



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

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

**Independence School Local I #333  
1300 West 36<sup>th</sup> Street  
Baltimore, MD, 21211**

**April 12-13, 2021**

200 East North Avenue  
Baltimore, Maryland 21202  
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## 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

Independence School Local I serves approximately 150 students in ninth through twelfth grades. The school is in the Northeast quadrant of Baltimore.

### **Virtual SER Context**

Independence School Local I has been virtual since the beginning of the year. At the time of the site visit (April 12-13, 2021) some students were returning to in-person learning. All classroom observations conducted for the purpose of this report were recorded prior to the visit.

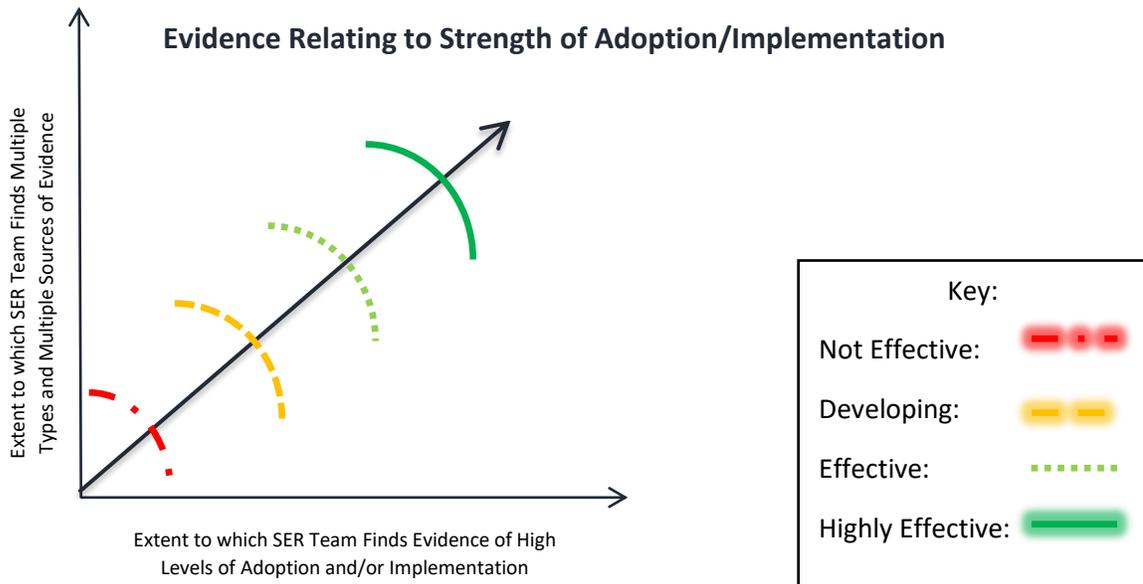
### **School Leadership and Staffing:**

The principal, Ms. Ayanna McLean, has been at the school for 3 years and with the district for 26 years in various roles. For the purpose of this SER site visit, staff designated as school leadership are listed below.

<b>School Leadership Focus Group Members</b>	
<b>Name</b>	<b>Role</b>
Ayanna McLean	Principal
Marlon Quillens	Educational Associate

## 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<sup>1</sup> and multiple sources<sup>2</sup> 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	<b>Not Effective</b>	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	<b>Developing</b>	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	<b>Effective</b>	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	<b>Highly Effective</b>	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.

<sup>1</sup> "Multiple types of evidence" is defined as evidence collected from two or more of the following: document review, stakeholder focus groups; and classroom observations.

<sup>2</sup> "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.	Developing
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.	Developing
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.	Developing
3.2 The school cultivates and sustains open communication and decision-making opportunities with families and the community.	Developing
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.	Developing
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.	Developing
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- 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, teachers follow the Baltimore City Public School System’s (BCPSS) curriculum, and use a Project-Based Learning (PBL) model, and teachers submit lesson plans as well as project plans and outlines which are uploaded to a shared drive which leadership can access. School leadership and teachers added that a lesson plan template was provided for teachers to use, which includes required components such as standards, essential questions, automaticity, and HSA warm up/questioning. Further, school leadership and teachers noted that teachers meet to discuss curriculum planning and pacing in weekly meetings in which leadership sometimes participates; some teachers indicated pacing was flexible, as a project-based school, and leadership noted this was an area of focus in which teachers receive regular feedback. Lastly, regarding equity and diversity, school leadership and teachers noted that projects have allowed students to explore themes such as “This is Us,” the school to prison pipeline, African American males in society and more; teachers also noted they have received training on incorporation of students’ varied learning styles. Review of lesson and unit plans and project outlines confirmed use of the PBL model and also that standards were included, as well as warm ups, automaticity and essential questions. Review of staff meeting notes also confirmed the lesson plan template and expectations for lesson plan submission.
- School leadership consistently provides actionable feedback and guidance to teachers, aligned with the Instructional Framework. In focus groups, school leadership and teachers stated that Legacy Pathways has been contracted for the current year to provide coaching to teachers. Further, school leadership and teachers stated that teachers are informally observed regularly (weekly or bi-weekly), and receive feedback that includes strengths, weaknesses, and next steps regarding lesson plans and instruction. School leadership and teachers added that feedback is provided via email or verbally. Regarding formal observations, school leadership and teachers reported that school leadership follows the district’s process, which includes a pre- and post-observation conference prior to and following the observation, respectively, with next steps included. Review of Individual Development Plans (IDPs) and formal observations confirmed use of the district’s process, which includes ratings and comments aligned to the Teach indicators of

