Findings of Root Cause Analysis for Comprehensive Support and Improvement Schools

Eutaw-Marshburn Elementary School

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MORGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

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COLLEGE OF EDUCATION

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This report was prepared by the University of Maryland College Park Center for Educational Innovation and Improvement at the College of Education and in partnership with the Bowie State University College of Education and the Morgan State University School of Education & Urban Studies. The Root Cause Analysis process was facilitated by Dr. Susan De La Paz and Dr. Danielle Bierzynski who also co-authored this report.

I. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this report is to share to outcomes of a Root Cause Analysis (RCA) conducted to support Eutaw Mashburn in identifying underlying causes of school performance problems. The report provides an overview of the RCA process, school profile, problem statement, root cause analysis and recommendations to address the root causes.

The Maryland Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) Consolidated State Plan requires schools that have been identified for comprehensive support and improvement (CSI) engage in a root cause analysis process facilitated by a third party. CSI schools are the lowest achieving five percent of Title I schools; high schools that do not graduate one third or more of their students; or schools that have federal school improvement grants (SIG). Eutaw Mashburn was identified as a CSI school as one of the lowest achieving five percent of Title I schools. Outcomes of the root cause analysis must be used to inform the development of intervention plans to improve school performance.

CSI schools that were identified in the 2018-2019 school year have three years to exit CSI status. CSI school leaders will receive a leadership coach to support the development and implementation of the intervention plan. CSI principals are also required to participate in the Leading for School Improvement Institute which provides customized professional learning experiences to support school improvement. CSI principals are also required to engage in monitoring visits by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to ensure that progress is being made toward school improvement goals.

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) established a memorandum of understanding with the University of Maryland College Park to facilitate the RCA process. The University of Maryland College Park collaborated with the American Institutes for Research (AIR) to develop RCA tools and train field teams. Field teams consisted of researchers, data analysts, and education practitioners from Morgan State University, Johns Hopkins University, Bowie State University, and other organizations. Field team members worked with all CSI schools to go through an RCA process. MSDE will support each school to engage in a long-term continuous improvement process that includes RCA analyses, recommended interventions, and evaluations of employed interventions. As part of this process, CSI schools were first required to go through a needs-assessment process that was used to drive the RCA work.

I. INTRODUCTION

RCA Process for CSI Schools

A Root Cause Analysis Facilitator Guide was developed to promote consistency in the root cause analysis process. The Facilitator Guide contains protocols designed to engage school leaders and stakeholders in identifying a specific problem and prioritizing root causes for the problem.

There was a four-step process used to facilitate the root cause analysis:

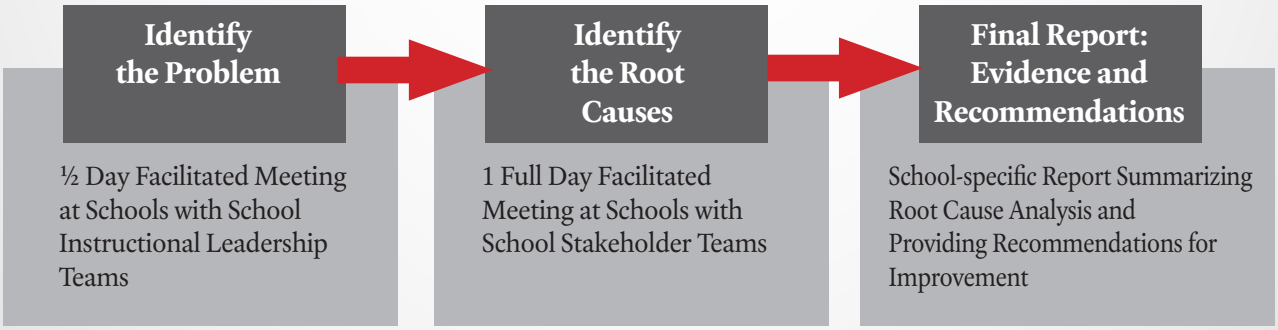
1. Craft a Problem Statement Based on Data.
2. Brainstorm Causal Factors
3. Analyze Underlying Causes to Identify Root Causes
4. Prioritize Root Causes for Intervention

The root cause analysis process translates the successes and challenges identified through the CSI needs assessment into priorities to inform actionable improvement planning. The work with schools was staged in three steps: 1) identify the problem; 2) identify the root causes; 3) draft a school report with recommendations for improvement.

First, the RCA facilitator team worked with school leadership teams to craft a problem statement in a half-day meeting. Using the available school, school system, and state data, the school team selected a problem that relates to their CSI status and provides a direction for the root cause analysis.

Second, the facilitators returned to the school for a full-day meeting with the school's stakeholder team to better understand the root causes of the problem. Once the stakeholders worked through the process of determining the root causes, they prioritized those root causes based on importance, feasibility, and alignment to CSI status.

As a third and final step, the RCA facilitator teams created school-specific reports with recommendations for addressing the problem and root causes in improvement planning.



