Office of Achievement and Accountability
Division of School Evaluation and Accountability

School Effectiveness Review

2014 - 2015

Abbottston Elementary School

February 18-19, 2015
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Part I: Introduction and School Background

Introduction to the School Effectiveness Review

Baltimore City Public Schools (City Schools) developed the School Effectiveness Framework and the School Effectiveness Review process in 2009. The School Effectiveness Review (SER) uses trained school reviewers to measure a school’s effectiveness against City Schools’ School Effectiveness Standards. The School Effectiveness Standards are aligned with City Schools’ effectiveness frameworks for teachers and school leaders.

The SER provides an objective and evidence-based analysis of how well a school is working to educate its students. It generates a rich layer of qualitative data that may not be revealed when evaluating a school solely on student performance outcomes. It also provides district and school-level staff with objective and useful information when making strategic decisions that impact student achievement.

The SER team, comprised of representatives from City Schools who have extensive knowledge about schools and instruction, gathered information from teachers, students, parents, and leadership during a two-day site visit. During the visit, the SER team observed classrooms, reviewed selected school documents, and conducted focus groups with school leadership, teachers, students, and parents. The SER team analyzed evidence collected over the course of the SER to determine the extent to which key actions have been adopted and implemented at the school. This report summarizes the ratings in the four domains and related key actions, provides evidence to support the ratings, and – based on a rubric – allocates a performance level for each key action. More information about the SER process is detailed in the School Effectiveness Review protocol, located on the City Schools website and available upon request from the Office of Achievement and Accountability in City Schools.

School Background

Abottston Elementary School serves approximately 150 students in Pre-Kindergarten through fifth grades. The school is located on Gorsuch Avenue in the Coldstream/Chillum community of Baltimore, Maryland. The principal, Mrs. Cathleen Miles, has been at the school for four years. For more information about the school’s student demographics and student achievement data, please see the School Profile, located on the City Schools website.
## Part II: Summary of Performance Levels

Based on trends found in the collected evidence, the SER team assigns a performance level to each key action.

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<td><strong>Domain 2: Talented People</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Domain 3: Vision and Engagement</strong></td>
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<td>3.1 The school provides a safe and supportive learning environment for students, families, teachers, and staff.</td>
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<td>3.2 The school cultivates and sustains open communication and decision-making opportunities with families about school events, policies, and the academic and social development of their children.</td>
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<td>4.1 The school establishes growth goals that guide strategic planning, teaching, and adjusting of practice to meet student needs.</td>
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### Part III: Findings on Domains of Effective Schools

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#### Domain 1: Highly Effective Instruction

**Key action 1.1: Teachers plan highly effective instruction.**  
**Effective**

- Teachers implement standards-based daily lessons, units, and long-term plans using appropriate curriculum planning documents. School leadership and teachers reported that teachers implement the district’s curriculum materials including the literacy modules lesson plans. A review of lesson plans confirmed the implementation of Common Core State Standards. Specifically, one lesson plan referred to standard RL.3.4: “Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, distinguishing literal from nonliteral language” and included the following objective: “Students will be able to use context clues in order to determine the meaning of unfamiliar words.”

- Most teachers design daily lessons that meet learners’ unique needs. School leadership reported that although teachers use the district’s curriculum, the Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) looks at how to extend the lessons to include accommodations and modifications and small group instruction. To this end, school leadership stated and a review of the 2014-2015 Lesson Plan Addendum confirmed that the ILT created an addendum in the form of a template to accompany the district’s lesson plans (which includes the previously mentioned components) that some teachers have chosen to use. Teachers confirmed the addition to the lesson plan and that it includes boxes to insert small group instruction, accommodations and modifications, and some differentiated activities. School leadership also stated that some teachers add notes to the lesson plans to indicate the addition of these components. Teachers added that some teachers include differentiated exit tickets and assessments in the lesson plans. Upon a review of plans, it was noted that most plans did include the abovementioned components. For example, one lesson plan contained three groups of students reading three different texts; one group was assigned to read *The Dust Bowl*, while another group was assigned to read *The Dirty Thirties*, and the final group was assigned to read *The Great Depression*.

- Teachers set and track goals based on students’ performance levels. School leadership reported that teachers set goals based on Beginning of the Year data (BOY) and Middle of the Year (MOY) data from Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Learning Skills (DIBELS), Text Reading Comprehension (TRC), and math interim assessments through the Data Driven Instructional Teams (DDIT) process, which teachers confirmed. School leadership and teachers also reported that goals are tracked through exit tickets and informal class assessments (which vary from teacher-to-teacher). School leadership added that students’ progress is also tracked through monitoring of the Maryland College and Career Readiness Standards (MDCCRS) “I Can” statements (a rubric in which students’ capabilities of demonstrating the understanding of specific skills is rated). A review of a DDIT forms revealed the Specific, Measureable,
Attainable, Realistic, and Timely (SMART) goal for students. For example one goal was “The percentage of students in grade five scoring proficient of higher in mathematics will increase from 59% to 70% by the end of quarter four as measured by Interim four.”

