



**Office of Achievement and Accountability
Division of Research Services**

**Virtual School Effectiveness Review
for Charter Schools
2020 - 2021**

**Connexions: A Community-Based Arts School #325
2801 N. Dukeland Street
Baltimore, MD, 21218**

May 3-4, 2021

200 East North Avenue
Baltimore, Maryland 21202
www.baltimorecityschools.org

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Overview of School Effectiveness Review	3
School Background	4
Performance Level Rubric.....	5
Summary of Performance Levels.....	6
Findings on Domains of Effective Schools	7
Domain 1: Highly Effective Instruction	7
Domain 2: Talented People	14
Domain 3: Vision and Engagement	16
Domain 4: Strategic and Professional Management.....	19
Appendix A: School Report Comments	24
Appendix B: SER Team Members	25

OVERVIEW OF 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.

For the 2020-2021 school year SER visits were conducted virtually, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, using a modified and abbreviated version of the SER protocol. The SER team comprised of representatives from City Schools and consultants from Schoolworks, (an education consulting group) 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 submitted electronic school documents and conducted virtual focus groups via Microsoft Teams or Zoom platforms, with school leadership, teachers, students, and parents. For classroom observations schools submitted one recorded synchronous lesson from each of the school's academic content teachers. The Team Lead then randomly selects 60% of lessons submitted to observe. Lessons were observed during the beginning, middle, and end of the recording.

The SER team analyzed evidence collected over the course of the visit 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. Those key actions that were not rated for the virtual SER have been grayed out in the report. 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

Connexions: A Community Arts-Based School serves approximately 550 students in sixth through twelfth grades. The school is in the (northwest) quadrant of Baltimore.

Virtual SER Context

Connexions: A Community Arts-Based School has been virtual since the beginning of the year. At the time of the site visit (April 12-13, 2021) some students had returned to in-person learning. All classroom observations conducted for the purpose of this report were recorded prior to the visit.

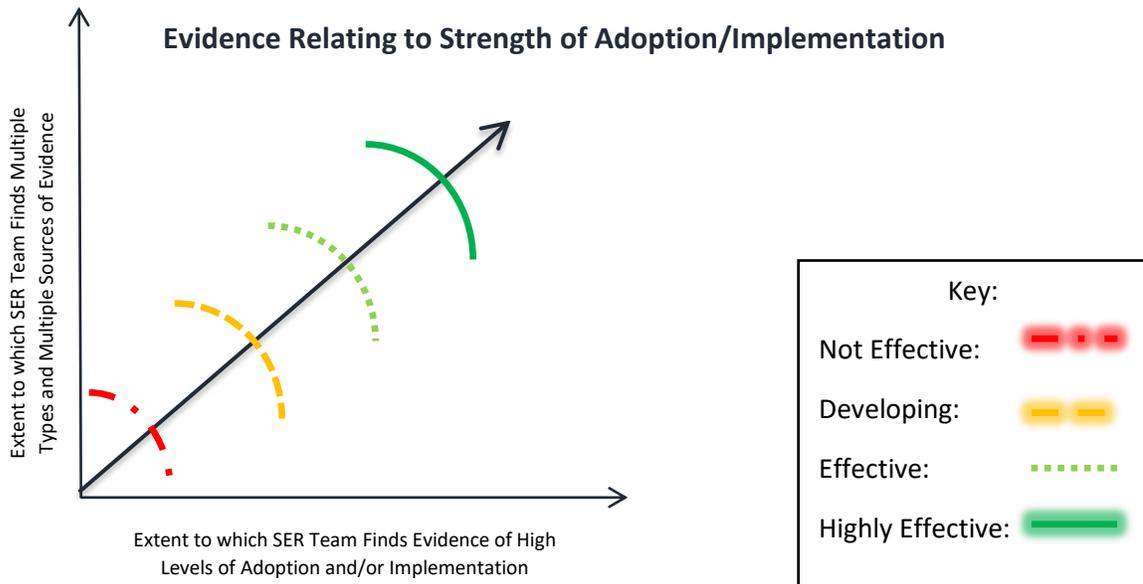
School Leadership and Staffing:

The principal, Mr. Sidney Brooks, has been at the school for 5 years and with the district for 11 years in various roles. For the purpose of this SER site visit, staff designated as school leadership are listed below.

School Leadership Focus Group Members	
Name	Role
Sidney Brooks	Principal
Jessica McLeod	Assistant Principal
Delia Wilson	Director – Climate and Culture
Jodi Faye	Instructional Coach
Shannon Stokes-Graham	Instructional Coach

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 types¹ and multiple sources² 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.



Rating	Performance Level	Quality Standard
1	Not Effective	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.
2	Developing	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.
3	Effective	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.
4	Highly Effective	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.

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.

SUMMARY OF PERFORMANCE LEVELS

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

Please note: due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the shift to virtual learning, the School Effectiveness Standards have been reduced for this academic year. Key actions and indicators highlighted in grey are not under review during the 2020-2021 SER review cycle.