I. INTRODUCTION

An RCA starts with asking the question: What problem do we face that, if solved or mitigated, would most effectively lead to our desired outcomes (in this case significant improvement in student outcomes that would lead to the school being removed from CSI status)? This "Problem Statement" is then studied and interrogated by a team of stakeholders through the RCA process that answers questions such as:

- What do successful student outcomes look like, and where are the biggest gaps between what you would like to see and where you are currently?
- Where is this not happening, and to what extent is it not happening (are there specific grades, subjects, subgroups, etc.)?
- Why was the school identified as a CSI school, and how is that reflected in the data?
- What data points support this as being a major gap?

This process led to a small number of "root causes" to the problem designed to help school stakeholders design strategies and programs that are more likely to lead to significant improvement for students. In addition, the process will include conducting research on the problem and prioritized root causes and recommending evidence-based strategies for improvement.

II. SCHOOL PROFILE

School Name:
Eutaw-Marshburn Elementary School
1624 Eutaw Place, Baltimore, MD 21217
(410) 396-0779
Total number of teachers : 18

Student Demographics								
Total Students	Asian	Black African Americans	Hispanic/ Latino	White	Other	% Economically Disadvantaged	% English Learners	% Students with Disabilities
296	<10	288	<10	<10	<10	86.61%	<5%	16.72%

Eutaw-Marshburn Elementary School
MSDE School Report Card for K-5

Academic Progress		School Quality and Student Success		Academic Achievement		Progress in Achieving English Language	
Student Growth Percentile in Math	**31**	Student Not Chronically Absent	**72.4%**	% Proficient in Math	**5.6%**	% English Learners Making Progress Towards Learning English	NA
Student Growth Percentile in English Language Arts	**26**			Average Performance in Math	**1.5/5.0**		
Credit for Well Rounded Curriculum N/A	**0%**	Access to Well Rounded Curriculum	**6.1%**	% Proficient in English Language Arts	**0%**		
				Average Performance in English Language Arts	**1.6/5.0**		
Earned Points	**6/30**	Earned Points	**6.6/25**	Earned Points	**3.6/20**	Earned Points	NA
Total Earned Percent:				**21%**			

To view this school's full report card, visit www.mdreportcard.org

III. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Description of the Process

The first step in the RCA process was to convene a half-day meeting that was facilitated by a two-member RCA facilitator team. Eutaw-Marshburn Elementary School convened on April 2, 2019 for Day 1 of the RCA process. The convening included the school leadership team, consisting of a local school system leader (i.e. principal supervisor, school improvement lead) and other key school staff. The primary goal of this meeting was to craft a "Problem Statement" that would drive the root cause analysis. A Problem Statement can be defined as a statement describing a situation, issue, barrier, impediment, or challenge that a school must address to significantly improve students' outcomes related particularly to those outcomes that led to the school being placed on the CSI list.

The goals of the first day were to 1) determine a problem statement to drive the analysis of the root causes; and 2) identify stakeholders for day two of the RCA.

The Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) met for half a day on April 2nd, 2019 to examine Eutaw-Marshburn school-level data and to select a Problem of Practice.

The primary data sources reviewed were the MSDE CSI Needs Assessment Report, the MD State School Report Card, and the School Climate Survey data and qualitative date from school stakeholders.

Problem Statement Criteria

Participants arrived at a problem statement by examining how CSI schools were identified; by using data to understand why the school received CSI status; by organizing data trends into themes; by evaluating the feasibility of addressing those themes; and by prioritizing addressable themes to identify the RCA area of focus. The problem statement was crafted based on the following criteria:

1. *How important is the problem to addressing our needs?*

Importance is determined by whether student outcomes will be improved, teacher efficacy is increased, and/or organizational systems will be improved.

2. *How feasible is it to address this problem?*

Feasibility is defined by the availability of adequate resources, staff, and capacity, and whether there is sufficient support and buy-in.

3. *How aligned is the problem to our needs?*

The problem statement should be related to the reason the school was identified as a CSI school. Also the school should be able to address the problem and its root causes by the effective selection and implementation of evidence-based practices.

III. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Day One Summary

Participants reviewed each set of school data and flagged the school's low academic performance in both English Language Arts (ELA) and math as significant concerns, in combination with high rates of students' chronic absenteeism and minimal growth from the beginning to the end of the year. Additionally, they noted that their school enrolls a disproportionately high number of students with disabilities. What emerged initially from the review of the school-level data was a complex picture of the many at-risk factors that characterize their students and which lead to the array of low academic outcomes. The Eutaw-Marshburn team also described positive gains such as some increase in math scores and lower suspension rates due to incorporating restorative practices at their school. Parents overall, based on the parent survey, have a positive view of the school. While there were many themes that emerged from the data review, with many of the themes being factors outside of the school's control, what was glaring was the need to focus on ELA instruction and performance on the state assessment. The ILT generated a draft problem statement that focused on ELA proficiency.

