Maryland School Review

Expert Review Team Report

Winston Churchill High School

Maryland State Department of Education

Office of Teaching and Learning

January 10 – 11, 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 the 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 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 WINSTON CHURCHILL HIGH SCHOOL

Winston Churchill High School, located in Montgomery County, serves a total of 2,212 students in grades 9th – 12th. The enrolled population is made up 31% Asian, 10% African American, 8% Hispanic, and 45% White. The school's population includes approximately 7% of students that receive free or reduced meals and 24% 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 Curriculum and Instructional Materials and its lowest rating of Accomplishing in Multi-Tiered Systems of Support. 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	89%	Accomplishing with Continuous Improvement
Classroom Instruction	86%	Accomplishing with Continuous Improvement
Assessment and Timing	75%	Accomplishing

Domain 2: Student Support		
Indicator	Percentage	Rating
Multi-Tiered Systems of Support	64%	Accomplishing
Opportunities and Access	78%	Accomplishing

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

- Implement opportunities for student-driven learning in classroom instruction. Encourage teachers to turn over the learning responsibility to their students via student presentations and student-led group discussions. The usage of choice boards and receiving student feedback on the most effective means of assessment could be explored and considered. Assist students in developing habits of monitoring their own learning.

- Implement a Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) plan for students reading below grade level. Execute the MTSS with fidelity while progress monitoring student growth toward their goals. Students should be screened to determine if they are reading at or above grade level. If a student is not reading at or above grade level, the student should be provided a reading intervention. These interventions can happen at all levels of instruction (Tier 1, 2, and 3)

- Develop professional learning structures within the current Plan, Do, Study, Act (PDSA) cycles, to support professionals with strategies for helping students reading below grade level. This system should include diagnostics for identifying the specific need creating the learning gap and a regular progressive monitoring system to ensure individual students are progressing toward identified goals.

- Implement clear communication between students and families from the school. Identify the time frame from submission of student work to posting of student grades and a primary location for all school communications and explain course titles, content and entrance criteria (i.e., College Prep Lit 1, Honors English 9 (supported), English Resource (intervention)).

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 LEA's website emphasizes the commitment to prepare all students for success in college, career, and community through the use of robust courses in all content areas and career opportunities, ensuring student outcomes are equitably supported. The school's Professional Learning Communities (PLC) are used to ensure teaching and learning are connected to the LEA and the school's improvement plan.

- During the site visit, in the sixteen classes reviewed, evidence of the LEA curriculum was visible and during focus group discussions stakeholders explicitly included evidence statements connected to curriculum components and training.

- During focus group discussions, teachers and administrators identified PLCs as an opportunity to identify areas of professional growth sought and receive ongoing professional learning around identified areas. Specifically, teachers noted that they were presented with various pathways (identified by Montgomery County Public Schools - MCPS) and each PLC was able to choose the pathway that best meets their goals. However, teachers are looking for more PD on instructional strategies that include using technology in the classroom and information on the use of artificial intelligence (AI).

- PLC time is dedicated to delving deeper into specific topics associated with the selected curriculum pathway. Individualized feedback is provided by the department chair and/or administrator twice a quarter regarding progress made on the identified curriculum learning focus which includes peer observations.

- PLCs meet weekly to analyze student learning and identify best practices to support student growth. Teachers are supported in their learning by both their department chair and the staff development teacher. Additionally, school-based administration supports department chairs in planning and implementing learning, often joining in on PLCS.

There is a common schoolwide approach to differentiated instruction that is evident in the majority of classroom learning environments.

- During classroom reviews, there was noticeable evidence of students using graphic organizers to assist with organizing their thinking and plan responses.

- In the majority of the classes reviewed, student groups were supported with interactive scaffolds as the teacher circulated within the class and each group offered suggestions to extend learning and address misconceptions.

- After explicit instruction, students were often broken into groups for collaborative learning or allowed to work on their own. These approaches supported student learning by providing necessary information and skills to students while also allowing them to work with new knowledge and practice skills.

Teachers employed several instructional strategies designed to support students in learning and retaining content-specific information.

- In twelve of the seventeen classrooms visited, questions required probing, inquiring, hypothesizing, justifying, citation of evidence, and elaboration. An example of this is when the French teacher required students to locate the text evidence supporting their response focused on Haiti.