Key action 1.2: Teachers deliver highly effective instruction.

- Teachers use and communicate standards-based lesson objectives and align learning activities to the stated lesson objectives. In 86% of classrooms (n=7) standards-based lesson objectives were communicated to students by either being posted, explained, or referenced during the lesson. In 71% of classrooms, the lesson activities and resources aligned with the stated lesson objectives. In one class, the posted objective read “I can represent shaded and non-shaded parts of a whole as fractions.” During the observation, students were observed creating equations based on shaded and non-shaded parts of figures.

- Teachers present content in various ways and emphasize key points to make content clear. In 100% of classes (n=7), teachers presented accurate, grade-level content. In 43% of classrooms, teachers presented content in two or more ways to make content clear for students. In one class a teacher used a text, manipulatives, and a problem set to teach the content. Lastly, in 86% of classrooms, teachers modeled academic vocabulary and used standard grammatical structures. In the previously mentioned class, the teacher used terms such as “array” and “organized”.

- Most teachers use multiple strategies and tasks to engage all students in rigorous work. In 100% of classes (n=7), all tasks had a clear and intentional purpose in that the tasks were related to the objectives. In 71% of classes, teachers provided access to materials by scaffolding and/or differentiating tasks. In some classes, teachers scaffolded for students by modeling and giving students additional guided practice before releasing students to complete independent work. However, in only 29% of classes, did students have time and opportunities to grapple with complex texts and/or rigorous tasks. One example observed, students were asked to identify pictures that began with the same sound as the emphasized sound and to attempt to write the words (describing the pictures) once they had completed the first assigned task.

- Most teachers use evidence-dependent questioning. In 86% of classrooms (n=7), teachers asked questions at key points throughout the lesson. In only 57% of classes, teachers asked questions requiring students to justify, cite evidence, or explain their thought processes. Finally in 71% of classes, teachers asked questions that were clear and scaffolded. In one class, the teacher asked the following questions, “What does it mean to blend [letter sounds]?” , “What other word could go in this word family?” , and “Why did you circle this picture?”
Most teachers check for student understanding and provide specific academic feedback. In 71% of classrooms (n=7), teachers conducted one or more checks for understanding that yielded useful information at key points throughout the lesson. For example, in one class, the teacher circulated around the room to listen to students’ discussions to check for students’ understanding of the content. Next, in only 43% of classes, did teachers provide specific academic feedback to communicate current progress and next steps to move forward. In one class, when a student struggled to identify rhyming words, the teacher admonished the student to determine which two words ended with the “-at” sound.

Most teachers facilitate student-to-student interaction and academic talk. In 71% of classes (n=7), teachers provided one or more opportunities for student-to-student interaction through partner and group work. However, in only 57% of classes, did student-to-student interactions prompt students to engage in discussions with their peers to make meaning of content or deepen their understanding of the content. In one class, students worked together to determine how to create an array with the groups’ manipulatives. Additionally, in 71% of classes students used academic talk. For example, in one class students used terms such as “unit fractions” and “intervals”.

Teachers analyze students’ progress toward goals. School leadership and teachers reported that the Data Drive Instruction Team (DDIT) process is used to analyze math and literacy data (Text Reading Comprehension- beginning, middle, and end of year data and Math Interim Assessment) during collaborative planning meetings and that the process is led by the Mathematics and Literacy representatives. School leadership added that teachers had recently completed the second DDIT cycle, which teachers and a review of DDIT forms and the Data Inquiry Process Calendar confirmed.

Teachers modify instruction in response to data. School leadership reported that teachers modify instruction by changing the activities and the frequency of small group instruction, which teachers confirmed. School leadership also stated that teachers modify instruction by incorporating mini-lessons and shared graphic organizers (across grade levels). Teachers confirmed the implementation of small group instruction and added that teachers may modify by adding one-on-one instruction for students who are performing far above grade level and incorporating other resources such a Reading A-Z, Leveled Literacy Intervention, and Do the Math. A review of DDIT forms confirmed the use of all of the abovementioned strategies. Also a review of formal observation feedback through the Online Performance Management System (OPMS) confirmed that teachers are expected to modify instruction in response to data. The feedback reads “Teacher has analysis and instructional strategies and impact forms complete and ready to discuss. Teacher will continue to identify instructional strategies and what it looks like for the teacher, student, and outcome (based on BOY assessment data)”.

