Maryland School Review

Expert Review Team Report

Pocomoke Elementary School

Domain 1: Curriculum and Instruction

Maryland State Department of Education

Office of Teaching and Learning

March 20-21, 2024

Table of Contents

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 ERT 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 POCOMOKE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Pocomoke Elementary School, located in Worcester County, serves a total of 443 students in grades Pre-K – 3rd. The enrolled population is made up of 42% African American, 39% White, 10% 2+ Races, and 6% Hispanic. The school's population includes approximately 80% 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.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The following table summarizes the school's ratings on each domain. The school scored its highest rating of Accomplishing with Continuous Improvement in Classroom Instruction and its lowest rating of Accomplishing 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	83%	Accomplishing
Classroom Instruction	86%	Accomplishing with Continuous Improvement
Assessment and Timing	79%	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.

- Equip teachers with professional learning opportunities focusing on collaborative learning's best practices, rationale, benefits, tools, implementation strategies, and classroom management techniques. Facilitate peer observation, feedback, and coaching, enabling teachers to learn from experienced colleagues.

- Create a professional learning series centered on higher-order questioning. Integrate different frameworks such as Bloom's Taxonomy, Webb's Depth of Knowledge, Costa's Levels of Questioning, or Paul-Elder's Critical Thinking to assist teachers in fostering higher-order thinking skills for students.

Domain 1: Curriculum and Instruction

Curriculum and Instruction	High-quality curriculum, instructional materials, teaching practices, and assessments 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 MSDE.

The Local Education Agency (LEA) submitted curriculum documents aligned with Maryland College and Career Standards, rated as "strong" by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and "Meets Expectations" by EdReports. The curriculum includes diverse perspectives and meets various learning needs.

The review of the school's curriculum documents, focus group discussions, and classroom reviews show that the school curriculum and instructional materials are aligned with LEA and state standards, incorporate culturally responsive teaching strategies, and include stakeholder input.

- During teacher focus groups, all teachers stated that they utilize a suite of targeted interventions such as "Dibels, Do The Math, I-Ready, and Wilson Reading" to cater to the diverse educational needs of students.

- In parent focus groups, seven out of eight parents reported that the school consistently communicates with them, offering regular updates on student progress, safety notifications, and other relevant events.

- In all focus groups, it was noted that parents receive consistent updates on their child's academic progress and can readily communicate with teachers as needed.

The school has successfully created a learning environment that fosters both academic and social-emotional competencies, with classrooms demonstrating respectful interactions and effective behavior management.

- In fifteen out of seventeen classrooms, the teacher-student interactions were respectful and positive, contributing to a constructive learning environment.

- In all classrooms reviewed, there was clear evidence of positive teacher-student, student-student, and student-teacher interactions.

- Teachers infrequently needed to redirect students, but when they did it was handled discreetly and privately, with minimal impact on instructional time.

- Although the learning environment was generally positive, the implementation of the reward system varied across different classrooms.

AREAS FOR GROWTH

Collaborative learning opportunities, where students work together in small groups to collaboratively solve problems, develop answers to questions, and complete assignments was evident in some classrooms.

- In nine out of seventeen classrooms reviewed, techniques such as 'turn and talk' and 'think-pair-share' facilitated collaborative learning, but in the others, such strategies were not used for problem-solving, answering questions, or completing assignments.

- During classroom reviews, opportunities for students to engage in collaborative work were limited compared to whole group or individual tasks.

- Classroom reviews showed a need for more peer-to-peer learning, as students rarely had chances to discuss and provide feedback on each other's work.

Classroom reviews showed the use of a range of questioning techniques in most classrooms reviewed, however, higher-order questioning techniques were notably lacking.

- During classroom reviews, there was a noted absence of higher-order questions used by teachers to engage students in classrooms.

- In eleven out of seventeen classrooms reviewed, a variety of questions were used to challenge, engage, or stretch students' thinking.

- "Why" questions requiring students to justify their answers was the most employed questioning technique used to deepen understanding.

- There was also evidence of open-ended questions techniques used to encourage students to think creatively and expansively.

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

Equip teachers with professional learning opportunities focusing on collaborative learning's best practices, rationale, benefits, tools, implementation strategies, and classroom management techniques. Facilitate peer observation, feedback, and coaching, enabling teachers to learn from experienced colleagues.

ACTION STEPS:

As a result of this school review:

- Provide concrete strategies for implementing collaborative learning in the classroom.

- Arrange opportunities for teachers to observe experienced colleagues conducting collaborative learning sessions.

- Establish structured feedback protocols so teachers provide and receive feedback on their teaching practices.

- Provide coaching sessions to guide teachers through the implementation of collaborative learning strategies.

- Provide follow-up professional learning sessions based on evaluation feedback.

RESOURCES:

1. Using Collaborative Learning Effectively
2. Big List of Class Discussion Strategies
3. Peer Assessments
4. Making Cooperative Learning Better

FOCUS AREA 2

Create a professional learning series centered on higher-order questioning. Integrate different frameworks such as Bloom's Taxonomy, Webb's Depth of Knowledge, Costa's Levels of Questioning, or Paul-Elder's Critical Thinking to assist teachers in fostering higher-order thinking skills for students.

ACTION STEPS:

As a result of this school review:

- Conduct a needs assessment or survey among teachers to gauge their familiarity and comfort level with higher-ordered questioning techniques.

- Organize targeted workshops or sessions focusing on demonstrating and practicing higher-order questioning techniques, emphasizing probing, inquiry, and hypothesis-building.

- Implement a feedback mechanism for teachers to receive constructive feedback on their application of higher-ordered questioning techniques.

- Encourage teacher peer observation and feedback sessions where teachers can observe and learn from each other's questioning approaches.

- Develop assessment tools or checklists to measure the implementation and effectiveness of higher-order questioning techniques.

RESOURCES:

1. Developing Higher-Order Questions
2. Questioning Strategies
3. Depth of Knowledge Questions (DOK)
4. Blooms Taxonomy of Measurable Verbs
5. Costa's Levels of Questioning
6. Paul-Elder's Critical Thinking

Appendix A

SUMMARY OF EXPERT REVIEW TEAM ACTIVITIES

Expert Review Team Members

1. Dr. Joshua Fine, Principal, Montogomery County Public Schools

2. Abigail Metcalf, Teacher, Baltimore County Public Schools

3. Kelly Cleland, Specialist, Calvert County Public Schools, (Retired)

4. Elizabeth Hazelwood, Tacher, Garrett County Public Schools

5. Susan Huff, GATE Instructional Coach, Cecil County Public Schools

6. Eric Counts, SPED Compliance, Charles County Public Schools

Site Visit Day 1

Wednesday, March 20, 2024

Site Visit Day 2

Thursday, March 21, 2024

Number of Classroom Reviewed

Seventeen

Description of Classroom Visited

Wednesday, March 20, 2024	Thursday, March 21, 2024
- PK 4 - PK 3 - Inclusion 3rd - PE 2nd - EL 3rd - ELA 2nd - K - EL - Math 3rd	- EL 2nd - EL 1st - Writing PK - ELA PK - Math - Music 2nd - Writing PK - Math 2nd

Number of Interviews

One

- Principal

Number of Focus Groups

Five

- 8 students (2 groups)

- 5 school leaders

- 11 teachers

- 8 parents

Documents Analyzed

- Site visit documentation submitted by the school and LEA.

Appendix B

MARYLAND SCHOOL REVIEW RUBRIC

Ratings for Pocomoke 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.