- Feedback was evident in all seventeen of the classrooms reviewed, instructional practices required students to demonstrate understanding in at least one of two ways to ensure learning. An example often used was whole group questioning throughout the lesson.

- Explicit instruction was evident in sixteen of the seventeen classes reviewed, evidenced by students receiving feedback from teachers requiring students to connect responses to the main point of the lesson and/or objective.

- In all the three math classrooms reviewed, mathematics goals were visible in student-friendly language with standard aligned vocabulary. Students presented mathematical thinking and demonstrated multiple strategies to solve problems. An example of this evidence is when both Geometry classes explored "Side, Angle, Side vs. Side, Side, Side vs. Angle, Angle" as types of Triangle Similarity problems, students demonstrated strategies through various approaches. However, reviewers noted, that students could use mathematical errors or misconceptions as a learning opportunity to critique the reasoning of others and dig deeper in student mastery of content. Students should develop habits of using mathematical practices to skillfully address mathematical errors as a learning opportunity. Additionally, engage students in tasks that require sense-making, critiquing, and constructing arguments and/or justifying to explain their thinking during collaborative learning.

Classrooms of students working together in small groups or pairs to solve problems were common. The learning environment experience was positive and supportive and encouraged academic growth.

- In eleven of the seventeen classrooms, collaborative learning was demonstrated by students collaborating in groups or pairs to solve a problem, work on an assignment, and/or answer questions.

- In all seventeen classrooms reviewed, student interactions with peers and the teachers were positive and respectful. Students were polite, raised their hands, and were respectful of answers provided by peers, which created a positive atmosphere.

- Further evidence of a supportive learning environment was students engaged in writing instruction aligned to writing prompts. Students received explicit instruction on the writing format and organization of ideas. Another example of this was in English for Speakers of Other Languages

(ESOL) intervention classes, as they were learning new vocabulary and making connections between new words and other known words, (i.e. learning new vocabulary words such as "dandelion and rummaging" before reading the story).

The school's use of formative and summative assessments is aligned with standards and provides a range of data sources to support instructional strategies for teaching and learning and the purpose of these assessments is understood by the instructional staff.

- During focus groups, teachers and school leadership shared that PLCs include structures that consist of "class-alike" teachers who meet weekly to discuss instruction and data. Teachers shared that teachers who teach similar courses should be in "lockstep". Leadership stated that this PLC model is based on the Plan-Do-Study-Act improvement cycle, which is recursive.

AREAS FOR GROWTH

Strengthen the reading intervention structures with instruction grounded in the science of reading.

- In one of the three classrooms, students received differentiated reading instruction which was provided by the tier 2 & 3, online reading intervention program.

- While there was some evidence of students reading aloud for fluency in one classroom, none of the seventeen classes provided evidence of reading intervention strategies. Additionally, in the three intervention classrooms, there was no evidence of students receiving explicit writing instruction.

- While eight of the seventeen classrooms offered students opportunities to drive their learning, most of the classrooms did not create the space for students to intentionally learn from each other. Looking further into these eight classes, two classes allowed students to make decisions about what/how they wanted to engage with the 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

Develop a system that includes further diagnostic assessment to determine a specific area of need to address learning gaps for students reading below grade level. Incorporate (or enhance) a progress monitoring system that regularly reviews specific identified goals for individual students reading below grade level.

ACTION STEPS:

As a result of this school review:

- Provide professional development to all instructional staff to support strategies for helping students reading below grade level.

- Develop a formal system of diagnostic assessment for students reading below grade level to determine specific areas of need to address learning gaps.

- Develop a progress monitoring system so that teachers and students can regularly monitor identified goals for individual students.

RESOURCES:

1. Multi-Tiered System of Support

FOCUS AREA 2

Provide professional development on incorporating opportunities for student-driven learning to ensure each student can adequately receive and meet curriculum demands.

ACTION STEPS:

As a result of this school review:

- Incorporate these systems to align with instructional opportunities for students to drive their learning during collaborative learning. Include professional development in the use of technology that provides teachers with information about the use of AI during instruction.

- Include communication tools that are clear to students and parents/guardians.

RESOURCES:

1. GROUP work: Using cooperative learning groups effectively

2. 12 tips for effective communication with parents: for educators

3. Teacher and Parent Communication: A Guide for Success

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 has multiple structures to support students' academic, behavioral, and emotional health.

