

# Maryland School Review

## Expert Review Team Report

Domain 1: Curriculum and Instruction

Darlington Elementary School

Maryland State Department of Education

Office of Teaching and Learning

February 7-8, 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 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 one or 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 three 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 DARLINGTON ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Darlington Elementary School, located in Harford County, serves a total of 101 students in grades K through 5<sup>th</sup>. The enrolled population is made up of 80% White students. The school's population includes approximately 40% of students that receive free or reduced meals and 23% 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 rating on Domain 1. The school scored its highest rating of Accomplishing in Curriculum and Instructional Materials and its lowest rating of Accomplishing in Assessment and Timing. 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 | 83%        | Accomplishing |
| Classroom Instruction                  | 84%        | Accomplishing |
| Assessment and Timing                  | 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.

- Provide teachers with professional learning opportunities focusing on collaborative learning best practices and classroom management techniques. The collaborative learning model should include, but not be limited to, collaboration in groups or pairs, performing role-specific assignments to complete group tasks, and implementing strategies to develop structured and balanced discussions that include various viewpoints.
- Implement opportunities for student-driven learning in classroom instruction. Student-driven learning should focus on the students sharing their learning, actively leading discussions, making their learning their own by making decisions about what/how they will learn, and beginning to take ownership of their learning by having them monitor their learning and develop strategies for learning.

## 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 evidence from focus group feedback, classroom assessments, and documents from the LEA and school demonstrate that not only are instructional materials of high quality and aligned with standards, but their application in teaching is also effective. Specifically:

- The adoption of Envision 2.0 and Common Lit across various grades reflects a dedication to providing diverse, high-caliber instructional resources.
- The use of Foundations for foundational literacy instruction in kindergarten and as an intervention in first grade is a method grounded in solid research.
- The careful consideration of parent feedback and the use of differentiated materials, such as tailored spelling and writing aids, show a commitment to meeting the unique needs of each student.
- The strategy of using teacher-led read-aloud sessions and novel studies in English Language Arts (ELA) classes to apply skills in independent reading is a testament to the effective deployment of materials to uplift comprehension abilities.

Assessments serve as a pivotal tool for educators, allowing for the strategic organization of students within the classroom, adjusting the pace of instruction, and refining the content delivered.

- The leadership focus group shared that they use pre-assessments and DIBELS to form groups for interventions and advanced programs, ensuring targeted educational support.
- Pre-assessments guide teachers in creating specific learning paths, fostering focused small-group sessions in literacy and numeracy.
- During the teacher's focus group, teachers stated that they adjust their groupings and interventions based on data, continuously refining the groupings as new assessments are conducted.
- During classroom reviews, there was evidence of the teacher's in-class assessment prompting immediate re-grouping to maintain a student's progress momentum.



## AREAS FOR GROWTH

Offer professional learning to teachers on how to create collaborative learning opportunities for students. There was a gap in the implementation of collaborative learning strategies across the classrooms reviewed. The observation indicated a lack of structured group work, peer interaction, role assignment, and exposure to diverse viewpoints. The Expert Review Team reviewed eight classrooms; however, the data below includes only six classrooms, as non-verbal students in the STRIVE program were excluded from the review.

- Across most classrooms reviewed, five out of six, there was no evidence of student engagement in group work.
- In five out of six classrooms, there was no evidence of students providing helpful responses about an assignment, product, or answer to each other.
- In five out of six classrooms, discussions that encourage the sharing of diverse perspectives and facilitate critical discourse were not evident.

The evidence from the school review reveals room for improvement in student-driven learning. Teacher-led questioning and activities were prevalent throughout most classrooms restricting student participation in inquiry-based learning and reducing students' capacity to fully participate and engage in lessons. The Expert Review Team reviewed eight classrooms; however, the data below includes only six classrooms, as non-verbal students in the STRIVE program were excluded from the review.