the Instructional Framework. Review of Instructional Practice Guide Coaching forms included areas such as objective alignment, objective format, warm up activities and content, with notes on what was observed and suggestions regarding next steps, though it is unclear if these observations were conducted by school leadership or Legacy Pathways.

- School leadership is beginning to ensure the use of a complete student learning data-cycle. According to school leadership and teachers, teachers are administering iReady three times a year to assess students’ growth in Math and English, and teachers were trained this year in using iReady data and reports to inform their instruction. School leadership and teachers added that data is used to determine which students need interventions, such as Moby Max, Achieve 3000, and Math 180. Further, school leadership and teachers noted that the school has a dual enrollment program for students who are performing above grade level, though currently no students are enrolled; some teachers also indicated the use of IXL and Khan Academy as enrichment for students. However, when probed on specific steps in a data analysis process, teachers could not articulate them beyond creating small groups based on performance, and school leadership clarified that the school will do a deeper dive into data and training later this Spring with the Legacy Data Lab. Lastly, the operator reported that data has demonstrated the need for summer programming to provide interventions to support students who are performing below grade level. A review of some collaborative planning agendas revealed discussions of data and action planning.

<b>Key action 1.2</b>	<b>Teachers use multiple data sources to adjust practice to meet learners’ unique needs.</b>	<b>Not rated</b>
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- 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.

<b>Key action 1.3</b>	<b>Teachers deliver highly effective instruction.<sup>3</sup></b>	<b>Developing</b>
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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 6 classroom observations that were conducted.

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

<b>Communication of objective</b>	<b>Evident</b>	<b>Partially Evident</b>	<b>Not Evident</b>
<b>Evident:</b> Teachers communicate lesson objectives to students by explaining and/or referencing it during lessons. <b>Partially Evident:</b> Teachers communicate lesson objectives by posting it. <b>Not Evident:</b> Teachers do not communicate lesson objectives to students.	<b>50%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>50%</b>
<b>Learning activities and resources align with lesson objective</b>	<b>Evident</b>	<b>Partially Evident</b>	<b>Not Evident</b>
<b>Evident:</b> Lesson activities and resources have a clear and intentional purpose and are aligned with lesson objectives. <b>Partially Evident:</b> Lesson activities and resources are generally aligned with lesson objectives and/or some tasks have a clear, intentional purpose. <b>Not Evident:</b> Lesson activities and resources are not aligned with lesson objectives OR Lesson activities and resources do not have a clear intentional purpose.	<b>33%</b>	<b>67%</b>	<b>0%</b>

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

<b>Accurate, grade-level content</b>	<b>Evident</b>	<b>Partially Evident</b>	<b>Not Evident</b>
<b>Evident:</b> Teachers present students with accurate grade level content aligned to appropriate content standards. <b>Partially Evident:</b> Teachers present students with mostly accurate grade level content aligned to appropriate content standards. <b>Not Evident:</b> Teachers present students with inaccurate grade level content and/or not aligned to appropriate content standards.	<b>100%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>0%</b>
<b>Alternate presentation of content</b>	<b>Evident</b>	<b>Partially Evident</b>	<b>Not Evident</b>
<b>Evident:</b> Teachers present content in various ways (two or more) to make content clear. <b>Partially Evident:</b> Teachers attempt to present content in various ways (two or more), but attempts do not make content clear. <b>Not Evident:</b> Teachers do not present content in various ways.	<b>83%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>0%</b>
<b>Emphasis of key points</b>	<b>Evident</b>	<b>Partially Evident</b>	<b>Not Evident</b>
<b>Evident:</b> Teachers emphasize important points to focus learning of content. <b>Partially Evident:</b> Teachers attempt to emphasize important points to focus learning of content, but attempts do not make content clear.	<b>100%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>0%</b>

<sup>3</sup> Percentages shown in the table are subject to rounding and may appear to not sum to exactly 100%.