Key action 1.3: Teachers use multiple data sources to adjust practice. Effective
• Teachers appropriately recommend students for tiered interventions including some opportunities for acceleration. School leadership reported and teachers confirmed that the school uses Reading Rampage as a school-wide intervention and an opportunity for acceleration because it is based on students’ reading levels and provides targeted texts and activities for students across performance levels. School leadership and teachers also reported that Spatial Temporal (ST) Math (a computer software program) is also used as an intervention and opportunity for acceleration because it adjusts to students’ skill levels and can be customized to address the curricular concepts teachers are addressing in class. Continuing, school leadership and teachers reported that a staff member pulls small groups of accelerated students in addition to proficient students who are close to the advanced level in third through fifth grades during Reading Rampage and that the special educator works with students who may be performing below grade level. Teachers reported that interventions and acceleration opportunities are provided for pre-kindergarten students through Drop Everything and Read (DEAR) time and small group instruction. School leadership reported that a teacher may be hired in the future to work with accelerated students in Kindergarten through Second Grades. A review of a teacher’s weekly schedule confirmed that Reading Rampage is a consistent school-wide practice.

Key action 1.4: School leadership supports highly effective instruction. Effective

• School leadership holds and promotes an instructional vision of high student achievement. School leadership reported that every adult should know every student in their class and plan for students’ needs based upon student data. Continuing school leadership reported that students should be engaged in class activities because they are challenged at the appropriate level and that teachers should include small (flexible) group instruction, student-to-student interaction, and accountable talk in their instruction. However, teachers only confirmed that small group instruction should be included as an instructional strategy and added that mini lessons and process charts should be a part of the daily lessons. School leadership and teachers reported that the instructional vision is communicated through professional development and collaborative planning meetings, which teachers and a review of agendas confirmed.

• School leadership ensures that teachers engage in the planning of the curricula through oversight of standards-based units, lessons, and pacing. School leadership reported that teachers must bring data and lesson plan binders to every formal discussion (including pre-observation conferences), which teachers and a review of the formal observation process summary confirmed. Continuing, school leadership reported that the Mathematics and Literacy Representatives conduct check-ins with teachers regarding planning and pacing during collaborative planning meetings, which collaborative planning agendas confirmed. Teachers reported that the principal reviews teachers’ submissions to Data Link, which would give the principal insight into where they are in the curriculum. Finally, school leadership and teachers reported that the principal conducts informal observations, during which lesson plan binders are also examined. One collaborative planning agenda noted the discussion topic: Principal Review of the Lesson Plan Binder.
• School leadership provides formative feedback and guidance to teachers about the quality of planning, teaching, and adjustment of practice. School leadership reported that verbal feedback is offered after each informal observation and followed up with written feedback, which teachers confirmed. Teachers reported that they are observed frequently, sometimes on a daily basis. Teachers added that the principal offers suggestions/strategies and on-the-spot coaching which they found beneficial. School leadership added that reflections from informal observations are brought to the Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) to determine instructional areas of focus for the school, which a review of notes from an ILT meeting confirmed. A review of an informal observation form revealed the following questions submitted from school leadership to the teacher observed: “How can posting student work with a rubric push academic achievement?” and “Was the objective said and/or re-stated by students?”

• School leadership demonstrates an understanding of data analysis and ensures the use of a complete student learning data-cycle. School leadership reported that teachers have received a variety of trainings (systemic and on-site with principal) on Data Driven Instructional Teams (DDIT) process, which teachers and a review of a presentation confirmed. School leadership and teachers reported that the data forms are discussed during ILT, collaborative planning, and professional development meetings, which a review of agendas confirmed. School leadership reported that there is an expectation that DDIT forms be submitted at designated times, which a review of data inquiry process calendars confirmed. Collaborative planning meeting agendas confirmed ongoing discussions around data analysis and the use of data in instruction.

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**Key action 1.5: Teachers establish a classroom environment in which teaching and learning can occur.**

• Teachers are working to build a positive, learning-focused classroom culture. In 100% of classrooms (n=7), all teacher-initiated interactions with students were positive and respectful. All teachers used engaging tones with students. In 100% of classes, all student-initiated interactions with the teacher were positive and respectful. Even when corrected, students always maintained a favorable disposition with the teacher. However, in only 14% of classes, were all student-to-student interactions positive and respectful. In some classes, students did not work well together and were disrespectful to one another. Finally, in 88% of classes, students were active participants in classwork and discussion in that most students were on task.

• Teachers reinforce positive behavior and redirect off-task or challenging behavior, when needed. In 71% of classes (n=7), teachers promoted and or reinforced positive behavior. For example, in one class the teacher told the class “[I’m] very proud of you. You look amazing” in response to students being ready for learning. In 57% of classes, less than 10% of teachers’ time was used for redirection or discipline. Finally in 57% of classes, the estimated percent of students not complying with the
lessons’ directions and not working on intended activities was less than 10%. In most classes, the majority of students were on task.