Domains and Key Actions	Performance Levels			
	Level 4: Highly Effective	Level 3: Effective	Level 2: Developing	Level 1: Not Effective

Domain 1: Highly Effective Instruction	
1.1 School leadership supports highly effective instruction.	Effective
1.2 Teachers use multiple data sources to adjust practice.	Not Rated
1.3 Teachers deliver highly effective instruction.	Effective
1.4 Teachers establish a classroom environment in which teaching and learning can occur.	Not Rated
Domain 2: Talented People	
2.1 The school implements systems to select effective teachers and staff whose skills and beliefs meet the needs of the school.	Not Rated
2.2 The school develops teacher and staff capacity through individualized support and professional development.	Effective
Domain 3: Vision and Engagement	
3.1 The school has a clear vision and mission that promotes a student-centered, culturally relevant learning that prepares students for future success.	Effective
3.2 The school cultivates and sustains open communication and decision-making opportunities with families and the community.	Effective
3.3 The climate and culture of the school creates a welcoming learning environment that meets the academic, social, and emotional needs of each student.	Not Rated
Domain 4: Strategic and Professional Management	
4.1 The school establishes clear goals for student achievement and tracks progress towards goals.	Developing
4.2 The school allocates and deploys the resources of human capital and funding to address the priority growth goals for student achievement.	Effective
4.3 School's board of trustees (or operator) provides competent stewardship and oversight of the school.	Developing

FINDINGS ON DOMAINS OF EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS

Domains and Key Actions	Performance Levels			
	Level 4: Highly Effective	Level 3: Effective	Level 2: Developing	Level 1: Not Effective

Domain 1: Highly Effective Instruction

Key action 1.1	School leadership supports highly effective instruction.	Effective
----------------	--	-----------

- School leadership ensures that teachers engage in the planning of the curricula through oversight of standards-based units, lessons and pacing. According to school leadership and teachers, a virtual lesson planning template was created by school leadership and shared with staff in the beginning of the year, and required components include standards, accommodations and modifications for students with disabilities, and mastery assessments. School leadership and teachers added that teachers are required to upload plans (either daily lesson or unit) into a hub, which are reviewed by school leadership; some teachers indicated that feedback was provided if improvements were needed. Further, school leadership and teachers stated that teachers follow the district curriculum and are expected to be on pace according to the corresponding scope and sequence; pacing checks are conducted in content meetings, and if teachers are behind, they can receive suggestions on how to catch up. Lastly, school leadership and teachers noted the use of culturally relevant texts, including discussions on LGBTQ, and intentional discussions. Review of unit plans, organizers and lesson plans confirmed that they include standards, skills, assessments and more, while review of pacing plans confirmed feedback of questions such as where teachers were and where they should be, according to scope and sequence.
- School leadership consistently provides actionable feedback and guidance to teachers, aligned with the Instructional Framework. School leadership and teachers reported that informal observations are conducted frequently (weekly or bi-weekly) for staff, and feedback is provided verbally (via Zoom) or via text or email aligned with the Instructional Framework. School leadership and teachers added that feedback includes areas of strength, growth and suggestions or next steps, which are monitored through subsequent observations or meetings. Regarding formal observations, school leadership and teachers reported that it follows the district's evaluation process, including a pre-observation conference, the formal observation, and a post observation conference, and this year due to the virtual space, all observations were recorded. Lastly, teachers noted that the feedback was beneficial. Review of IDPs, formal observation reports, confirmed that the district process was used, and in addition to ratings and evidence, included a summary of strengths and suggestions regarding areas of growth. Review of informal

observations and coach logs confirmed they were aligned with the Instructional Framework and included glows, questions, and suggestions/next steps.

- School leadership is working to develop the use of a complete student learning data-cycle. According to school leadership and teachers, the ILT had been developing a data plan prior to the pandemic, and a new Deputy Director will be supporting the school with the implementation of a data-analysis process, but the school is not currently using a formal data analysis process, which the board and operator confirmed. School leadership and teachers added that for Math, ANet staff have been supporting teachers in analyzing data bi-monthly to determine strengths, areas of growth and next steps around instruction, and trackers are completed to this end. Regarding trends in the data and interventions in place, school leadership and teachers noted the use of programs such as Moby Max, Prodigy, Achieve 3000, IXL and a partnership with FEV tutoring after school, which review of a FEV tutoring report confirmed. Lastly, regarding acceleration opportunities, school leadership and teachers indicated that the school offers AP classes in Math, English, and Spanish. Review of an ANet Analyzing Student Work for Actionable Trends Protocol, data analysis meeting overview for ANet, and ANet coaching agenda running records with next steps for instruction based on data noted at points confirmed the data analysis support for Math. ANet running agendas also revealed that teachers discuss three data decisions to inform next steps, and used data from the first administration of ANet (A1) to prepare for the upcoming administration (A2), looking at standards and identifying potential areas of struggle for students.

Key action 1.2	Teachers use multiple data sources to adjust practice to meet learners' unique needs.	Not Rated
---------------------------	--	------------------

- Teachers plan instruction in response to data
- Teachers appropriately recommend students for structured, school-wide interventions.
- Teachers appropriately recommend students for structured, school-wide opportunities for acceleration.