<b>Not Evident:</b> Teachers do not emphasize important points to focus learning of content.			
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- Teachers use multiple strategies and tasks to engage all students in rigorous work.

<b>Scaffolded and/or differentiated tasks</b>	<b>Evident</b>	<b>Partially Evident</b>	<b>Not Evident</b>
<b>Evident:</b> Teachers scaffold and/or differentiate tasks by providing access to rigorous grade-level instruction for all students. <b>Partially Evident:</b> Teachers attempt to scaffold and/or differentiated tasks, but not all students are supported in accessing rigorous grade-level instruction. <b>Not Evident:</b> Teachers do not scaffold or differentiated tasks.	<b>100%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>0%</b>
<b>Opportunities to engage with complex texts and tasks</b>	<b>Evident</b>	<b>Partially Evident</b>	<b>Not Evident</b>
<b>Evident:</b> Students have opportunities and time to grapple with complex texts and/or rigorous tasks. <b>Partially Evident:</b> Students have opportunities to engage with complex texts and rigorous tasks superficially. <b>Not Evident:</b> Students have rare or no opportunities to engage with complex texts and rigorous tasks.	<b>83%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>0%</b>

- Some teachers use evidence-dependent questioning.

<b>Questions requiring justification</b>	<b>Evident</b>	<b>Partially Evident</b>	<b>Not Evident</b>
<b>Evident:</b> Teachers asks questions that require students to cite evidence and clearly explain their thought processes. <b>Partially Evident:</b> Teachers ask questions that require students to explain their thought processes or cite evidence but not both. <b>Not Evident:</b> Teachers does not ask questions that require students to cite evidence or explain their though processes.	<b>17%</b>	<b>50%</b>	<b>33%</b>
<b>Clear and/or scaffolded questions</b>	<b>Evident</b>	<b>Partially Evident</b>	<b>Not Evident</b>
<b>Evident:</b> Teachers asks questions that are clear and scaffolded. <b>Partially Evident:</b> Teachers asks questions that are somewhat unclear to students or lack scaffolding. <b>Not Evident:</b> Teachers do not ask scaffolded questions.	<b>100%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>0%</b>

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

<b>Informative checks for understanding</b>	<b>Evident</b>	<b>Partially Evident</b>	<b>Not Evident</b>
<b>Evident:</b> Teachers conduct one or more checks for understanding that yield useful information at key points throughout the lesson. <b>Partially Evident:</b> Teachers attempt to conduct checks for understanding, but checks may only yield some useful information. <b>Not Evident:</b> Teachers do not check for understanding during the lesson. OR Teachers' checks for understanding are inappropriate or ineffective.	<b>67%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>16%</b>
<b>Specific, academic feedback</b>	<b>Evident</b>	<b>Partially Evident</b>	<b>Not Evident</b>
<b>Evident –</b> Teachers give specific academic feedback to communicate current progress and next steps to move forward. <b>Partially Evident –</b> Teachers give general academic feedback, but feedback may not clarify next steps to move forward.	<b>33%</b>	<b>67%</b>	<b>0%</b>

<b>Not Evident</b> – Teachers do not give academic feedback. OR When needed, teachers do not address student misunderstandings.			
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- Some teachers facilitate academic talk.

<b>Opportunities for student-to-student interaction*</b>	<b>Evident</b>	<b>Partially Evident</b>	<b>Not Evident</b>
<b>Evident:</b> Teachers provide multiple or extended opportunities for student-to-student interactions. <b>Partially Evident:</b> Teachers provide one opportunity for student-to-student interactions. <b>Not Evident:</b> Teachers provide no opportunity for student-to-student interactions.	<b>33%</b>	<b>0%</b>	<b>67%</b>
<b>Evidence-based discussions*</b>	<b>Evident</b>	<b>Partially Evident</b>	<b>Not Evident</b>
<b>Evident:</b> In most student-to-student interactions, students engage in discussions with their peers to make meaning of content or deepen their understanding. <b>Partially Evident:</b> In few student-to-student interactions, students engage in discussions with their peers to make meaning of content or deepen their understanding. <b>Not Evident:</b> Students do not engage in discussions with their peers to make meaning of content or deepen their understanding.	<b>17%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>67%</b>
<b>Student academic talk</b>	<b>Evident</b>	<b>Partially Evident</b>	<b>Not Evident</b>
<b>Evident:</b> Students use academic talk and, when necessary, teachers consistently and appropriately support students in speaking academically. <b>Partially Evident:</b> Students sometimes use academic talk, and teachers inconsistently or inappropriately supports students in speaking academically. <b>Not Evident:</b> Students do not use academic talk, and teachers does not support students in speaking academically.	<b>50%</b>	<b>17%</b>	<b>33%</b>

\*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.