Data Source	Key Takeaways
MD School Report Card	• Historically low performing in literacy. • There are more students 1-2 grade levels below in Math versus 2+ grade levels below in ELA.
Needs Assessment	• Decrease in enrollment (a new school opened nearby). • Chronic absentee rate has improved, but is worse among students who receive Tier 3 services. Kids who need instruction the most attend the least.
Parent Survey	• New families are pleased with school culture; highest dimension is safety at 98.8% - kids don't feel safe outside and they feel safe in the school. • Administration is rated positively; people have clear understanding of what is happening.

Themes Across Data Sources (Topics) (1 being high priority)	Ranking
Students have increased performance in math relative to ELA.	1
Many parents do not have adequate capacity/supports to facilitate student success (see absenteeism rate); however parental engagement has increased.	2
Poverty is a contributing factor to student academic achievement.	3
Parents trust school (safe) and suspension rates decreased; perhaps this could be capitalized on to increase engagement in some way.	NA

III. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Final Problem Statement

In grades 3-5, 83.7% of students did not score at the meets or exceeds level on the 2018 Maryland English Language Arts assessment.

Evidence Base for Problem Statement

This represents a brief research summary of the evidence related to the significance and/or impact of the Problem Statement identified above.

Reading outcomes are hugely important for students to master. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is the only assessment that measures what U.S. students know and can do in various subjects across the nation, states, and in some urban districts. Also known as The Nation's Report Card, NAEP has provided important information about how students are performing academically since 1969. In 2017, the percentage of fourth grade students in Maryland who performed at or above the NAEP Proficient level was 40% and the percentage of students in Maryland who performed at or above the NAEP Basic level was 69 (National Center for Educational Statistics, 2018). In contrast, the percentage of students in Baltimore City who performed at or above the NAEP Proficient level was 13% in 2017, and 39% performed at or above the NAEP Basic level. These results have real consequences for students as reading performance is highly correlated to future earnings (Hanushek and Woessmann, 2008).

IV. ROOT CAUSE ANALYSIS OF THE PROBLEM STATEMENT

Day Two Summary

Eutaw-Marshburn Elementary School convened on April 9, 2019 for Day Two of the RCA process. Day two was devoted to working with the same core school school leadership team members as well as additional stakeholders to identify and prioritize the root causes of the problem so the causes could be addressed in the school's improvement planning efforts. Please see the Appendix for the full list of participants.

The stakeholder team started the day by reviewing the draft Problem of Practice Statement and modifying the finalized version to clarify the comparison group should be Baltimore City Public School students. The stakeholder team was then divided into three smaller groups through which each group generated ideas as to what factors contribute to the problem of low literacy performance. Each group created a Fishbone Diagram to represent their thinking, which were shared and combined into one composite Fishbone, organized into themes, and a causal factor statement was crafted for each theme. Using the "5 Whys Activity," stakeholders were encouraged to dig deeper to causal factor statements were then by asking "why" questions in order to arrive at underlying causes. Underlying causes were then collectively ranked in order to arrive at a prioritized list of root causes.

Specifically, the goals for day two Included:

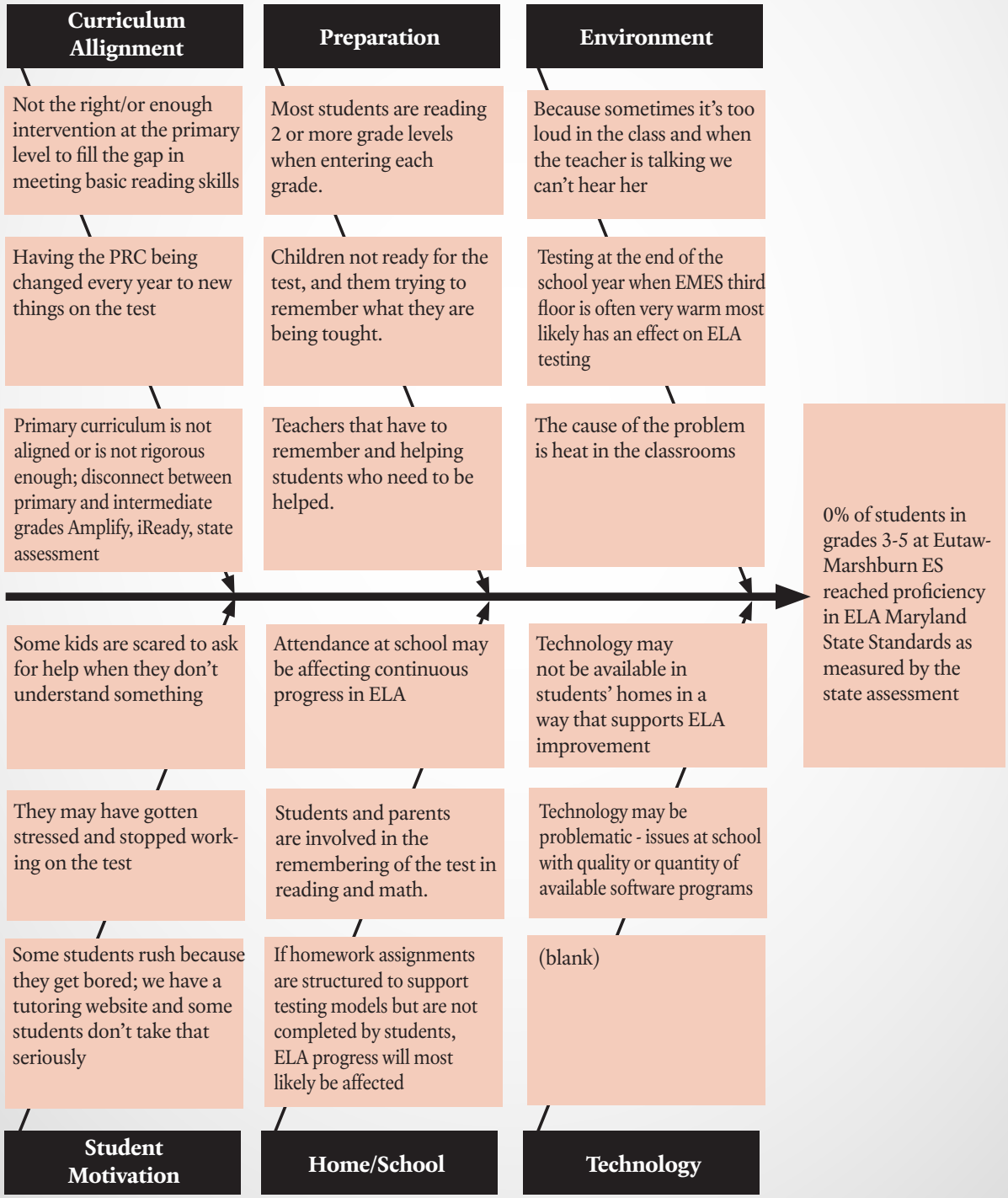
- Determining factors contributing to the problem statement.
- Identify underlying causes of the problem and determine which underlying causes are primary "root" causes.
- Prioritize the root causes for the importance of impacting student outcomes and the feasibility of implementing strategies to address them.

IV. ROOT CAUSE ANALYSIS OF THE PROBLEM STATEMENT

Causal Factors

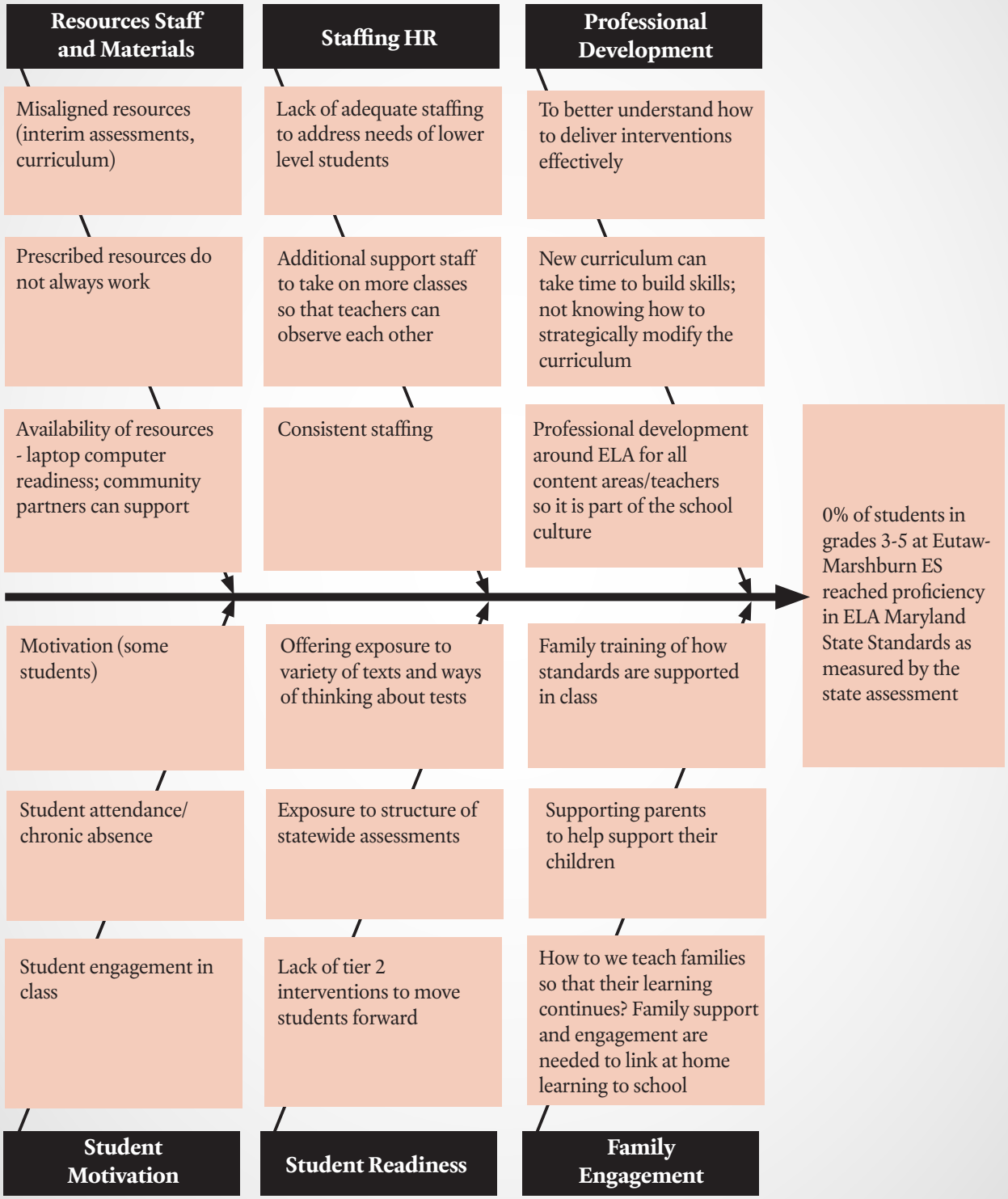
The "Fishbone" diagram represents the stakeholder group's initial assessment of all of the individual factors.

