Maryland School Review
Expert Review Team Mathematics Report

Highlandtown Elementary/Middle School

Maryland State Department of Education

Office of Teaching and Learning

October 23rd-24th

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 HIGHLANDTOWN ELEMENTARY/MIDDLE SCHOOL

Highlandtown Elementary / Middle School, located in Baltimore City Public Schools, serves a total of 851 students in grades PK-8. The student population is 7.9% African American, 88.8% Hispanic, 1.6% white. The school's population includes 63.3% of economically disadvantaged, 79.5% multilingual learners, 95% Title I, and 8.6% 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.

- Empower students to take ownership of their learning, encourage peer leadership, and enhance critical thinking skills by increasing collaborative learning structures to foster deeper understanding of complex mathematical ideas, ensure cooperative learning environments for students to collaboratively solve problems, complete rigorous tasks, and to build on each other's knowledge.
- Develop a differentiated professional learning plan to support teachers with increasing their depth of knowledge and internalization of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics Effective Mathematics Teaching Practices to maximize teacher impact with implementation of all the high-quality curriculum and instructional materials provided.
- Enhance school culture to create a more inclusive learning environment for all students and families within the school community- where all staff consistently use curricular materials, evidence-based strategies, and differentiate and scaffold materials to support each students' access to instruction including Tier I, II, and III.

Domain 1: Instruction and Student Support

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.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

STRENGTHS

The school provided evidence of regular instruction reflecting researched-based practices that challenge and supports students.

- In four out of six classes, teachers continually assessed students understanding of concepts and skills with questions, academic tasks, and instructional tools.
- In five out of six classes, teachers used mathematical errors as learning opportunities by analyzing and discussing students' errors and having the entire class identify and fix the errors.
- In all six classes, teachers and support staff assisted students as needed and positioned themselves at eye level when working with the student.
- During student focus groups, nine out of nine students indicated their teachers are supportive and encourage them to learn from mistakes. In addition, they all indicated there is a structure to how instruction is organized that included teacher-led, explicit instruction and peer-to-peer engagement and support.
- During school leader focus groups, six out of six school leaders stated and agreed that the focus is "finding joy in Math" and students should always have manipulatives in their hands and do most of the talking and explaining of work. In addition, leaders agreed that to keep expectations high and keep everything equitable, they assisted with modeling lessons, observe frequently, and ensure that all students have the resources available to be successful.
- During the interview, the principal indicated the school has partnered with Scott Books to focus on growth mindsets for teachers and how to modify instruction for multilingual learners who don't speak English, but can make content connections.

AREAS FOR GROWTH

While there was evidence of regular implementation of instruction using researched based practices to support students' academic growth, there is a need for daily opportunities for students to engage in meaningful math discourse.

- In five out of six classes, teachers facilitated the whole group instruction as the primary opportunity for students to explain their thinking.

- In zero out of six classes, teachers encouraged peer-to-peer discussions in students' native languages. In addition, there were little to no multicultural representations- visuals or artifacts- displayed throughout the building or in classes visited**.**

- One out of six teachers in the focus group stated that they pull the ESOL students for targeted instruction.

- In one out of six classes, the teacher used body language, gestures or expressions to communicate the students' lived experiences, used Google Translate to communicate with the students, and had two students translate directions for classmates.

- During the parent focus groups, six out of six parents agreed they lack access, communication, and information regarding their child's performance in math and how to support them. This was particularly pervasive for parents of multilingual learners. In addition, five out of six parents shared their children struggle with math and they needed support for helping at home. Parents do not know how to do math in the way that students are being taught and would like more opportunities to learn how to support in math.

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:

Empower students to take ownership of their learning, encourage peer leadership, and enhance critical thinking skills by increasing collaborative learning structures to foster deeper understanding of complex mathematical ideas, ensure cooperative learning environments for students to collaboratively solve problems, complete rigorous tasks, and to build on each other s knowledge.

ACTION STEPS:

As a result of this school review:

- Survey teachers and use informal observation data to identify teacher leaders who regularly incorporate collaborative learning structures to engage students and support academic progress. Identified teacher leaders should support the schoolwide implementation of collaborative learning.

- During academic planning, provide planning time for teachers to use the grade level curriculum and instructional materials to design structured collaborative learning requiring students to discuss and explain their reasoning, engage with peers to make meaning of content or deepen understanding, solve complex mathematical problems, reinforce the use of academic vocabulary and language, and lead their learning.

- Establish schoolwide roles and expectations for student collaboration- to include clear roles and expectations- to ensure active participation and contribution. Provide explicit guidance to ensure respectful communication, shared responsibility, and mutual support.

- Establish schoolwide roles and expectations for all teachers and support staff to monitor group interactions, assess student progress, and provide real-time feedback to keep all students engaged in the learning.

Focus Area 2

Enhance school culture to create a more inclusive learning environment for all students and families within the school community where all staff consistently use curricular materials, evidence based strategies, and differentiate and scaffold materials to support each students' access to instruction including Tier I, II, and III.