<b>Key action 1.4</b>	<b>Teachers establish a classroom environment in which teaching and learning can occur.</b>	<b>Not rated</b>
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- Teachers implement routines to maximize instructional time.

<b>Maximized instructional time</b>	<b>Evident</b>	<b>Partially Evident</b>	<b>Not Evident</b>
<b>Evident:</b> Students are only idle for very brief (less than 2 minutes) periods of time while waiting for teachers. <b>Partially Evident:</b> Students may be idle for short periods of time (2-4 minutes) while waiting for teachers. <b>Not Evident:</b> Students may be idle for significant periods of time (4 minutes or more) while waiting for teachers.	%	%	%
<b>Smooth routines and procedures</b>	<b>Evident</b>	<b>Partially Evident</b>	<b>Not Evident</b>
<b>Evident:</b> Routines and procedures run smoothly with minimal or no prompting from the teachers. <b>Partially Evident:</b> Routines and procedures run smoothly with some prompting from the teachers. <b>Not Evident:</b> 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.

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

<b>Reinforce positive behavior</b>	<b>Evident</b>	<b>Partially Evident</b>	<b>Not Evident</b>
<b>Evident:</b> Teachers promote and reinforce positive behavior. <b>Partially Evident:</b> Teachers occasionally acknowledge positive behavior but focus more on negative behavior. <b>Not Evident:</b> Teachers primarily focus on negative behavior.	%	%	%
<b>On-task behavior</b>	<b>Evident</b>	<b>Partially Evident</b>	<b>Not Evident</b>
<b>Evident:</b> Students are on-task and active participants in classwork and discussions. <b>Partially Evident:</b> Some students exhibit frequent off-task behavior in the classroom. AND/OR Most students exhibit occasional off-task behavior in the classroom. <b>Not Evident:</b> Students exhibit consistent off-task behavior in the classroom.	%	%	%
<b>Time impact of redirection/discipline of off-task behavior</b>	<b>Evident</b>	<b>Partially Evident</b>	<b>Not Evident</b>
<b>Evident:</b> Teachers address behavioral issues (if any) with minimal interruption to instructional time (less than 2 minutes). <b>Partially Evident:</b> Teachers address behavioral issues with some interruption to instructional time (2-4 minutes). <b>Not Evident:</b> 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

<b>Key action 2.1</b>	<b>The school implements systems to select effective teachers and staff whose skills and beliefs meet the needs of the school.</b>	<b>Not rated</b>
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- 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.

<b>Key action 2.2</b>	<b>The school develops teacher and staff capacity through individualized support and professional development.</b>	<b>Developing</b>
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- School leadership ensures the implementation of an informal mentoring program, when applicable, to support the development of all new teachers and staff. According to school leadership and teachers, the educational associate serves as the unofficial mentor for early career teachers, and the school has contracted Legacy Pathways to provide coaching and professional development to all teachers on pedagogy. Teachers added that supports for new teachers from the educational associate have included informal observations, lesson planning feedback and conversations after professional development, and they are able to reach out for assistance as needed; for example, with accommodations for students with Individual Education Programs (IEPs). Further, teachers also noted that their peers have provided supports around lesson planning and curriculum during weekly collaborative planning meetings; one teacher noted a veteran teacher was her mentor and has provided support around family engagement, pacing, and indicators within the Instructional Framework. Lastly, school leadership indicated that teachers participated in an Orientation through the district's New Teacher Institute.
- 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 stated that teachers who were struggling could be identified in a variety of ways, including formal and informal observations, as well as through weekly collaborative meetings, based on "temperature checks" and conversations. Some teachers also noted it could be based on feedback from students and parents. School leadership and teachers added that supports include professional development, district office staff who have supported in specialized areas (special education), direct feedback and lesson/project planning. Further, teachers reported that Legacy Pathways has conducted walkthroughs and shared trends. Lastly, school leadership noted that no teachers were currently on Performance Improvement Plans, and

improvements have been noted in planning and instruction with the supports provided by school leadership.