Eutaw-Marshburn Fishbone: Exploring Causes



IV. ROOT CAUSE ANALYSIS OF THE PROBLEM STATEMENT

Eutaw-Marshburn Fishbone: Exploring Causes



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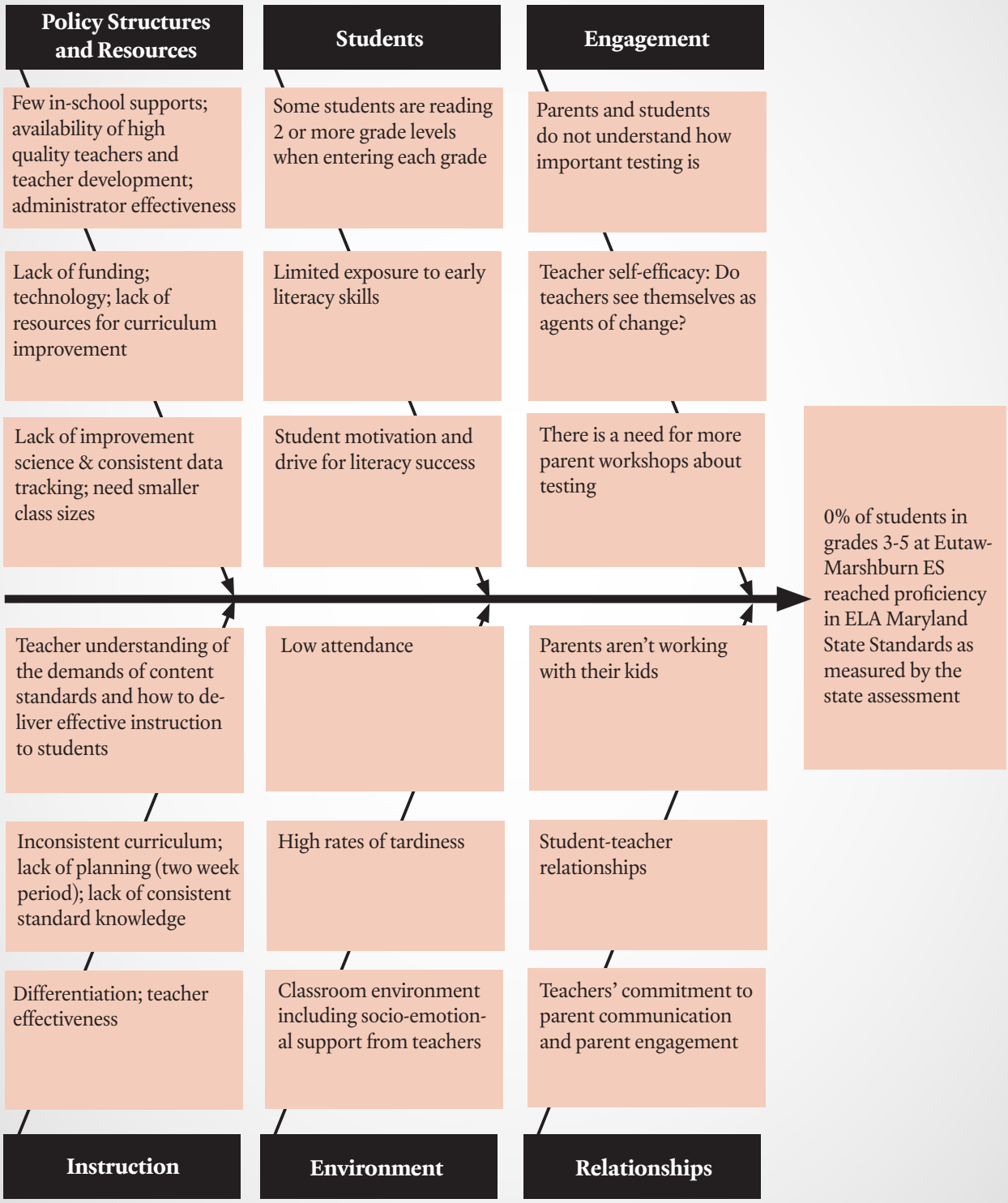

IV. ROOT CAUSE ANALYSIS OF THE PROBLEM STATEMENT

Root Causes

Following several group exercises, the stakeholder group came to consensus on the priority root causes. These are the causes most critical to addressing the problem based on the criteria of importance, feasibility, and alignment.

