Maryland School Review

Expert Review Team Report

Domain 2: Student Support
Domain 3: Educator Support

Smithsburg Elementary School

Maryland State Department of Education

Office of Teaching and Learning

January 24-25, 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 SMITHSBURG ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Smithsburg Elementary School, located in Washington County, serves a total of 369 students in grades Pre-kindergarten through 5th grade. The enrolled population is made up of 80% White, 8% Hispanic, 6% two or more races, and 4% African American. The school's population includes approximately 42% of students who receive free or reduced meals and 14% 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 Domains 2 and 3. The school scored its highest rating of Accomplishing in Opportunities and Access and Career Growth and its lowest rating of Developing in Observation and Feedback. A comprehensive list of measures, indicators, and ratings can be found in the full School Review Rubric in Appendix B.

Domain 2: Student Support		
Indicator	Percentage	Rating
Multi-Tiered Systems of Support	65%	Accomplishing
Opportunities and Access	75%	Accomplishing

Domain 3: Educator Support		
Indicator	Percentage	Rating
Observation and Feedback	50%	Developing
Professional Learning	69%	Accomplishing
Career Growth	75%	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.

- Establish a comprehensive support system encompassing academic, social-emotional, and behavioral aspects, focusing on thorough data collection on student performance and needs. Develop and implement tiered intervention strategies, ensure staff are adequately trained, allocate appropriate resources, and engage in continuous progress monitoring.

- Develop a comprehensive Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and Mental Health Framework. This initiative should encompass the creation of an inclusive SEL plan and staff training focused on SEL practices and bullying prevention strategies.

- Establish a structured observation framework, providing thorough support and training for teachers and administrators. The observation framework should provide actionable and constructive feedback based on clear evidence, and continuously monitor and evaluate the impact of these practices on teaching effectiveness and student outcomes.

- Create a new professional learning series by evaluating the current plan, forming a school leadership/teacher team, focusing on school climate and behavior management, scheduling diverse activities, linking learning to school improvement goals, customizing development for staff needs, and introducing feedback mechanisms for continuous refinement and effectiveness.

Domain 2: Student Support

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

Findings and Recommendations

STRENGTHS

The school employs a systematic approach to track and enhance student progress while providing opportunities for advanced learning and ensuring that students progress on the expected trajectory toward graduation.

- During school leadership focus groups, school leaders stated that the school utilizes the "Early Warning System" (EWS) to guide instruction and identify high-risk students, with the "Classroom-Focused Improvement Process" (CFIP) time dedicated to data analysis and planning.

- Data from the teacher focus group survey, eight out of nine teachers reported that the school leadership has established systems to monitor student progress toward grade level promotion. These systems include providing teachers with training on disaggregating data and offering professional learning opportunities to support teachers in tracking students' timely progress toward promotion.

- The parent and student focus groups shared that the school offers an Enrichment Curriculum through the Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) program that directly supports students.

- In the student group survey, four out of seven students stated that they felt challenged and supported by their school coursework.

The school successfully provides students with a broad curriculum, fostering engagement and diverse educational opportunities ensuring that measures are in place to ensure students are on track to meeting grade level expectations.

- In the teacher focus group, teachers shared that the "special teachers" deliver varied curricular experiences like chorus and STEM during school hours and provide students with varied curriculum options.

- During the student focus group, students shared that "Encore Clubs" give students a choice in specialized activities, including Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM).

- Students shared that cross-disciplinary strategies connect subjects like English Language Arts, Math, Social Studies, and Science to real-world concepts such as "geology" and "financial literacy".

- Documentation provided by the school shows that the school has developed a system to track students each marking period through the "Early Warning System" (EWS) and that there is an array of courses designed to support academic progress.

AREAS FOR GROWTH

While the school has established an Early Warning System (EWS), feedback from focus groups indicates a need for enhanced resources and consistent implementation strategies for support interventions. Additionally, there is a need for more specialized support for students with disabilities.

- In the teacher and school focus group, it was shared that service hours for students with disabilities are being covered by paraprofessionals and teachers due to the absence of a designated special educator.

- It was also noted by these two focus groups, that central office staff is supporting in this area however, it has not effectively addressed the service and scheduling needs of individual students, leading teachers to manage both tier 2 and tier 3 interventions, with varying levels of success.

- During the parent focus group, it was noted that there is a need for additional resources and aligned support for students in need of tier-one intervention both behaviorally and academically.

