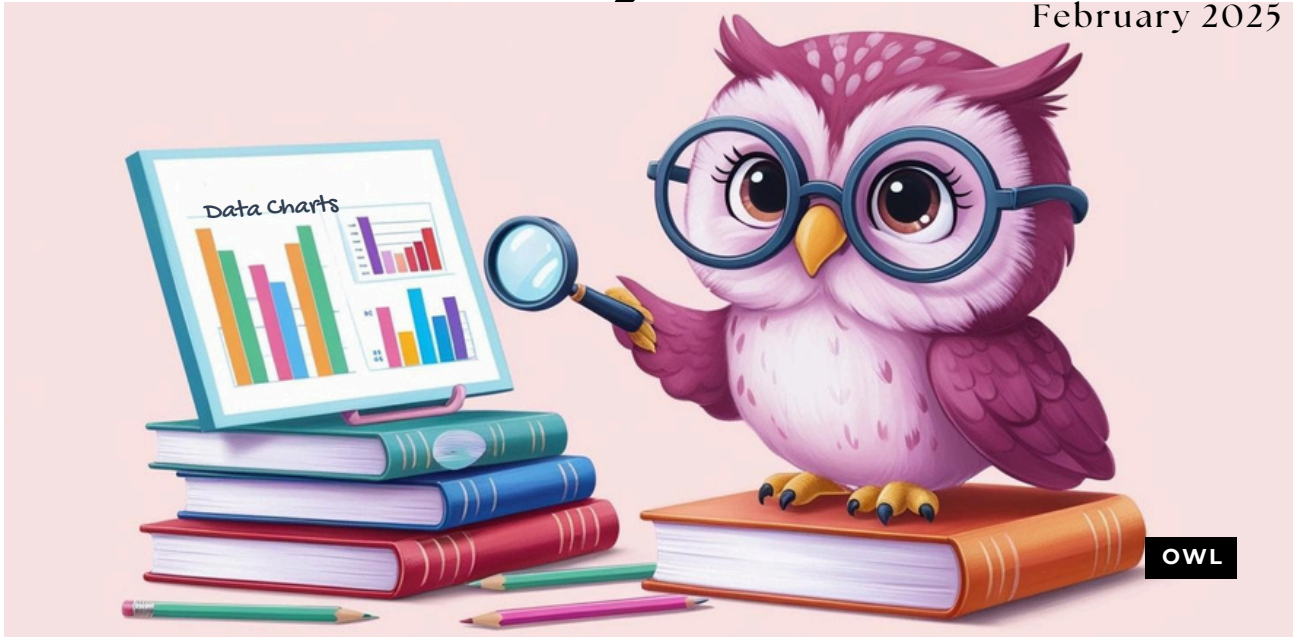


# Whoo's Accountability?

SHARED  
ACCOUNTABILITY



February 2025



## Welcome to the first issue of Whoo's Accountability!

*Whoo's excited?* Welcome to the inaugural issue of Whoo's Accountability! I'm your wise and feathery guide to all things data and accountability in our district. You can call me "Owl," but don't worry—I'm here to make data-friendly and fun, not scary or technical.

Let's face it—educators are asked to make data-informed decisions all the time, but interpreting those numbers can feel overwhelming. That's where my team and I come in! Through a targeted professional learning initiative, we're helping teachers and leaders like you build confidence in data literacy, empowering you with the tools to monitor and improve student performance.

Together, we're creating a district-wide culture where data isn't just collected—it's used to make real improvements in classrooms. Each month, we'll bring you innovative strategies, success stories, and even a guest appearance from our owl mascot (name pending!) to keep things light, lively, and focused on what really matters—our students. Let's make data work for us!

Stay tuned, because every month, I'll share stories, strategies, and even a few owl-approved tips to make data a hoot! 🦉 ✨

*Owl x*

### In this newsletter you can expect:

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From the  
Director's Desk

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Data Insights

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Wise Resources

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## From the Director's Desk

Welcome to our Shared Accountability newsletter! I am thrilled to share with you the latest developments in our mission to make a positive impact in our district community.

A growing body of research underscores the critical role of data literacy in education. According to a report from the Data Quality Campaign (2020), effective data use by teachers results in stronger instructional decision-making and higher student achievement.

Now, if I have visited your school within the past two years, you will know these next two definitions that I share during the professional learning session:

**Data literacy** is the ability to collect, analyze, communicate, and use multiple measures of data to continuously improve all aspects of the learning organization, especially teaching and learning" (Bernhardt, 2013, p. 5).

**Data use** is the ability to transform data into information and then into action to improve all aspects of the learning organization. Data use will not happen on its own. An organizational shift away from a singular focus on compliance, toward a true commitment to improvement through a shared vision is required" (Bernhardt, 2013, p. 5).

This newsletter is designed to ensure accuracy, consistency, and alignment with district priorities. Additionally, to provide expert guidance in data analysis and to support teams in making informed decisions.

*Kecia*

## Equity in Action: A Look at Educational Equity Analysis

Kecia L. Addison, Ph.D.

Our district recognizes the need for a deep, systemic examination of educational equity, leading to the development of a research-based approach focused on creating an organizational culture of equity and excellence. This approach emphasizes the importance of high expectations, cultural competence, and strong support systems to ensure that race and ethnicity do not predict student success.