- Teachers implement routines to maximize instructional time. In 71% of classes (n=7), routines and procedures ran smoothly with minimal prompting from the teacher. For example in one class, students transitioned from whole group instruction to small groups quickly and quietly. In 71% of classes the teachers’ arrangement of the classroom and materials allowed for efficient classroom movement and use or access. Most classrooms contained sufficient materials and were organized in such a way that students were able to effectively utilize the materials. In 100% of classes, the estimated percent of classroom time spent on transitions was less than 10%. Lastly, in 100% of classes the estimated time students were idle while waiting for the teacher was less than 10%.
School leadership has created and implemented an organizational and staffing structure that meets the diverse needs of all students. School leadership reported that the needs of the school and the capacity and interest of the staff are evaluated when creating positions within the school. School leadership and teachers reported that the school has a staff member that supports the school by providing interventions, acceleration opportunities, and support with the school’s climate. School leadership and teachers reported that the school has a part-time social-worker, a part-time psychologist, and a Hope Health counselor. Additionally, school leadership and teachers reported that the school has a music teacher (part-time), a technology program (coordinated by a teacher and a parent volunteer), and physical education. Teachers reported that the school has special educators that also provide literacy and mathematics support. Lastly teachers reported that all teachers serve as reading teachers during the Reading Rampage block. A review of the school’s staff roster confirmed these courses and staff positions.

School leadership leverages a pipeline for staff recruitment and uses multiple measures and includes stakeholders in the assessment of candidates. School leadership and teachers reported that the school acquires candidates through the district’s Human Capital department (which a flyer from the transfer fair confirmed), Towson and Morgan State Universities, the Baltimore City Teaching Residency (BCTR), the Urban Teacher Center (UTC), principal referrals/recommendations, and staff referrals. School leadership reported that the hiring process can vary depending upon the time of year, but generally includes a resume screening, a phone interview, a tour of the building, and panel interview (with school leadership and teachers), and a sample lesson. Most teachers confirmed the process as outlined above, while few teachers reported being hired after an interview.

School leadership includes staff members and other stakeholders in the development and retention of effective teachers and staff. School leadership and teachers reported that teachers participate in Learning Walks and peer observations through the Cycles of Professional Learning, which a review of peer observation and learning walk forms and meeting agendas confirmed. School leadership and teachers also reported that some teachers were chosen serve as mentors to Early Career teachers. Continuing school leadership and teachers reported that teachers lead professional development and assist one another through collaboration during collaborative planning meetings. In regards to retention, teachers reported that they remain at the school because it is a small school; teachers are valued as professionals and are supported by the principal. Additionally, teachers stated, families are supportive of the school and its programs, and the relationships with students are positive.
• School leadership has created a mentoring program, to support the development of all new teachers and staff and monitors the program’s effectiveness. School leadership reported, and teachers confirmed that there is a site-based mentor at the school who has received training from the district; in addition there is another teacher who serves as a mentor. Teachers reported that the site-based mentor meets with the assigned teachers weekly, while another mentor teacher has a co-teaching structure with another early career teacher and meets daily. Meetings agendas confirmed that the site-based mentor meets with the teacher (who is not new to the profession, but new to the district) on Thursdays to discuss lesson planning and district initiatives. The site based mentor reported that the mentor-mentee relationship is a collaborative one and that both parties learn from each other. School leadership and teachers reported that the program is monitored through ongoing conversations with the mentors and the mentees.

Key action 2.2: The school has created and implemented systems to evaluate teachers and staff against individual and school-wide goals, provide interventions to those who are not meeting expectations, and remove those who do not make reasonable improvement.

• School leadership makes full use of the evaluation system to develop faculty and staff capacity. School leadership reported that the formal observation calendar is sent to teachers at the beginning of the year, which teachers and a letter to teachers (with the observation schedule) confirmed. Continuing, school leadership and teachers reported that the observation process consists of the Pre-Observation conference, the formal observation period, and the Post-Observation meeting, which a review of completed formal observations confirmed. School leadership and teachers added, and a review of the previously mentioned letter confirmed that following the formal observation period, the scripted observation notes are sent to teachers and teachers are asked to rate themselves according to the Instructional Framework and bring the information to the Post-Observation meeting for a discussion around how their ratings compare with the ratings of school leadership. School leadership reported that trends from the formal observations are presented during Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) meetings so that best teacher practices can be presented in Collaborative Planning Meetings. School leadership reported that teachers rated as Effective and Highly Effective in a particular practice may be used as peer coaches or to assume other leadership opportunities within the school.

• School leadership provides timely support and interventions to struggling teachers and staff as indicated by data and/or informal or formal observations and holds them accountable for performance. School leadership reported that struggling teachers are identified by informal observations, which teachers confirmed. School leadership reported and a review of the Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) confirmed that one teacher is currently on a PIP and has two peer coaches (one for instruction and one for culture and climate) to assist with organizational strategies, time management, content knowledge, and lesson planning, which teachers confirmed. School leadership reported that the one month review had just been completed and the peer coaches and the teacher
receiving support turn in weekly reflection notes from their meetings. Additionally school leadership reported that the teacher submits lesson plans weekly to school leadership to receive feedback, which a review of the PIP also confirmed.