- School leadership engages all staff in professional development that is somewhat differentiated based on identified needs. According to school leadership, the operator, and teachers, professional development is centered around Project-Based Learning (in alignment with the school's mission and vision), pedagogy, special education and restorative practices. School leadership and teachers added that Legacy Pathways was contracted to provide the professional development related to pedagogy, planning and data, while teachers noted the focus on restorative practices was intended to build community and address the social and emotional needs of students. School leadership also indicated that special education has been a focus, based on deficits in the past. Further, school leadership, the operator and teachers noted that professional development needs were identified based on observed areas of growth per the Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI) plan and also teacher feedback through surveys. Continuing, however, school leadership and teachers stated that most professional development is whole group, though special educators have weekly targeted professional development, and some professional development (for example, through Legacy Pathways) occasionally allows for teachers to participate in breakout rooms based on content. Lastly, regarding impact, school leadership and teachers indicated that teachers are assessed after professional development through surveys, and elements of professional development are expected to be incorporated in lesson planning and instruction. Review of a professional development calendar for the year organized by month confirmed that topics included Legacy Pathway Teaching in the virtual world, Math 180, Achieve 3000, special education professional development (monthly), PBL works and planning session, student planning and reading related to data, as well as trauma informed care, reading and using data/PBL, the Instructional Framework and more. Review of agendas, activities, notes and planning also confirmed the aforementioned topics, as well as virtual professional development related to platforms such as google classroom, clever, and Infinite Campus.

## Domain 3: Vision and Engagement<sup>4</sup>

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.	Developing
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- Most of the school community shares an understanding of the school’s mission and vision, including a clear understanding of initiatives and values, that support high student achievement. According to school leadership, teachers, the operator, board, and families, the mission of the school is centered around creating a safe and nurturing environment for students, which is manifested in the size of the student body (which is under 200 students), small class sizes, and relationships between staff and students. Teachers, families, the board, and operator and added that another element of the mission is the project-based learning focus, on which teachers have received a great deal of professional development for the current year, and which allows for real world connections to material learned in class. Further, some teachers, families, the board and operator noted the aspect of cooperative learning and engaging families and the community, manifested through partnerships with organizations such as Outward Bound and Urban Gardens, as well as the Movement team that supports engagement and restorative practices. However, when probed, students generally noted that they are encouraged to be independent and prepared for the real world. Regarding communication, school leadership, teachers, families and the operator stated that the vision and mission was developed with input from staff and families, has been re-visited this year, and is shared through parent cafes, posted throughout the building, in the handbook, on the website, and through social media platforms; the operator also shared that newsletters are sent monthly. Review of emails also confirmed revised mission and vision statements based on feedback. Lastly, school leadership and the board indicated in the past there had been a focus on agriculture as a pathway, but the school is in the process of being re-imaged. Review of the staff handbook confirmed the mission and vision are as follows: *“We are committed to cultivating a nurturing but challenging learning environment, encouraging our learners to persevere through life’s challenges, cooperatively working with staff and peers as they increase their academic competencies and master skills needed to pursue higher learning and career.”*
- 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, and the operator reported that the school’s project-based learning model allows for discussions around diversity and equity, such as a This Is Me project, which a review of a project overview confirmed, and field trips in the past to other cities, including a trip to New York to listen to Mr. Farrakan speak. School

<sup>4</sup> The parent focus group and student focus group both included less than five participants.

leadership, teachers, families, and the operator added that students participate in nature experiences through Outward Bound and can also participate in clubs, such as anime and LGTBQ. Review of emails confirmed that teachers were able to support various clubs for students. Further, school leadership stated that students in Spanish class also research and present on various countries regarding culture, social life, government, currency and more. Lastly, students indicated they learn about cultures in their classes, such as Egypt and other parts of Africa. Regarding 21<sup>st</sup> century preparations, all stakeholders noted that students have access to technology for virtual learning, and use platforms such as Google classroom, and that project-based learning supports collaborative learning, that is connected to the real world. Further, families indicated that students have opportunities to participate in student government, while some teachers noted that students have learned about colleges from tours and via speakers, and also participated in financial literacy education.

<b>Key action 3.2</b>	<b>The school cultivates and sustains open communication and decision-making opportunities with families and the community.</b>	<b>Developing</b>
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- The school implements systems to build relationships with families and garners feedback in order to make schoolwide decisions. According to school leadership, teachers, families and students, the school hosts a monthly Parent Café, in which families can learn about school-wide updates through a principal talk, and ask any questions, and also communicates via newsletters, robocalls, social media, emails, phone calls and texts. Stakeholders added that the school has a Movement Team the supports student engagement, as well as support staff who assist in engaging students and families after students have been absent by making phone calls and conducting home visits, if necessary. Review of the Movement Team proposal confirmed the scope of work. Further, school leadership and teachers stated that the school has hosted events in the past such as Back to School Night, a cookout in the beginning of the year for families and students to meet teachers and receive supplies, a Health fair, a Thanksgiving event, and Literacy and Technology nights. Continuing, regarding family input, in addition to the parent café (through which families provided feedback on the budget), school leadership, teachers, families and the operator noted that the school administers surveys, and changes as a result of feedback have included extending communication through social media and text Tuesdays, mental health supports, and interventions for students, such as Achieve 3000 and math 180, in addition to after school and summer programming. Lastly, the operator noted that families serve on the board and are able to attend board meetings. Review of newsletters and parent café agendas and powerpoint presentations revealed that topics included budget, resources for families, COVID-19 updates and the hybrid learning model, attendance, and college acceptance celebrations, and more.

