Maryland School Review

Expert Review Team Report

Domain 1: Curriculum and Instruction

Matthew Henson Middle School

Maryland State Department of Education

Office of Teaching and Learning

February 21-22, 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 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 MATTHEW HENSON MIDDLE SCHOOL

Matthew Henson Middle School, located in Charles County, serves a total of 736 students in grades 6th – 8th. The enrolled population is made up of 2% Asian, 66% African American, 13% Hispanic, and 9% White. The school's population includes approximately 33% of students that receive free or reduced meals and 8% 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.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The following table summarizes the school's rating on Domain 1. The school scored its highest rating of Accomplishing in Curriculum and Instructional Materials 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	**84%**	**Accomplishing**
Classroom Instruction	**71%**	**Accomplishing**
Assessment and Timing	**80%**	**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.

- Provide ongoing, job-embedded professional learning that is anchored in the specific curriculum and materials used for instruction, more specifically the science of reading.
- Provide ongoing, job-embedded professional learning for teachers and instructional leaders to implement formative assessment and feedback during live instruction to collect student performance data to inform collaborative planning and coaching processes. This will allow student assessment to drive differentiated instruction and provide richer data to complement extant data-informed structures: iReady and Multi-tiered Systems of Support (MTSS).

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 provided is aligned with the LEA documents provided to MSDE.

The school has built a positive learning environment, which is an area of promise. In all sixteen classrooms, teachers' interactions with students were positive and respectful.

- Teachers created a space that was open to several viewpoints, all students were respected, and positivity was consistently displayed. Likewise, student interactions with their peers and the teachers were positive and respectful, students were engaged and motivated by the lesson and related discussions. Students were respectful of each other as well as their teachers when lessons, activities and discussions were going on.
- In 100% of the classrooms reviewed, teachers consistently reinforced the main point of the lesson.
- In eleven classrooms, instruction was focused on critical content (skills, vocabulary, concepts). Such as, multiplication, names of countries, academic vocabulary, and grammar for Spanish.
- In four of the classrooms, teachers related new learning to prior learning. For example, teachers used video and text to access and develop students' background knowledge. Teachers gradually released responsibility for learning to students. This was especially apparent in three math classes, which followed the “I do, we do, you do” model.
- In three classrooms, teachers guided student practice and provided support and feedback as needed. This was especially evident in two math classes, where students had opportunities to practice their math skills while the teacher monitored and guided their learning.
- In three out of three classrooms, some evidence of vocabulary instruction was evident. For example, vocabulary words were listed on the board or reading guide.
- In one of the three classrooms reviewed, there was evidence of students participating in literary analysis as they analyzed a character while participating in a fishbowl discussion. Also, there was evidence of students receiving differentiated reading instruction as students were given choice to read independently, with a partner, or with the teacher in a small group.
- As students read independently, they annotated an article from Common Literature, received comprehension instruction during the reading lab, participated in guided pre-reading activities, and students had opportunities to practice speaking and listening skills as evidenced in the Honors 8 ELA class "fishbowl" discussion activity.

Students in math classes at the secondary level received mathematics instruction using evidence-based instructional strategies.

- In all five of the classrooms reviewed, there was evidence of quality math instruction. Outcomes on the board were noted in four of those classrooms. Additionally, in all five classrooms, teachers maintained a positive attitude about math and confidence in the students while using specific mathematical terms with precision.

AREAS FOR GROWTH

The school learning environment is conducive to strong academic performance; however, key components of the learning structures are necessary to ensure that students are successful.

- While students are grouped into labs, classroom instruction remains mostly whole group. There was little evidence of differentiated instruction within the classroom delivery. In addition, observers noted a high-quality curriculum in the honors classes (Junior Great Books, Discovery Education, Illustrated Math), but the curriculum materials for other groups did not appear to come from a coherent curriculum. This was reinforced during focus group discussion as students spoke about a need for differentiation using incentives to increase motivation.
- In two of the three classrooms reviewed, students did not participate in independent reading. For example, in the reading lab, students engaged in pre-reading activities (identifying headings, video on background info, KWL). Also, out of the three classes reviewed, there was no evidence of students receiving instruction in syntax/grammatical structures.
- During the teacher focus group with six teachers, none of them mentioned receiving training on the "science of reading" when asked about 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. Domain-specific ratings can be found in Appendix B.

FOCUS AREA 1

Provide ongoing, job-embedded professional learning that is anchored in the specific curriculum and materials used for instruction, more specifically the science of reading. Provide ongoing, job-embedded professional learning for teachers and instructional leaders to implement formative assessment and feedback during live instruction to collect student performance data to inform collaborative planning and coaching processes. This will allow student assessment to drive differentiated instruction and provide richer data to complement extant data-informed structures: iReady and MTSS.

ACTION STEPS:

As a result of this school review:

- Provide ongoing, job-embedded professional learning for teachers and instructional leaders to implement formative assessment and feedback during live instruction to collect student performance data to inform collaborative planning and coaching processes.
- Include professional development on differentiated instruction to provide richer data-informed structures.

RESOURCES:

1. Science of Reading Walkthrough Tool: Literacy-Look-Fors-Walkthrough-Guide.pdf
2. Differentiated Instruction
3. Making Cooperative Learning Work Better

FOCUS AREA 2

While explicit teaching is evident throughout the school, there was limited evidence of collaborative learning and student-led learning. This can begin with increased student collaboration and then student choice in how they are held accountable. Allowing students more agency in their learning at all levels (beyond honors) increases their engagement with the content, and ultimately the standards. Consider leveraging the talent demonstrated in some classrooms to drive this initiative throughout the school.

ACTION STEPS:

As a result of this school review:

- Provide professional development on building collaborative learning structures that include student-driven learning to ensure to encourage student agency.
- Implement peer-to-peer learning structures throughout the school to leverage the current talent demonstrated in some classrooms.

RESOURCES:

1. Learning From Instructional Rounds
2. The Shift to Student-Led

Appendix A

SUMMARY OF EXPERT REVIEW TEAM ACTIVITIES

Expert Review Team Members

1. Duane Arbogast, Educational Consultant
2. Tisa Holley, Director, Student Services, Prince George's County Public Schools
3. Natalie Zinkham, Teacher, Baltimore County Public Schools
4. Miguel Cervantes Del Toro, Principal, Baltimore City Public Schools
5. Rhonda Asplen, Instructional Coordinator, Secondary ELA, Cecil County Public Schools
6. Devorah Danielson, Educational Consultant

Site Visit Day 1

Wednesday, February 21, 2024

Site Visit Day 2

Thursday, February 22, 2024

Number of Classroom Reviewed

Sixteen

Description of Classroom Visited

Wednesday, February 21, 2024	Thursday, February 22, 2024
• Math Lab (6) • ELA Inc. (6) • 6/7 Math Lab 1 • ELA Lab (6) • Math Lab 3 (6) • Social Studies (7) • Science 7 Honors • Science (8)	• Spanish I (7/8) • Social Studies Honors (8) • Algebra I • ELA Honors (8) • Social Studies (6) • Science (8) • Math Accelerated (6) • Gateway to Tech (7)

Number of Interviews

One

- Principal

Number of Focus Groups

Four

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

Documents Analyzed

- Site visit documentation submitted by the school and LEA.

Appendix B

MARYLAND SCHOOL REVIEW RUBRIC

Ratings for Matthew Henson Middle 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.