- Focus group participants and the site visit documentation supported that MCPS partners with Montgomery College to offer Dual Enrollment and Early College options for students. The Dual Enrollment Coordinator works to inform the community, enroll students, and support them in achieving success.

- While WCHS has an established CTE department with multiple programs of study, they are working to increase the number and consistency of the programs offered to determine student interest based on surveys and enrollment to identify areas of interest.

The school implements a multi-faceted approach to supporting student mental health to ensure the well-being of each child.

- The school uses the "Kid Talk" application to communicate concerns about students with counselors and administration. This consists of a Google form that teachers fill out that includes a list of interventions and family contacts.

- Both teacher and administrator focus groups mentioned the use of the "Bridge to Wellness" program that individualizes support for students. This program is supported by the Sheppard Pratt institution.

- The student focus group identified the ability to fill out paperwork to seek SEL help from school staff, and social workers.

The school measures toward monitoring student progress for on-time graduation and access to advanced rigorous coursework has a multi-tiered approach.

- Participants in the student focus group identified that advising/articulation presentations were held during ELA classes in the 2nd quarter. This included a review of credits and a conversation on "what it would take to graduate."

- The school leadership focus group indicated that senior students received progress reports that updated families on how class progress might affect graduation. In the site visit documentation included for SY 2022-2023, the graduation rate was greater than 95%. Additionally, in May of 2023, 1,358 Churchill students completed 3,091 exams. For the class of 2024, 90.6% of the students scored at least 3 or better.

Access to a well-rounded curriculum ensures students have multiple pathways to access courses in art, career and technical education, world language, STEM, or other content areas beyond mathematics, ELA, science, or social studies.

- Student focus group participants shared praises about the music program and art programs including band, chorus, photography, and art history courses that all have multiple levels of offering. One student stated, "There's a class for everything."

AREAS FOR GROWTH

The school's system of support classes has been identified when they are titled Geometry (support), Honors English 9 (supported), English Resource (intervention), English Language Development (ESOL Intervention), Geometry (self-contained), and College Preparatory Literature 1 (supported). However, it is unclear of the specific supports for tiers 2 and 3.

- During classroom reviews, it was difficult to determine what/if any intervention was occurring in the classroom. Many classrooms, such as Geometry, Hon Eng 9, and Geometry had paraprofessionals in the class but were mainly there to help students individually and keep the students on task.

- During the focus group discussions, there was no mention of the current use of data that supports adjustment to the classroom learning structures during in-person class time. Parents stated, "My child is not comfortable asking for help". Another expressed it is much harder for students with Individualized Education Programs (IEPs).

- One class, College Preparatory Literature 1, was using a Tier 2/3 intervention entitled "Elit", but the class itself was not referred to as an intervention class and there was "no teacher of record" present in the classroom.

- Seven out of nine parents/caregivers stated that they paid for private tutoring for their child. One parent raised an equity concern for low-socioeconomic status (SES) families that cannot afford to pay for a private tutor.

- In the teacher focus group, teachers identified that the redo policy felt "transactional" and that students were focused on raising their grades without increasing their comprehension of the material. Also, in the student focus group, the students indicated that grades were the largest source of anxiety with some days having three to four tests on one day, which was overwhelming.

Focus group participants indicated a need for clarity on receiving support around wellness.

- During the student focus group, participants stated students must file paperwork for some of the mental health services (it's about a week-long process to file paperwork before students are allowed to use the resource). Another student mentioned using the "Zen-den" in the counseling office for their panic attacks. Stating, "they would like to use mental health resources more easily."

- To see a therapist there is a six-week process for signing up, remarking, "Let me pre-plan my trauma", others agreed this is what is implied; continuing, "...this makes it feel like most counseling was academic in nature".

- Some students stated one thing they would like to see improved in the future is PRIDE lessons and increased teacher buy-in.

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 professional development for all instructional staff on MTSS and making support visible during classroom instruction.

ACTION STEPS:

As a result of this school review:

- Using the current PDSA improvement cycle structure, provide professional learning on helping teachers make MTSS support for Tier 2 & 3 visible and impactful during class instruction.

RESOURCES:

1. [What To Do When Students Don't Respond to Interventions](#)
2. [How to Adapt Your Teaching Strategies to Student Needs](#)

FOCUS AREA 2

Simplify the required amount of paperwork in the mental health process to ensure students can access and receive support without delay.

ACTION STEPS:

As a result of this school review:

- Begin the cross-collaboration with the LEA and state agency to streamline and simplify the process for students to access mental health support within the school context.

