



# Maryland School Review Expert Review Team ELA Report

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Daniel of St. Thomas Jenifer Elementary School

Maryland State Department of Education

Office of Teaching and Learning

January 22-23, 2025

**MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

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# Overview of Maryland School Site Reviews

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## 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

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### **ABOUT DANIEL OF ST. THOMAS ELEMENTARY SCHOOL**

Daniel of St. Thomas Jenifer ES, located in Charles County, serves a total of 625 students in grades PreK-5<sup>th</sup>. The student population is <1% American Indian, 3.5% Asian, 67.8% African American, 17.9% Hispanic, 6.7% Two or More Races, 3.7% White. The school's population includes 49.7% of Economically Disadvantaged, 9.3% Multi-lingual learners, and 11.2% 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.

- It is recommended to strengthen Tier 1 processes for all classes by implementing a structured process for executing instruction that is differentiated while strengthening targeted support focused on student needs. This process should emphasize the use of formative and summative data to create flexible, targeted instruction that addresses specific student needs while maintaining a focus on access to grade-level standards. This process should also incorporate intentional structures to support the development of discourse and student agency. This focus should include intentionality around planning structures and practices that integrate opportunities for students to engage in meaningful, grade-level discussions while fostering ownership of their learning (including scaffolding up for access to grade-level standards).
- Provide teachers with job-embedded, ongoing professional learning that is facilitated by the ILT and literacy coach. The existing structures can be adjusted to ensure the maximized impact of professional learning and desired instruction outcomes. Leverage real-time instructional opportunities in the classroom to support bridging new learning for teachers and coaches simultaneously.

## Domain 1: Instruction and Student Support

### 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.

### FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### STRENGTHS

The school review provided a glimpse of instructional practices that were consistent with evidence of implementation of the reading curriculum that aligns with the science of reading (SOR) tenets and expectations. There was evidence of students engaging with grade-level text in many of the classrooms.

- All three of the applicable classrooms provided phonological/phonemic awareness lessons where brief auditory practice was evident. In one class, students were engaged in a Heggerty lesson structured to practice identifying rhyming pairs, blending, segmenting, substituting, and removing sounds to create words. Also, these lessons included phonological instruction with evidence that students understood and followed the routines for performing phonological awareness tasks, leveraging the gradual release model.
- Four of the applicable classrooms provided evidence of phonics and word study engaged in phonics/word study instruction as students internalized structures and routines. In one classroom, students were aware of and followed routines for reading sounds and blending words.
- Ten of the twelve classrooms reviewed had students engaged with grade-level content and texts in a variety of settings. A variety of questions were strategically used to invite students into the learning and content.
- Approximately half of the classrooms visited provided evidence of affirming instruction as evidenced by all members of the class working together to create a welcoming and inclusive community through words, actions, and physical space that value students' personal and cultural backgrounds.
- In eight classrooms, all members of the class work together to create a welcoming and inclusive community that values students' personal and cultural backgrounds through their words and actions. However, while three of the parents in the focus group described having an invitation to read to the classes, one parent countered, explaining feeling uninvited to the school, and five other parents nodded in agreement.
- In six classrooms engaged in reading comprehension, students were engaged in before, during, and/or after reading strategies. Evidence provided in two classrooms provided a glimpse of students previewing the text to engage in a "noticing and wondering protocol". In another classroom, the strategy of students using turn and talk to summarize what they

remembered from the text from the day before. In another classroom, the audio text was paused after each page to allow students to answer level 1 questions and to check for basic comprehension.

- During the principal interview, he provided information regarding targeted support for students who have not met proficiency. All grade levels have a 2-hour block to ensure intervention /small group is happening. Additionally, students are supported through Title I tutors and other support staff to bridge gaps with students.

## **AREAS FOR GROWTH**

While there was evidence of SOR components in some classrooms, not all classrooms visited had evidence of SOR consistently. There is a need for job-embedded structures to bridge the learning from faculty PLC sessions to the students in the classroom. There is a need for structured student model designs that drive student-led learning in the classroom environment, focused on increasing student voice.

- Out of the twelve classrooms reviewed, three had targeted small groups that are differentiated by instructional focus time and intensity. During the student focus group, three students shared that they work in pairs or groups and that working like this helps them learn.
- These classes also included evidence of students being monitored during the work period and being supported by the teachers to help them meet the learning expectations.
- No classrooms had a gradual release method for writing instruction. In one classroom, students were assigned an independent writing task to write a summary without any instruction on how to write a summary. The teacher went to work with a small group. After students were struggling and asking for help, she provided further clarification to use the timeline in the text and include three key details in their summary. Only one student was able to complete the task during the review time of the visit.
- Out of the twelve classrooms reviewed, two classes had evidence of students' writing. In one classroom, the teacher prompted students to write by saying, "It's your turn to write," and students wrote words on their whiteboards. A connection was made during the teacher focus group when one of the four teachers expressed that the writing curriculum moved too fast and did not always align with the reading text, and this was agreed upon by the other three teachers.