- The school builds strong relationships with community stakeholders and leverages some resources to meet the needs of students and the school. In focus groups, school leadership, teachers, families and the operator stated that community partners include Outward Bound, which has supported outdoor, experiential learning, overnight excursions and teambuilding activities for students, which students confirmed, as well as Urban Gardens, which supports the agriculture focus of the school. A review of a letter from Outward Bound confirmed this partnership. School leadership, families, and teachers added that the school has contracted partners such as the Movement Team who is on-site 3 days a week to provide mental health supports, and family and community engagement support and Aziza Peace also supports social and emotional learning. Further, school leadership, teachers, and the operator noted that Legacy Pathways has been contracted to support teacher development through professional development and coaching around pedagogy and data. Lastly, some teachers and the operator indicated PAL supports the school as well. Review of a Legacy Pathways implementation planning document and proposal for the Movement Team confirmed some of the partnerships.

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

<b>Key action 4.1</b>	<b>The school establishes clear goals for student achievement and tracks progress toward goals.</b>	<b>Developing</b>
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- School leadership establishes and communicates measurable goals for the improvement of student learning and strategies aligned to the goals; however, not all teachers could articulate the goals. According to school leadership and teachers, the school identified a Math goal related to MCAP through the CSI plan identified through root cause analysis; in the absence of standardized testing, the goal is now based on iReady. School leadership added that the goal is for a 5% increase, which some teachers confirmed, though most teachers could not articulate the target, and noted a general increase. Review of the CSI plan confirmed the MCAP goal, though it was noted as 4%. Further, school leadership reported that the attendance goal was 94%, and while some teachers confirmed the attendance goal, others believed the goal was 70%, and still other teachers generally indicated that creating a supportive environment was a goal. Continuing, school leadership also indicated a goal of reducing course failure by 5%, though no teachers confirmed this goal. In terms of strategies, school leadership and teachers reported that for the Math goal, a math intervention program has been purchased (math 180), as well as incorporation of HSA warm-up questions in instruction and the use of iReady data and lessons; review of the CSI plan confirmed math 180 and data analysis/iReady. For the attendance goal, school leadership and teachers stated that support staff and the Movement team make phone calls home per a formal process to handle student absence, which includes home visits. Review of a running record of student names and notes confirmed phone calls home. Regarding development of the goals, school leadership indicated that the leadership team created the goals and strategies last year, though some teachers noted they provided feedback on goals and leadership noted staff were surveyed regarding goals, which are communicated through staff meetings, weekly PD and family events and robocalls. Lastly, however, when probed, students and families were not aware of goals. Review of root cause analysis noted recommendations for instruction, PD, attendance and more.
- School leadership and all staff participate in 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 iReady results are shared in professional development meetings with staff, and some teachers stated that strengths and weaknesses were discussed, and teachers provided feedback on the data, while other teachers noted that gift cards were distributed to students who were most improved; some teachers noted that this year, information was shared via email. However, when probed, teachers could not articulate progress towards goals around school-wide attendance, though some teachers noted the goal was not being met and strategies were being pushed, and others indicated updates were shared via email. Regarding

adjustments, some teachers noted the process of handling student absence became more streamlined and involved additional staff, while other teachers noted an increase in the use of small groups; school leadership noted the use of iReady interventions.

Key action 4.2	<b>School leadership allocates and deploys the resources of time, human capital, and funding to address the priority growth goals for student achievement.</b>	<b>Developing</b>
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- Budget distributions and resource allocations are aligned to school goals and priorities that support equitable learning environments. According to school leadership, the operator and teachers, the school’s budget has been supported through federal grant funds such as ESSA and CARES, which was used to purchase technology (computers, iPads, etc.), and also intervention programs, such as Math 180, Moby Max and Zern, the latter being targeted to a large special education population; families confirmed the technology investments. School leadership, the operator and teachers added that professional development has also been a budget priority, including virtual learning platforms, the use of iReady data and restorative practices to support social-emotional needs of students. Continuing, teachers noted that the Movement Team supports student engagement and a whole child focus. Lastly, school leadership, teachers and families noted that families had an opportunity to provide feedback on the budget, noting needs such as summer and after school programming, while students indicated that they received learning supplies, and there were no perceived inequities in the budget. Review of purchase orders and the principal budget tool confirmed investments in aforementioned technology, interventions, restorative practices and the Movement team, as well as iReady, supplies and safety equipment.
- School leadership leverages staff in key roles; however, it is unclear how it supports school-wide goals. In focus groups, school leadership and teachers reported that as a small school, teachers are leveraged to support in various roles in addition to their primary teaching responsibilities, including SST chair, union representative, third party billing, and testing coordinator. School leadership added that a teacher also serves as the literacy coach. Further, teachers stated that they have opportunities to support summer school and serve as coaches. Continuing, school leadership and teachers noted that teachers are identified for a role through a combination of interest and skill/areas of strength. However, school leadership and teachers did not articulate how these roles connected to school-wide goals. Lastly, the operator indicated that teachers serve on the Instructional Leadership Team, though teachers and school leadership did not confirm this.
- 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 meet during half day professional development meetings in math and literacy content

