

# Maryland School Review

## Expert Review Team Report

### Bluford Drew Jemison STEM Academy 6-12

Maryland State Department of Education

Office of Teaching and Learning

November 29, 2023



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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-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 four 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 BLUFORD DREW JEMISON STEM ACADEMY WEST

Bluford Drew Jemison STEM Academy West School, located in Baltimore City, serves a total of 239 students in grades 6th - 12th. The enrolled population is made up 100% African American males. The school's population includes approximately 80% of students that receive free or reduced meals and 38% 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](#).

Schools identified as Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) Low Performing and/or CSI Not Exiting in the 2022-2023 school year and selected for an ERT visit, received a differentiated visit to avoid duplication of data requests and integrate into the school improvement process in collaboration with the Office of School Improvement and Transformation at MSDE.

## SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The following table summarizes the school's ratings on each domain. The school scored its highest rating of Accomplishing in Curriculum and Instruction, Community Schools, and Observation and Feedback; and its lowest rating of Developing in Classroom Instruction. 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 | 75%        | Accomplishing |
| Classroom Instruction                  | 52%        | Developing    |
| Assessment and Timing                  | 70%        | Accomplishing |

| Domain 2: Student Support       |            |               |
|---------------------------------|------------|---------------|
| Indicator                       | Percentage | Rating        |
| Multi-Tiered Systems of Support | 62%        | Accomplishing |
| Community Schools               | 75%        | Accomplishing |
| Opportunities and Access        | 50%        | Developing    |

| Domain 3: Educator Support |            |               |
|----------------------------|------------|---------------|
| Indicator                  | Percentage | Rating        |
| Observation and Feedback   | 75%        | Accomplishing |
| Professional Learning      | 65%        | Accomplishing |
| Career Growth              | 64%        | 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.

- Implement professional development and accountability measures to support educator's understanding of the structure, role, and purpose of academic standards, learning objectives and the alignment of standards and objectives to instruction. Professional development should include, unpacking the standards and assessment limits, and aligning explicit instruction and student tasks/assessments.
- Create a tiered system of support to provide academic and social-emotional interventions for students requiring additional support. Tiered levels of support (1 - 3) should be research-based and include a documented list of strategies.
- Ensure explicit instruction is available to all students in all classes daily following a model that incorporates a mini-lesson (I do), guided practice (we do), and independent practice (you do). Explicit instruction should reinforce the main point, objective, standard of the lesson, new learning for students, and allow student practice and feedback while including critical vocabulary.
- Develop a post evaluation process for teachers that includes actionable feedback and recommendations to improve instructional strategies and student outcomes. The process should be structured for new teachers and veteran teachers to support their varying strengths and abilities.

## 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 school uses Achieve3000 to target reading comprehension and fluency and this platform ensures differentiation as the technology is adaptive and creates materials/resources that are modified for individualized student learning.

- One out of three classrooms reviewed used Achieve3000 to target reading comprehension and fluency.
- Per the Achieve3000 intervention, an adaptive curriculum, auto-differentiation of text complexity was present.

A variety of questions are used to challenge students and promote higher-order thinking.

- The U.S. Government instructor posed a significant number of questions, many of which were higher order in that they required justification. Students were encouraged to cite evidence from a text to support their answers.
- Evidence of timely feedback was noted in the math class. Individual verbal support was provided to specific students within the classroom, as needed.
- The Achieve3000 is an adaptive curriculum, therefore, adjustments to text are automatic. No observable adjustments, however, were made by the teacher to instruction.

Explicit instruction was used within the classroom and reinforced the main point of the objective and focused on critical content and concepts.

- In one out of three classes, the teacher emphasizes the 14th Amendment, the Plessy v. Ferguson decision, and the Civil Rights Act and the ineffectiveness of each legislation in ensuring equal protection for all.

Goals were visible in student-friendly language with standard aligned vocabulary.

- In one classroom the math objective and standard were posted on the board.

Teacher-to-student and student-to-student interactions were positive and respectful creating an environment conducive to learning.

- Reviewers noted in all three classes, teacher interactions with students were positive and respectful. All teachers greeted students and students responded respectfully.



- Students helped each other clean up an accidental spill, greeted each other, opened the door, and welcomed peers to seats near each other.

## AREAS FOR GROWTH

Build structures and systems targeted toward ensuring daily instruction is written with language in the objective that aligns with the LEA's course curriculum and is accessible for students to make connections.

- In all three of the classrooms visited, standards and objectives were posted but the classroom reviewers noticed objectives were not aligned with the instruction that was delivered. Additionally, no complex text or specific materials were observed in all three of the classrooms visited. While conducting the reviews, in one of the classrooms students were working on Achieve3000 intervention, and none of the classes reviewed included culturally responsive strategies.
- During focus group discussions, all teachers reported that the curriculum was not appropriate for the student population as the scope and sequence did not allow for remediation.
- Teachers shared that they currently do not receive any professional development related to curriculum or learning focused on reviewing academic data from previous learning sessions.

There should be a clear plan for differentiating instruction to meet the needs of the student.