Key action 1.3	Teachers deliver highly effective instruction.	Effective
---------------------------	---	------------------

Data for Key Action 1.3 was collected from classroom observations in order to provide trends in instruction across the school, as it relates to Teach Action 1-6 of the Instructional Framework. During each classroom visit, the observer collects evidence based on his/her observations and then determines whether the indicator was “evident”, “partially evident” or “not evident” for each of the 14 indicators. Below is the summary of the 15 classroom observations that were conducted.

- Some teachers use and communicate standards-based lesson objectives and align learning activities to the stated lesson objectives.

Communication of objective	Evident	Partially Evident	Not Evident
Evident: Teachers communicate lesson objectives to students by explaining and/or referencing it during lessons. Partially Evident: Teachers communicate lesson objectives by posting it. Not Evident: Teachers do not communicate lesson objectives to students.	60%	0%	40%
Learning activities and resources align with lesson objective	Evident	Partially Evident	Not Evident
Evident: Lesson activities and resources have a clear and intentional purpose and are aligned with lesson objectives. Partially Evident: Lesson activities and resources are generally aligned with lesson objectives and/or some tasks have a clear, intentional purpose. Not Evident: Lesson activities and resources are not aligned with lesson objectives OR Lesson activities and resources do not have a clear intentional purpose.	53%	40%	7%

- Teachers present content in various ways and emphasize key points to make content clear.

Accurate, grade-level content	Evident	Partially Evident	Not Evident
Evident: Teachers present students with accurate grade level content aligned to appropriate content standards. Partially Evident: Teachers present students with mostly accurate grade level content aligned to appropriate content standards. Not Evident: Teachers present students with inaccurate grade level content and/or not aligned to appropriate content standards.	86%	7%	7%
Alternate presentation of content	Evident	Partially Evident	Not Evident
Evident: Teachers present content in various ways (two or more) to make content clear. Partially Evident: Teachers attempt to present content in various ways (two or more), but attempts do not make content clear. Not Evident: Teachers do not present content in various ways.	93%	7%	0%
Emphasis of key points	Evident	Partially Evident	Not Evident
Evident: Teachers emphasize important points to focus learning of content. Partially Evident: Teachers attempt to emphasize important points to focus learning of content, but attempts do not make content clear. Not Evident: Teachers do not emphasize important points to focus learning of content.	100%	0%	0%

- Most teachers use multiple strategies and tasks to engage all students in rigorous work.

Scaffolded and/or differentiated tasks	Evident	Partially Evident	Not Evident
Evident: Teachers scaffold and/or differentiate tasks by providing access to rigorous grade-level instruction for all students. Partially Evident: Teachers attempt to scaffold and/or differentiated tasks, but not all students are supported in accessing rigorous grade-level instruction. Not Evident: Teachers do not scaffold or differentiated tasks.	80%	13%	7%
Opportunities to engage with complex texts and tasks	Evident	Partially Evident	Not Evident
Evident: Students have opportunities and time to grapple with complex texts and/or rigorous tasks. Partially Evident: Students have opportunities to engage with complex texts and rigorous tasks superficially. Not Evident: Students have rare or no opportunities to engage with complex texts and rigorous tasks.	74%	13%	13%

- Some teachers use evidence-dependent questioning.

Questions requiring justification	Evident	Partially Evident	Not Evident
Evident: Teachers asks questions that require students to cite evidence and clearly explain their thought processes. Partially Evident: Teachers ask questions that require students to explain their thought processes or cite evidence but not both. Not Evident: Teachers does not ask questions that require students to cite evidence or explain their though processes.	47%	33%	20%
Clear and/or scaffolded questions	Evident	Partially Evident	Not Evident
Evident: Teachers asks questions that are clear and scaffolded. Partially Evident: Teachers asks questions that are somewhat unclear to students or lack scaffolding. Not Evident: Teachers do not ask scaffolded questions.	74%	13%	13%

- Most teachers check for student understanding and provide specific academic feedback.

Informative checks for understanding	Evident	Partially Evident	Not Evident
Evident: Teachers conduct one or more checks for understanding that yield useful information at key points throughout the lesson. Partially Evident: Teachers attempt to conduct checks for understanding, but checks may only yield some useful information. Not Evident: Teachers do not check for understanding during the lesson. OR Teachers' checks for understanding are inappropriate or ineffective.	87%	13%	0%
Specific, academic feedback	Evident	Partially Evident	Not Evident
Evident – Teachers give specific academic feedback to communicate current progress and next steps to move forward. Partially Evident – Teachers give general academic feedback, but feedback may not clarify next steps to move forward. Not Evident – Teachers do not give academic feedback. OR When needed, teachers do not address student misunderstandings.	47%	40%	13%

- Some teachers facilitate academic talk.

