



Maryland School Review Expert Review Team Report

Berry Elementary School

Maryland State Department of Education

Office of Teaching and Learning

April 23 -24 , 2025

MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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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 two or three-day site visit that includes classroom observations, focus groups, and a principal interview.

The Expert Review Team forms a consensus based on student data, documents, observations, focus groups, and a principal interview. The rubric consists of two domains:

- **Domain 1: Instruction and Student Support** - High-quality curriculum, instructional materials, teaching practices, and assessments are implemented to support student learning. Schools use multiple sources of data (qualitative, quantitative, and perceptual) to identify students and implement a multi-tiered approach to support all student groups. Progress monitoring systems are clearly defined and integrated into daily practice.
- **Domain 2: Professional Learning and Educator Support** - Educators at all levels are provided with support to improve results and shift instructional practice. Professional learning goals for educators are clearly aligned with school and LEA overarching student achievement goals.

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, is available online in [the Maryland School Report Card](#).

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 and action steps to address the recommendation.

Appendix: The appendix expands 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.

Executive Summary

ABOUT BERRY ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Berry Elementary School, located in Charles County serves a total of 753 students in grades Pk-5. The student population is 62.4% African American, 6% Asian, 15% Hispanic, 10.8% two or more races, 5.3% white. The school's population includes of economically disadvantaged, 56.6% multi-lingual learners, and 12.4% students with disabilities. More detailed information, including enrollment, attendance, demographics, and student outcome data, can be found in the [Maryland School Report Card](#).

OVERALL RECOMMENDATIONS

The following actions are recommended to support 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 subsequent sections.

- Leverage the expertise of teachers who provide daily opportunities for students to test their mathematical conjectures and critique the conclusions of their peers through meaningful math discourse by developing professional learning cycles-inclusive of peer observations-around elevating students analytical reasoning and math argumentation for all instructional staff.
- Enhance school culture to create a more inclusive learning environment for all students and families within the school community- where all staff consistently use curricular materials, evidence-based strategies, and differentiate and scaffold materials to ensure all students equitable access to grade level instruction.

Domain 1: Instruction and Student Support

<p>Instruction and Student Support</p>	<p>High-quality curriculum, instructional materials, teaching practices and assessments are implemented to support student learning. Schools use multiple sources of data (qualitative, quantitative, and perceptual) to identify students and implement a multi-tiered approach to support all student groups. Progress monitoring systems are clearly defined and integrated into daily practice.</p>
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FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

STRENGTHS

The school provided evidence of regular instruction reflecting researched-based practices that challenge and supports students.

- During the school leader focus groups, all participants shared the major strength of the ELA curriculum is the shift to structured literacy, which gives teachers an opportunity to hone in on phonics.
- In three out of four class, where phonics instruction was provided, instruction included sound-symbol connections and/or analysis of words and word parts (ie. sound spellings, word origin, meaning, morphemes). Some examples include the use of a structured literacy program where students began literacy instruction on the SmartBoard with established routines.
- During the school leader focus group, staff shared ways the structure of the ELA block provides time for whole and small group instruction. School leaders mentioned that provided small group time was limited and was difficult for teachers to connect what is taught in small groups to translate to whole group.
- In the parent focus groups, participants mentioned One Book, One Berry, where every family gets a book and to read, answer questions, and do projects with their student(s). Parents also shared, there are opportunities provided to read to students.
- During school leader focus groups, leaders stated to support teachers continued professional growth, teachers participate in LTRS training, SUNY courses, Structure of Literacy, Sound walls training, and model lessons.
- During focus groups, school leaders shared all data is housed on an excel spreadsheet and is used to group students for small group instruction. In addition, they shared one professional development day a year for data deep dives.
- Submitted site visit documentation included a monthly newsletter providing resources, strategies, and tips for supporting multilingual learners. Some resources posted included: “The Power of Wait Time”, creating visual word walls, and higher order questioning activities. In addition, there were notes from a book study focused on ways for teachers to address the needs of multilingual learners in the classroom.

- During the interview, when asked how the school’s daily structure allows for the individual needs of students to be met, the principal indicated the master schedule is designed to ensure the school-based interventionist, reading coach, and special educators can maximize support for meeting students individual needs.

AREAS FOR GROWTH

While there was evidence of implementation of instruction using researched based practices to support students’ academic growth, there is a need for teachers to sustain collaborative inquiry and continuously adjust instruction based on student need and increasing stakeholder engagement to improve student outcomes.

- During school leader focus groups, participants shared the provided ELA pacing guide, does not allow teachers enough time to accurately implement each literacy component during the instructional block.
- During the parent focus group, participants shared they desired more small group instruction time for students. One participant stated that all students do not meet with teachers for small group daily and they see a difference in their child's attitude towards literacy when they meet in small group versus when they do not.
- In the teacher focus group all participants agreed there is student data available to use for data informed instructional planning however, the consistency from teacher to teacher to understand and apply the analysis needs improvement.
- In two out of seven classes where vocabulary instruction was provided, instruction led to in-depth word learning including word relationship, word usage, and multiple word exposures. Some examples included teachers who asked students to talk about other ways they could use the word as well as finding another word that utilized the same sound as the word they identified and how they saw that word used at home.

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.

Focus Area 1

Enhance school culture to create a more inclusive learning environment for all students and families within the school community- where all staff consistently use curricular materials, evidence-based strategies, and differentiate and scaffold materials to ensure all students equitable access to grade level instruction.

