

Maryland School Review

Expert Review Team Report

Domain 1: Curriculum and Instruction

National Academy Foundation Middle/High 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 NATIONAL ACADEMY FOUNDATION SCHOOL

National Academy Foundation School, located in Baltimore City, serves a total of 810 students in grades 6th-12th. The enrolled population is made up 55% African American, 43% Hispanic and 2% White. The school's population includes approximately 53% of students that receive free or reduced meals and 24% 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 Classroom Instruction and its lowest rating of Developing in Assessment and Timing. 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 | 69% | Accomplishing |
| Classroom Instruction | 71% | Accomplishing |
| Assessment and Timing | 55% | Developing |

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 more teacher professional learning opportunities with a focus on differentiation in the classroom through the lens of English Language Development (ELD) instruction. Align an English Language Learner (ELL) co-teacher and/or paraprofessional in core classes with high numbers of ELL students to support.
- Faculty would benefit from sequenced professional development in student-driven learning, and the school should adopt school-wide practices for collaborative learning.

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 has fostered an environment that is positive and supportive of student learning and engagement, and the learning environment is a commonplace for shared respect.

- The LEA documentation included a plan along with three dates for professional learning for teachers and instructional support staff along with professional development for school leaders five times annually.
- During focus group discussions, teachers and school leaders described ongoing professional development offered at the beginning of the school year by school-based experts and then made available to teams throughout the school year.
- During the principal interview, the discussion around supporting student achievement was highlighted featuring, Achieve3000 intervention, an adaptive curriculum, auto-differentiation of text complexity for reading, and mathematics tutoring with iReady which both are funded through Title I.

Questioning and explicit instruction were evident in all four classrooms reviewed.

- In most classrooms, students were asked to justify and cite evidence. An example of this was when one teacher said, "Why did you choose that picture to match the vocabulary word?" Another example was when students were asked to, "Bow your heads, close your eyes, and vote." After "voting," the teacher asked individual students to explain their reasoning.
- Reviewers noted that teachers frequently ask open-ended questions to support building critical thinking as evidenced by these examples: Why is science important? Why are we calling this cubed? In a science class, teachers asked questions that required probing, inquiring-hypothesizing, or simply hypothesizing: Why do you think we do it this way? Why is science important?

Overall, in all four classrooms, the learning environment was responsive and supportive toward fostering positive growth emotionally during instruction.

- In the science classroom, the teacher responded to students 'nervously' tapping on the desk, by offering them stress balls to use.

- Many teachers used a point system to encourage positive behavior and redirected students who were on cell phones.
- The principal interview offered insight into the intentional focus on ensuring a positive learning environment for students and teachers. The school has collaborative planning, coaching, district PD, and each teacher has five 90-minute planning periods per week and special education teachers have two additional planning periods.

Students received literacy and mathematics instruction aligned with current research-based strategies.

- Reviewers noted during classroom visits, students learned new vocabulary by connecting to other words and images, practiced listening and speaking to others to complete their work, and used prepositions for grammar instruction.
- Specifically in middle school, math content was aligned to grade-level standards, goals and standards-aligned vocabulary were visible in both classrooms, students frequently engaged in purposeful discourse using mathematical language, and students received feedback throughout the entire lesson from the teacher and each other.
- In one of the two mathematics classrooms visited, after the teacher checked for understanding of a math problem, and saw one student had a correct answer, the teacher invited other students to ask that student for help. Students then engaged and provided helpful responses about an assignment and answered each other.
- During focus group discussions, students highlighted specific courses at the school that help with understanding learning in the real world, (i.e., Finance class, which helped with how to manage and save money; Hospitality class, which provides on-the-job training and real-world skills). Students mentioned that these skills help you to be successful later in life.

AREAS FOR GROWTH

Implementing multiple instructional strategies would benefit student learning for all learning needs.

- During focus group discussions, teachers cited that more district-wide training is being offered due to the growing population of Multilingual Learners (MLs), however, only selected staff are accessing this professional development.
- Also, teachers in the focus groups expressed a need for professional development regarding English Language Development (ELD) instruction since the school has had a change in demographics, specific and focused on instructional strategies.
- While in one of the four classes, Google Translate was used to communicate with all students. However, this practice is not in alignment with current researched best practices.
- Reviewers noted that differentiation of instruction was not evident during instruction. In three of the four classes reviewed, student directions were the same and scaffolding was not offered to support student learning.
- While there was evidence of feedback being provided to students, it was often provided to one student and was one-way (teacher to student), and rarely offered to the entire class to elevate understanding for other students who may have benefited from the information.

- Adjustments to instruction, based on student responses, were not evident during the instructional learning time.

Provide a professional development series to all instructional staff to support each learner toward accessing content at the grade level standard and each other in co-teaching models.

- Most classrooms reviewed were not conducive to student-led learning. Students were not asked to present or share their thinking within the context of the content. Classrooms did not engage in small group discussions. There was no opportunity for the students to make decisions about what and how they would engage in the learning nor were they given the opportunity to monitor their learning and develop strategies for how to learn the material.

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 teachers with professional learning opportunities with a focus on differentiation in the classroom through the lens of English Language Development (ELD) instruction. Align an English Language Learner co-teacher and/or paraprofessional in core classes with high numbers of ELL students to support.

ACTION STEPS:

As a result of this school review:

- Provide teachers and instructional support staff with differentiation strategies and specifically, differentiation for multi-language learners.
- Include professional development for using data during instruction for all teachers which involves a monitoring component for self-assessment and goal setting around differentiation in the classroom.

RESOURCES:

1. [Redefine the possibilities for your Multilingual Learners](#)
2. [English Learner & Migrant Education Services](#)

FOCUS AREA 2

Begin a series of professional learning on student-driven learning corresponding with collaborative learning opportunities during instruction.

ACTION STEPS:

As a result of this school review:

- Provide a job-embedded professional learning series on research-based instructional practices and strategies such as project-based learning, history labs, and inquiry-based assignments that allow for collaborative and student-driven learning.

RESOURCES:

1. [Making Space for Students in PLCs](#)
2. [How to Foster Student-Centered Collaborative Learning in Modern Classrooms?](#)
3. [What is Learner-based Agency?](#)

Appendix A

SUMMARY OF EXPERT REVIEW TEAM ACTIVITIES

Expert Review Team Members

1. Angela Stepancic, Professor, George Washington University
2. Natalie Rebetsky, English Teacher, Retired, Frederick County Public Schools
3. Dr. Andrea Thompson, Education Associate for School Leadership, Delaware Office of Education
4. Justin W. Leonard, Classroom Teacher - PLTW & Science, Prince George's County Public Schools
5. Tara O'Barsky, Supervisor of Family, Community & School Programs, Wicomico County Public Schools
6. LaShawn Terrell, Assistant Principal, Prince George's County Public Schools

Site Visit Day 1

January 24, 2024

Number of Classroom Reviewed

Four

Description of Classroom Visited

| |
|---|
| January 24, 2024 |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• English Language Arts (ELA)• Mathematics• Algebra 1• Biology |

Number of Interviews

One

- Principal

Number of Focus Groups

Four

- 7 students
- 7 school leaders

- 8 teachers
- 5 parents

Documents Analyzed

- Site visit documentation submitted by the school and LEA.

Appendix B

MARYLAND SCHOOL REVIEW RUBRIC

Ratings for National Academy Foundation

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.