Prioritized Root Causes

Final Output. Prioritized Root Causes:	
1.	Lack of support for students' social emotional skills to help them cope with academic pressures.
2.	Teachers have gaps in knowledge of interventions at lower grades to address challenges in upper grades. Many teachers did not learn how to teach phonics, something that many students need.
3.	Reading growth progress for K-5 students over the course of the year is not well known or consistently tracked.

Evidence Base for Root Causes

The consequences of not being socially and behaviorally ready for Kindergarten are real. According to the Baltimore Education Research Consortium (Bettencourt, Gross, & Ho, 2016), as recently as in 2015, 52% of Baltimore City Public Schools' kindergarteners were entering school without sufficient social-behavioral skills needed to learn. These are the readiness skills children need to follow directions, comply with the rules, manage emotions, solve problems, organize and complete tasks, and get along with others. Poor educational outcomes included being retained in grade, receiving additional services and supports through an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or 504 plan, and being suspended or expelled from school.

According to a review of social-emotional learning (SEL) literature conducted by the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC), there have been many studies that have been done about SEL that have had positive outcomes (O'Conner, De Feyter, Carr, Luo, and Romm, 2017). However, while there is a strong evidence base for restorative practices (International Institute for Restorative Practices) with reduced suspension rates, the field has not yet established clear recommendations with respect to other SEL interventions that relate to coping with academic pressure. For example, social skills training (which is a collection of practices that utilize a behavioral approach to teaching preschool children age-appropriate social skills and competencies, including communication, problem

solving, decision making, self-management, and peer relations) was found to have no discernible effects on cognition and positive effects on social-emotional development and behavior for children with disabilities in early education settings.

Second, there is national data on the problems associated with poor reading instruction. As previously noted, NAEP data show that only 36% of 4th grade students scored at or above proficiency in reading in 2017. The Institute of Educational Sciences' What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) released a Practice Guide for Principals and Teachers, focused on recommendations for foundational skills to support reading for understanding in kindergarten through 3rd grade (Foorman et al., 2016). In this practice guide, the WWC reports that to develop literacy, "students need instruction in two related sets of skills: foundational reading skills and reading comprehension skills (p. 1)." Without teaching students foundational reading and reading comprehension skills, they will continue to struggle with building fluency, decoding words, and developing academic language. The National Reading Panel (NRP) found that instruction to increase reading fluency in particular (which is built through developing academic language and decoding) is "critical to both reading comprehension and future reading success" (2000, p. 2) While there is much more involved in teaching reading, what is important to note is that in order for students to become proficient readers, effective reading instruction needs to be present at the early elementary level and by extension, throughout later grades, for struggling readers.

Third, when it comes to teacher professional development, improved teaching and learning are most effective when they are tailored to the individual needs of teachers. Additionally, professional development is more effective when it is collaborative and inquiry-based (Center on Instruction). Such collaborative structures are typically led by instructional coaches, often through professional communities of practice. Instructional coaching provides teachers with the support they need to build collective leadership and continuously improve teacher instructional capacity and student learning. Sailors and Shanklin (2010) note that in order to raise literacy levels, schools and districts began investing in coaches to improve teaching instruction. Furthermore, Sailors and Shanklin highlight a growing body of research that points to the positive impact that instructional coaching has on improving teacher instruction on literacy and in turn, increasing student achievement in reading.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Brainstormed Ideas for Improvement Planning from Stakeholders

At the conclusion of day two, the stakeholders had a brief opportunity to brainstorm ideas and strategies that might help to address the root causes identified. This brainstorming activity asked participants to list any good ideas they have. These ideas were not prioritized or identified as formal recommendations to the school.

