



LEA Final Report

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| Local Education Agency | Calvert County Public Schools |
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Study Purpose and Approach

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and Accountability and Implementation Board (AIB) contracted with the Maryland Initiative for Literacy & Equity (MILE) to evaluate literacy instruction across all 24 Maryland LEAs. This evaluation stems from a [joint resolution](#) by MSDE and AIB in November 2023. The evaluation was designed to focus on collaboration and capacity-building across all stakeholder groups, ultimately leading to statewide recommendations for technical assistance supporting reading development for all students in Maryland. Standard protocols were developed by translating IDA’s Knowledge and Practice Standards for Teachers of Reading and effective implementation research into key success indicators through joint collaboration with MILE and AIM Institute for Learning & Research. All protocols are available for review upon request, although MILE and AIM Institute for Learning & Research maintain intellectual property ownership of these protocols.

Calvert County Public Schools (CCPS) was evaluated between March and May 2024. This data collection included the county’s K-5 literacy plan, focus groups with teachers and principals, and targeted classroom observations. All data collection protocols, including the classroom [observation protocol](#), are aligned with a standard set of drivers and [indicators](#) of effective literacy instruction.

Review of K-5 Literacy Plans

The LEA’s K-5 literacy plan was provided to MILE in January 2024 and updated in May 2023. Two literacy experts reviewed this literacy plan using a standard rubric developed for the purpose. After the review, the literacy experts provided written and oral feedback to Calvert County Public Schools to revise the plan.

Review of 6-12 Literacy Plans

The LEA’s 6-12 literacy plan was provided to MILE in July 2024. Again, two literacy experts reviewed it using a standard rubric developed for the purpose.

Focus Groups

Two teacher focus groups, several individual interviews, and one principal focus group were conducted to review literacy implementation across the district. A total of 18 district teachers, principals, and staff participated in interviews and focus groups, providing insight into literacy implementation in schools and classrooms. Although the research team protected participant privacy, LEA staff knew which individuals were included in each prospective sample.

Classroom Observations

The same rubric used to analyze the literacy plans helped inform the data collection protocols to observe literacy implementation across the district. Nine classroom observations were conducted in one elementary school to provide data on classroom literacy implementation. Note, however, that these visits were limited in scope and not designed to capture a representative sample due to time constraints. One literacy expert conducted classroom observations using a standard observation protocol for about 20 minutes. *The write-up of the report was conducted by a separate reviewer and the research associate assigned to the district.* LEA staff members were present during classroom observations.



Introductory Statement

Calvert County Public Schools District (CCPS) embraces a comprehensive approach to literacy embedded in evidence-based literacy practices. In review of the district's Comprehensive Literacy Plan (CLP), the MTSS guide (Supplemental Instruction Guide for Reading) provides details of the district's supplemental instruction process. The guide includes discussions of data reports, other assessments, and progress monitoring. Data is used to inform instruction and measure student progress and is a driving force in MTSS. The data also assists in making decisions about instructional materials receiving interventions.

The district was evaluated according to the [EPIS Framework](#), which evaluates the system-wide implementation of evidence-based practices according to stages of exploration, adoption/preparation, implementation, and sustainment. For **Curriculum and Instruction**, CCPS demonstrates strengths in its aligned curriculum using Ready Reading and 95 Phonics Core Program (95 Percent Group) for Tier 1 reading instruction with culturally relevant content. There is a recommendation for additional support to standardize word recognition instruction and aid teachers in adopting evidence-based practices effectively. **Professional Learning** initiatives offer synchronous and asynchronous training in evidence-based literacy practices like LETRS, supporting teachers and administrators in implementing core curriculum effectively. Professional Learning should prioritize ongoing training in language comprehension and structured literacy tailored to student needs. **The Multi-tiered Support Systems** are well-defined and utilize a comprehensive instructional guide for screening, assessment, and targeted instruction across different tiers. Encourage experiential training aligned with the district's MTSS framework, particularly enhancing support for Title 1 schools and multilingual learners. **Instructional Leadership** emphasizes how administrators are trained in LETRS and evidence-based literacy practices, where they aim to be proactive supervisors fostering collaborative relationships amongst their staff and with other principals to engage in literacy. Leaders might benefit from a feedback mechanism to refine professional development offerings. For **Community Culture and Engagement**, Most schools (and all Title 1 schools) host literacy nights annually. There is an opportunity for CCPS to enhance community engagement strategies to support its literacy goals further, effectively modeling the strong efforts at Title 1 schools in the district. Efforts should target barriers to attendance at literacy events and outline stakeholder roles in fostering literacy development.