teams weekly to plan, develop strategies, focus on restorative practices, consult with special educators and more. Teachers added that occasionally, a member of the leadership team joins the meetings. Review of collaborative planning meeting notes revealed that teachers discuss data and create action plans, discuss planning, student concerns and more.

<b>Key action 4.3</b>	<b>School’s board of trustees (or operator) provides competent stewardship and oversight of the school.</b>	<b>Developing</b>
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- The governing board and operator maintain essential knowledge of the school and provide some oversight of the academic program. According to school leadership, the operator and board, the principal shares monthly reports with the board and the operator works closely with the principal on-site. School leadership, the board and operator added that a dashboard was created that is shared at board meetings which tracks student attendance, cohort retention, projects, field trips, and other indicators; interventions to support students have also been shared. Further, school leadership stated that the operator participated in a root cause analysis when the school-wide goals were created, and spotlighted areas in need of improvement, such as special education and parent involvement, which have been priorities of the board. The board confirmed priorities but noted they had not had an opportunity to reset goals. While the operator and board confirmed that the goals were related to iReady performance, when probed, they could not articulate a target, or current progress towards the goals at the time of the visit, though noted general progress over the contract term. The board also expressed concern that the data may not be fully reliable, based on participation rates and virtual administration. Continuing, while the board noted that the school’s mission and vision had centered at its inception around agriculture and project-based learning (PBL), it had strayed from that, though was returning to a focus around PBL. Review of board meeting agendas confirmed topics of discussion included a principal report, PBL themes, teacher and parents survey results, attendance by grade and overall with goal noted (94%), staffing, enrollment, SEL, parent cafés and purchases made with grant funds. Review of an agenda from January revealed that agenda items included iReady diagnostic results 1 and 2 for Math and English disaggregated by grade with the percentage of students who are 2 or more grade level below and 1 grade level below, as well as attendance and school events.
- The governing board and operator provide financial oversight by monitoring the school’s financial records and is in the process of ensuring that the school remains fiscally viable. In focus groups, school leadership, stated that the operator and board are involved in the budget process, which begins in the Spring and is approved in the summer by a full board vote after initial review by a sub-committee; school leadership noted priorities around staff and programming. The board and operator added that financial goals include staying in the black, with 5% in reserves, but due to enrollment challenges in the past, was not able to meet this goal and struggled financially; however, enrollment is currently projected to increase next year, and the operator also shared a

gal around enrollment increase. Further, school leadership, the operator and the board noted that they have a finance committee, which is chaired by an educator, and the budget is discussed during monthly meetings through financial reports presented that include budget to actuals, and the budget has been supplemented through grants (Title 1, 2 & 4, CSI, CoP, etc.) and some fundraising through an annual gala, though the operator indicated that the gala was not held this year. Continuing, the board noted that they pay dues, or contribute to the budget through fundraising. Lastly, the board and operator noted an annual audit is conducted. Review of board meeting agendas revealed that grants and allocations were discussed, and review of an audit from SY 18 and 19 revealed there were no material findings. A review of purchase and fiscal controls confirmed monthly and quarterly financial reports and the executive director's role in reporting to the board.

- 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 operator and the board, the board includes a president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer, as well as a finance committee and also an executive and personnel committee; there are also additional ad hoc committees as needed. The board and operator added that the board includes approximately 11-15 members, with a range of backgrounds, from legal, to business and education, and a parent representative is also included; however, there is not a parent currently on the board. Review of board member resumes confirmed 13 board members, with backgrounds in education, finance and marketing. Further, the board and operator noted that by-laws informed decision-making on the board, and they have been updated; review of by-laws confirmed number of members, terms, quorum, and more. Regarding continuous improvement planning, school leadership, the board and operator stated they participate in an annual retreat to Ocean City to reflect on the previous year and plan for the upcoming year with touchpoints during the year; however, no retreat was held this year due to the pandemic, nor could they articulate a long-term planning process beyond the annual retreat or a strategic plan. Regarding the hiring of the principal, school leadership noted that an ad had been posted online, and meetings were convened with families, the board and operator, as well as an interview with students and staff; the board noted they took a final vote as well. Regarding evaluation, school leadership, the board and operator noted the use of the district's process with mid-year and end of year evaluation conducted by the operator, which also includes a self-reflection component. Review of the principal evaluation showed it was for a previous principal in a prior year, and revealed a lack of performance targets, with a focus instead on task and structure development. Lastly, the board and operator noted that the operator is evaluated by the board at the annual retreat based on a set of multi-year targets/work plan, but the evaluation was not conducted as usual at the annual retreat for the previous year; the board instead indicated a series of informal conversations took place, but no supporting documentation was provided for review.