Opportunities for student-to-student interaction*	Evident	Partially Evident	Not Evident
Evident: Teachers provide multiple or extended opportunities for student-to-student interactions. Partially Evident: Teachers provide one opportunity for student-to-student interactions. Not Evident: Teachers provide no opportunity for student-to-student interactions.	27%	0%	73%
Evidence-based discussions*	Evident	Partially Evident	Not Evident
Evident: In most student-to-student interactions, students engage in discussions with their peers to make meaning of content or deepen their understanding. Partially Evident: In few student-to-student interactions, students engage in discussions with their peers to make meaning of content or deepen their understanding. Not Evident: Students do not engage in discussions with their peers to make meaning of content or deepen their understanding.	27%	0%	73%
Student academic talk	Evident	Partially Evident	Not Evident
Evident: Students use academic talk and, when necessary, teachers consistently and appropriately support students in speaking academically. Partially Evident: Students sometimes use academic talk, and teachers inconsistently or inappropriately supports students in speaking academically. Not Evident: Students do not use academic talk, and teachers does not support students in speaking academically.	53%	20%	27%

*Due to the COVID 19 pandemic, the shift to virtual learning, and the limitation of the recorded synchronous recorded lessons, two of the three indicators above (opportunities for student-to-student interaction and evidence-based discussions) were not included in the calculation to determine the overall rating for this Key Action. The percentages for these indicators are provided for informational purposes only. The percentage for student academic talk was still included in the overall rating.

Key action 1.4	Teachers establish a classroom environment in which teaching and learning can occur.	Not Rated
---------------------------	---	------------------

- Teachers implement routines to maximize instructional time.

Maximized instructional time	Evident	Partially Evident	Not Evident
Evident: Students are only idle for very brief (less than 2 minutes) periods of time while waiting for teachers. Partially Evident: Students may be idle for short periods of time (2-4 minutes) while waiting for teachers. Not Evident: Students may be idle for significant periods of time (4 minutes or more) while waiting for teachers.	%	%	%
Smooth routines and procedures	Evident	Partially Evident	Not Evident
Evident: Routines and procedures run smoothly with minimal or no prompting from the teachers. Partially Evident: Routines and procedures run smoothly with some prompting from the teachers. Not Evident: Routines and procedures are in place but require significant teachers prompting and direction. OR There are no evident routines or procedures, so the teachers direct all of them.	%	%	%

- Teachers build a positive, learning-focused classroom culture.

Teacher-to-student interactions	Evident	Partially Evident	Not Evident
Evident: Teacher interactions with students are positive and respectful. Partially Evident: Some interactions among teachers and students demonstrate a positive rapport and respect while other interactions demonstrate a lack of rapport/respect. Not Evident: Little to no interactions among teachers with students demonstrate a positive rapport/mutual respect.	%	%	%
Student-to-teacher interactions	Evident	Partially Evident	Not Evident
Evident: Student interactions with teachers are positive and respectful. Partially Evident: Some interactions among students and teachers demonstrate a positive rapport/mutual respect while other interactions demonstrate a lack of rapport/respect. Not Evident: Little to no interactions among students with teachers demonstrate a positive rapport/mutual respect.	%	%	%
Student-to-student interactions	Evident	Partially Evident	Not Evident
Evident: Student-to-student interactions are positive and respectful. Partially Evident: Some interactions among students demonstrate a positive rapport/mutual respect while other interactions demonstrate a lack of rapport/respect. Not Evident: Little to no interactions among students demonstrate a positive rapport/mutual respect.	%	%	%

- Teachers reinforce positive behavior and redirect off-task or challenging behavior, when needed.

Reinforce positive behavior	Evident	Partially Evident	Not Evident
Evident: Teachers promote and reinforce positive behavior. Partially Evident: Teachers occasionally acknowledge positive behavior but focus more on negative behavior. Not Evident: Teachers primarily focus on negative behavior.	%	%	%
On-task behavior	Evident	Partially Evident	Not Evident
Evident: Students are on-task and active participants in classwork and discussions. Partially Evident: Some students exhibit frequent off-task behavior in the classroom. AND/OR Most students exhibit occasional off-task behavior in the classroom. Not Evident: Students exhibit consistent off-task behavior in the classroom.	%	%	%
Time impact of redirection/discipline of off-task behavior	Evident	Partially Evident	Not Evident
Evident: Teachers address behavioral issues (if any) with minimal interruption to instructional time (less than 2 minutes). Partially Evident: Teachers address behavioral issues with some interruption to instructional time (2-4 minutes). Not Evident: Teachers address behavioral issues in a manner that does not fully solve the issue causing significant interruption to instructional time (4 minutes or more). OR Teachers does not address behavioral issues, allowing student misbehavior to continue or escalate.	%	%	%

Domain 2: Talented People

Key action 2.1	The school implements systems to select effective teachers and staff whose skills and beliefs meet the needs of the school.	Not Rated
---------------------------	--	------------------

- School leadership has implemented organizational structures for selection and/or placement across staffing positions that addresses student well-being and academic performance.
- School leadership recruits' candidates using multiple stakeholders and measures to assess each candidate's qualifications in alignment with school needs.