- Students did not participate in group discussions in five out of six classrooms observed.
- Decisions regarding their learning processes were not made by students in five out of six classrooms.
- In five out of six classrooms, there was no evidence of students monitoring their learning or developing strategies for learning.
- Helpful peer-to-peer responses regarding assignments, products, or questions were not evident in four out of six classrooms.
- In four out of six classrooms reviewed, teachers missed the opportunity to engage students in presenting and sharing content, as students were not encouraged to take an active role in their learning process.

## 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 teachers with professional learning opportunities focusing on collaborative learning best practices and classroom management techniques. The collaborative learning model should include, but not be limited to, collaboration in groups or pairs, performing role-specific assignments to complete group tasks, and implementing strategies to develop structured and balanced discussions that include various viewpoints.

#### ACTION STEPS:

As a result of this school review:

- Provide concrete strategies for implementing collaborative learning in the classroom.
- Arrange opportunities for teachers to observe experienced colleagues conducting collaborative learning sessions.
- Establish structured feedback protocols so teachers provide and receive feedback on their teaching practices.
- Provide coaching sessions to guide teachers through the implementation of collaborative learning strategies.
- Provide follow-up professional learning sessions based on evaluation feedback.

#### RESOURCES:

1. [Using Collaborative Learning Effectively](#)
2. [Big List of Class Discussion Strategies](#)
3. [Peer Assessments](#)
4. [Making Cooperative Learning Better](#)

## FOCUS AREA 2

Implement opportunities for student-driven learning in classroom instruction. Student-driven learning should focus on the students sharing their learning, actively leading discussions, making their learning their own by making decisions about what/how they will learn, and beginning to take ownership of their learning by having them monitor their learning and develop strategies for learning.

### ACTION STEPS:

As a result of this school review:

- Identify areas for improvement in student-driven instruction through classroom visits.
- Develop professional learning opportunities covering student-driven Instruction: Adapting teaching methods to student proficiency levels.
- Conduct professional learning focused on hands-on activities and model lessons showcasing effective student-driven learning techniques.
- Provide teachers opportunities to observe peers and provide/receive feedback on student-driven learning techniques.
- Implement regular assessments and feedback mechanisms to measure training impact.
- Provide ongoing support, follow-up sessions, and access to resources as needed.

### RESOURCES:

1. [Power School](#)
2. [Student Role](#)
3. [What is a learner Agency?](#)
4. [Co-Constructing Success Criteria with Students](#)

# Appendix A

## SUMMARY OF EXPERT REVIEW TEAM ACTIVITIES

### Expert Review Team Members

1. Rebecca Casserly, Teacher, Baltimore County Public Schools
2. Nicholas Gardiner, Teacher, Charles County Public Schools
3. Michele Murphy, Education Consultant LLC, Murphy Education Consultant
4. Stephen Isler, Coordinator, Prince George's County Public Schools
5. Dr. Laura Aberg, ELAR Supervisor, Dorchester County Public Schools
6. Dr. Eduardo Sindaco, Academic Acceleration Specialist, Maryland State Department of Education

### Site Visit Day 1

Wednesday, February 7, 2024

### Site Visit Day 2

Thursday, February 8, 2024

### Number of Classroom Reviewed

Eight

### Description of Classroom Visited

| Wednesday, February 7, 2024   | Thursday, February 8, 2024   |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ELA 2<sup>nd</sup></li> <li>• Math 5<sup>th</sup></li> <li>• Math K</li> <li>• STRIVE</li> <li>• ELA 3<sup>rd</sup></li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• STRIVE IST</li> <li>• ELA 4<sup>th</sup></li> <li>• ELA 1<sup>st</sup></li> </ul> |

### Number of Interviews

One

- Principal

### Number of Focus Groups

Four

- 6 Students

- 5 School Leaders
- 8 Teachers
- 8 Parents

#### **Documents Analyzed**

- Site visit documentation submitted by the school and LEA.

## Appendix B

### MARYLAND SCHOOL REVIEW RUBRIC

#### Ratings for Darlington Elementary

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 reviewed through data documentation or during the on-site school review.