To address social-emotional learning:

- Integrate social emotional resources such as CASEL into curriculum
- Obtain support in implementing restorative coaching
- Include wellness rooms or restorative corners in classrooms where students can go to decompress and get acclimated to school
- Identify habits of mind that could be highlighted at regular intervals

To address teaching reading at all grade levels

- Train all teachers K-5 in reading instruction (Fundations)
- Integrate intervention teachers to support Tier 2 and Tier 3 instruction
- Support out-of-school training for teachers
- Build in opportunities for teachers to visit other schools that are similar to EMES
- Provide workshops that address individual teacher needs
- Incorporate a targeted coaching model
- Teacher-to-teacher observations; peer feedback - identify focus areas
- Enlist support of community partners and parents to support literacy

To address effective professional development in reading instruction

- Analyze data from instructional planning
- Purposeful professional learning cycles
- Incorporate data cycles where student work is analyzed and teachers can collaborate on real-time changes that can be made to improve student outcomes

Recommendations for Evidence-Based Improvement

Final recommendations for this report have been developed by the University of Maryland College Park in consultation with UMD/RCA facilitators and leaders at MSDE. Recommendations were developed using the following process:

- Reviewing the ideas, notes, and stakeholder perspectives gathered throughout the Root Cause Analysis process;
- Conducting a scan of the research literature related to the problem statement and prioritized root causes identified throughout the process. While a comprehensive research analysis was outside the scope of this project, the team reviewed research using the standards of evidence model outlined in the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) to offer research that had moderate or strong evidence of effectiveness (Level 2 or Level 1 on the ESSA framework);
- Compiling, organizing and categorizing over 150 recommendations submitted by UMD/RCA facilitators.

These recommendations are offered by the University of Maryland College Park in consultation with MSDE. They represent only a portion of the potential strategies and interventions that will become a part of the school's three-year improvement plan developed in concert with the MSDE Title I office.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Recommendations	Domain of Rapid School Improvement
Implement Social Emotional Learning (SEL) to explicitly teach SEL skills focused on self-awareness, self-management, social-awareness, relationship skills, responsible decision-making	Culture Shift Talent Development

Employ a robust Social Emotional Learning (SEL) program that is inclusive of all school-based staff, including but not limited to, administrators, teachers, school social workers, guidance counselors, and para-professionals. Effective school based social-emotional learning programs are comprised of five major components:

1. Self- awareness
2. Self-management
3. Social awareness
4. Relationship skills
5. Responsible decision making (CASEL, 2012).

These competencies are more impactful when they are set in an environment in which organizational culture, climate, and conditions all support social-emotional learning (Durlak et al., 2011).

One goal of SEL programs is to improve the quality of interactions among individuals in schools and within classrooms; therefore, school-level social processes are important to examine when considering an SEL program. Moreover, some evaluation studies find that within low-income urban communities, school climate may be particularly salient (Aber et al., 1998; Hughes et al., 2005). Though CASEL endorses the use of evidence-based SEL programs in the context of systemic schoolwide and districtwide approaches (Devaney et al., 2006), it is necessary for a systemic approach to SEL programming to entail integration of SEL across school activities, both in and outside of the classroom, and even reaching into the community.

V. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Recommendations	Domain of Rapid School Improvement
Provide strong literacy instruction in English Language Arts courses and across the curriculum.	Cultural Transformation

Research suggests that for students to become fluent readers they need to build both foundational reading skills and comprehension skills.

Key components for improving reading skills include:

- Explicit instruction of academic language
- Instruction on decoding words, word parts, and letter sounds
- Reading multiple sentences daily
- The use of reading comprehension strategies
- The use of textual organizational structures
- An engaging and context rich setting for reading (National Reading Panel, 2000; Foorman et al., 2017; Shanahan, 2010)

The instruction of reading must extend beyond the language arts classroom orlesson. Teaching students the function and structure of language as they are used in multiple content areas and domains is also part of a robust literacy program. While this focus has typically been focused on the secondary level, building a foundation for literacy in the content areas is important for future success in multiple subjects (Moss, 2005).

V. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Recommendations	Domain of Rapid School Improvement
Maximize professional learning focused on planning, instruction, and improving learning conditions for students with a focus on data-based decision making to monitor student progress.	Instructional Transformation Talent Development

Establish or significantly strengthen a school-wide cycle of professional learning– coaching, observations, and team planning—that includes an aligned focus across core instructional activities. Several studies link teacher professional learning with improvements in instruction and quality of learning environments (Vescio, Ross, & Adams, 2008). Professional learning opportunities are most effective when they are part of coherent school-wide efforts that link content, assessments, and reflection, rather than episodic professional workshops (Akiba & Liang, 2016). Two effective professional learning strategies include professional learning communities and job-embedded professional learning.

Professional Learning Communities: Teachers need time spent planning and learning with colleagues in collaborative planning time and/or professional learning communities (PLCs) that are focused on teaching and learning not on administrative or organizational demands. Research shows that PLCs are most successful when they are designed and supported with specific attention to leadership, group dynamics, trust and respect (Vangrieken et al., 2017). PLCs can form around topics that teachers can explore together, plan for, and build upon together using peer observations and deeper capacity-building on areas of need, such as social emotional learning or trauma-informed teaching. Authentic PLC's include the following features:

- Dedicated time for the PLC
- Are led by teachers and based on specific needs of students
- Are supported by school leaders with training and development activities

Job Embedded Professional Development: Research emphasizes the importance of professional learning that emphasizes explicit strategies for conducting active teaching, assessment, observation, and reflection rather than includes abstract discussions (Darling-Hammond & Richardson, 2009).

V. RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Recommendations	Domain of Rapid School Improvement
Adopt a school-wide progress monitoring system that uses data to track key academic indicators in order to identify and intervene with students who are at risk of falling off track.	Turnaround Leadership Culture Shift

Monitoring and integrating multiple aspects of student data that can be used to direct implementation of student support strategies is an essential foundation for an effective progress monitoring system. Often schools establish inquiry teams and monitoring cycles to address monitoring needs, which include: attendance, student performance at progress reporting periods, and on-track status for graduation (Gallimore et al., 2009). A comprehensive and well-coordinated monitoring system of multiple indicators helps produce a complete picture of a student's progress that can help predict student failure before it occurs. The following steps should be considered in establishing an effective data management system:

- Analyze attendance data to identify students who are at risk of chronic absenteeism. Create a school wide attendance action plan that establishes a set of prescribed interventions/actions for teachers when students are absent and provides incentives for students with favorable attendance records.

- Require each grade level team to identify students in danger of failing at the midway point of each marking period and who are falling one or more grade levels behind. Develop a personalized support plan for identified students that includes specific interventions/actions, person(s) responsible and specific timeframes to provide the necessary academic supports for students to pass all courses (Carlson, Borman & Robinson, 2011).

VI. CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

Collaboratively with the Local School System (LSS) and stakeholders, Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) school teams will develop intervention plans that identify SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-bound) intervention goals with measurable annual outcomes and progress indicators that will guide schools toward meeting annual targets and exit criteria in three years. The outcomes of the root cause analysis must be used to inform the development of the SMART intervention goals and identification of evidence-based strategies included in the intervention plan. Any evidence-based strategy must meet the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) evidence requirements (level 1, 2, or 3). Intervention Plans will be approved by the school, LSS, and the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), and monitored annually by staff from the LSS and the MSDE. Additional information and resources are available on the MSDE Resource Hub. https://www.marylandresourcehub.com/

APPENDICES

Appendix A: List of Stakeholders

	Name	Position
Day 1 **April 2, 2019**	Tiffany Cole	*Principal*
	Nicole Scruggs	*Data Monitoring and Compliance Specialist*
	Bernadette Samaco	*Pre-K teacher/lead*
	Fareeha Waheed	*Special Education teacher*
	Darnice Mickey	*3rd grade teacher*
	Erica Robinson	*Literacy Lead*

	Name	
Day 2 **April 8, 2019**	Tiffany Cole	*Principal*
	Nicole Scruggs	*Data Monitoring and Compliance Specialist*
	Bernadette Samaco	*Pre-K teacher/lead*
	Fareeha Waheed	*Special Education teacher*
	Darnice Mickey	*3rd grade teacher*
	Erica Robinson	*Literacy Lead*
	Heidi Herzog	*Parent volunteer*
	Chrystie Adams	*Brown Memorial Park Avenue Presbyterian Volunteer Coordinator*
	Staphon Shorter	*Child First Authority Program Associate*
	Kimberly Dudley	*Judy Center, Maryland State Department of Education*
	Tenne Thrower	*Family and Community Engagement Specialist*
	Lebrie Walker	*Math Academic Content Liaison*
	Zaire Boyd	*Parent*
		4th grade student
		4th grade student

APPENDICES

Appendix B: Bios of Facilitators

Dr. Danielle Bierzynski has been in education for 15 years. She has served as a product manager at an educational technology start-up, where she researched the problems that English Language Arts (ELA) teachers face in the classroom and identified solutions to those challenges. Dr. Bierzynski started her work as an 8th grade ELA teacher in her hometown of Brooklyn, NY and then taught 4th, 5th, and 6th grade students in D.C. public schools through an experiential education non-profit called Live It Learn It. She served as an instructor of secondary education at the George Washington University (GWU) while working on her doctorate. Additionally, she developed curricular materials and designed professional development for 6-12 grade ELA teachers in D.C. Public Schools as a manager of professional development and curriculum. Dr. Bierzynski has served as a reviewer and has presented at several conferences, including the American Educational Research Association (AERA). She earned her B.A. from American University, her M.A. from Brooklyn College, and her Ed.D. from GWU. Dr. Bierzynski is excited to continue working with schools across the country to identify their biggest challenges and supporting them in helping students achieve personal and academic success.

Dr. Susan De La Paz is Professor of Special Education at the University of Maryland. She has worked for 23 years with general and special education teachers, developing and testing writing interventions, recognizing that a significant percentage of students are at-risk for school failure or limited post-secondary outcomes due to poor literacy skills. She has spent much of this time working alongside middle school teachers and principals, building on their experiences and addressing their challenges by developing interventions that improve student learning. Dr. De La Paz has worked with the Prince George's County Public Schools, for the past 12 years, with science and social studies district leaders, teachers, and students.

APPENDICES

Appendix C: Citations of research

Allensorth, E.M., & Easton, J.Q. (2006). *The on-track indicator as a predictor of high school graduation*. Chicago, IL: Consortium on Chicago School Research at the University of Chicago.

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