

Maryland School Review

Expert Review Team Report

Domain 1: Curriculum and Instruction

Watkins Mill High School

Maryland State Department of Education

Office of Teaching and Learning

March 20-21, 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 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 WATKINS MILL HIGH SCHOOL

Watkins Mill High School, located in Montgomery County, serves a total of 1715 students in grades 9th – 12th. The enrolled population is made up of 61% Hispanic, 23% African America, 8 % Asian, 6% White, and 2% 2+ races. The school's population includes approximately 68% of students who receive free or reduced meals and 13% 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 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	84%	Accomplishing
Classroom Instruction	85%	Accomplishing with Continuous Improvement
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 teachers with comprehensive professional learning opportunities on differentiating instruction according to student proficiency levels. This program should be designed to assist teachers in fine-tuning their instruction to align with each student's unique learning abilities and proficiency levels.
- 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 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 MSDE.

The school has established a clear school-wide redo policy and the integration of a data-driven approach to supporting students.

- During the school leadership focus group, it was stated that a school-wide redo policy has been established, supporting continuous student improvement, with leadership setting and reviewing quarterly goals to ensure targeted student support.
- In teacher focus groups, teachers consistently integrate data-driven methods into their daily teaching and routinely use data to guide their instructional decisions.

During the classroom reviews the school's learning environment is a place where students are consistently provided with a nurturing atmosphere conducive to both academic and socio-emotional development.

- In thirteen out of thirteen classrooms reviewed, teacher-student interactions were positive and respectful, maintaining a standard of respect and positivity within classes.
- Positive classroom interaction between students was consistently present across all thirteen reviewed classrooms.

AREAS FOR GROWTH

Although differentiation was evident in most classrooms, an area of prioritization, based on classroom reviews, is personalized accommodation for individual students.

- During classroom reviews, differentiation was present in nine out of thirteen classrooms.
- During classroom reviews there was limited evidence of accommodations or modifications tailored to the individualized needs of specific students.

While there are instances of effective probing and inquiry as higher-ordered questioning was present in seven out of thirteen classrooms, there is a need for a more systematic approach to deepen students' critical thinking skills across all classrooms.

- There is evidence of inconsistent teacher practice in using questions that engage students in probing, inquiring, and hypothesizing.
- In six out of thirteen classroom reviews, questions did not require students to justify their answers, provide evidence, or elaborate on their thinking.

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 differentiating instruction according to student proficiency levels. This program should be designed to assist teachers in fine-tuning their instruction to align with each student's unique learning abilities and proficiency levels.

ACTION STEPS:

As a result of this school review:

- Survey teachers to determine their current understanding and use of differentiation strategies.
- Offer workshops that progress from differentiation fundamentals to advanced applications, including hands-on practice.
- Assemble and distribute a range of differentiation resources and establish a system for easy access.
- Schedule regular opportunities for teachers to observe each other's classrooms and collaborate on differentiation techniques.
- Implement classroom observations with subsequent feedback sessions and use student data to guide and adjust instructional strategies.
- Regularly review the impact of differentiation on student outcomes and refine approaches based on teacher input and student performance.

RESOURCES:

1. [Differentiating up. Strategies to Enhance, Extend and Enrich Learning](#)
2. [Divergent Questioning](#)

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. Stephanie Ware, Principal, Frederick County Public Schools
2. Laila Watkins, Teacher, Frederick County Public Schools
3. Laurie Jenkins, Supervisor, Montgomery County (Retired)
4. Roman Ganoë, Teacher, Washington County Public Schools
5. Natalie Rebetsky, Teacher, Frederick County Public Schools (Retired)
6. ShoShauna McCoy-Hill, Assistant Principal, Prince George's County Public Schools

Site Visit Day 1

Wednesday, March 20, 2024

Site Visit Day 2

Thursday, March 21, 2024

Number of Classroom Reviewed

Thirteen

Description of Classroom Visited

Wednesday, March 20, 2024	Thursday, March 21, 2024
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ENG Lit • Found TECH • Honors Health • International Baccalaureate (IB) Statistics • Ceramic Sculpture • ENG 9B • Astronomy • Honors Health • Honors Modern World 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IB Biology • IB English 9 • ALG 2B • SPAN 1B

Number of Interviews

One

- Principal

Number of Focus Groups

Four

- 14 students
- 8 school leaders
- 12 teachers
- 10 parents

Documents Analyzed

- Site visit documentation submitted by the school and LEA.

Appendix B

MARYLAND SCHOOL REVIEW RUBRIC

Ratings for Watkins Mill High 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.