ACTION STEPS:

As a result of this school review:

- Support staff with ongoing professional learning and collaboration opportunities on sustain a culturally responsive learning environment, including inclusive teaching practices, differentiation and scaffolding, implementation of evidence-based instructional practices, and Universal Design for Learning (UDL).
- Enhance family and community engagement strategies by creating multilingual communication channels (newsletters, websites, etc.), hosting cultural community/family nights, and consider establishing a diverse parent advisory group to ensure diverse voices in school decision making.
- Provide equity-focused professional learning opportunities for staff to use culturally relevant teaching strategies and support multilingual education/learning.
- Support data-driven decision making by providing teachers with time and tools to regularly monitor and use student performance data to drive instructional decisions and address learning gaps. Reflect and adjust intervention strategies and supports to help all students achieve at or above grade level.

Domain 2: Professional Learning and Educator Support

Professional Learning and Educator Support	Educators at all levels are provided with support to improve results and shift instructional practice. Professional learning goals for educators are clearly aligned with school and LEA overarching student achievement goals.
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FINDING and RECOMMENDATIONS

STRENGTHS

There were opportunities provided for student collaboration and learner directed instruction fostering collaboration, peer feedback, and opportunities for student communication.

- In five out of nine classrooms, teachers used a variety of questions to invite students into the learning and content, assess and advance thinking, and motivate students to explain reasoning. For example, one teacher asked the following questions during a whole group read aloud: "What other season do we see? Are there leaves left on the trees? Why are the trees trembling? What down in the dirt helps the plants to grow up in the garden?"
- In six out of nine classrooms all members of the class worked together to create a welcoming and inclusive community that valued students' personal and cultural backgrounds through words, actions, and set up of physical space. Ther teacher and students in the room were genuinely aware of the needs of their classmates.
- During focus groups, all school leaders stated the diverse needs of students are met in various ways. Some examples include analyzing students' work to identify student needs, Kid Talk sessions to provide strategies to the teachers to support students, and there is an interventionists who provides support to struggling students.

AREAS FOR GROWTH

While there were opportunities for student collaboration and learner directed instruction empower students to take ownership of their learning, encourage peer leadership, and enhance critical thinking skills by improving collaborative learning structures for all students.

- In one out of nine classrooms, students participated in group discussions and constructed written responses to questions to enhance reading comprehension.
- In two out of nine classrooms, teachers provided opportunities for students to develop oral and silent reading fluency skills. Some examples include during small group students read aloud to the group.
- In three out of nine classes teachers progressed monitored in real time. In one class, the teacher questioned students and monitored peer discussions with minimal feedback provided to students.

- In four out of nine classes, the presentation of content was a shared process between the teacher and students. Examples include, students collaborating on the class topic and final product.
- In three out of nine classes, students collaborated in groups or pairs with identified roles to solve problems, work on an assignment, and/or answer questions.

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.

Focus Area 1

Leverage the expertise of teachers who provide daily opportunities for students to test their mathematical conjectures and critique the conclusions of their peers through meaningful math discourse by developing professional learning cycles-inclusive of peer observations-around elevating students analytical reasoning and math argumentation for all instructional staff.

ACTION STEPS:

As a result of this school review:

- Identify teacher leaders to lead or co-facilitate a Professional Learning Cycle (PLC) around student reasoning and math discourse. Use observation data, student work samples, and assessment data to identify teacher leaders.
- Develop a teacher led PLC to support instructional staff with using the standards of mathematical practice and standard aligned instructional materials to improve students' math reasoning and argumentation skills. Strategies explored in the PLC should include: justifying mathematical thinking, constructing viable arguments, critiquing the reasoning of others, and using precise mathematical language.
- Develop structures for teachers to conduct peer observations to observe effective practices in model classes and reflect on their own instruction. Teacher leaders and administrators should collaboratively develop a schoolwide look-for tool focused on student reasoning and discourse.
- Facilitate collaborative reflection and practice following peer observations for teachers to debrief observations, analyze trends across classes (including student behaviors, student and teacher responses, types of questions asked, etc.), and develop common schoolwide language and expectations around implementing strategies that promote analytical thinking and argumentation.

- Provide ongoing feedback and support with coaching cycles, looking at student work protocols, and informal observations. Celebrate areas of success, provide teachers with feedback and differentiated support to ensure continuous improvement, and establish a culture focused on improving opportunities for student reasoning and discourse.

Appendix A

SUMMARY OF EXPERT REVIEW TEAM ACTIVITIES

Expert Review Team Members

1. Toi Davis, Principal, Prince George's County Public Schools
2. Stephen Isler, Instructional Specialist and Test Development, Prince George's County Public Schools
3. Stacey Kopnitsky, Retired, Montgomery County Public Schools
4. Troiah Mason, Certified Teacher, MSDE
5. Robert Murphy, Consultant, Comprehensive Discipline Solutions
6. Joe Sampson, Principal, Calvert County Public Schools

Site Visit Day 1

Wednesday, April 23, 2025

Site Visit Day 2

Thursday, April 24, 2025

Number of Classroom Reviewed

Nine

Description of Classrooms Visited

Wednesday, April 23, 2025

- Kindergarten ELA (2)
- 1st Grade ELA (2)
- 2nd Grade ELA (2)
- 4th Grade ELA (3)

Number of Interviews

One

- Principal

Number of Focus Groups

Four

- 8 students
- 6 school leaders

- 8 teachers
- 7 parents

Documents Analyzed

- Site visit documentation submitted by the school.