



LEA Final Report

Local Education Agency	Prince George’s 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 practical implementation research into key success indicators through MILE and AIM Institute for Learning & Research collaboration. All protocols are available for review upon request, although MILE and AIM Institute for Learning & Research maintain ownership, and other users may not adapt these protocols.

Prince George’s County Public Schools was evaluated between February 2024 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 to 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. Two literacy experts reviewed it using a standard rubric developed for the purpose. After the review, the literacy experts provided written and oral feedback to Prince George’s 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 23 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 for observing literacy implementation across the district. Sixty-nine classroom observations were conducted from April to May 2024 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 30 minutes. LEA staff members were present during classroom observations.

LEA Background and Context

Prince George's County Public School District (PGCPS) embraces a comprehensive approach to literacy embedded in the Science of Reading (SoR) research. PGCPS' vision for literacy in English/ Language Arts is that all students are empowered readers, writers, speakers, listeners, and critical thinkers who leverage digital skills and literacy to become distinguished learners, leaders, voices of social justice, and advocates for humanity. The district has goals for improving reading outcomes across the board, specifically for students with disabilities and multilingual learners utilizing high-quality instructional materials and culturally-sustaining practices, including dual-language programs and language assets for literacy learning.

The findings from the PGCPS literacy plan review highlight several strengths and areas for improvement across various domains regarding the embrace and enactment of evidence-based literacy practices. The PGCPS literacy plan review highlights several strengths and areas for improvement across various domains regarding embracing and enacting evidence-based literacy practices. The implementation status across various areas shows early progress with a focus on structured literacy and professional development.

Curriculum & Instruction: Curricular programs like Really Great Reading and Houghton Mifflin Harcourt are consistently implemented in primary and intermediate grades.

Professional Learning initiatives, including LETRS training and coaching, receive positive feedback. **Multi-tiered Systems of Support** evidence data collection tools such as Dibels, Lexia, and i-Ready effectively monitor student progress. **Instructional Leadership** is still in the preparation phase, with tools for data collection and Tier 2 support being prepared for use. **Community Engagement** efforts are also in preparation, with standardized presentations by the RGR/Reading English Language Arts RELA Office to ensure consistent information delivery to families.

The district was evaluated according to the [EPIS Framework](#), which evaluates system-wide implementation of evidence-based practices according to stages of exploration, adoption/preparation, implementation, and sustainment. 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. Based on the comprehensive literacy plan, reviewers identified PGCPS in the mode of **early implementation** around the key drivers of Curriculum and Instruction, Professional Learning, Multi-Tiered Systems of Support and **preparation** for Instructional Leadership, and Community Engagement. Given the large amount of **adoption and early implementation** that was observed taking place, the district would be characterized in this transitional phase between planning and adoption to early implementation.

Secondary

Curriculum supports are designed to provide student choice, scaffolding for Students with Disabilities (SWD) and Multilingual Learners (ML), and exemplar lessons that highlight key literacy strategies. At the middle school level, the Reading/English Language Arts (RELA) department collaborates with elementary and high school teams to ensure a cohesive approach to literacy standards and evidence-based instruction. Teachers in grades 9 and 10 participate in quarterly Achieve 3000 training focused on data-driven decision-making and



close reading techniques. At the same time, middle school educators integrate reading and writing across the curriculum to emphasize the importance of literacy skills in real-world contexts. The plan includes systematic intervention training for teachers, a tiered support approach to ensure fidelity in implementation, and regular progress monitoring, complemented by accessible course syllabi for families to support student learning.

Key Findings: Current Status of Implementation

1.0 Curriculum and Instruction

Implementation Status: *Adoption to Early Implementation*

Grades K-5

As outlined in the literacy plan and observed during classroom visits, there is consistent implementation of structured literacy through programs like Really Great Reading (RGR) in primary grades (K-1) and Houghton Mifflin Harcourt (HMH) in intermediate grades 2-5. The curriculum includes scaffolds for multilingual learners and offers Spanish-English biliteracy support. We observed dual-language programs offered in the primary grades, which utilized structured literacy frameworks. These programs exhibit strong performance when teachers implement the program with fidelity, consistency, and structure.

As evidenced by PGCPS: *“HMH is used for 2-5, K-1 also uses Benchmark Advance, and 3-5 uses Benchmark Phonics and Word Study.”* (Corrections made.)

