Maryland School Review
Expert Review Team ELA Report

Riderwood Elementary School

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

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 RIDERWOOD ELEMENTARY

Riderwood Elementary, located in Baltimore County, serves a total of 392 students in grades K-5. The student population is 9.4% Asian, 6.1% African American, 5.6% Hispanic, 4.6% two or more races, and 74.2% white. The school's population includes 3.7% of economically disadvantaged students, 3.2% multilingual learners, and 14.7% 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.

- Increase the instructional focus on specific foundational science of reading (SoR) tenets to ensure K-5 grade-appropriate implementation of phonological/phonemic awareness is incorporated into the planned lessons and support daily instructional practices.

- Provide professional learning opportunities for teachers to create structures that support and increase student-driven learning that incorporates tools, such as success criteria, deepening higher-order thinking skills, and questioning.

- Provide teachers with comprehensive professional learning opportunities on differentiating instruction according to student proficiency levels. Assist teachers with creating more opportunities for students to take ownership of their learning by allowing for more student discourse and more opportunities for students to increase agency and have choices for how they will demonstrate learning.

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 consistent evidence of the school engaging and providing educators in professional learning congruent with the Science of Reading opportunities for teachers and administrators. This supports evidence of a positive literacy environment that is inclusive of a strong literacy connection between home and school.

- In the two early childhood classrooms visited, evidence of clear internalized routines was visible as students were tapping out the syllables when blending spoken words and modeling "rhyming words" to support awareness of spoken language.

- In another example, two classrooms provided evidence of students using vocabulary in their own writing and speaking, through turn and talk, whole group discussion, and partnered learning tasks.

- In several classrooms, evidence of students receiving explicitly taught grammar, punctuation spelling composition for the purpose of cyclical writing and working in individual steps within the writing process.

- In the teacher focus group discussion, teachers shared that they participate in district-provided Teacher Leader Core professional development where they meet with grade-level teachers and receive specific training that relates to the grade level and subject they teach. Further explaining that the district requires teachers to take LETRS courses and most of the staff have taken LETRS 1 and 2.

- During the student focus groups all nine students felt that they had no problems accessing grade-level content. All agreed that they enjoy being in their classrooms and genuinely enjoy their reading and writing instructors.

- All ten of the parents feel that the school promotes a positive and inclusive attitude towards literacy. As the question was asked 3 parents nodded in affirmation. One parent has a daughter who was not able to read at the first-grade level, and now as a third grader she is on grade level, and it was done in a way that did not ostracize her learner. Another parent has a student with special needs who is now able to read at his grade level.

- The principal shared in the interview that he attributes the school's success to the ELA state assessment because of the writing focus. He specifically emphasizes the reading specialist and

special education teachers and the school's daily structure in grades three and five holds breakouts to differentiate writing and reading.

AREAS FOR GROWTH

In all classrooms visited, students worked together in leveled-learning groups using systems such as read-aloud and think-aloud to complete a task or create a product; however, students did not have regular opportunities to engage in ownership of their learning through choice.

- Teacher voice was the primary factor in three of the thirteen classrooms visited, students were given the autonomy of what to learn, or how they will learn. Most of the classes demonstrate that students have little agency in the process of their learning.

- Two of the thirteen classrooms visited provided evidence of engagement with higher-order questions by teachers or students.

- Although instructional materials have diverse representations, there is a lack of intentional connections to lived experiences and cultural backgrounds. Very few personal connections are made to personal or community literacy practices during instruction.

- Out of the thirteen classrooms visited, there was no evidence of structured opportunities for students to discuss or compare newly acquired vocabulary across language variations. This would provide support for students who would benefit from additional language acquisition.

- Out of the thirteen classrooms visited, comprehension development was not visible.

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:

Increase the instructional focus on specific foundational science of reading (SoR) tenets to ensure K-5 grade-appropriate implementation of phonological/phonemic awareness is incorporated into the planned lessons and support daily instructional practices.

ACTION STEPS:

As a result of this school review:

- Develop a professional learning series that focuses on classroom instructors building instructional practices that incorporate high-level questioning techniques (i.e. Bloom's Taxonomy or Webb's Depth of Knowledge) to provide students with questioning strategies to be utilized during peer discourse and writing tasks.
- Leverage the current coaching structures to conduct peer-to-peer learning walks to give feedback on colleagues' lessons and instructional practices. This process will promote and encourage the use of different teaching methods and address teacher collaboration effectiveness.
- Adjust the peer-to-peer learning walk structure to include a monitoring system that provides teachers with opportunities to share and improve practices without an evaluative lens from administrators.

