



# Maryland School Review Expert Review Team ELA Report

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Park Heights Academy

Maryland State Department of Education

Office of Teaching and Learning

October 9-10, 2024

**MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

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# Overview of Maryland School Site Reviews

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## 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

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## ABOUT PARK HEIGHTS ACADEMY

Park Heights Academy, located in Baltimore City serves a total of 350 students in grades Pk-5. The student population is, 90.3% African American, 4% Hispanic, 2.3% white, 2.3% two or more races. The school's population includes 90.9% of economically disadvantaged, and 17.1% 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.

- Develop a differentiated professional learning plan to support teachers with increasing their depth of knowledge and understanding of the Science of Reading to maximize teacher impact with the implementation of the provided curriculum and high-quality instructional materials (HQIM).
- Develop a school-wide professional learning plan to provide all instructional staff with on-going support and opportunities for professional growth in the effective use of data to include data sources, data protocols, and using data to adjust instruction to meet the needs of all learners' including multilingual learners, students with disabilities, and gifted and advanced learners.

# 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

There was some evidence of teachers using data to improve instructional practices and student outcomes.

- Six out of six students said that they asked teachers, parents, or friends for help when they are having difficulties completing tasks in class.
- Three out of three teachers stated that they have opportunities to meet with their grade level team, vertical subject planning across grade levels, and that they have 90 minutes weekly or biweekly for planning with resource staff.
- During the focus group with leaders, they shared they are working with staff to implement Tier 2 instruction as a result of data review and analysis with teachers during collaborative planning.

### AREAS FOR GROWTH

While it was evident educators use data to plan instruction, practices are inconsistent. There is a need for regular job-embedded professional learning for all staff on how to use data to improve student outcomes.

- In zero out of three intermediate classes, instruction did not include sound-symbol connections, and/or the analysis of words or word parts. The instruction was not explicit and systematic, and students did not have an opportunity to practice decoding or encoding.
- In two out of six classroom observations, instructional materials include authentic and diverse perspectives, lived experience, and cultural backgrounds.
- In six out of six classes, neither targeted small group instruction nor differentiation was evident.
- Teachers in focus groups shared data from Amplify and DIBELS is used to support Tier 2 small group instruction in the classroom but also note more support and professional learning is needed for Tier 2 interventions. In addition, they reported a need for instructional materials to assist with teaching and communicating with their multilingual learners (ML) to support their access to the curriculum.
- During the 23-24 school year, Park Heights Academy became an ML school following and increase in the ML population from 2 to over 20 students. As a result, teachers have requested professional learning on instructional best practices for meeting the needs of the ML learner, to date no PD has occurred.

**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**

**Develop a school wide professional learning plan to provide all instructional staff with on going support and opportunities for professional growth in the effective use of data to include data sources, data protocols, and using data to adjust instruction to meet the needs of all learners’ including multilingual learners, students with disabilities, and gifted and advanced learners.**

**ACTION STEPS:**

As a result of this school review:

- Research data protocols. Identify and implement one that will establish a sustainable data culture and ensure teachers regularly engage in 6–8-week data cycles to reflect and adjust instruction using 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.
- Reflect on and adjust the professional learning plan as needed 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 with school and LEA overarching student achievement goals.

### FINDING and RECOMMENDATIONS

#### STRENGTHS

The school provided evidence of the regular implementation of high-quality curricula that included grade-level and standard-aligned instructional materials that build knowledge for some students.

#### STRENGTHS

- In six out of six classes, teachers utilized district provided curriculums: Wit and Wisdom, Foundations, and Heggerty.
- In three out of three primary classes, teachers taught foundational literacy skills including phonological awareness, phonics, and comprehension.
- In four out of six classes, fluency instruction was evident, including listening to fluent reading by the teacher.
- In four out of six classes students asked and/or answered a combination of text-dependent and higher-order thinking questions throughout the lesson.
- Site visit documentation included 3<sup>rd</sup> grade sample lesson plans focused on foundational literacy skills including- encoding and word structures.
- During the school leader focus group, it was shared school leaders work with staff to implement Tier 2 instruction after engaging in data review and analysis with teachers during collaborative planning.

#### AREAS FOR GROWTH

While there was evidence of regular implementation of high-quality curricula, there is a need for teachers to better support student learning by aligning curriculum implementation with research-based instructional practices aligned to the Science of Reading.

- No classes included sound- symbol connections, and/or the analysis of words or word parts. Instruction was not explicit or systematic and students did not practice decoding or encoding.
- Targeted support was evident in zero out of six classes visited.
- In two out of six classes, the instructional materials included authentic and diverse perspectives, lived experience, and cultural backgrounds.

- Teachers reported that ongoing PD in the Science of Reading (SOR) was limited to new teachers and was only offered at the district level (experienced teachers felt the science of reading PD was repetitive).
- During the teacher focus group, two out of two intermediate teachers said phonological and phonemic awareness instruction is not embedded into the provided curriculum.
- In one out of three primary classes, vocabulary instruction occurred explicitly when needed but also through incidental experiences.

**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**

**Develop a differentiated professional learning plan to support teachers with increasing their depth of knowledge and understanding of the Science of Reading to maximize teacher impact with the implementation of the provided curriculum and high quality instructional materials.**

**ACTION STEPS:**

As a result of this school review:

- Survey teachers to determine their current understanding and use of the Science of Reading, identify ‘experts’ to support 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. Dr. Linda C. Brown, Consultant, Lida Brown & Associates LLC
2. Rebecca Casserly, Kindergarten Teacher, Baltimore County Schools
3. Howard Franklin, Pupil Personnel Worker, Baltimore County Public Schools
4. Dr. Seth Barish, Principal, Baltimore County Public Schools
5. Dr. Contina Quick- McQueen, Supervisor of College and Career Readiness, St. Mary’s County Public Schools
6. Dr. Bruce Riegel, Adjunct Professor-Towson State University, Towson University

### Site Visit Day 1

Wednesday, October 9, 2024

### Site Visit Day 2

Thursday, October 10, 2024

### Site Visit Day 3

N/A

### Number of Classroom Reviewed

Six

### Description of Classrooms Visited

**Wednesday, October 9, 2024**

- Kindergarten ELA
- ELA 1<sup>st</sup>
- ELA 2<sup>nd</sup>
- ELA 3<sup>rd</sup>
- ELA 4<sup>th</sup>
- ELA 5<sup>th</sup>

### Number of Interviews

One

- Principal

### Number of Focus Groups

Four

- 6 students
- 4 school leaders
- 3 teachers
- 3 parents

**Documents Analyzed**

- Site visit documentation submitted by the school.