Key action 2.2	The school develops teacher and staff capacity through individualized support and professional development.	Effective
---------------------------	--	------------------

- School leadership ensures the implementation of a mentoring program, when applicable, to support the development of all new teachers and staff and monitors the program's effectiveness. According to school leadership and teachers, instructional coaches serve as mentors to early career teachers (first through third year of teaching). School leadership and teachers added that teachers meet as needed with coaches, and supports include planning, modeling, observations, SLO support, and more. Teachers noted they are also encouraged to observe other teachers, and prior to the pandemic, visited other schools. Further, teachers stated that they have been provided with resources from their coaches, and school leadership noted that supports are documented through coaching trackers. Continuing, teachers indicated that they receive support from administration and their teams as well and were strategically placed on teams with veteran teachers. Lastly, school leadership and teachers indicated that teachers participated in the district's New Teacher Institute. Review of coaching schedules confirmed meetings with individual teachers, and topics included professional development, informal observations, planning support, instruction and assessments. Review of a New Teachers Beginning of School Professional Development agenda revealed that topics included technology, what do effective teachers do, curriculum and instruction, school-wide discipline system and incentives, classroom management, assessments, and a virtual school tour.
- School leadership uses multiple methods to provide timely support and interventions to struggling teachers and staff as indicated by data and/or informal or formal observations. In focus groups, school leadership and teachers reported that struggling teachers can be identified through lesson plans, informal and formal observations, and self-referral. Teachers added that through conversations with students, school leadership can also identify struggling teachers. Further,

school leadership stated that supports can include co-teaching and peer observations, while teachers noted observations, check-ins, collaboration with teams, and some teachers also indicated professional development and other resources. Continuing, school leadership noted that two teachers are currently on action plans related to lesson planning, and coaches are meeting with teachers to provide supports; review of action plans confirmed that areas for improvement noted use of curricular resources to prepare, and supports included collaboration with instructional coaches to plan, informal observations, lesson plan feedback and more.

- School leadership engages all staff in differentiated professional development based on identified needs. According to school leadership, teachers, the board and operator, the school has focused on the 4 R's for this year (Relationship, Rigor, Relevance, Ready) around which to center professional development for staff. School leadership and teachers added that related to those areas, topics have included content and curriculum planning, virtual learning platforms, SEL (such as restorative practices), and communication with families. Further, regarding differentiation, school leadership and teachers noted that sessions related to use of technology (such as training on Nearpod, IXL and Achieve 3000) were differentiated based on skill level, and sessions have also been differentiated based on content. For example, one team is working with Legacy Pathways each week around curriculum development and resources, which the operator confirmed. Continuing, school leadership and teachers indicated that PD is informed by trends observed as well as teacher feedback. Lastly, regarding impact, school leadership and teachers reported that the goal is for teachers to implement practices learned from PD, and that it is engaging and meaningful. Review of content PD agendas confirmed a focus on the 4 R's and support from Legacy Pathways, and review of agendas also revealed topics included student engagement, the Instructional Framework, Flocabulary, google classroom and more.

Domain 3: Vision and Engagement ³

Key action 3.1	The school has a clear vision and mission that promotes student-centered, culturally relevant learning that prepares students for future success.	Effective
-------------------	--	------------------

- The school community shares a clear understanding of the school’s mission and vision, including a clear understanding of initiatives and values that support high student achievement. According to all stakeholders - school leadership, the board, operator, teachers, family members, and students - the mission and vision is centered around artistic and academic excellence, cultural identity and community engagement. Stakeholders added that the vision and mission are manifested through a thriving arts program (including African drumming) supported by partners such as Arts Everyday and which is showcased throughout the city and country, special event and after school programming, mental health services for staff and students, and family engagement events and resources. Stakeholders added that students have participated in community clean up events. Regarding awareness, stakeholders noted that the vision and mission are in the name of the school, posted throughout the building, reviewed in PD for staff, discussed in morning huddles, noted in correspondence, and generally infused throughout the school. Review of videos of performances, an Ubuntu community PPT, and a Spirit of ConneXions video confirmed a focus on arts and community.
- School leadership ensures that the school’s programs are culturally relevant and incorporate skills for 21st century success. In focus groups, school leadership, teachers, families, board and operator reported that the school incorporates culture (particularly African and European) through the arts program, and students experience teaching through a lens of cultural relevance, which includes discussions of current events, such as the Black Lives Matter movement. School leadership and teachers added that Black History Month programming is extended beyond the month of February, and includes performances, which review of a flyer and video confirmed; some teachers noted a Hispanic Heritage event was held and women’s month is also celebrated. School leadership and teachers further noted that after school programming, including the LGBTQ, business and garden clubs, provide exposure and safe spaces for students; the school also has gender neutral bathrooms in the building. Further, school leadership and teachers noted that master classes with artists in the field are offered, guest speakers engage students in exposure to future careers, students participate in college tours, and engage in experiential learning through trips to North Bay, Florida, and more. Lastly, some teachers noted that Transition Services supports students with disabilities in securing employment options post-graduation. Review of flyers revealed that students also watched Roots and participated in a dialogue, while an SEL

³ The family focus group included eight participants, three of whom were parents.

teacher resource revealed discussions after the Capitol Riots. Review of green team documentation confirmed beautification efforts and urban gardening.