Focus group feedback indicates the school's Mental Health Supports are inadequate, with no comprehensive Social Emotional Learning (SEL) plan, leading to more bullying and social exclusion.

- In the teacher focus group, teachers shared that the counselor, while very effective, is unable to address all intense behaviors and needs due to the limited capacity of having just one counselor at the school.

- During the parent focus group, parents shared that the school lacks a school-wide SEL plan to address the specific social-emotional needs of individual students.

- Parents in the focus group expressed concern that the school's peer monitoring system, intended to foster student engagement, inadvertently leads to exclusion and increased bullying due to heightened awareness of which students are the "popular" ones.

- Students reported bullying incidents both in classrooms and around the school, despite the presence of posted rules. Students in the focus groups also echoed what was shared in the parent focus groups, students stated that they are aware of how social hierarchies, including those among athletes and popular groups, contributed to these issues and hindered effective peer collaboration.

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

Establish a comprehensive support system encompassing academic, social-emotional, and behavioral aspects, focusing on thorough data collection on student performance and needs. Develop and implement tiered intervention strategies, ensure staff are adequately trained, allocate appropriate resources, and engage in continuous progress monitoring.

ACTION STEPS:

As a result of this school review:

- Identify the specific academic, social-emotional, and behavioral needs of students through a detailed data collection.

- Create tiered intervention strategies tailored to the varying levels of student needs.

- Equip staff with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively implement the support system.

- Ensure that adequate resources are available to support the implementation of the intervention plans.

- Begin the roll-out of the comprehensive support system, including tiered interventions.

- Regularly monitor the effectiveness of the support system and make data-driven adjustments.

Resources:

1. What is MTSS?
2. Multi-Tiered System of Support
3. A Comprehensive Guide to MTSS

FOCUS AREA 2

Establish a comprehensive Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and Mental Health Framework. This initiative should encompass the creation of an inclusive SEL plan and staff training focused on SEL practices and bullying prevention strategies.

ACTION STEPS:

As a result of this school review:

- Conduct surveys and review existing Social Emotional Learning (SEL) and mental health initiatives to assess current programs.

- Form a committee and incorporate evidence-based strategies to develop an inclusive SEL plan.

- Identify training needs and organize professional development workshops for staff on SEL practices.

- Develop bullying prevention policies and conduct training on recognizing and addressing bullying.

- Review data and feedback to refine and adjust the SEL and mental health framework as necessary.

RESOURCES:

1. Advancing Social-Emotional Learning
2. Leading with Kindness and Empathy
3. Social Emotional Learning Resource Finder

Domain 3: Educator Support

Educators Support	Educators at all levels are provided with support to improve results and shift instructional practice.

Findings and Recommendations

STRENGTHS

The school has effectively incorporated data into ongoing professional development for teachers and leaders to enhance student learning outcomes.

- In the school leadership focus group, it was stated that the leadership team regularly schedules Classroom Focused Improvement Process (CFIP) sessions for collaborative planning, occurring 4-5 times per marking period.

- Teachers use county-created assessments, such as Dynamic Indicator of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) and Kindergarten Readiness Assessment (KRA), to assess and monitor students, with a platform that facilitates the compilation and tiering of data for instructional support.

- The school provided documentation showing that dedicated time is allocated throughout the day for analyzing school data. Additionally, collaborative planning sessions are scheduled for teacher teams to review this data together.

The school incorporates time for peer collaboration into the daily schedule, ensuring that teachers have designated periods to meet and plan with their colleagues.

- In the teacher focus group, it was shared that planning blocks are designated for peer collaboration, enabling shared planning opportunities session among teachers.

- There are four scheduled CFIP sessions during the year aimed to support and foster collaborative planning among teachers in support of student learning.

- During the teacher focus group, it was shared that the lead teacher offers on-the-spot training and professional learning in response to specific teacher requests.

The school has developed a novice teacher support system that provides novice teachers with job-embedded induction and support that ensures that novice teachers can shift their practices and improve student outcomes.

- During the teacher focus group, novice teachers shared that they have access to professional learning both before the start of the school year and throughout the school year.

- Novice teachers shared that they are paired with a mentor for direct classroom support, and they feel that it is a highly valued resource.

- Novice teachers expressed that they appreciated that they have access to and receive feedback from school and county-level supervisors throughout the school year.