- School leadership engages faculty in a school-wide professional development plan based on identified needs and in alignment with the school’s instructional vision. School leadership and teachers reported that the professional development plan was created to align with the vision of the school of knowing students and being able to meet students’ instructional needs. School leadership added that the plan has to be flexible to accommodate the facilitation of district initiatives. Teachers reported that the professional development occurs during the first Monday of every month. School leadership and teachers reported and a review of the professional development plan confirmed that some professional development topics have included: the DDIT process, Leveled Literacy Instruction, small group instruction, and how to conduct mini-lessons.
Domain 3: Vision and Engagement

Key action 3.1: The school provides a safe and supportive learning environment for students, families, teachers, and staff.

- The school community shares some understanding of, and commitment to, the school mission, vision, and values, including an understanding of strategic goals and initiatives. School leadership reported that the vision of the school is to know every child well and to teach and instruct at the highest level in order to move students to achieve at higher levels. Continuing school leadership reported that the mission of the school is that the school community will work together to prepare students for citizenship and the next level of education. Some teachers reported and a review of a letter to staff confirmed that the mission is “To equip all students with the ability to achieve at high levels, both academically and socially in order to become college and career ready. We accomplish this by knowing our students well [and] by including all stakeholders to provide high quality instruction and a nurturing community where children feel safe, productive, and successful.” However, some staff members could not speak to the mission of the school. Parents and students reported the school’s mission is to have each student perform excellently. Community partners reported that the school’s mission is to assist students with achieving their goals. School leadership and teachers reported that the mission/vision is communicated during meetings. School leadership reported that the mission is used as the guide post to bring teachers back to purpose of the school, particularly during challenging times. Most stakeholders could speak to the school’s goals around student achievement. Additionally, school leadership, teachers, staff, parents, and community partners reported that the schools initiatives were focused around building and sustaining student and family relationships and meeting students’ needs.

- Students, staff, and families feel physically and emotionally safe at the school. All stakeholders reported that the school is physically safe due to the security system, locked doors, the clean environment, the constant monitoring of the school by the staff, and the consistent reinforcement of school-wide expectations (i.e. students traveling in pairs). Continuing stakeholders reported that the “small school structure” supports the physical and emotional safety in that all staff members know all of the students and, who belongs in the building; and reports concerns to the appropriate parties. Additionally all stakeholders reported that the emotional health of students is important and is closely monitored and that the school offers counseling for students through Hope Health (individual and groups counseling). Parents reported that families feel welcome in the building and frequently drop in. School leadership reported that 80% of parents attend student-led conferences which are held twice per year. Teachers reported that they feel like the principal is approachable and open to feedback. Members of the site-visit team observed lockdown codes posted in certain areas of the school.
• School leadership establishes structures for the acknowledgement and celebration of student, faculty and staff success. School leadership, teachers, and parents reported that all students’ are celebrated monthly for perfect attendance (although school leadership stated that students within the chronically absent group may receive recognition more often). Continuing, school leadership reported that students are celebrated for progress in Reading Rampage and Spatial Temporal (ST) Math (postcards for 10% growth). Teachers confirmed that students are celebrated in ST Math with the postcards. Students reported that they receive pizza parties (which some community partners confirmed) for perfect attendance and that fifth graders have a graduation ceremony when they complete fifth grade. School leadership reported that staff members are acknowledged by way of announcements, emails from the principal, and baked goods and breakfasts brought in by the principal. School leadership reported and a review of the principal’s budget tool confirmed that teachers receive stipends for extra duties assumed within the school (i.e. test coordinator, ILT members). A review of the school’s calendar confirmed that a monthly attendance celebration is scheduled for the students.

• The school develops systems that proactively attend to individual students’ social and emotional needs. School leadership reported that the school proactively looks for unsatisfactory ratings on report cards so that the student support staff can determine how to assist kids. Continuing, school leadership reported that a staff member meets with new families to acclimate them to the school environment. Continuing, school leadership reported that the school has an active student support team (that provides support to students in the areas of attendance, behavior, and grades) which a review of the Staff Duties’ List confirmed. Teachers and student support staff confirmed the SST process and added that the SST process is a team effort in which all staff members come together to support students. School leadership added that last year’s caseload was analyzed to prioritize what would need to happen for the “watch kids” (students who had been in the SST process during the previous year) such as behavior support plans and behavior contracts, which a review of a support plan confirmed. Additionally student support staff reported that some students are on behavior contracts (which offer rewards for positive classroom performance and behavior). Lastly, school leadership reported and site team observations confirmed that the school has a mentoring group for fifth grade boys that is facilitated by a parent volunteer.