ACTION STEPS:

As a result of this school review:

- Support staff with ongoing professional learning and collaboration opportunities on sustain a culturally responsive learning environment, including inclusive teaching practices, differentiation and scaffolding, implementation of evidence-based instructional practices, and Universal Design for Learning (UDL).

- Enhance family and community engagement strategies by creating multilingual communication channels (newsletters, websites, etc.), hosting cultural community/family nights, and consider establishing a diverse parent advisory group to ensure diverse voices in school decision making.

- Provide equity-focused professional learning opportunities for staff to use culturally relevant teaching strategies and support multilingual education/learning.

- Support data-driven decision making by providing teachers with time and tools to regularly monitor and use student performance data to drive instructional decisions and address learning gaps. Reflect and adjust intervention strategies and supports to help all students achieve at or above grade level.

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

There was evidence of teachers having consistent opportunities to engage with job-embedded professional learning experience to support professional growth and improve student outcomes.

- During focus groups six out of six school leaders stated and agreed that some teachers are completing their master's degree and others are working to become Nationally Board Certified. Moreover, teachers are encouraged to attend conferences and complete learning walks with math coaches to have fruitful conversations.

- During teacher focus groups, six out of six teachers stated and agreed that teachers are provided with the options to increase their professional knowledge noting, one teacher's promotion to schoolwide math coach. In addition, it was shared that teachers participate in monthly vertical planning, weekly team planning, and traditional backwards planning meetings to effectively lesson plan.

- Site visit documentation included a presentation from a teacher-led professional development session, vertical planning agendas for grades 3-8, and an example of a curriculum deep dive session held for K-2 teachers. In addition, a Highlandtown University guide was included reflecting how veteran teachers support the instructional staff by leading two full days of professional development.

- During the interview, the principal indicated there are lesson planning parties after school, where everyone is welcome to sit down and work side-by-side, elbow-to-elbow with the work. Teachers don't just read others plans they need to do the work, ask questions, and determine how it will look in the different classes.

AREAS FOR GROWTH

While there was evidence of ongoing job-embedded opportunities for teachers to engage in professional development, there is a need for teachers to engage in targeted professional development to maximize the provided curriculum and instructional materials.

- In six out of six classes, developmentally appropriate, standards-based objectives were posted; however, in five out of six classes the objective was not referenced after the lesson began.

- In three out of six classes, teachers consistently communicated high expectations for all students.

- In two out of six classes, teachers used formative assessments to focus on critical content to check for understanding.

- During parent focus groups, six out of six parents agreed that their students are assessed regularly; however, communication regarding the results of the assessments is inconsistent and they are unaware of the best way to support their students as a result of the assessment.

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 2

Develop a differentiated professional learning plan to support teachers with increasing their depth of knowledge and internalization of the National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM) Effective Mathematics Teaching Practices to maximize teacher impact with implementation of all the high quality curriculum and instructional materials provided

ACTION STEPS:

As a result of this school review:

- Survey teachers to determine their current understanding and use of NCTM's Effective Mathematics Teaching Practices, identify 'experts' to support with schoolwide implementation, and determine staff needs to plan differentiated professional learning opportunities.

- Plan and provide professional learning opportunities to provide in-depth knowledge of each mathematics teaching practices.

- Schedule regular opportunities for teachers to conduct peer observations and provide feedback.

- Implement classroom observations with subsequent feedback sessions and use student data to guide and adjust implementation strategies.

- Implement a culture of reflecting on and adjusting of teacher practices to review the impact on student outcomes and refine approaches to maximize schoolwide impact.

- Assemble and distribute a range of resources for each NCTM teaching practice and establish a system for easy access.

Appendix A

SUMMARY OF EXPERT REVIEW TEAM ACTIVITIES

Expert Review Team Members

1. Jill Snell, Manager, Educator Development, Baltimore County Public Schools
2. Stephen Isler, Instructional Specialist, Prince Georges County Public Schools
3. Martha James. Associate Professor, Morgan State University
4. Eric Counts, SPED Compliance, SPED Advocate, Adjunct Professor, Charles County Public Schools
5. D'Nia Walker, Academic Specialist, Anne Arundel County Public Schools
6. Robert A. Murphy, Lead Trainer, Comprehensive Discipline Solutions

Site Visit Day 1

Wednesday, October 23, 2024

Site Visit Day 2

Thursday, October 24, 2024

Site Visit Day 3

N/A

Number of Classroom Reviewed

Six

Description of Classrooms Visited

Wednesday, March 21, 2024
• Kindergarten Math • 1st Grade Math • 2nd Grade Math • 3rd Grade Math • 4th Grade Math • 5th Grade Math

Number of Interviews

One

- Principal

Number of Focus Groups

Four

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

Documents Analyzed

- Site visit documentation submitted by the school.