AREAS FOR GROWTH

The school is in the process of developing an observation and feedback process that supports the specific needs of teachers. There is also a need for more structured and supportive feedback to better support teacher development.

- In the leadership team focus group, it was shared that the pre-and post-observation process is not effectively prioritized.

- During the teacher focus group, eight out of eight teachers shared that there were multiple instances of missed observations and insufficient pre- and post-conference opportunities.

- Teachers in the focus group shared that observations by the principal are sporadic, brief, and sometimes missed or "drop-in" rather than planned.

- In the school leader focus group, it was stated that there is a need for authentic observations and actionable feedback provided by the school principal.

There is a need to implement a continuous, year-round schedule of school-based professional learning that is aligned specifically addressing school climate and support for correctly addressing student behaviors.

- Focus group feedback revealed differing opinions between teachers and school leaders regarding the areas that require additional professional learning. School leaders emphasized the importance of improving the school climate, whereas teachers felt they required more training in effectively managing student behavior.

- During the teacher focus group, it was shared that school-based professional learning occurs only at the start of the year and is not followed up by additional learning throughout the school year.

- Teachers in the teacher focus group stated that there is an overall lack of professional learning tailored to school-specific needs and a clear cycle for learning.

- In the teacher focus group survey, seven out of nine teachers indicated that the level of support provided to teachers "needs improvement".

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

Establish a structured observation framework, providing thorough support and training for teachers and administrators. The observation framework should provide actionable and constructive feedback based on clear evidence, and continuously monitor and evaluate the impact of these practices on teaching effectiveness and student outcomes.

ACTION STEPS:

As a result of this school review:

- Create a structured and standardized observation framework that aligns with the school's educational objectives.

- Equip observers and teachers with the necessary skills and understanding to participate effectively in the observation and feedback process.

- Implement a regular schedule for classroom observations that minimizes disruptions while maximizing the opportunity for growth.

- Deliver feedback that is constructive, specific, and actionable, with a clear path for professional growth.

- Assess the effectiveness of the observation and feedback process and its impact on teacher performance and student outcomes.

RESOURCES:

1. Danielson Group
2. Marzano Resources
3. Learning Forward

FOCUS AREA 2

Create a new professional learning series by evaluating the current plan, forming a school leadership/teacher team, focusing on school climate and behavior management, scheduling diverse activities, linking learning to school improvement goals, customizing development for staff needs, and introducing feedback mechanisms for continuous refinement and effectiveness.

ACTION STEPS:

As a result of this school review:

- Evaluate the effectiveness of existing professional learning strategies and programs.

- Create a dedicated team comprised of teachers and school leaders to lead and oversee the new professional learning series.

- Prioritize improvement efforts towards enhancing school climate and refining student behavior management techniques.

- Tailor professional learning experiences to cater to the unique needs and preferences of staff members.

- Implement a feedback system to continuously refine and enhance the professional learning plan.

RESOURCES:

1. Inclusive Leadership
2. Evaluating Professional Learning
3. Professional Learning

Appendix A

SUMMARY OF EXPERT REVIEW TEAM ACTIVITIES

Expert Review Team Members

1. Mallory Wright, Assistant Principal, Baltimore City Public Schools

2. Miguel Cervantes, Principal, Baltimore City Public Schools

3. Matalie Gay, Coordinator, Frederick County Public Schools

4. Jessica Zentz-Ridenour, Coordinator, Frederick County Public Schools

5. Sherry Eichinger-Wilson, Coordinator, Cecil County Public Schools

6. Dr. Joshua Fine, Principal, MSDE, Montgomery County Public Schools

Site Visit Day 1

Wednesday, January 24, 2024

Site Visit Day 2

Thursday, January 25, 2024

Number of Classroom Reviewed

Eleven

Description of Classroom Visited

Wednesday, January 24, 2024	Thursday, January 25, 2024
• Math 2nd • ELA SCI (K) • ELA 4th • ELA 5th • Math 3rd • Math 5th	• ELA Pre-K • GATE • Math 2nd • Math 5th • ELA K

Number of Interviews

One

• Principal

Number of Focus Groups

Four

- 8 Students

- 6 School Leaders

- 6 Teachers

- 5 Parents

Documents Analyzed

- Site visit documentation submitted by the school and LEA.

MARYLAND SCHOOL REVIEW RUBRIC

Ratings for Smithsburg 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.