Key action 3.2	The school cultivates and sustains open communication and decision-making opportunities with families and the community.	Effective
---------------------------	---	------------------

- The school implements systems to build strong relationships with families and garners feedback in order to make schoolwide decisions. According to school leadership, teachers, families and students, family engagement has been a priority for the current year given the virtual environment, and the school invested in Classroom Parent (a communication platform which fosters family engagement/involvement) in order to strengthen communication with families, and also communicates via emails, texts, phone calls, Parent Link, google classroom, social media and more; documents are translated into Spanish as needed and staff support with translation. School leadership, teachers and families added that the school has provided resources to families in need such as food, conducted home visits, and a technology expert from the school has also visited homes to assist with access. Further, school leadership, teachers, families, and students noted that the school hosts community meetings and family events monthly (including movie night, Paint and Chill, and Trivia night), and has a Parent Teacher Association (PTA) and Family Community Engagement (FCE) that meet monthly. Continuing, school leadership, teachers, families and students indicated that the school garners feedback via surveys and monthly PTA and FCE meetings, and feedback has informed re-opening, budget priorities, family events and more. Lastly, some teachers noted that families can also attend board meetings, and families stated that the principal and school overall has been engaging, hands-on, and worked hard to serve students and assist families. Review of paint and chill flyers, family movie night agenda, family fitness night flyers, home visit form documents, Back to School Night flyer and more confirmed events and some of the practices noted above.
- The school builds strong relationships with community stakeholders and leverages resources to meet the needs of students and the school. In focus groups, school leadership, teachers, the board and operator stated that a variety of partners support the school, including Concentric (home visits), Aziza Peace (mentoring and after school activities for students, particularly LGBTQ), KEYS (wrap around supports for students and families), Arts Everyday (art showcases and job opportunities) and Legacy Pathways (pedagogy support for the Science team); students confirmed the Aziza Peace partnership, while parents confirmed KEYS. School leadership added that partners also include Downtown Lockerroom (incentives) and Roberta’s House (grief and loss support), while families noted the Maryland Food Bank, Shoprite and a family shelter. Further, school leadership noted that partnerships develop through referrals and word of mouth and are vetted by school staff to determine if there is a fit and are invited to town halls to provide feedback.

Review of an Aziza Peace flyer confirmed after school programming is provided virtually, and review of a Legacy Pathways partnership log confirmed a focus on STEM.

Key action 3.3	The climate and culture of the school creates a welcoming learning environment that meets the academic, social, and emotional needs of each student.	Not Rated
-------------------	---	------------------

- The school implements and monitors school protocols that create an environment where students, staff, and families feel welcome and safe.
- The school develops proactive systems that support individual students' social, emotional, and socioeconomic needs.
- School leadership establishes consistent structures to recognize and celebrate student achievement.
- School leadership establishes consistent structures that demonstrate value and recognition of staff.

Domain 4: Strategic and Professional Management

Key action 4.1	The school establishes clear goals for student achievement and tracks progress toward goals.	Developing
---------------------------	---	-------------------

- School leadership collaborates with teachers to establish and communicate measurable goals for the improvement of student learning and strategies aligned to the goals; however, not all teachers could articulate the goals or strategies. According to school leadership, the board and operator, the school-wide goals developed out of the Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) root cause analysis process and include multi-year growth goals for middle school ELA and Math to move to the 40th percentile based on NWEA MAP scores, which most teachers confirmed. However, some teachers did not know the targets, while other teachers noted more general goals around student engagement and a decrease in students requiring remediation; other teachers indicated there was an attendance goal. School leadership and teachers stated that goals were communicated in the beginning of the year and have been referenced during the year in team meetings, weekly PD, and morning and afternoon huddles. Further, school leadership noted that strategies to support the goals included small group instruction, intervention, use of data to differentiate instruction and after school programming. Some teachers confirmed data use and differentiation, but teachers also noted professional development, retreats to develop the goals, technology and SEL support. Some teachers also reported that they were not aware of specific strategies. Review of an infographic with the CSI goals confirmed they were based on a root cause analysis with a target of the 40th percentile in NWEA MAP, and also included grade level performance over the last three years. Review of the CSI plan confirmed the goals and noted strategies included data analysis (progress monitoring), PD, interventions, summer programs and SEL.
- School leadership and some staff participate in regular analysis of data and instructional practices to monitor progress towards goals, revisiting and adjusting action plans as needed. In focus groups, school leadership and teachers reported that NWEA MAP is administered three times over the course of the year, and they are in the process of reviewing data currently. School leadership and teachers added that while in previous years they have reviewed data throughout the year as a staff collectively, the pandemic has posed challenges, so data is shared with the ILT and disseminated to teachers in grade level teams after the Fall and Winter assessments in PD. Teachers indicated MAP data is also used for their SLOs. Further, school leadership noted that the math team analyzes Anet data after each administration. Continuing, some teachers noted testing updates were shared via email. Lastly, school leadership and teachers noted that goals and strategies have remained the same since their inception. Review of an email confirmed that MAP growth from the winter assessment was shared with the middle school team, linked to their SLOs.

Review of the CSI Data Monitoring Protocol from January displayed growth by grade in MAP reading and Math from Fall 2019 to Fall 2020.

