Maryland School Review

Expert Review Team Report

Domain 1: Curriculum and Instructional Materials

Westminster High School

Maryland State Department of Education

Office of Teaching and Learning

February 21-22, 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 WESTMINSTER HIGH SCHOOL

Westminster High School, located in Carroll County, serves a total of 1517 students in grades 9th-12th. The enrolled population is made up of 77% White, 8% Hispanic, 6% African American, and 4% 2+ races. The school's population includes approximately 24% of students that 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 rating on Domain 1. The school scored its highest rating of Accomplishing with Continuous Improvement in Assessment and Timing and its lowest rating of Accomplishing in Curriculum and Instructional Materials. 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	75%	Accomplishing
Assessment and Timing	85%	Accomplishing with Continuous Improvement

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.

- 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.

In twelve out of twelve classroom visits, there was direct evidence of a positive, and respectful learning environment, with student behavior exemplifying strong social-emotional skills and no need for behavioral interventions.

- In twelve out of twelve classrooms, all interactions between teachers and students are positive and respectful. Peer to Peer interactions were positive, supportive, and respectful.

- There were no off-task or negative behaviors. The need for interventions were not needed to achieve behavioral standards.

During classroom reviews, it was evident that feedback was consistently observed in eleven out of twelve classes, with students receiving timely, specific, and structured guidance to enhance their learning.

- Positive affirmations such as "great job", "fantastic job", and "nice job" were frequently given throughout the lessons in eleven out of twelve classrooms.

- Actionable feedback from teachers regarding students' current progress and next steps was communicated, covering topics such as the slope of a line, the French and Indian War, solving equations, the location of organs, and transversal lines.

AREAS FOR GROWTH

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

- During six out of the twelve classrooms reviewed, classroom visits revealed that questions required students to engage in probing, inquiring, or hypothesizing, with questions such as "What stood out and why?" and "Where is the small intestine located about the stomach?"

- Students were asked to justify their responses in three out of twelve classrooms.

- During classroom reviews, there was a lack of sufficient opportunities for students to answer questions that demanded justification or critical 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

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. Robert Limpert, Director, Harford Community College
2. Tanya Montgomery, Principal, Department of Juvenile Services
3. Laila Watkins, Teacher, Frederick County Public Schools
4. Scott Buhrman, Specialist, Washington County Public Schools
5. Scott Ruel, Director, Howard County Public Schools
6. Seth Barish, Principal, Baltimore County Public Schools

Site Visit Day 1

Wednesday, February 21, 2024

Site Visit Day 2

Thursday, February 22, 2024

Number of Classroom Reviewed

Fourteen

Description of Classroom Visited

Wednesday, February 21, 2024	Thursday, February 22, 2024
- Int Math - Academic Math - Advisory - English - AP Spanish - Int Reading - World History - AP ENG	- ESOL - Honors - Advisory Flex - SPED - Honors - SPED Math

Number of Interviews

One

Number of Focus Groups

Eight

- 10 Students (2 groups)
- 14 School leaders (2 groups)
- 13 Teachers (2 groups)
- 10 Parents (2 groups)

Documents Analyzed

- Site visit documentation submitted by the school and LEA.

Appendix B

MARYLAND SCHOOL REVIEW RUBRIC

Ratings for Westminster 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.