![Key action 3.2: The school cultivates and sustains open communication and decision-making opportunities with families about school events, policies, and the academic and social development of their children.](image-url) Effective

• The school uses multiple strategies, languages, and vehicles to communicate information about school progress, policies, events, and the academic and social development of students to families and the community. School leadership, teachers, staff members, and parents reported that the school most often uses Parent Link, flyers, monthly calendars, conversations, email messages, text messages, and phone calls to communicate with stakeholders, which students confirmed. A review of
flyers confirmed that this is one of the methods the school uses to communicate with families and the community. Community partners confirmed that they receive communication from the school through phone calls, conversations, and text messages. School leadership added that an outside translator is used for some families. Site-team members observed a flyer offering translation services in the main office.

- The school establishes regular structures for two-way communication, which facilitates opportunities for families and the community to participate in, or provide feedback on school-wide decisions. School leadership and teachers reported that the School Family Council (SFC) meets monthly and adheres to the recommended agenda that is given by the district, although additional items are sometimes included. School leadership and teachers reported that parents have given feedback on the budget and ways the school can use its resources such as adding interventions, materials, and staff. Teachers also reported that the school hosts monthly family workshops, which a review of the school’s calendar confirmed. Moreover school leadership and teachers reported that the school has student-led conferences that approximately 80% of parents and families attend. Community partners reported that they can speak with the principal whenever they need to have a conversation regarding the school. A review of the flyers and the school’s calendar confirmed that SFC meetings are held monthly. An agenda from one SFC meeting revealed the following topics: Analyze Progress, Calendar Notes, PARCC Assessment Next Month, and Fundraising.

- School leadership establishes multiple structures for frequent communication with teachers and staff members regarding policies, progress, and school culture. School leadership and teachers reported that the principal communicates via conversations, email messages, text messages, meetings, and through Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) team members (who serve as team leaders). A review of emails from school leadership to teachers confirmed that email is one method school leadership uses to communicate with teachers.

| Key action 3.3: The culture of the school reflects and embraces student, staff, and community diversity. | Effective |

- School leadership, teachers, and staff build strong relationships with families and community stakeholders from diverse backgrounds. School leadership reported that the school has a food pantry that is accessible to the community, but added that the school is working to institute a more regular distribution process. Continuing school leadership reported that the school attempts to create a welcoming environment for all students and families, by being inclusive of all cultures. Additionally school leadership reported that the school partners with churches, educational organizations, and business, which community partners, and a review of letters confirmed. School leadership reported that the school is associated with the Greater Homewood Community Association (which a letter from Representative Mary Pat Clarke to the district confirmed) and is in the process of acquiring a community liaison. Teachers reported that the school has an orientation for students in Pre
Kindergarten and their families, monthly family workshops, and student-led conferences. A review of the school’s calendar confirmed that monthly family workshops are scheduled. Teachers added that family members are encouraged to volunteer and some volunteer opportunities have led to employment opportunities for parents.

- The school’s curricula, resources and programs consider socioeconomic diversity and some cultural diversity. School leadership and teachers reported that the district’s curriculum is diverse in that students read about Native Americans (The Birchbark House), and traditions around the world (What the World Eats), which parents confirmed. Students reported that they have read We are the Ship and The History of Us as well as learned about Negro Spirituals in music class. School leadership and teachers reported that the school has had a holiday program, entitled “Zoobilee” and has scheduled a black history program, which the school’s calendar confirmed. Additionally school leadership and teachers reported and a review of the school’s calendar also confirmed that students have attended field trips to the National Aquarium, the Reginald F. Lewis museum, the Baltimore Zoo, and the Great Kids Farm, which parents confirmed. Teachers reported that community partners from the Peabody Institute at John’s Hopkins University teach violin lessons to students. School leadership reported that the school has a food pantry. Teachers reported that students in third through fifth grades participate in Junior Achievement Biztown, which teaches students about financial literacy. School leadership, teachers, and community partners reported that school supplies, outerwear, uniforms, and holiday gifts have been provided by community partners at various points during the school year.

- The school maintains a positive school culture and climate. School leadership reported that there is a school-wide policy of expectations and procedures with built in incentives (around attendance and academic performance in math and literacy) and a transparent intervention plan that is communicated to parents. Continuing, school leadership reported that the school attempts to avoid suspensions. To this end, teachers added that teachers have “buddy teachers” when sending students to time-out. Teachers reported that students have opportunities to participate in the school community by doing the morning announcements and opening exercises. Teachers added that the principal creates a family atmosphere, uses positive words and tones, and greets teachers positively. Teachers also reported that the school meets some of the students’ physical needs by providing them with warm clothing and food. Finally teachers stated that teachers are prepared to teach students daily and that the small school setting allows everyone to know each other. Upon entry to the school, the site-visit team was cordially welcome into a clean and orderly environment. Transitions were orderly and hallways were quiet during class time.
Domain 4: Strategic Leadership

Key action 4.1: The school establishes growth goals that guide strategic planning, teaching, and adjusting of practice to meet student needs.

