Maryland School Review

Expert Review Team Report

Domain 1: Curriculum and Instruction

Johnston Square Elementary School

Maryland State Department of Education

Office of Teaching and Learning

January 24, 2024

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

The Expert Review Team uses a rubric (see Appendix B) to form a consensus rating for each measure based on student data, documents, observations, focus groups, and a principal interview. The rubric consists of three domains:

- **Domain 1: Curriculum and Instruction** - High-quality curriculum, instructional materials, teaching practices, and assessments are implemented to support student learning.

- **Domain 2: Student Support** - Schools use data to identify students and implement a multi-tiered approach to support all student groups.

- **Domain 3: Educator Support** - Educators at all levels are provided with support to improve results and shift instructional practice.

Each domain contains indicators and measures. Indicators specify criteria within the domain that will be reviewed. Measures identify the component that will be rated within the indicator. Each measure can earn one of four ratings:

- **Accomplishing with Continuous Improvement** - evidence reviewed demonstrates that a school fully addressed action(s) while implementing measures and attaining outcomes and demonstrates a commitment to continuous improvement.

- **Accomplishing** - evidence reviewed demonstrates that a school fully addressed action(s) while implementing measures and attaining outcomes.

- **Developing** - a plan and/or process is observed; however, actions towards attaining measures and outcomes have not yet been implemented.

- **Not Evident** – a plan and/or process towards implementing measures or obtaining outcomes was not observed.

In cases where the measure and/or component does not apply, it will be marked as not applicable.

MSDE will collaborate with LEAs for any school that earns a rating of Developing or Not Evident for any measure to develop recommendations, a support plan, and a timeline for the school to make progress toward the Accomplishing or Accomplishing with Continuous Improvement rating.

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, can be found online in the Maryland School Report Card.

- The summary of findings is a snapshot of the ratings the school received by each domain, with more detailed ratings of each measure embedded in the complete school rubric in Appendix B.

- Overall recommendations for the school to focus their school improvement work.

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, action steps, and resources to address the recommendation. Resources are currently being reviewed for accessibility.

Appendices: Two appendices expand 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 and a deeper dive into the ratings the school received on the School Review Rubric.

Executive Summary

ABOUT JOHNSTON SQUARE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Johnston Square Elementary School, located in Baltimore City, serves a total of 262 students in grades Pre-k to 5th. The enrolled population is greater than 95% African American. The school's population includes approximately 92% of students who receive free or reduced meals and 11% or less of the population includes either students with disabilities or students with 504 plans. More detailed information, including enrollment, attendance, demographics, and student outcome data, can be found in the Maryland School Report Card.

Schools identified as Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) Low Performing and/or CSI Not Exiting in the 2022-2023 school year and selected for an ERT visit, received a differentiated visit to avoid duplication of data requests and integrate into the school improvement process in collaboration with the Office of School Improvement and Transformation at MSDE.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The following table summarizes the school's rating on Domain 1. The school scored its highest rating of Accomplishing in Assessment and Timing and its lowest rating of Accomplishing in Classroom Instruction. A comprehensive list of measures, indicators, and ratings can be found in the full School Review Rubric in Appendix B.

Domain 1: Curriculum and Instruction		
Indicator	Percentage	Rating
Curriculum and Instructional Materials	81%	Accomplishing
Classroom Instruction	73%	Accomplishing
Assessment and Timing	83%	Accomplishing

OVERALL RECOMMENDATIONS

The following actions are recommended to support improvement 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 following sections.

- Work collaboratively to strengthen the formal system to review and respond to progress monitoring data. The system should include consistent review of daily, weekly, and monthly assessments used to adjust the pace of instruction.

- Provide instructional staff with professional development for building content lessons that allow students with an opportunity to drive learning and collaborate with peers.

Domain 1: Curriculum and Instruction

Curriculum and Instruction	High-quality curriculum, instructional materials, teaching practices, and assessment are implemented to support student learning.

Findings and Recommendations

STRENGTHS

The Local Education Agency (LEA) provided documentation supporting the high-quality curricula aligned with the Maryland College and Career Readiness Standards (MCCRS). The school documentation is aligned with the LEA documents provided to the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE).

The school climate fosters a culture that all participants emphasized as "loving" the school which is supportive of respectful interactions between students and teachers and conducive for a supportive learning environment.

- During classroom reviews, there was evidence of students being challenged and expected to answer higher-order questions to build critical thinking skills.

- All four classes demonstrated questioning techniques. In one of the classes, higher-order questions were presented to challenge students to think about what "Natural Selection" meant. Students were able to brainstorm the meaning.

- In both the mathematics and science classes, instructors took time to require students to justify their responses when questioned. In one situation, the instructor asked, "How do you solve this problem?" causing students to justify their response.

The school learning environment created conditions for students to engage in explicit instruction and receive timely feedback connected to the learning.

- During the student focus group, a student discussed the learning that is important to him was, "Learning about my history…Black History, people were treated unequally, and I feel better…I need to learn more about myself."

- In three out of four classes, reviewers noted examples of effective feedback during instruction and teachers questioned students through prompts such as thumbs-up.

- In one of the four classes reviewed, the goals for the day were clearly written on the board so students knew the work that was expected. Students were able to share ideas and thoughts as they discussed math problems in teams. Reviewers observed appropriate math conversation happening.