The reviewers evaluated the implementation plan (Comprehensive Literacy Plans) for detailed strategies and approaches. Then, they determined the strength and consistency of implementation through observations of classroom instruction, interviews with administrators, and focus groups with teachers and support staff. The reviewers identified CCPS as being in the mode of **Early Implementation** for Curriculum and Instruction, Professional Learning, **Preparation to Early Implementation** for Multi-tiered Systems of Support and Instructional Leadership, and **Early Implementation** for Community Engagement.

Secondary



The current Comprehensive Literacy Plan (CLP) highlights the importance of stakeholder engagement in its development. It acknowledges the findings of the "Caregiver Engagement" report, which identified several key activities supporting caregivers as only "partially met." In response to the identified need for improved shared literacy leadership, the district has initiated the LETRS program for administrators to formulate a four-year Literacy Implementation Plan. In contrast, the English Language Arts (ELA) leadership team regularly convenes to integrate effective reading instruction within school structures. Furthermore, the CLP delineates the roles of administrators in the secondary education context, emphasizing the establishment of Tier 2 and Tier 3 intervention programs designed to enhance students' foundational reading skills. Professional development opportunities are tailored to specific needs, focusing on curriculum pacing, data analysis, and instructional strategies, with particular attention given to supporting English Language Learners and Special Education students.



Key Findings: Strengths & Opportunities

1.0 Curriculum and Instruction: *Implementation (early)*

Grades K-5

CCPS curriculum is aligned with the Maryland College and Career Ready Standards (MCCRS). CCPS utilizes the 95 Phonics Core Program (95 Percent Group) as the Tier 1 curricular resource to address Word Recognition (reading foundational skills).

As evidenced by CCPS: *“This HQIM was implemented in grades 1-5 for the 2023-2024 school year and will be implemented in grades K-5 in SY 2024-2025.”* The curriculum provides high-quality texts that are rich in content and culturally relevant. The system uses Lexia 5 as supplemental material for Tier 1 instruction.

Grades 6-12

The Local Education Agency (LEA) asserts that educators must plan and deliver instruction utilizing research-based strategies and evidence-based practices, including scaffolded supports. The LEA employs Sheltered Instruction Observation Protocol strategies to foster language-rich learning environments specifically designed to support multilingual learners. Each grade's curricular guide includes a dedicated section on vocabulary and morphology, outlining expectations for vocabulary instruction, differentiating among the three tiers of vocabulary, and identifying effective instructional techniques. Additionally, these curricular guides provide Tier 1 reading comprehension support and list instructional resources and routines that enhance language comprehension, promote critical thinking, and encourage student independence over the course of the academic term.

2.0 Professional Learning: *Implementation (early)*

Grades K-5

CCPS has provided system-wide opportunities for training in research/evidence-based literacy instruction. Teachers and administrators take a combination of synchronous and asynchronous training in LETRS. Teachers also receive continued training in the core curriculum and associated resources aligned with SoR.

Grades 6-12

The Comprehensive Literacy Plan (CLP) indicates that the Secondary English Language Arts (ELA) supervisor and specialist collaborate to create agendas for professional development meetings targeting middle school and core ELA instruction. Support primarily concentrates on ELA teachers, while professional development for content-area teachers outside of ELA remains unspecified. Special Education (SPED) and Reading Specialists provide essential guidance and training to staff on interventions, including support for screening, data analysis, and progress monitoring. Professional development is tailored to identified needs, encompassing curriculum focus and pacing, an assessment calendar informed by data from assessments, insights from classroom observations by supervisors, specialists, and administrators, teacher requests, and directives from the Central Office, particularly the Departments of Instruction and Special Education, aligned with overarching system goals.

