



Maryland School Review Expert Review Team ELA Report

Abbottston Elementary School

Maryland State Department of Education

Office of Teaching and Learning

September 25-26, 2024

MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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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 or three-day site visit that includes classroom observations, focus groups, and a principal interview.

The Expert Review Team forms a consensus based on student data, documents, observations, focus groups, and a principal interview. The rubric consists of two domains:

- **Domain 1: Instruction and Student Support** - High-quality curriculum, instructional materials, teaching practices, and assessments are implemented to support student learning. Schools use multiple sources of data (qualitative, quantitative, and perceptual) to identify students and implement a multi-tiered approach to support all student groups. Progress monitoring systems are clearly defined and integrated into daily practice.
- **Domain 2: Professional Learning and Educator Support** - Educators at all levels are provided with support to improve results and shift instructional practice. Professional learning goals for educators are clearly aligned with school and LEA overarching student achievement goals.

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, is available online in [the Maryland School Report Card](#).

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 and action steps to address the recommendation.

Appendix: The appendix expands 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.

Executive Summary

ABOUT ABBOTTSTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Abbottston Elementary School, located in Baltimore City, serves a total of 338 students in grades PreK-5. The student population is 12.7% Hispanic, 83.1% African American, 1.2% two or more races, and 2.1% white. The school's population includes 84.3% of economically disadvantaged students, 11.9% multilingual learners, and 16.9% students with disabilities. More detailed information, including enrollment, attendance, demographics, and student outcome data, can be found in the [Maryland School Report Card](#).

OVERALL RECOMMENDATIONS

The following actions are recommended to support 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 subsequent sections.

- Provide professional learning opportunities to teachers that include evidence-based practices aligned with the Science of Reading and writing instruction to ensure each student is optimally positioned to receive the maximum learning from the grade-level curriculum and tiered interventions simultaneously.
- Continue to strengthen efforts around accessibility for students while increasing access to grade-level content and learning about literacy strategies to all stakeholders. This includes the continuation of data monitoring practices that include multiple pathways of sharing information about ongoing data collection and specific actions with all stakeholders.
- Provide job-embedded, professional learning opportunities to build teacher capacity that incorporates peer-to-peer routines during learning activities that will help teachers monitor and collect implementation data on how students include interventions during grade-level learning. This focus should be designed to differentiate instructional practices to align with each student's unique learning abilities and proficiency levels.

Domain 1: Instruction and Student Support

<p>Instruction and Student Support</p>	<p>High-quality curriculum, instructional materials, teaching practices and assessments are implemented to support student learning. Schools use multiple sources of data (qualitative, quantitative, and perceptual) to identify students and implement a multi-tiered approach to support all student groups. Progress monitoring systems are clearly defined and integrated into daily practice.</p>
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FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

STRENGTHS

The school provided significant evidence of intentionality of fostering an inclusive and language-affirming learning environment for students using common language phrasing. This effort has created positive classroom cultures and positive teacher-to-student interactions.

- In all nine classes reviewed, there was evidence of the consistent progress monitoring systems in place, multiple forms of assessing learning, and feedback communicated to students as they were completing learning tasks.
- Application of the Science of Reading (SOR) was observed in all classes where literacy intervention or the core curriculum was delivered. However, evidence of these practices was not observed in small groups occurring outside of structured intervention time.
- In four out of five classrooms visited, formative and summative data was used to develop targeted small groups. For example, data from recent assessments were used to form small groups in kindergarten and intervention groups in grades 3 and 4.
- Three out of three early childhood grades, students engaged in routines for small group lessons. The routines supported the lessons flow seamlessly and learning time was maximized.
- There was evidence of progress monitoring systems in place. For example, there is evidence that students are being assessed regarding their reading levels and these reading levels and areas of growth were used to determine if students require Tier II and Tier III interventions.
- During the school leaders' focus group, leaders shared that bi-weekly progress monitoring of multiple data sets is used to determine the fluid groups.
- During the teacher focus group discussion, members shared information regarding Tier 2 and 3 interventions that were used to support students who need more intensive support. Additionally, they shared that the co-teaching model is supportive of students who have greater needs in the form of push-in and pull-out.
- The principal interview further confirmed the intentionality of the preparation for meeting students' needs. The school's master schedule was designed for the daily structure to include weekly literacy coach training and follow-up with informal class visits, small group instruction, and personalized learning with literacy tutors, and all are aligned with the LEA professional development at the beginning of the school year.