The concept of educational equity is not new yet it continues to evolve. The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) has introduced a Measure of Equity, which provides a data-driven approach to assessing equitable access and outcomes for students across the state. This tool examines key indicators such as academic performance, access to advanced coursework, and participation in specialized programs—aligning with our district's long-standing commitment to ensuring every student has the opportunity to succeed.

In upcoming issues of *Whoo's Accountability*, we'll explore how this new measure can be used at both the school and district levels to drive meaningful change. Stay tuned as we break down how equity data can inform decision-making and highlight promising practices already making a difference for students!

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# Insights on Accountability with *the Superintendent*



**Thomas W. Taylor, Ed.D., M.B.A.**  
**Superintendent of Schools**

Welcome to *Insights on Accountability*, a monthly feature where we sit down with district leaders to explore how accountability and data-driven decision-making shape our school district. Each month, we'll hear from a different guest, sharing their insights on fostering a culture of continuous improvement and equity.

To kick off this series, we're starting at the top—with our Superintendent! Read on to see his discussion on the role of accountability in driving student success and the district's vision for a data-informed future.

**Why is a strong culture of accountability and data-driven decision-making important for both schools and central services?**

Ultimately, I think this relates back to clarity around our mission. One of the most positive things that I have observed as the "new" superintendent of MCPS is all of the wonderful pockets of excellence occurring throughout the district. Truly inspiring. Unfortunately, this also means that with pockets of excellence, we even step on each other because we aren't all pointed in the same direction, or we are overlapping work because we aren't aware of what others are doing. This isn't uncommon for large districts. This is fixable, but it won't happen organically. All of that to say, that having clarity around our work, clarity around our metrics (to measure our work), and clarity around expectations - it's critical. We are also in the space where we've engaged in activities that haven't been proven to move the needle on performance. Moving forward, it is essential that we do two things: 1) invest our time, energy, and money into the things that work, and 2) use reliable data to make those determinations. This notion transcends schools and central services.

**What steps is the district taking to ensure that data is used effectively at all levels—from the classroom to the central office?**

Right now, not nearly enough. We have experts in Shared Accountability. We need to use them better to evangelize data literacy. I can envision a path where we (Team MCPS, all of us) become data magnates. We have some work to do in training our team to speak a common business language, have a unified project management approach, and have clear protocols that we share for data management and utilization. I feel like over the next few years, this can be present in every classroom and behind the wheel of every bus, not to mention every office.

**How do you see data playing a role in improving equity, opportunity, and outcomes for all students?**

Something you will hear me say more and more...we can do more for educational equity and opportunity with a spreadsheet than we can ever do in professional learning. I think this is true (at least in the short term). What we learn from student performance data, financial data can create a path for us. We do have to follow that path and that has been a real challenge for us. Sadly, the path is pretty obvious. The next steps we take will require courage and fortitude. We can do this. The kids and our community are counting on us!

**What challenges have you encountered in reinstituting a data-driven culture, and how is the district addressing them?**

The best metaphor that I can come up with is that this is like a muscle. It gets stronger with use. We are out of practice. We have to get comfortable with being uncomfortable. I would also posit that we should aim to become more of a data-based culture and not merely a data-driven culture. For example, in business, when a sales rep looks at segmentation data about the target audience to sell a product successfully, the data determines that sales rep's next steps. The data is the basis for decisions, not just driving the decisions. By contrast, in education (and we all fall victim to this because doing the opposite requires tremendous discipline), when we are confronted with performance data, we treat that data set as one of many inputs not the sole factor that generates the output. This is a tremendous shift in mindset. And this too will take practice.

**What message would you like to share with school and central office leaders about embracing accountability and using data to drive continuous improvement?**


The message that I would like to share is twofold: 1) We are learners in a learning organization. We can and should model learning how to be better data stewards to guide our work for students. 2) It is okay to mess this up and to not get it right all of the time. Accountability should not be a hammer but rather a flashlight to illuminate how we might improve, together.


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## Wise Learning: Resources to Strengthen Your Data Skills

Who's ready to grow? *Whoo's Accountability* is here to help you build confidence in using data to drive student success! Whether you're looking to deepen your understanding of assessments, enhance your data literacy, or explore powerful tools like Performance Matters, our district offers a variety of professional learning supports.

 **Performance Matters Training** – Access on-demand and live training sessions to help you navigate and utilize Performance Matters effectively. Learn how to analyze student and school performance data, create custom reports, and make data-informed instructional decisions. Visit the Assessment and Data Management [Professional Development](#) page to get started!

 **State Assessments & Data Interpretation** – Need support understanding state assessments and student performance data? The Testing Team Supervisor, Donna Blaney, is available to help you interpret results and apply insights to instruction. [Contact the Testing Team Supervisor](#) for more details!

 **Building Data Literacy for Instructional Leadership** – Strengthen your school's or office's data-driven decision-making with customized professional learning for Instructional Leadership Teams and Core Teams. Contact the Director of Shared Accountability, [Dr. Kecia L. Addison](#), to schedule a session designed to enhance your team's skills in data analysis and strategic action planning.

Stay curious, keep learning, and remember—wise educators make wise decisions with data!

*Thank you for reading!*

