

Maryland School Review

Expert Review Team Report

Domain 1: Curriculum and Instruction

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 80% White, 8% Hispanic, 6% two or more races, and 4% African American. The school's population includes approximately 42% of students that 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 Domain 1. The school scored its highest rating of Accomplishing in Curriculum and Instructional Materials 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	81%	Accomplishing
Classroom Instruction	77%	Accomplishing
Assessment and Timing	67%	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 teachers with comprehensive professional learning opportunities on student-driven learning with topics such as the following. Most classrooms observed showed teacher-led instruction with limited student involvement in leading learning activities. Students lacked opportunities to take ownership of their learning, contribute to discussions, or present content independently.

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 demonstrates commitment and execution in aligning curriculum and instructional materials to standards, integrating culturally responsive strategies, and utilizing research-based approaches to support student learning.

- During focus groups school leaders, teachers, students, and parents shared how the enriched curriculum and the Gifted and Talented Education (GATE) program is connected to the real world.
- The school's curriculum engages students with interdisciplinary strategies, including geology and financial literacy, and is continually vetted for quality, meeting the highest EdReports standards.

In all eleven classrooms reviewed, there was clear evidence of a positive and supportive environment.

- During the classroom reviews, the team observed positive and respectful student interactions, and minimal need for behavior redirection.
- Instances where teachers needed to remind students of expectations, the students met the desired behavior, indicating effective behavior management strategies.

There is clear evidence of teachers effectively implementing explicit instruction.

- In eleven out of eleven classrooms, teachers actively engaged with students, providing feedback, and summarizing previous lessons to connect with new content, emphasizing critical skill development.

AREAS FOR GROWTH

During classroom reviews, it was evident that there is a need for a shift toward student-driven learning. Teacher-led questioning and activities are prevalent throughout most classrooms restricting student participation in inquiry-based learning and reducing students' capacity to fully participate and engage in lessons.

- In three out of eleven classes reviewed, students were not given ownership over the time, place, pace, and path of their learning and were not able to make decisions about what or how they learned.
- In nine out of eleven classrooms reviewed, there is a need for additional student engagement in content, and push for student discussions to allow students to take ownership of their learning.
- In most classrooms, instruction was centered around the teacher, leaving little room for students to exercise choice on their learning.

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 comprehensive professional learning opportunities on student-driven learning. Most classrooms observed showed teacher-led instruction with limited student involvement in leading learning activities. Students lacked opportunities to take ownership of their learning, contribute to discussions, or present content independently.

ACTION STEPS:

As a result of this school review:

- Identify areas for improvement in student-driven instruction through classroom visits.
- Develop professional learning opportunities covering student-driven instruction: Adapting and teaching methods to student proficiency levels.
- Conduct professional learning focused on hands-on activities and model lessons showcasing effective student-driven learning techniques.
- Provide teachers opportunities to observe peers and provide/receive feedback on student-driven learning techniques.
- Implement regular assessments and feedback mechanisms to measure training impact.
- Provide ongoing support, follow-up sessions, and access to resources as needed.

RESOURCES:

1. [Power School](#)
2. [Student Role](#)
3. [What is a learner Agency?](#)
4. [Co-Constructing Success Criteria with Students](#)

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
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Math 2nd • ELA SCI (K) • ELA 4th • ELA 5th • Math 3rd • Math 5th 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ELA Pre-K • GATE • Math 2nd • Math 5th • ELA K

Number of Interviews

One (1)

- Principal

Number of Focus Groups

Eight (4)

- 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.