Key action 4.2	School leadership allocates and deploys the resources of time, human capital, and funding to address the priority growth goals for student achievement.	Effective
-------------------	--	------------------

- Budget distributions and resource allocations are aligned to school goals and priorities that support equitable learning environments. According to school leadership, families and teachers, funding was allocated for a Director of Climate and Culture, who supported student engagement efforts, and also for two instructional coaches. School leadership and teachers added that funding is also used to support the arts programming, including drumming, dance, and arts media. Further, school leadership, families, students, and teachers stated that investments were made in technology this year to support student access at home in a virtual learning space (laptops and hotspots), and also in online intervention programs, such as FEV tutoring, Moby Max, IXL and platforms such as Nearpod, as well as PD to prepare teachers for the shift to virtual instruction; families and school leadership also indicated student supplies were provided. Review of purchase orders for Nearpod and Moby Max confirmed investments in online platforms and interventions and review of a budget document for SY21 confirmed investments in laptops and computers, instructional supplies and more. Continuing, school leadership, families and teachers noted that families and staff had opportunities to view and provide feedback on the budget through surveys. Review of the community budget forum presentation confirmed stakeholder feedback and priorities for the current and upcoming years related to student engagement (including technology and interventions), student wholeness, math and literacy and summer programming. Lastly, school leadership noted an investment in safety equipment to support school re-opening efforts, such as temperature scanners, floor decals, sanitizing stations and desk shields.
- School leadership leverages staff in key roles in support of school-wide goals. In focus groups, school leadership and teachers stated that teachers serve on the Instructional Leadership Team (ILT), a governing body for the school, which includes a representative from each grade level. School leadership and teachers added that teachers who are technologically savvy have been able to provide PD to staff on platforms such as Google Classroom, Nearpod, Moby Max, Seesaw and Achieve 3000. Further, teachers noted that staff serve as mentors and testing coordinators, while school leadership noted a staff member leads the after school program. Continuing, school leadership and teachers stated that teachers are identified to take on leadership roles based on talent, engagement, and growth. Review of ILT agendas confirmed that teachers serve in these roles, and that school-wide attendance, MAP, Anet, and progress monitoring were discussed in January.

- School leadership leverages common staff time to focus on professional learning and collaboration in support of student achievement. According to school leadership and teachers, teachers have time during weekly PD days to meet by content area, and topics include planning curriculum, data analysis, and instruction. Teachers added that they also meet bi-weekly in grade level teams (middle school and high school), and discuss grading, pacing, student activities and attendance, and more. Further, school leadership and teachers noted that special educators meet together, and the arts team meets together. Lastly, school leadership and teachers noted that one content team is meeting with a partner who supports curriculum and provides PD. Review of content planning agendas confirmed topics included planning, instruction, data, pacing, interventions and more.

Key action 4.3	School’s board of trustees (or operator) provides competent stewardship and oversight of the school.	Developing
---------------------------	---	-------------------

- The governing board or operator maintain essential knowledge of the school and provide some oversight of the academic program. According to school leadership, the board and operator, the operator is in the building frequently, and the board had previously spent time in the school prior to the pandemic but is still invited to virtual events and can access virtual instruction. School leadership, the board, and operator added that through monthly board meetings, the principal presents updates through a dashboard which tracks a variety of data points, including the goals developed through the CSI process (which the operator and board articulated) and relevant student data to track progress, including NWEA and Anet assessment data, attendance, and graduation rates, as well as PD, staffing, and areas of concern are noted and addressed. Further, school leadership, the board and operator noted the data is used to address deficits, such as challenges posed to engagement for the current year, which resulted in the use of hall monitors to conduct home visits, or the provision of technology to students. Further, the board and operator noted that through an annual retreat, the board and operator worked with the school teams to reflect on the previous year in terms of successes and challenges, and plan for the upcoming year, through the development of goals and the dashboard, and a multi-year perspective is used; the board and operator articulated the growth targets for middle school students related to math and reading, as measured by NWEA. However, though the board indicated that data was shared as it was received, they could only reference data points from the Fall, which were not specific, and noted concerns with the reliability of data given the virtual learning environment. Lastly, school leadership, the board and operator added that the school was built on teacher voice, the arts and small class sizes, and they have stayed true to their contractual charter agreement in these regards. Review of board meeting agendas and reports noted principal updates, as well as updates on staffing, enrollment, grants, virtual learning and more; review also confirmed that data was included, such as attendance by grade, and changes

from the previous month, as well as CSI intervention/progress monitoring were noted occasionally.

