra 2</li> <li>• Math</li> <li>• World History</li> <li>• US History</li> </ul>

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### Number of Interviews

One (1)

- Principal

### Number of Focus Groups

Four (4)

- 9 students
- 8 school leaders
- 8 teachers
- 7 parents

### Documents Analyzed

- Site visit documentation submitted by the school and LEA.

## Appendix B

### MARYLAND SCHOOL REVIEW RUBRIC

#### Ratings for Century High 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 observed through data documentation or during the on-site school review.