The CIM plan offers supplemental resources for special education and ELD teachers, including evidence-based literacy practice documents. It aims to create inclusive, culturally responsive literacy environments through training from the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Belonging, based on Zaretta Hammond’s framework. However, clarification is needed on when HQIM (High-Quality Instructional Materials) will be adapted. Focus groups reported that the curricula use wide-ranging, diverse, culturally relevant materials, and teachers were observed connecting curricula to topics relevant to students' lived experiences.

As evidenced by PGCPS: *“...the CIM aligns the College and Career Readiness Standards with textbook resources and the Science of Reading.”*

As reported in focus groups, teachers identified a vast set of materials and resources but limited training on how and when to use particular resources, leading them to use alternatives (Teachers Pay Teachers) to meet their needs. Also, teachers in grades 2-5 reported being unclear about how to enact structured literacy practices using HMH textbooks, and teachers in these intermediate grades reported having less training on the “science of reading” and how the curriculum is implementing these practices.

Grades 6-12

Curriculum supports encompass opportunities for student choice, scaffolding for Students with Disabilities and Multilingual Learners, and exemplar lessons emphasizing key literacy strategies. At the middle school level, the Reading/English Language Arts (RELA) department collaborates with elementary and high school English Language Development (ELD) and Developmental Special Education (DSE) teams to ensure a cohesive continuum of literacy standards and evidence-based instruction. English 9 and 10 teachers participate in quarterly Achieve 3000 training focused on instructional strategies, data-driven decision-making, and close reading techniques. Additionally, middle school teachers work together to integrate reading and writing across the curriculum, underscoring the significance of literacy skills in real-world contexts.

<p>2.0 Professional Learning</p>	<p>Implementation Status: <i>Early Implementation</i></p>
<p>Grades K-5 According to the literacy plan, the district offers a range of initial and ongoing literacy training for various employee groups, including general education and special education teachers, principals, reading specialists, and other relevant staff. It provides multiple pathways for K-5 teachers to learn evidence-based literacy practices, including LETRS training for administrators. Elementary Literacy Support Teachers (ELSTs) support 22 schools by providing ongoing job-embedded professional development. This includes co-teaching, demonstration lessons, and co-planning. The ELSTs also arrange opportunities for site-based professional development with the reading leaders (reading specialist, instructional lead teacher). Elementary Reading/English Language Arts (RELA) consultants and coaches provide job-embedded professional development. The Reading department has received positive feedback from focus groups and principals, including LETRS training and in-house and external coaching. Collaborative planning meetings also support effective implementation.</p> <p>However, teachers and principals reported that LETRS training is offered to all K-5 teachers but is less available to intermediate grades (3-5). Both groups reported the instrumental role that coaches play, but this support varied from school to school. According to principal interviews and focus groups, schools promote collaborative planning through school-based meetings and district-wide professional development days, but these activities happen inconsistently across schools.</p> <p>Grades 6-12 For grades 6-12, the training program emphasizes the delivery of targeted interventions, specifically focusing on tier 2 and tier 3 supports. Reading intervention teachers have undergone specialized training in implementing the Lexia Power and Read 180 programs to effectively support students reading below grade level.</p>	
<p>3.0 Multi-tiered Support Systems</p>	<p>Implementation Status: <i>Adoption to Early Implementation</i></p>
<p>Grades K-5 Based on the literacy plan and observations, assessment tools include DIBELS, Lexia, and i-Ready for data collection and progress monitoring. Teachers report that these are routinely used to inform instructional decisions and Tier 2 intervention support. Teachers and principals both referenced the significance of WOW Wednesdays in efforts to collect data and monitor student reading progress. However, some teachers cited limited knowledge about differences in types of assessments and how to use data outcomes to inform instructional practices, suggesting variability between schools.</p> <p>SIT teams meet monthly to address individual student needs, review data, track progress, and adjust interventions as needed, involving various professionals such as school nurses and psychologists. However, reading specialists mentioned the challenge of addressing Tier III groups during focus groups because they are being pulled in various directions.</p>	

The PGCPS Division of Academics collaborates to assess Reading and Mathematics interventions with a tier 1 or 2 Level of Evidence, using quarterly data protocols shared with schools for review and strategic planning. Additionally, Data Cafe sessions focus on data for out-of-classroom leaders and principals, while Learning Cafes are dedicated to achieving learning goals.