- The school site visit documentation provided "Artifacts 1, 2, and 3: Demonstrate examples of how Amplify assessment data is used at each cycle (BOY, MOY, and EOY) to inform small group instruction interventions based on skill subtests at various grade levels. Data trackers also include progress monitoring cycles that are completed every 3 weeks to monitor student progress. Artifact 4: Example of grade 3's full year of Foundations unit assessments and reteaching plans that were utilized to plan and analyze student progress in alignment with phonics instruction and supported small group instruction demonstrating the school instructional program is in alignment with the district instructional reading program.

AREAS FOR GROWTH

In all classrooms visited, there was evidence of structures in place to support student needs, however, there was limited evidence of students implementing the skills they learned for the purpose of reading and comprehending grade-level content.

- During the seven class visits, less than half of those classes were scheduled during the writing portion of the ELA lesson. Two of the classes provided insight to students engaging in the writing process.
- This number of opportunities for students to engage in grade-level text is low due to the high focus and usage of intervention classes. During an intervention class, grade-level content is not the focus. In fact, the very nature of an intervention is to provide support to students to reach grade-level expectations which can hinder providing students with grade-level content reading.
- In three of the nine classrooms visited, students demonstrated comprehension development to ensure students gain meaning and think critically with a variety of texts.
- While students expressed that they have a variety of choices with online learning software, limited examples were provided on choices in deciding what and how to learn in ELA class. One student provided an example of location choice during buddy reading, but all other examples were examples of choices within online learning software like Amplify.
- Parents/caregivers shared that MCAP assessment data was shared at the beginning of the year; however, formative assessment data is rarely shared with caregivers. They receive daily information regarding student behavior through Class Dojo; however, limited information is provided on academic progress and how the parents can support their child at home with literacy.

There was limited writing instruction in all classrooms visited and teachers shared that there is no program to explicitly teach systematic writing instruction.

- In two of the four intermediate classrooms visited, instructional structures provided opportunities for students to demonstrate written knowledge and/or express written ideas.
- Two out of seven classrooms visited demonstrated intentional opportunities for fluency development for students using repeated and echo reading.

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.

Focus Area 1

Provide professional learning opportunities to teachers that include evidence-based practices aligned with the Science of Reading and writing instruction to ensure each student is optimally positioned to receive the maximum learning from the grade-level curriculum and tiered interventions simultaneously.

ACTION STEPS:

As a result of this school review:

- Revisit the current master schedule for dedicated time for writing instruction and how those times align to each grade-level structured time.
- Conduct a teacher needs assessment on knowledge of Science of Reading and explicit writing instruction. Examine current schedules for time dedicated to writing instruction.
- Develop a peer-to-peer monitoring system that provides teachers with opportunities to share and improve practices for building foundational skills consistent with the Science of Reading and applying those skills toward meeting student outcomes.

Focus Area 2

Continue to strengthen efforts around accessibility for students while increasing access to grade-level content and learning about literacy strategies to all stakeholders. This includes the continuation of data monitoring practices that include multiple pathways of sharing information about ongoing data collection and specific actions with all stakeholders.

ACTION STEPS:

As a result of this school review:

- Leverage the current walkthrough structure to investigate and collect data on the time and attention toward grade-level active reading and tasks.
- Provide continuous ongoing communication with students and families based on formative assessment data at least quarterly throughout the year to ensure all stakeholders are aware of the strategy and purpose.
- Consider convening and forming a literacy committee of parents, teachers, and leaders. Have this committee plan and host literacy-focused learning nights for families. Consider

a parent engagement coordinator or like role. Conduct a family/community needs assessment to align activities/support to best support families' needs.