**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**

**Emphasize and provide job-embedded professional learning aimed toward strengthening existing Tier 1 processes for all classes by implementing a structured process for executing instruction that is differentiated while strengthening targeted support focused on student needs. This process should emphasize the use of formative and summative data to create flexible, targeted instruction that addresses specific student needs while maintaining a focus on access to grade-level standards. This process should also incorporate intentional structures to support the development of discourse and student agency. This focus should include intentionality around planning structures and practices that integrate opportunities for students to engage in meaningful, grade-level discussions while fostering ownership of their learning (including scaffolding up for access to grade-level standards).**

**ACTION STEPS:**

As a result of this school review:

- Leverage the existing expertise within the ILT to interrogate the current structures in place that are designed to bridge teacher support from learning sessions to classroom practice. Consider designing a collaborative “co-plan, co-deliver, and co-reflect” model that scaffolds newly learned practices (or strengthening existing practices) in a peer partner method. This will enhance an even exchange learning model for both the expert and the teacher.
- This model will focus on cycles of learning directed toward differentiated instruction, using data within the classroom Tier 1 instruction, and implementing meaningful discourse during student-led learning groups. This approach ensures that students will grapple with challenging content, assume cognitive responsibility, and engage deeply with grade-level content.
- Adapt the current walk-through structure to include teachers, paraprofessionals, and other instructional support personnel to conduct peer visits to gain visual learning opportunities of the target practice in real-time. This model will also serve as a peer monitoring system to provide teachers and paraprofessionals with non-evaluative feedback designed to improve practice.

# Domain 2: Professional Learning and Educator Support

<b>Professional Learning and Educator Support</b>	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 was consistent evidence of teacher use of LEA materials to support the implementation of SOR components congruently provided through classroom visits and focus group discussions. All professional stakeholders shared that there is specific training for implementing components of the ELA program that are provided school-based and by the district.

- All four teacher participants in the focus group stated that they are aware of the LETRs training and the schedule for it by grade-level. School leaders corroborated that some teachers and administrators have already been scheduled to attend the training through the LEA scheduled roll-out. One school leader shared that this training supports understanding and improves instructional practice.
- All teachers and six school leaders provided detailed information for the PLCs support for “data-dives” to review student data to support implementing interventions and enrichment decisions. All teachers shared they are comfortable in their ability to use data to plan instruction. However, none of the teachers mentioned job-embedded professional development opportunities.

### AREAS FOR GROWTH

The school has consistent structures and systems for professional learning for teachers. Most teachers interviewed in the focus groups, and observed in the classroom, reflected confidence in their use of the materials and resources available to them. There is a need for job-embedded structures to serve as a bridge between the professional learning sessions and the implementation of learning during instruction.

- Out of the six school leaders in the focus group, none expressed providing job-embedded professional development aligned to literacy practice. Similarly, no teacher mentioned this type of support during their focus group discussion.
- All four teachers expressed that they were having difficulty with inclusion. Explaining, trying to have the same expectations, and making modifications for some students to ensure they get what they need was very time-consuming.

## 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

**Provide teachers with job-embedded, ongoing professional learning that is facilitated by the ILT and literacy coach. The existing structures can be adjusted to ensure the maximized impact of professional learning and desired instruction outcomes. Leverage real-time instructional opportunities in the classroom to support bridging new learning for teachers and coaches simultaneously.**

#### **ACTION STEPS:**

As a result of this school review:

- Develop an additional layer to the current professional learning session to include classroom implementation alongside the ILT and literacy coach experts. Expand the existing co-planning model to include co-delivery and co-reflection to support bridging the new learning to the new practice.
- Adapt the current walk-through structure to include teachers, paraprofessionals, and other instructional support personnel to conduct peer visits to gain visual learning opportunities of the target practice in real-time. This model will also serve as a peer monitoring system to provide teachers and paraprofessionals with non-evaluative feedback designed to improve practice.
- Utilize that same structure to serve as a monitoring system to measure the successes and strengthen areas that need support to ensure forward progress of the SOR initiative.

# Appendix A

## SUMMARY OF EXPERT REVIEW TEAM ACTIVITIES

### Expert Review Team Members

1. Christy Renzulli, School Counselor, Harford County
2. Dr. Laura Aberg, K-12 RELA and AVID Supervisor, Dorchester County Public School
3. Shawanda Spivey, Home and Hospital Case Manager, Prince George's County Public Schools
4. Dr. Jessica Grant, Principal, Prince George's County Public Schools
5. Abigail Metcalf, Special Educator, Baltimore County Public Schools
6. Jamila Walker Denney, Principal, Montgomery County Public Schools

### Site Visit Day 1

Wednesday, January 22, 2025

### Site Visit Day 2

Thursday, January 23, 2025

### Site Visit Day 3

N/A

### Number of Classrooms Reviewed

Twelve

### Description of Classrooms Visited

Wednesday, January 22, 2025	Thursday, January 23, 2025
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PreK ELA</li> <li>• Kindergarten ELA</li> <li>• 1st ELA</li> <li>• 2nd ELA</li> <li>• 3rd ELA</li> <li>• 4th ELA</li> <li>• 5th ELA</li> </ul>	Focus Groups

### Number of Interviews

One

- Principal

### **Number of Focus Groups**

Four

- 9 students
- 6 school leaders
- 4 teachers
- 9 parents

### **Documents Analyzed**

- Site visit documentation submitted by the school.