Grades 6-12

For grades 6-12, the Achieve 3000 Level Set is administered to students in grades 9 and 10 three times annually, alongside NoRedInk Benchmarks administered to the same cohorts in the fall and spring. Special educators utilize Goalbook to facilitate the tracking of support teams in effectively monitoring the progress of students with disabilities (SWD) in relation to their Individualized Education Program (IEP) goals and objectives. Additionally, a sample data protocol is provided for school leaders, and MCAP results are disaggregated by race, gender, English Learner status, and SWD status. Lexia Power Up is a computer-adaptive reading intervention program designed for struggling readers, alongside READ180, which serves a similar purpose. The intervention framework includes Tiers 1, 2, and 3, specifically tailored for secondary students.

4.0 Instructional Leadership

Implementation Status: *Preparation*

Grades K-5

The plan includes setting short- and long-term goals tailored to student demographics, conducting bi-monthly meetings to deepen understanding of structured literacy for supporting teachers, and providing training for principals and assistant principals on Special Education Instructional Planning Considerations. Principals must also attend regular system-wide and cluster meetings that review district or school-specific data.

The literacy plan and principal interviews cited the use of learning walk and teacher evaluation systems as measures to ensure implementation; however, teachers in the focus group reported needing to be made aware of learning walk protocols.

During focus groups, some teachers, especially those in grades 3-5, suggested that they must be aware of short-, midterm, and long-term goals and that data sharing needs to be more consistent.

Grades 6-12

The Reading/English Language Arts (RELA) Department conducts regular workshops to transform non-classroom-based literacy leaders into effective literacy coaches for middle school teachers, supplemented by on-site training sessions and leadership meetings with assistant and principal leaders. Professional Development Lead Teachers (PDLTs) and Engagement Technology Lead Teachers (ETLTs) are assigned to schools according to their specific needs, receiving targeted training to support literacy initiatives. At the same time, the Office of Language and Literacy hosts monthly office hours for implementation assistance. In grades 9-12, Teacher Coordinators receive personalized technical support from High School RELA Instructional Specialists and participate in monthly professional development to

strengthen their instructional leadership skills.

5.0 Community Culture and Engagement

Implementation Status: *Preparation*

Grades K-5

The plan ensures a standardized approach to informing K-5 families about the science of reading through turn-key presentations from the RGR/Reading English Language Arts (RELA) office. This includes Back to School Night, Family Engagement Nights, and Literacy Nights, as well as vendor-led sessions on DIBELS, Really Great Reading, i-Ready, and Lexia Core5.

Grades 6-12

The plan states that intervention training is systematically provided to equip teachers with the skills necessary to effectively implement and monitor interventions. A tiered support approach has been established to ensure that interventions are executed with fidelity, accompanied by biweekly desktop monitoring and communication with schools demonstrating low intervention usage. Quarterly progress monitoring includes the analysis of diagnostic completion and growth data, supported by weekly office hours and small group or individual coaching sessions, as well as instructional observations with fidelity checks. The Reading/English Language Arts department also offers accessible course syllabi to families, detailing course objectives, content, and participation requirements. These are essential resources to guide student success and facilitate parental support in the learning process.

Recommendations: Next Steps

1.0 Curriculum and Instruction

Grades K-5

Curriculum implementation has faced challenges due to a historical focus on math, leading to resource gaps for other subjects and highlighting the need for continued professional development, particularly in intermediate grades. Observations revealed an overemphasis on Word Recognition rather than Language Comprehension in primary grades and difficulties with the intermediate phonics program for struggling readers. There are opportunities to enhance writing instruction, provide Tier 2 focus group resources, and manage data from digital platforms. Training needs include CIM resources, differentiation, and instructional strategies for diverse student groups. Additionally, concerns about the appropriate level of challenge for students and the constraints of a shortened instructional day impact curriculum integration and underscore the need for better time management.

As evidenced by PGCPs: *“...we recognize the need for improvement in explicit writing instruction, foundational skills for intermediate grades, and Tier 2 supports. In response,*

we developed a K-1 Writing Toolkit during the summer of 2024 to better support teachers with explicit writing instruction and offer strategies for differentiating and scaffolding writing. We also provided grades 3-5 teachers with routines and Google Slides to help them effectively teach Benchmark Phonics and Word Study.”