- Students discussed different strategies on how to solve a problem and shared aloud with the class. The teacher quickly reviewed student work as they continued to work on solving the problem. Students displayed a strong sense of math sense and fluency by completing a worksheet in class using several strategies.

The school has structures to support student academic success and personal well-being.

- Student participants in the focus groups explained that they were aware of the "redo policy on work", as it applies to both classroom work and assessments. An example of this was provided on morning work and completing an "exit ticket". "If you get a lower grade, you can redo it, but you can only redo it once." Several students agreed and further added, "If you are absent, you can retake it."

- Parents offered the same sentiment about the "redo" options during their focus group discussion. Examples offered included one parent stating, "My child was tired, and the teacher said when he comes back tomorrow, he can redo the work that he was too tired to do." Another parent said her child was allowed to turn in her homework on Monday so that she could help her.

- During the teacher and school leader focus group, both described how a change in the school schedule impacted student performance. Changing the school start times and limiting the number of times students switch classes lowered the number of disruptions. Additionally, restructuring the formal assessment structure that occurs monthly, weekly, and daily aligned to Maryland Comprehensive Assessment Program (MCAP) assessments, helped students to change their mindset. Teachers also spoke about the great strides the school's improvement plan has gained by addressing attendance issues and the positive impact the plan has made on student performance on MCAP.

- Teachers gave accolades to the people who created the "Green Party" & "Owl of the Month" initiatives. Teachers discussed that the students are vested in the daily 30-minute scrimmages on MCAP standards in the testing grades, which has increased their confidence.

Reading at the early elementary grades to support continuous growth for students' success is strongly emphasized in the school.

- In one PreK- 2 class reviewed, the teacher prompted students to manipulate sounds in words by doing single letter substitution "We're going to change the r to an f, and tap out the letter sounds in unknown words, then blend sounds to make the word." This was evidence of the implementation of instruction grounded in the science of reading.

- Reviewers noted that students heard, said, read, and wrote the sound and spelling patterns. Students identified the letter corresponding to the sound the teacher provided using the "Fundations" letter tiles and marked the short or long vowel sounds on the classroom board. Students mainly chorally shared their responses to teacher questions.

- Students were provided phonics/phonemic awareness instruction, and they participated in related routines such as letter-sound drill, wordplay, and letter-sound substitution.

AREAS FOR GROWTH

Begin the process of releasing the learning to the students. Provide teachers with professional learning on creating structures that promote students owning the learning.

- In all four classes reviewed, there was no evidence of collaborative learning. However, the team noticed several opportunities for collaborative learning to occur.

- Instruction was teacher-driven, and students were seated in rows during the directed conversation opportunities. There was very little evidence of students monitoring their learning.

- Although there were instances where students were directed to hold mini-discussions on an assigned topic using the "think-pair-share" strategy, the majority of the learning time was with students listening to teacher-led discussions.

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. Domain-specific ratings can be found in Appendix B.

FOCUS AREA 1

School leaders and teachers should work collaboratively to strengthen the formal system to review and respond to progress monitoring data. The system should include a consistent review of daily, weekly, and monthly assessments used to adjust the pace of instruction.

ACTION STEPS:

As a result of this school review:

- Provide a data protocol, that includes an anecdotal notetaker. Use the current coaches to review the data and adjust the assessments to align with the improvement plan to ensure meeting and exceeding the goals.

- Develop progress monitoring being conducted by teachers to include students so they know they are completing monthly assessments and moving toward goals.

RESOURCES:

1. How to Foster Student-Centered Collaborative Learning in Modern Classrooms?

FOCUS AREA 2

Provide instructional staff with professional development for building content lessons that allow students an opportunity to drive learning and collaborate with peers.

ACTION STEPS:

As a result of this school review:

- Build teacher capacity to review roles in the classroom so students can take more leadership in the learning. Conduct peer visits on-site and off-site to provide teachers with greater insight into developing a stronger student-driven learning environment.

- Provide professional training to promote student-driven learning strategies.

RESOURCES:

1. Improving Teacher Performance Through Instructional Coaching

Appendix A

SUMMARY OF EXPERT REVIEW TEAM ACTIVITIES

Expert Review Team Members

1. Kendra Gray, Director, Deans for Impact
2. Robert A. Murphy, President, Comprehensive Discipline Solutions
3. Dr. Tisa Holley, Director, Prince George's County Public Schools
4. Dr. Toi Davis, Principal, Prince George's County Public Schools
5. Nicole Cole, Consultant, SchoolWorks
6. Dr. Mark M. Rust, Professor Emeritus, McDaniel College

Site Visit Day 1

Wednesday, January 24, 2024

Number of Classroom Reviewed

Four

Description of Classroom Visited

January 24, 2024
• Grade 1 - Science • K - FUNdations • Grade 3 - Science • Grade 4 - Math

Number of Interviews

One

- Principal

Number of Focus Groups

Four

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

Documents Analyzed

- Site visit documentation submitted by the school and LEA.

Appendix B

MARYLAND SCHOOL REVIEW RUBRIC

Ratings for Johnston Square Elementary School

The Expert Review Team Rubric is used by the review team to form a consensus on a rating for each measure based on all collected evidence. Collected evidence includes documents submitted by the school prior to the on-site review; outcomes of classroom observations; answers to focus group questions from teachers, administrators, students, and parents; and student data. Items checked were reviewed through data documentation or during the on-site school review.