Focus Area 2:

Provide professional learning opportunities for teachers to create structures that support and increase student-driven learning that incorporates tools, such as success criteria, deepening higher-order thinking skills, and questioning.

ACTION STEPS:

As a result of this school review:

- Leverage the current structures to focus on building strategies for preparing students to work collaboratively and actively implement newly learned vocabulary and students' discourse strategies.

- Consider organizing workshops on student-centered pedagogy. Facilitate professional development workshops that focus on student-centered teaching strategies, such as project-based learning, inquiry-based learning, and personalized learning. Partner with district-level facilitators to model these approaches and provide practical tools and resources that teachers can implement in their classrooms and ensure these practices align with district initiatives.

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 that supports ongoing educator support for teacher development that is led by the LEA. This structure includes data-driven learning experiences with actionable feedback.

- In the teacher focus group it was shared by all teachers that they have received professional development aligned with the ideas of science of reading (SoR) to ensure that their instruction is able to be adjusted to ensure that each student is able to maintain high expectations.

- The school site visit documentation provided evidence of continuous school-based professional development for teachers in alignment with the LEA.

- During the principal interview he shared information regarding the PD University structure for incentivizing continuous improvement for ELA with teachers of other content areas, to integrate ELA components into their courses. Additionally, when teachers provide a written reflection, they will earn ten internal points toward personalized professional learning.

AREAS FOR GROWTH

The school has a robust professional learning structure to address instructional practices in many of the program targets. However, there is a need for job-embedded time and structures to support modifying instructional resources that serve some instructional needs.

- During the teacher focus group discussion, some teachers expressed concern with the shift in the English Language Arts curriculum.

- In one of the eleven classrooms, there was evidence of teacher-utilized UDL adjustments to maintain grade-level expectations for learning to not only support student access to grade-level text but accelerate student learning.

- During the principal interview the principal shared that while the school curriculum provided by the LEA addresses diversity, the books require the teacher to identify and adapt them to the standards and integrate them into the curriculum instructional program.

- The documentation provided by the LEA outlining the school's weekly schedule provides limited opportunity for content co-planning or data analysis and the use of formative assessment data to make instructional decisions.

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 teachers with comprehensive professional learning opportunities on differentiating instruction according to student proficiency levels. Assist teachers with creating more opportunities for students to take ownership of their learning by allowing for more student discourse and more opportunities for students to increase agency and have choices for how they will demonstrate learning.

ACTION STEPS:

As a result of this school review:

- Consider implementing feedback, within the existing structure, tailored to the implementation of newly acquired learning focused on the differentiation of student's needs.
- Include how students are empowered with choice and voice with the newly acquired learning from the professional learning. Share the specifics for teacher moves and student moves to support teachers with monitoring their own improvement efforts.
- Survey students to gain understanding on how the structures help them acquire student agency in their own growth.
- Consider extending this approach to paraprofessionals who partner with classroom teachers in the teaching process.

Appendix A

SUMMARY OF EXPERT REVIEW TEAM ACTIVITIES

Expert Review Team Members

1. Katerine Airey, Classroom Teacher, Harford County Public Schools
2. David Bell, Staff Specialist, Baltimore City Public Schools
3. Elaine Gorman, Retired Administrator, Maryland & New York
4. Mallory Wright, Assistant Principal, Baltimore City Public Schools
5. Shawanda Spivey, Home and Hospital Teaching Case Manager, Prince George's County Public Schools
6. Stanimira Ivonava, Assistant Principal, Frederick County Public Schools

Site Visit Day 1

Wednesday, October 9, 2024

Site Visit Day 2

Thursday, October 10, 2024

Number of Classroom Reviewed

Thirteen

Description of Classrooms Visited

Wednesday, October 9, 2024
• 1st grade ELA Phonics
• K ELA Foundational Skills
• 3rd grade ELA Writing (2 classes)
• 3rd grade ELA Phonics
• 5th grade ELA Writing
• 5th grade ELA Reading 3
• Inclusion ELA OGE-Phonics (Primary & Intermediate)
• 3rd grade ELA Reading 3
• 4th grade ELA Reading 2
• 4th grade ELA Reading 3
• 1st grade ELA ULS Phonics

Number of Interviews

One

- Principal

Number of Focus Groups

Four

- 9 students

- 5 school leaders

- 7 teachers

- 10 parents

Documents Analyzed

- Site visit documentation submitted by the school.