- The governing board and operator provide financial oversight by monitoring the school's financial records and ensuring that the school remains fiscally viable. In focus groups, school leadership, the operator and the board stated that the board has a finance committee, the budget is drafted in the spring and ultimately approved by the board, and the operator is involved in the budget creation. School leadership, the board and operator added that monthly updates are provided to the board around finances, including budget to actuals which summarized spending, and an audit is conducted annually; school leadership indicated that an accountant presents financial reports. The board and operator also noted that they have a financial goal of a 5% surplus, which the school is currently exceeding, and the school raises additional funds through galas and campaigns, which provided supplies for students and teachers and supports the arts program. Further, the board and operator noted that grants have been secured to support the school, including Title 1, 2 and 4, as well as CoP and ESSA, which support after school programming, tutoring, technology and more. Lastly, the operator noted that enrollment is increasing for next year and has done so incrementally over the years. Review of quarterly financial statements for the first half of the year displayed profit and loss summaries, and review of the audit from 2019 confirmed no material findings of concern.
- The governing board and operator maintain some effective governance practices to ensure organizational viability, including the systematic selection and oversight of the school leader. According to school leadership, the board and operator, the board includes a president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer, and also includes the following sub-committees: finance, executive, personnel, and ad hoc committees as needed, and board members represent a range of backgrounds and expertise. School leadership, the board and operator added that a parent representative is also on the board, though school leadership indicated they are currently seeking a parent for that seat. School leadership, the board and operator added that the board meets monthly, in addition to an annual retreat during the summer that involves strategic planning for the upcoming year; school leadership noted that reimagining schools has been a current focus as well, in terms of virtual learning and key takeaways. Further, school leadership, the board, and operator indicated that a deputy director has been hired to support school leadership and will begin in the summer. Continuing, the board and operator reported that decision-making is guided by by-laws for the board, and the operator noted a new policy related to diversity was developed based on feedback from the community and after being discussed by the board. Review of board members resumes, bylaws, purchase policy and fiscal controls, and policies confirmed governing board composition and practices. Lastly, regarding evaluation, school leadership, the board and operator indicated that the principal is evaluated by the operator using the district's process, including an IDP, mid-year and end of year conference, including a self-reflection component; review of the principal's evaluation confirmed use of the district's process, and includes ratings

and supporting comments. The board and operator noted that the board evaluates the operator, though the operator was not formally evaluated this year, due to the pandemic; traditionally, the operator is evaluated based on goals outlined in a work plan at the annual retreat and provided with feedback.

APPENDIX A: SCHOOL REPORT COMMENTS

Domain 1: Highly Effective Instruction

None

Domain 2: Talented People

None

Domain 3: Vision and Engagement

None

Domain 4: Strategic and Professional Management

None

APPENDIX B: SER TEAM MEMBERS

The SER visit to the Connexions School was conducted on May 3-4, 2021 by a team of representatives from Baltimore City Public Schools and SchoolWorks.

Team Lead/Writer: Mona Khajawi is a Program Evaluator II in the Office of Achievement and Accountability in Baltimore City Public Schools. She has had a variety of experience in the field of education, including teaching, program management and evaluation. Most recently, she worked in the capacity of Evaluation Specialist with City Year in Washington, D.C., assessing the quality of educational programming implemented by 140 AmeriCorps members in eleven schools throughout the district. She initially gained exposure to evaluation while interning with the Academy for Educational Development, where she assisted in conducting reviews of a subset of the Gates-funded small schools in New York City. Previously, she also taught English in a rural high school in Ukraine, and served as an Assistant Program Coordinator of the AmeriCorps program at the Latin American Youth Center in Washington, D.C. Mona holds a Bachelor's degree in English Literature from the University of Maryland, College Park, and a Master's degree in Education Policy from Teachers College, Columbia University.

Team Support: Brianna Kaufman is the Manager for the School Effectiveness Reviews in the Office of Achievement and Accountability in Baltimore City Public Schools. Brianna began her career as an elementary art teacher in Bryan, TX. After obtaining her Master's degree, she interned and worked at a number of art museums in the education department including the: Dallas Museum of Art, The National Gallery of Art in DC, and the Walters Art Museum. In 2008, Brianna made the shift from art education to general education reform as a Program Manager at the Fund for Educational Excellence. There she managed a grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation that focused on College and Career Readiness. Prior to joining OAA, Brianna worked as the College and Career Readiness Education Specialist for Baltimore City Public Schools. Brianna holds a Bachelor's degree in elementary education from Texas Lutheran University, a Master's degree in Art Education from University of North Texas, and a Master's of Business Administration from Loyola University in Maryland.

Team Support: 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.

Team Support: Kara Dunn is a consultant with SchoolWorks. As school quality reviewer, she has been a frequent team lead or team writer for school quality reviews and charter renewal visits in California, Colorado, Massachusetts, Maryland, New York, Pennsylvania, and Tennessee. She is also the CEO and consultant of ApogeeVision – a consulting firm that works with many public and private organizations in the areas of administration, facilitation, teacher and staff training, organizational and curriculum development, and program evaluation. She has been an educator for more than 15 years, serving K-12 students. Among many instructional positions, she has worked in Boston Public Schools as a teacher, district lead teacher, teacher trainer, instructional coach for math/science educators, and a school-based administrator. She graduated from Spelman College with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Educational Psychology. She has earned two Masters degrees – a Masters of Education from the University of Massachusetts, and Masters of Divinity from Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary. She has served as an adjunct professor at Gordon Conwell Theological Seminary (Boston Campus). She has served as a curriculum developer and instructor for the Office of Diversity and Community Partnerships at Harvard Medical School. She is the author of several curricula, including one made for the national film tour, *Kunta Kinteh Island: Coming Home without Shackles*.