- School leadership and teachers establish goals for the improvement of student learning that are measurable and aligned to student need and school improvement. School leadership and some teachers reported that the Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) helped to develop the School Performance Plan (SPP) goals. School leadership and some teachers reported and a review of the School Performance Plan confirmed that the school-wide goals are: “The percent of all students at Abbottston (135) in first through fourth grades scoring proficient or higher on EOY TRC literacy assessments will increase from BOY 34% (46 students) to EOY 44% (59 students); each grade level will gain 10% proficiency by the second interim (In first grade, 23% (7) of students were proficient on Interim 1; by Interim 4, 33% (10) of students will score proficient or advanced. In second grade, 41% (13) of students were proficient on Interim 1; by Interim 2, 51% (16) will score proficient or advanced. In third grade, 33% (6) were proficient on Interim 1; by Interim 4, 43% (8) will score proficient or advanced. In fourth grade, 4% (1) student was proficient on Interim 1; by Interim 2, 14% (4) will score proficient or advanced. In fifth grade, 25% (6) students were proficient on Interim 1; by Interim 4, 35% (8) will score proficient or advanced)” chronic absence rate for 2014-2015 will drop to 14% school-wide. Some teachers and parents could discuss the focus areas for the goals but were unsure of the measures around the school-wide goals.

- School leadership ensures the alignment of all school goals, action plans and key priorities. School leadership reported that Reading Rampage, a school-wide intervention program, twice per week for 45 minutes for each session), progress monitoring throughout the school year, reassignment of students based on Beginning of Year (BoY) and Middle of Year (MoY) data are strategies and initiatives aligned to the reading goal. Continuing school leadership and teachers reported that Spatial Temporal (ST) Math, along with the use of data cycles align with the math goal. Lastly, school leadership and teachers reported that attendance is closely monitored and incentives are provided for all students (with special incentives being provided for students who have higher rates of absenteeism) including a weekly attendance trophy, a public display of attendance, a pizza party, and prizes. A review of the SPP confirmed these strategies and initiatives.

- School leadership and staff participate in regular analysis of school-wide data and revisit and adjust action plans as needed. School leadership reported that the Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) meets weekly and analyzes the following data: Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Learning Skills (DIBELS), Text Reading Comprehension (TRC), Reading Inventory and Scholastic Evaluation (RISE), and Interim Math Data using the DDIT method (from a school-wide approach), which teachers and a review of ILT agendas confirmed. School leadership added that the ILT evaluates how teachers are using Reading Rampage (monitoring teaching practices) as well as data from administrative “walk-throughs” to determine how teacher practice can be improved. Teachers added that district
initiatives and the pre-kindergarten through fifth grade continuum are discussed. School leadership and teachers reported (at the time of the review) that the math goal was being adjusted to adjust grade-level math goals (due to the lack of Pre-tests for units) to more effectively track students’ achievement in math. A review of an ILT agenda noted the following topics: Discussion of Progress Monitoring Results, BoY literacy data, School-Wide Data and Trends for math/literacy, Data Analysis; Discussion of SPP Format and Goals.

Key action 4.2: The school allocates and deploys the resources of time, staff talent, and funding to address the priorities of growth goals for student achievement.

- Budget distributions and resource allocations always support teaching and learning. School leadership and teachers reported that the principal is always open to feedback on the budget and includes all stakeholders in decisions about how to use additional funding, which parents confirmed. School leadership reported that the needs of the school and the students are analyzed and from there, decisions are made about the budget. As it relates to staffing, the school does not have any instructional vacancies and has added a staff member that provides behavioral interventions, and a special educator, which teachers confirmed. School leadership reported and a review of a document from Principal’s Dashboard confirmed that some funding has been allocated for stipends for teachers who take on roles beyond the scope of their professional duties (ILT members, parent-community liaison, and technology coordinator). The school has also added programs for students such as New Fit Kids to provide a soccer team for students according to school leadership and teachers. School leadership and teachers reported that teachers have document cameras, Smart boards, a computer lab, a laptop cart, and sufficient resources and materials to support the teaching of the curriculum.

- School leadership leverages teacher and staff talent, expertise, and effectiveness by delegating essential responsibilities and decisions to appropriate individuals. School leadership reported that the capacity, interest, and untapped potential of staff members is evaluated when looking at which staff members can take on additional roles. Teachers added that the principal gauges interest and capabilities during teachers’ initial interviews. School leadership reported that the ILT is chaired by the principal and includes five teachers, which teachers confirmed. Additionally school leadership and teachers reported that teachers and staff members serve as the technology and ST Math coordinator, the mathematics and literacy representatives, the parent-community engagement liaison (who also chairs the School Family Council), and the soccer coach (which students confirmed). Continuing, school leadership and teachers reported and a review of a letter stating committee expectations confirmed that teachers serve on committees including: the Hospitality, Fundraising, Math, and Literacy committees. Students reported that teachers coordinate other activities chess and dance.
• School leadership consistently provides and focuses common staff time on instructional practices and development in support of student achievement. School leadership and teachers reported that teachers meet weekly as a primary group (Pre-Kindergarten through second grades) and an intermediate group (third through fifth grades) for collaborative planning time. School leadership and teachers reported that collaborative planning meeting topics include district initiatives, student achievement, student work, and data. A review of collaborative planning agendas revealed the following topics: Reviewing Norms, Data Analysis Calendar Changes, ILT Walk, Peer Observation, and Amplify Results.