Domain 2: Professional Learning and Educator Support

Professional Learning and Educator Support

Educators at all levels are provided with support to improve results and shift instructional practice. Professional learning goals for educators are clearly aligned with school and LEA overarching student achievement goals.

FINDING and RECOMMENDATIONS

STRENGTHS

Staff have embraced the model of professional learning communities. There is a collaborative spirit both in the classrooms and in the focus groups. Through the implementation of core curricula, teachers have embraced the Science of Reading and its related curricular materials.

- During the teacher focus group discussion, members shared there are several programs to support ELA learning within the district such as Wit and Wisdom, Frogstreet, Foundations, UFLI, and Just Words. There is training on the resources themselves in the building, as well as district wide. While there has been ample training available in the past, the training has been more limited this year.
- During the school leaders' group discussion, members commented that all teachers receive weekly walkthroughs and feedback regarding their instruction. Additionally, shared this feedback is tied to overall initiatives within the school and possibly a teacher's coaching goals.
- In all classrooms visited, students were actively engaged with adopted curriculum materials and teachers were involved in problem-solving tasks.
- During teacher and leadership focus groups, the consensus was that collaborative planning is a regular part of a teacher's work week. Every teacher is visited by a teacher leader during the week and provides feedback regarding their practice. All teachers are involved in a coaching cycle and have long and short-term goals.

AREAS FOR GROWTH

The school has designed and implemented a consistent structure for conducting informal walkthroughs. While most teachers in the focus group acknowledged the structure, there is still a need to design a more inclusive structure of peer-to-peer job-embedded learning for all teachers and classroom support.

- Three of the six teachers noted that they were eager for more training at this point of the year, teachers did not appear to be 'training fatigued'.
- While the school leaders offered information regarding the informal walkthroughs, the teacher group did not mention the walkthrough structures or walkthrough tools as being a part of their professional development.
- One teacher (who received consensus from the group) noted that they were having trouble understanding the alignment of all the assessments. The teachers' goal is to ensure that

student data is driving instruction and instruction is improving student outcomes, but they questioned the overall alignment of the assessment and instruction.

- The consensus of the six teachers in the group was that district-led professional development (PD) initiatives have fallen during the current year. There was tremendous support in years past for the district for PD, but that is not as prevalent in the current school year.

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.

Focus Area 1

Provide job-embedded, professional learning opportunities to build teacher capacity that incorporates peer-to-peer routines during learning activities that will help teachers monitor and collect implementation data on how students include interventions during grade-level learning. This focus should be designed to differentiate instructional practices to align with each student's unique learning abilities and proficiency levels.

ACTION STEPS:

As a result of this school review:

- Leverage the current walkthrough structures to include peer-to-peer learning opportunities to allow teachers to strategize collectively about how best to improve and increase teacher implementation of grade-level learning.

Appendix A

SUMMARY OF EXPERT REVIEW TEAM ACTIVITIES

Expert Review Team Members

1. Scott Buhrman, Content Specialist, Washington County Public School
2. Ann Hefflin, Elementary School Principal, Montgomery County Public Schools
3. Danielle Ellis, Consultant, N/a
4. Maureen Liakos, Department Chair, Social Studies, Anne Arundel County Public Schools
5. Jill Snell, Manager Educator Development, Baltimore County Public Schools
6. Dr. Contina Quick-McQueen, Supervisor of College and Career Readiness, St. Mary's County Public Schools

Site Visit Day 1

Tuesday, March 20, 2024

Site Visit Day 2

Wednesday, March 21, 2024

Site Visit Day 3

Thursday, March 22, 2024

Number of Classroom Reviewed

Nine

Description of Classrooms Visited

Wednesday, September 25, 2024

- 1st grade (W&W)
- 5th grade (W&W)
- Kindergarten (Int), Lit. Int.
- Kindergarten (Fund)
- 4th (W&W)
- 3rd (Fund)
- Kindergarten (Small Grp), Lit Inv (JustWords)

Number of Interviews

One

- Principal

Number of Focus Groups

Four

- 9 students
- 6 school leaders
- 6 teachers
- 9 parents

Documents Analyzed

- Site visit documentation submitted by the school.