3.0 Multi-tiered Support Systems: *Preparation to Implementation (early)*

Grades K-5

CCPS has a clear plan for systems of support in literacy instruction. A supplemental instructional guide outlines the universal screener and diagnostic assessments used for instructional grouping, tiers of instruction and the MSDE-suggested resources used in each tier, and skills for targeted instruction in 5 core areas of reading instruction.

Grades 6-12

The Local Education Agency (LEA) has established Tier 2 and Tier 3 intervention programs to enhance students' comprehension and foundational reading skills, including decoding. Detailed descriptions of these interventions are available, along with supplementary information provided in a Reading Intervention Quick Facts guide.

4.0 Instructional Leadership: *Preparation to Implementation (early)*

Grades K-5

CCPS trains administrators in LETRS and structured literacy practices to support reading instruction in their schools. This training also helps principals provide appropriate feedback during walk-throughs and evaluations. The elementary reading and language arts supervisor frequently assists in schools and has developed relationships with principals. She is viewed as an ally in providing literacy support in the district.

Grades 6-12

The 2017 Comprehensive Literacy Plan (CLP) identified a critical need for enhanced shared literacy leadership, revealing shortcomings in developing future literacy leaders and establishing equitable infrastructures for literacy initiatives. In response, the district has implemented the LETRS program for administrators to create a four-year Literacy Implementation Plan, alongside regular meetings of the ELA leadership team to integrate effective reading instruction components into school structures. Ensure a specific emphasis on the distinct roles of administration within the secondary education context.

5.0 Community Culture and Engagement: *Implementation (early)*

Grades K-5

CCPS Title 1 schools must hold several literacy nights annually to implement their literacy plan. **As evidenced by CCPS, *Literacy Nights were held by all elementary schools except two and are not solely done for Title 1 schools.*** However, community and cultural engagement need support.

Grades 6-12

The current Comprehensive Literacy Plan (CLP) emphasizes the engagement of all stakeholders in its development. The district has conducted an extensive analysis of the "Caregiver Engagement" report, which indicates that several key activities aimed at supporting caregivers—such as fostering literacy-friendly home environments and promoting meaningful conversations—have been only "partially met." Furthermore, CCPS's recognition and examination of the critical role of caregiver engagement serve as a commendable model



for other districts to emulate. Ensure a specific focus on the secondary implementation of this category.

Recommendations: Next Steps

1.0 Curriculum and Instruction

Grades K-5

As evidenced by CCPS, “CCPS utilizes 95 Phonics Core Program (95 Percent Group) as the Tier 1 curricular resource to address Word Recognition (reading foundational skills) and Reading Ready to address comprehension.” The MILE team observed variations in implementation in word recognition instruction, particularly beyond grades K-2. To minimize literacy struggles in later grades, we recommend that CCPS provide additional support for teachers implementing less-than-ideal practices. Additionally, increased support is needed for teachers struggling to transition to evidence-based practices.

Grades 6-12

2.0 Professional Learning

Grades K-12

We recommend that CCPS provide continued professional learning around language comprehension and expression, partnering with understanding student needs within the classroom to implement structured literacy.

3.0 Multi-tiered Support Systems

Grades K-12

We recommend that CCPS provide experiential job-embedded training for teachers and administrators using the district-created MTSS resource as a guide. Additionally, we recommend that staff in Title 1 schools receive additional training and support in literacy for MLs.

We recommend that the district establish experiential professional development on the supplemental reading guide, using anonymous student profiles, in which teachers are trained to go through the entire process and complete one student independently. Additionally, we recommend that the MTSS process should be the focus of at least one of the collaborative planning meetings per week as continued practice for at least the first quarter.

The district should also consider partnering with the ESOL department to extend the MTSS guide for ML instruction and strategies, including understanding data and preparing for data meetings.

4.0 Instructional Leadership

Grades K-12



Consider developing a method for teacher feedback regarding ongoing professional learning and training opportunities.

5.0 Community Culture and Engagement

Grades K-12

To build on opportunities for growth in community and culture engagement, we recommend that CCPS identify the barriers that lead to low attendance at literacy nights and develop literacy engagements around those findings. Additionally, the district should discuss the goals of community engagement, who the stakeholders are, and the roles those stakeholders can play in literacy development.