Grades 6-12

The alignment of this curriculum should be clearly defined horizontally and vertically to ensure coherence across grade levels. A detailed scope and sequence are necessary to facilitate skill and knowledge-building for secondary students. It is important to provide specific guidance for Tier 1 literacy instruction within content areas, emphasizing how this instruction will be integrated into various disciplines at the secondary level. Additionally, elucidating the characteristics of evidence-based practices will enhance clarity. Consider how scaffolding will be incorporated for English Language Learners (ELLs) and dialectical speakers. More specific guidance is needed for vocabulary instruction at the Tier 1 level, covering areas such as direct word instruction, word awareness, synonyms, context cues, and morphological knowledge. Further elaboration on explicit writing strategies, including specific methods for teaching these strategies, their integration into content areas, and the scaffolds available for Tier 1 settings for secondary students, is essential.

2.0 Professional Learning**Grades K-5**

Recommendations include establishing consistent school-based reading specialists to integrate coaching into daily practice, which would promote ongoing and equitable professional learning across the district.

Grades 6-12

The array of professional development opportunities currently lacks explicit reference to underserved language groups. It is necessary to include a description of how teachers will be trained to adjust the duration and intensity of instruction for each component at the secondary level. Additionally, enhanced professional learning focused on strategy instruction for content area teachers and more specific information regarding support for educators delivering academic interventions are needed.

3.0 Multi-tiered Support Systems**Grades K-5**

Inconsistencies in Tier 2 instruction and data usage across schools and varied materials and staffing may undermine effectiveness, particularly as many intermediate teachers need more consistent training in structured literacy. To enhance equity in supporting struggling readers, it is essential to establish a clear, district-wide, Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) framework and provide comprehensive training for all educators. A centralized platform to aggregate data from assessment tools and targeted training for teachers on utilizing this data will improve consistency in addressing student needs. Furthermore, despite the breadth of

available materials, additional training is necessary for teachers to effectively leverage these resources in their instruction.

Grades 6-12

The section on the Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) requires completion. It is essential to delineate the intensity of each intervention level in relation to instructional groups and the amount of instructional time allocated. Additionally, a more detailed description of how interventionists, reading specialists, and content teachers will collaborate to deliver intensive strategy instruction for struggling readers is needed. Specific guidance for implementing Tiers 1, 2, and 3 at the secondary level should also be provided.

4.0 Instructional Leadership

Grades K-5

Establishing a learning culture through non-evaluative walk-through tools could enable administrators to provide clear and constructive feedback to teachers regarding their literacy instruction practices. Creating a robust communication system that facilitates bidirectional feedback would ensure effective dissemination of data, goals, and initiatives across various levels. The PGCPSS has developed a "Look For" document for reading instruction, which serves as a non-evaluative observation tool to guide administrators and reading leaders in offering constructive feedback and setting expectations for future professional learning. Moreover, the Office of Professional Learning and Leadership issues a quarterly professional development calendar detailing upcoming learning opportunities. At the same time, the Curriculum and Instruction Office provides a collaborative planning guide that includes resources for data analysis, lesson planning, and professional learning activities, incorporating pre-work for learning walks and the Plan-Do-Study-Act (PDSA) protocol for data examination.

Grades 6-12

The plan should include a comprehensive calendar for future data analysis, specifying dates and timelines for data meetings. Additionally, it is essential to provide detailed guidance for secondary care, incorporating an early warning system. A more thorough description of the collaborative efforts among interventionists, reading specialists, and content teachers is necessary to clarify how they will deliver intensive strategy instruction for struggling readers. Furthermore, the Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) section requires completion, particularly in delineating the intensity of each intervention level concerning instructional groups and the corresponding instructional time allocation.

5.0 Community Culture and Engagement

Grades K-5

To enhance family engagement, providing multilingual support through translated materials and interpreters is essential. Engagement can be standardized by establishing a centralized resource repository and offering staff professional development on effective strategies.



Rebuilding community trust and increasing participation may involve providing additional support, such as childcare and transportation. Furthermore, leveraging technology and social media can keep parents informed and engaged while strengthening community partnerships through collaboration with local organizations on joint initiatives.

PGCPS exemplifies that the district offers extensive community support via the Community Schools Office, Title I Office, and the Office of Family and School Partnerships, ensuring materials are accessible in multiple languages, including English, French, and Spanish, to promote inclusivity. Facilitate monthly engagements with community partners to enhance families' understanding of literacy.

Grades 6-12

The plan should incorporate monthly opportunities to engage community partners in discussing families' literacy knowledge. Additionally, it is important to present evidence related to collecting and analyzing secondary climate and culture data to inform ongoing initiatives.