• The school collaborates with families and community partners to garner resources to meet the needs of students and the school. School leadership and teachers reported that parents volunteer in some classes, as chaperones on trips, and with extra-curricular activities, which students confirmed. School leadership also reported that parents and families participated in a major way by advocating that the school remain open, which letters, meeting agendas, and sign-in sheets confirmed. Continuing school leadership and teachers reported and a review of letters and emails confirmed that the school’s partners are Hope Health (counseling and school support), the Maryland Food Bank (the food pantry), Loch Raven United Methodist Church (Angel Tree, school supplies, and help with organizing the school’s library), Walk By Faith Ministries (school supplies, uniforms, coats and hats, and other resources as needed), New Fit Kids (soccer), and Morgan State University (Color guard training and mentoring). Teachers added that violins and music lessons from the Peabody Music Conservatory provides violins and music lessons to students.
Performance Level Rubric

The SER team will use the following guidance to select a performance level for each key action. Note that the quality standard for each performance level is based upon: the extent to which the SER team finds multiple types\(^1\) and multiple sources\(^2\) of evidence AND the extent to which the SER team finds evidence of high levels of adoption and/or implementation of a practice or system. The SER team will also reflect on the Instructional Framework and School Leadership Framework in their analysis prior to assigning a rating for each key action.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Performance Level</th>
<th>Quality Standard</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Not Effective</td>
<td>Evidence indicates that the key action is not a practice or system that has been adopted and/or implemented at the school, or the level of adoption/implementation does not improve the school’s effectiveness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Developing</td>
<td>Evidence indicates that the key action (including some indicators) is a practice or system that is emerging at the school, but that it has not yet been implemented at a level that has begun to improve the school’s effectiveness, OR that the impact of the key action on the effectiveness of the school cannot yet be fully determined.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Effective</td>
<td>Evidence indicates that the key action (including most indicators) is a practice or system that has been adopted at the school, and is implemented at a level that is improving the school’s effectiveness.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Highly Effective</td>
<td>Evidence indicates that the key action (including all indicators) is a practice or system that has been fully adopted at the school, and is implemented at a level that has had a strong, significant or sustainable impact on the school’s effectiveness.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key:
- Not Effective:  
- Developing:  
- Effective:  
- Highly Effective:  

\(^1\)“Multiple types of evidence” is defined as evidence collected from two or more of the following: document review, stakeholder focus groups; and classroom observations.

\(^2\)“Multiple sources of evidence” is defined as evidence collected from three or more stakeholder focus groups; two or more documents; and/or evidence that a descriptor was documented in 75% or more of lessons observed at the time of the visit.
## Appendix A: School Report Comments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain 1: Highly Effective Instruction</th>
<th>None</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Domain 2: Talented People</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domain 3: Vision and Engagement</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Domain 4: Strategic Leadership</td>
<td>None</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B: SER Team Members

The SER visit to the Abbottston Elementary School was conducted on February 18-19, 2015 by a team of representatives from Baltimore City Public Schools.

**Katherine Harris Toler** is a Program Evaluator II in the Office of Achievement and Accountability in Baltimore City Public Schools. Prior to joining OAA, Ms. Toler was a District Mentor in the Office of Teacher Support and Development. In Baltimore City Public Schools, Ms. Toler has served as teacher, Academic Coach, Dean of Instruction, and High School Administrator. Ms. Toler has also served as teacher in the Anne Arundel County Public School System, the Baltimore County Public School System and the Vance County Public School System in North Carolina. She holds a B.A. in English with a Concentration in Secondary Education from North Carolina Central University and a Masters of Education in School Improvement Leadership from Goucher College.

**Chevonne Hall** is a Program Evaluator II in the Office of Achievement and Accountability in Baltimore City Public Schools. Prior to joining City Schools, Chevonne served in various founding capacities, including: High School Coordinator, Upper School Social Studies Coordinator, Dean of Students and Director of a Boys Mentorship Program with a charter school management organization in Brooklyn, New York. In these roles, she secured more than $700,000 in scholarship funding for middle school students. Chevonne began her career in education as a middle school Social Studies and Science teacher. Chevonne has also served as a consultant on projects with New Leaders for New Schools, the New Teacher Project and various middle schools in New York City. She holds a B.A. in Political Science from Spelman College, an M.A. in Secondary Education with an emphasis in Social Studies from Brooklyn College, a Certificate in Non-Profit Management from Columbia University’s School of Business and completed coursework for a Masters in Educational Leadership and School Administration at the College of Saint Rose.