- Each class observed had a posted daily objective. However, there was little to no evidence of a connection between the daily objectives and instruction. A greater connection between objectives/targets and instruction would support the teacher's ability to identify student needs for extensions and support leading to differentiation opportunities.

Structure questioning for lessons to ensure students are challenged with higher-ordered questions.

- The majority of the questions posed that required justification relied on personal opinion rather than prior covered content, textual evidence, or accurate numeracy strategies.
- In all three classes, a majority of the questions posed were compliance questions such as, "Did you write this down", "Did you get X for an answer", and "How many of you had to slow down when you were reading".
- Incorporating collaborative learning should allow students to learn alongside and from one another to cooperatively solve problems and develop answers to questions.

The school and LEA should increase job-embedded professional learning for teachers and leaders to ensure the effective use of high-quality instructional materials for the specific student demographics and the specific focus of the STEM program within the school.

- Teachers do not currently receive any professional development directly related to the curriculum.
- It was reported that summer professional learning focused on reviewing academic data from the previous year and not curriculum implementation.
- Reviewer familiarity with Achieve3000 led to the conclusion that differentiation was present. However, there was no explicit reference to differentiation during instruction. Therefore, if reviewers were not familiar with the tool, then differentiation would not have been obvious or apparent.

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Provide professional development to teachers for giving student feedback that is specific, timely, and aligned to the content lesson or task.

- Clarifying lesson objectives and purpose will support teachers in being able to deliver specific, timely information to students based on the content of the lesson.
- From the classroom reviews, feedback on student tasks appeared to be predominantly compliance-based. For example, in both the English and U.S. Government classes, students were repeatedly asked if they "wrote down or copied" the notes the teacher wrote in the front of the room. Rather than giving feedback on quality.
- Students were encouraged to take notes throughout the lesson. However, checking for understanding to ensure that students fully understood what they were copying was not evident.
- While other terms were referenced, allowing students to relate new learning to prior knowledge and lessons would have been helpful toward deepening students understanding.

## 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

The school should collaborate with the LEA on building structures and systems for administrators and school leaders to ensure daily instruction includes written language that aligns with the LEA pacing for core curriculum and science, technology, engineering, arts, and mathematics (STEM/STEAM).

#### ACTION STEPS:

As a result of this school review:

- Connect with the LEA’s PD team or curricular office to receive guidance on designing process systems for aligning daily lessons and objectives with curriculum pacing guides.
- Develop a cross-functional team of experts (school-based and central office) to develop professional development with STEM-focused content learning sessions.

#### RESOURCES:

1. [Baltimore City PS Systemic Professional Learning Catalogue](#)

**FOCUS AREA 2**

Connect the learning between explicit instruction and collaborative learning to provide students with intentional opportunities to collaborate in groups and drive the learning in the gradual release model.

**ACTION STEPS:**

As a result of this school review:

- Provide professional development on differentiation to meet student needs while challenging their thinking with higher-order questions with tasks that will help students drive learning.

**RESOURCES:**

1. [STEM Education Journal: Teachers' roles and identities in student-centered classrooms](#)

**FOCUS AREA 3**

Create a clear plan for differentiating instruction to meet the needs of the student and structure questioning for lessons to ensure students are challenged with higher-ordered questions.

**ACTION STEPS:**

As a result of this school review:

- Implement a multi-tiered system of support to provide prevention and intervention services and support to meet student needs.

**RESOURCES:**

1. [ASCD Streaming: Differentiated Instruction in Action – Middle School](#)
2. [Where the Promise of the American Dream Falls Short in Schools: Race and Equity in Our Schools](#)

## Domain 2: Student Support

### Student Support

Schools use data to identify students and implement a multi-tiered approach to support all student groups.

## Findings and Recommendations

### STRENGTHS

The school has an informal system of support for students who require assistance or mentoring.

- Two teachers and school leaders described an informal system of support designed to assist students who require additional support (e.g., restorative circles, lunch meetings, informal mentoring sessions)

The school has a support pathway for College and Career Readiness (CRR).

- The school principal introduced us to the career and pathways coordinator who explained his role of supporting 9/10th grade students through 12th grade successfully, specifically students without IEPs or 504s.
- All teachers and school leaders described a "9th grade Academy" designed to ensure 9th graders start and stay on track to graduate.
- All school leaders reported that students take the practice Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) to prepare for the actual test. Student data is used to provide informal support to students who scored low in performance bands.

The school has a partnership with a community college.

- Two students briefly described a recent visit from a local community college designed to introduce them to post-secondary options; however, there is no such program that occurs regularly at the school. Additionally, all participants in the focus groups explained this is not a consistently available program.

The school measures students' progress toward graduating on time.

- The school has staff devoted to students being on track for graduation while also monitoring student attendance.
- During the school leader's focus groups, the assistant principal said they were responsible for evaluating data for ongoing professional development.
- Additionally, the Advance Placement (AP) teacher cited that the curriculum, selection of students, and student's ability to complete the course work are not aligned.

Students have access to a well-rounded curriculum.