RESOURCES:

1. Maryland School Mental Health Response Program

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 a continuous path of improving teacher practice with regularly scheduled teacher observations and actionable feedback to support professional growth and improve student outcomes.

- In both the teacher and school leader focus groups, it was mentioned that all teachers (regardless of years of experience) are observed, at a minimum, two times a quarter by either their department chair or school administrator.

- Department chairs noted in the focus group that in addition to being observed teaching, administrators also observe them leading their PLCs and are provided feedback. Teachers in the focus group also indicated that peers from their PLC observe their instruction and provide them with non-evaluative feedback that informs areas/topics for future professional learning.

- Focus group participants for both teachers and school leaders stated that non-tenured are observed formally for three years, whereas teachers who are tenured are put on a 3-year cycle for formal observations.

Professional development is a part of the continuous learning cycle and is a strength for job-embedded teaching practices.

- During focus group discussions, teachers and leadership indicated that professional learning occurs regularly within the school building. Both groups discussed PLCs as their source of professional learning that is choice-based. School leadership also stated that professional development is embedded in department meetings that are based on monthly content meetings offered by the LEA.

- Teacher and leadership focus groups both indicated the use of data as a primary topic of discussion within PLCs and as a focus of learning pathways in building-based professional development opportunities. However, no groups indicated the specific ways in which professional development supported the use of data in the classroom or how data was used in PLC meetings to adjust teaching and learning.

- Teachers and school leaders stated that teacher schedules are intentionally constructed to ensure teachers that teach the same course or content have the same planning. These PLCs meet weekly to discuss curriculum and data.

- The leadership focus group indicated that a Consulting Teacher (CT) is provided by the district for observation and support to new teachers. New teachers are defined as within their first 3 years in

the county. Additionally, within the building, teachers are supported by a Staff Development Teacher (SDT). This person provides support in planning and understanding school norms.

- Teachers who are new to the school are provided with mentors within their content area. These mentors are trained by the school district; one school leader, who serves as a department chair, stated that she was a mentor and had to participate in a 6-hour training. The mentor must document 12 hours of meetings per semester with their assigned new teacher.

AREAS FOR GROWTH

The career ladder is an area that can be supported by school leadership to ensure all teachers have equitable access to the advancement of professional opportunities.

- During the teacher focus group, when asked about a career ladder, teachers shared the Blueprint incentive for NBCT and a county-reimbursement program for a master's degree, but teachers did not articulate specific career-ladder routes as this is still in the development phase.

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

Begin the development of communicating specific career-ladder routes to ensure teachers know what is available and the access pathways.

ACTION STEPS:

As a result of this school review:

- Provide clear and regular communication to teachers regarding specifics on pathway programs available within the LEA.

RESOURCES:

1. Career Pathways Program

Appendix A

SUMMARY OF EXPERT REVIEW TEAM ACTIVITIES

Expert Review Team Members

1. Scott Buhrman, Content Specialist, Washington County Public Schools
2. Brooke Gardner, Data Coach Teacher Specialist, Frederick County Public Schools
3. Patrick Johnson, Retired
4. Shannon Beatty, Teaching and Learning Specialist, Talbot County Public Schools
5. Brian Zeleny, Department Chair, Baltimore County Public Schools
6. Darren Myzak, Science Teacher, Fairfax County Public Schools

Site Visit Day 1

January 10, 2024

Site Visit Day 2

January 11, 2024

Number of Classroom Reviews

Sixteen

Description of Classroom Visited

Wednesday, January 10, 2024	Thursday, January 11, 2024
- Geometry (supported) - AP Language and Composition - Hon Eng 9 (supported) - English Resource (intervention) - AP World History - Hon Biology - AP Human Geography - Forensic Science 2D Art - AP Spanish	- English Language Development (ESOL Intervention) - Hon French - Geometry (self-contained) - College Prep Lit 1 (supported) - Hon Algebra 2 - Hon Chemistry - AP Physics 1A

Number of Interviews

One

- Principal

Number of Focus Groups

Five

- 11 students
- 10 school leaders
- 17 teachers
- 9 parents

Documents Analyzed

- Site visit documentation submitted by the school and LEA.

Appendix B

MARYLAND SCHOOL REVIEW RUBRIC

Ratings for Winston Churchill 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 observed through data documentation or during the on-site school review.