



# Maryland School Review Expert Review Team ELA Report

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Johnston Square Elementary

Maryland State Department of Education

Office of Teaching and Learning

September 25<sup>th</sup> -26<sup>th</sup>, 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 to 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 and it provides detailed information on the specific methods used by the ERT during the site visit.

# Executive Summary

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## JOHNSTON SQUARE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Johnston Square Elementary School, located in Baltimore City, serves a total of 244 students in grades PreK-5. The student population is 96.7% African American, 2% Hispanic, and 1.2% two or more races. The school's population includes 95% Title I, 92.1% of economically disadvantaged, and 11.9% students with disabilities. More detailed information, including enrollment, attendance, demographics, and student outcome data, can be found in the [Maryland School Report Card](#).

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## 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.

- Enhance teachers' understanding and implementation of the Science of Reading to improve the implementation of the curriculum, the effective use of instructional materials, and to provide daily differentiated instruction to meet the needs of all students.
- Enhance current data analysis practices by developing a differentiated school-wide professional development plan to provide teachers with ongoing, job-embedded professional learning on how to use data to adjust instruction to meet the needs of all students and improve student outcomes.

# Domain 1: Instruction and Student Support

<p><b>Instruction and Student Support</b></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

Teachers provided evidence of consistently providing Tier 1 support to students to ensure access to their grade level content and complex text.

- In five out of eight classes, students engaged with grade-level content and text, teachers utilized the provided curriculum, and students were provided opportunities to engage in discussions around the meaning of the text.
- In four out of eight classes, students received and applied feedback throughout the lesson.
- During focus groups, two out of three teachers stated they provide students with accommodations and modifications to access the curriculum and integrate small group instruction.
- Site visit documentation indicated there is an expectation that all teachers implement high quality curriculum aligned to the district standards. The curriculums include: Foundations & Heggerty in Grades Kindergarten- 2nd Grade, Foundations & Wit and Wisdom- Grade 3, Wit and Wisdom in Grades K-5, and Just Words -Grades 3-5.

### AREAS FOR GROWTH

While teachers consistently supported Tier I students, there is a need to strengthen teachers' ability to provide targeted support and continuous monitoring to support all students- including Tier 2 and Tier 3.

- Lesson adjustments were made in two of eight classrooms during instruction to provide increased interaction, insights, and questions from students.
- In one class, students were engaged in a round-robin reading activity with a text that was two levels below grade level.
- Two out of seven classrooms provided opportunities for targeted student support in small groups or individually.
- In three out of eight classrooms, instructional materials included authentic and diverse perspectives from different cultural backgrounds.

- During focus groups, all teachers stated that the pacing in the curriculum is a relative weakness, and if strictly adhered to many students would be left behind.
- In two out of six classes, instructional aids, such as graphic organizers, were used to help students organize their thoughts and provide text evidence.

**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**

**Enhance current data analysis practices by developing a differentiated school-wide professional development plan to provide teachers with ongoing, job-embedded professional learning on how to use data to adjust instruction to meet the needs of all students and improve student outcomes.**

- Research data protocols to identify and implement one to establish a sustainable data culture and ensure teachers regularly engage in data cycles to reflect and adjust instruction using the available curricula resources, assessment data, and progress monitoring systems.
- Develop a differentiated professional learning plan to prepare teachers to implement the data cycle and assess the progress of implementation.
- Engage in ongoing reflection and adjustment of the professional learning plan to ensure the selected data cycle is effective and meets the schoolwide need.



# 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 to school and LEA overarching student achievement goals.

### FINDING and RECOMMENDATIONS

#### STRENGTHS

The school provided evidence of teachers’ daily use of curriculum and instructional materials that are aligned to the state-standards and address the core components of literacy.

- In seven out of eight classes, teachers implemented the curriculum provided.
- In four out of eight classrooms, teachers explicitly and systematically used the curriculum and provided explicit vocabulary instruction when needed.
- In four out of eight classes, teachers provided differentiated language acquisition strategies for students, including the use of pictures, stories, magazines, and mystery bag items.
- In five out of eight classes, teachers asked questions that invited students into learning and motivated them to explain their learning.

#### Areas of Growth

While teachers used standards-aligned curriculum and instructional materials, there is a need to strengthen teachers’ skills and knowledge of the core components the Science of Reading, to improve implementation of the curriculum and effective use of instructional materials to provide daily differentiated instruction for all students.

- One out of eight classes provided students with corrective feedback that was appropriate and effective for students’ fluency development.
- During focus groups all teachers stated that the pacing in the curriculum is a relative weakness and teachers often modify the pace to meet the individualized needs of students and there is no curriculum assessment data that is utilized to drive instruction.
- No classes provided evidence of the gradual release of responsibility for students to independently demonstrate learning.
- In two out of seven classrooms, targeted student support in small groups or individually was evident.
- In two of eight classrooms, lesson adjustments were made during instruction to provide increased interaction, insights, and questions from students.

- School leaders stated that the district provides systemic professional development whereby all teachers in grade 3 and below must take the Science of Reading courses. However, there is no evidence to support this claim, as teachers were not aware of the Science of Reading professional development.

**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**

**Enhance teachers’ understanding and implementation of the Science of Reading to improve the implementation of the curriculum, the effective use of instructional materials, and to provide daily differentiated instruction to meet the needs of all students.**

**Action Steps:**

- Survey teachers to determine their current understanding and use of the Science of Reading, 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 component of the Science of Reading.
- 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 and adjusting teacher practice with the implementation of the Science of Reading to review the impact on student outcomes and refine approaches to maximize schoolwide impact.
- Assemble and distribute a range of resources for the Science of Reading and establish a system for easy access.

# Appendix A

## SUMMARY OF EXPERT REVIEW TEAM ACTIVITIES

### Expert Review Team Members

1. Daniel Russell, Co-Founder-Bridge the Gap
2. Elaine Gorman, Retired Administrator- Maryland and New York
3. Dr. Joe Sampson, Principal, Calvert County Public Schools
4. Eric Counts, SPED Compliance, SPED Advocate, Adjunct Professor, Charles County Public Schools
5. Dana Peake, Section 504 Coordinator K-12, Washington County Public Schools
6. Dr. Rachel Thompson-Adedeji, Pupil Personnel Services Transition Worker, Prince Georges County Public Schools

### Site Visit Day 1

Wednesday, September 25, 2024

### Site Visit Day 2

Thursday, September 26, 2024

### Site Visit Day 3

N/A

### Number of Classroom Reviewed

Seven

### Description of Classrooms Visited

September 25, 2024
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1<sup>st</sup> Grade</li> <li>• 2<sup>nd</sup> Grade</li> <li>• Kindergarten (2)</li> <li>• 4<sup>th</sup> Grade</li> <li>• 5<sup>th</sup> Grade</li> <li>• 3<sup>rd</sup> Grade</li> <li>• SPED</li> </ul>

### Number of Interviews

One

- Principal

### Number of Focus Groups

Four

- 4 students
- 2 school leaders
- 3 teachers
- 1 parent

**Documents Analyzed**

- Site visit documentation submitted by the school.