- During focus groups, students, teachers, and parents identified courses offered and taught such as Spanish, Chemistry, Art, and Robotics.

The school has a partnership to address barriers that affect marginalized students, African American males.

- Omega Psi Phi Fraternity Inc. at Morgan State meets with different students over lunch and builds relationships with students to prepare them for life. Partnerships with “Soles for Souls” and “Angels for Angels” provide services and support for students in need.
- While there is evidence of a well-rounded curriculum offered for the students who are traditionally marginalized, the students want more support for the STEM-focused program.

## AREAS FOR GROWTH

The school should implement a more intentional structure of support for a multi-tiered system for academic and behavioral support.

- During the teacher and school leader focus groups, participants noted that the school does not have a documented system for monitoring which students need additional support.
- The school does not utilize a tiered approach to providing support. One school leader and three teachers described the school having universal Tier 1 support offered to all students. However, they could not describe Tier 2 or Tier 3 support outside of special education support for students with individualized education plans (IEP).

The school would benefit from supplemental tutoring and mental health support.

- While the participants in each of the focus groups referenced a coach class they may attend after-school for support to make up missing assignments, tutoring sessions are not available for all students. Additionally, the school does not currently employ a school social worker on staff.

## 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

Implement an intentional structure of support for a multi-tiered system for academic and behavioral support.

#### ACTION STEPS:

As a result of this school review:

- Implement a multi-tiered system of support to provide prevention and intervention services and support to meet student needs.

#### RESOURCES:

1. [Differentiated Activities for Middle School Social Studies: Teaching Language Arts & More](#)

## Domain 3: Educator Support

### Educators Support

Educators at all levels are provided with support to improve results and shift instructional practice.

## Findings and Recommendations

### STRENGTHS

Teachers and leaders are regularly observed and receive feedback from supervisors.

- Teachers reported being regularly observed by administrators and feedback provided during conferences. One administrator mentioned specific feedback to teachers regarding data and performance.
- Informal observations happen at least bi-weekly for all teachers. New teachers may receive informal observations weekly.

Support for new teachers by a mentor or a coach is provided by the LEA and school.

- New teachers described receiving onboarding PD from veteran staff.
- New teachers reported that they received a series of trainings during their onboarding including being matched with a more veteran teacher for support.
- During the focus group, teachers described bi-weekly collaborative meetings where they look at student assessment data to check for levels of proficiency. Also, students are grouped according to their performance. Ex: unit tests.

### AREAS FOR GROWTH

Support teachers with actionable feedback and professional development with a specific focus on improving instruction.

- Teachers and administrators cited observations that occurred, but the feedback provided was not aligned with professional development and specific examples of feedback for improvement were not provided.
- While bi-weekly or weekly collaborative planning meetings are scheduled, the teachers expressed a need for increased professional development aligned to meeting student needs.
- Although administrators mentioned utilizing data at the beginning of the year and in conversations with teachers, there was no evidence of ongoing professional development for staff.
- Teachers reported they are not aware of opportunities for growth within the building; but have heard of opportunities that may be available if they transfer to other schools or positions at the central office.



- During the focus group, one of the ten teachers mentioned that strong staff members are typically reassigned to other students or go to central office positions, as opposed to moving up within the building and continuing to support current staff.

## 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

Develop a schedule that outlines a structure for supporting teachers with creating lessons for students consisting of collaborative learning, questioning, and student-driven learning strategies.

#### ACTION STEPS:

As a result of this school review:

- Develop professional learning that supports new and veteran teachers with instructional practices that need to be strengthened or developed.
- Provide professional development to all staff on explicit instruction that includes mini-lessons, guided practice, and independent practice.

#### RESOURCES:

1. [Baltimore City Public Schools Instructional Framework 3.0](#)

# Appendix A

## SUMMARY OF EXPERT REVIEW TEAM ACTIVITIES

### Expert Review Team Members

1. Dr. Martha James, Associate Professor, Morgan State University
2. Nakeisha Savage, Instructional Specialist, Anne Arundel County Public Schools
3. Danielle Goddard-Ellis, Consultant, New Leaders
4. Nicole Cole, Independent Consultant
5. Joe Sampson, Coordinator of Maryland Lead's Grant and Blueprint for Maryland's Future, Calvert County Public Schools
6. Robert A Murphy, President, Comprehensive Discipline Solutions

### Site Visit Day 1

November 29, 2023

### Number of Classroom Reviewed

Three

### Description of Classroom Visited

|   |
|---|
| <b>December 15, 2023</b>  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• English 1</li> <li>• US Government</li> <li>• Mathematics 6</li> </ul> |

### Number of Interviews

One

- Principal

### Number of Focus Groups

Five

- 6 students (in-person)
- 2 students (virtual)
- 5 school leaders
- 10 teachers

- 2 parents

#### **Documents Analyzed**

- Site visit documentation submitted by the school and LEA.

## Appendix B

### MARYLAND SCHOOL REVIEW RUBRIC

#### Ratings for Bluford Drew Jemison STEM Academy 6 - 12

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