## APPENDIX A: SCHOOL REPORT COMMENTS

### Domain 1: Highly Effective Instruction

Formal observations are used to improve student performance and teacher effectiveness. Principal Ayanna Mclean conducts all teacher observations not Legacy Pathways. The formal observation process clarifies expectations for teacher effectiveness, assists with teachers meeting expectations and provides support along with feedback for improvement.

Both PSEL and NELP Standards support “walkthroughs/collaborative walkthroughs” along with the National Council of Professors of Educational Administration (NCPEA). Walkthroughs align with the indicator “School leadership supports highly effective instruction.” Walkthroughs/Collaborative Walkthroughs provide school leaders valuable information about what is working or not working in the classrooms as well as an opportunity to monitor best practices. In addition, collaborative walkthroughs support data driven instructional practices, sustain visibility, foster teacher growth and improve student learning. Mr. Quilliens, Principal Ayanna Mclean’s Educational Associate conducts weekly walkthroughs and collaborative walkthroughs with Legacy Pathways using Instructional Framework indicators.

Principal Ayanna Mclean promotes teacher peer reviews. Teacher peer reviews provide opportunities to be intentional about teaching and learning as well as best practices all of which support the indicator “School leadership supports highly effective instruction.” When teachers master this process they can assist their students to develop the critical thinking skills to respond thoughtfully and constructively on various academic tasks.

### Domain 2: Talented People

Principal Ayanna Mclean reviews student data; esp. BCPS (Indicators: academic achievement, graduation rate, etc.) and shares results with teachers collectively as well as individually. She exercises distributive leadership as several staff play key roles on the leadership team. These practices align with “the school develops teacher and staff capacity through individualized support and professional development” indicator.

Principal Ayanna Mclean fosters an atmosphere of professional growth and leadership promoting Mr. Quilliens to Educational Associate and serves as his mentor. She meets regularly with him as outlined in the meeting notes providing next steps on professional development and teacher best practices which aligns with “the school develops teacher and staff capacity through individualized support and professional development” indicator.

Principal Ayanna Mclean encourages and supports Mr. Quilliens as he collaborates with Legacy Pathways on coaching, pedagogy, and providing informative feedback to teachers as well as the principal. Her support of Mr. Quilliens and the impact of his work aligns with “the school develops teacher and staff capacity through individualized support and professional development” indicator.

Principal Ayanna Mclean established a relationship with Tech 4 Learning to support teachers individually with project development, question scaffolds and differentiated tasks. This practice aligns with “the school develops teacher and staff capacity through individualized support and professional development” indicator.

Principal Ayanna Mclean mentors and supports the Educational Associate, Mr. Quilliens as he facilitates meetings with the school's Instructional Leadership Team (ILT) to review and discuss data along with developing next steps. This practice aligns with “the school develops teacher and staff capacity through individualized support and professional development” indicator.

### **Domain 3: Vision and Engagement**

Principal Ayanna Mclean has established several viable partnerships at Independence High School to impact teaching and learning. Her partnerships align with “the school cultivates and sustains open communication and decision-making opportunities with families and the community” indicator.

### **Domain 4: Strategic and Professional Management**

None

## APPENDIX B: SER TEAM MEMBERS

The SER visit to the Independence School Local I School was conducted on April 12-13, 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:** Reginald Trammell is a Program Evaluator II in the Office of Achievement and Accountability in Baltimore City Public Schools. Reginald began his career in education in 2000 as an elementary classroom teacher with Baltimore City Public Schools. After a decade of providing direct service to scholars, he transitioned to the Office of Teaching and Learning as the Education Associate for Elementary and Middle School Mathematics. In this role, he wrote curriculum, modelled instruction and facilitated professional development opportunities for math instructors. In 2011, Reginald continued to support Baltimore City Public Schools through the work of the Engagement Office. Here, he served as a Family and Community Engagement Specialist and subsequently secured the role as Parent Involvement Manager. His responsibilities included coordinating district-wide learning opportunities for school staff on engaging of families and community members and supporting the district's Title I Parent Involvement Program. Reginald is currently earning his Administrator I Certificate to continue his mission of improving public education.

**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*.