District Support Visit Report

County: Cecil

Schools visited:
- Elkton High School
- Holly Hall Elementary School

Teacher Classroom Participation:
- The MSDE team visited 15 classrooms in Elkton High School. The visits were very organized with MSDE staff visiting in groups of 4.
- The MSDE team visited 12 classrooms in Holly Hall Elementary School. The visits were very organized with MSDE staff visiting in groups of 4 or 5.

Participation at meetings:
- Approximately 10 Cecil County central office staff attended the morning meeting, including the Elkton High School principal.
- All teachers who participated in the classroom visits, met with MSDE staff. At Elkton High School, school was in sessions and teachers were given coverage to visit in rotations of four teachers at a time. At Holly Hall Elementary School, teachers visited with MSDE staff after school in the cafeteria.
- Approximately 40 teachers from schools county-wide participated in the open forum with MSDE staff.

Summary of MSDE resources and support that teachers found most useful:
- Maryland Common Core Frameworks
- Maryland Academy presentations dealing with the Common Core English language arts Capacities and the Math Practices, as well as the STEM Standards of Practice.
- The Social Studies World History online course resources that included the C3 framework.

Summary of resources and support that district personnel and teachers reported they would like from MSDE:

- *Professional development needs from MSDE:*
    - The teaching of Algebra II. Teachers felt that there were too many standards in Algebra II, making it impossible to master all standards in one school year.
    - Elementary--Helping students focus on citing text appropriately and unlearn the focus on personal connection from MSA
    - Special Education—Differentiating lessons for low/middle/and advanced students in a single classroom
    - Support for disciplinary literacy
    - Guidance on bridging the gap between the HSAs and CCSS in terms of testing this year (HSAs) and simultaneous implementation of CCSS.
    - Deconstructing the standards beyond the Framework MSDE has provided
    - Common Core with special populations, such as special education/GT students
    - Closing the Achievement Gaps that will grow at the Common Core is initially implemented.

- o   Guidance on MSDE resources--more information on what is available, and how to utilize the resources along with their own district resources effectively.
  - o   UDL

- *Special Additional Resources Needed from MSDE:*
  - o   Revision of Biology and Government HSA to align and reflect the rigor of the Common Core. Teachers felt that the lack of rigor of these assessments was hindering their ability to teach with higher cognitive demands, because they had to prepare students for the assessments.
  - o   Resources/guidance documents on the teaching of Algebra II. Teachers felt that there were too many standards in Algebra II, making it impossible to teach all standards in one school year and dig deep.
  - o   MSDE initiated/organized meetings between community industry partners with teachers/schools. These could result in partnerships, internships, mentors, etc
  - o   More resources for disciplinary literacy
  - o   In elementary: suggestions/guidance for selection of instructional materials, such as textbooks, on digital resources that are aligned to CCSS, particularly e-textbooks
  - o   Repository of interventions
  - o   Learning progression documents/backwards mapping/planning documents for other subject areas, such as science and tech ed.
  - o   Resources for multi-level classrooms—differentiation.
  - o   Models on how to incorporate CCSS in their lesson planning so that it is readily apparent to a classroom observer
  - o   Common Core aligned interdisciplinary lessons/units
  - o   Rubric for ensuring activities align to the Common Core
  - o   An assessment item bank with PARCC-like tasks
  - o   Common Core Accommodation possibilities for PARCC Formative Assessment Practices to Empower Learners to Self-Direct and Self-Regulate
  - o   Teaching Mythology at grade 4, especially suggestions for grade appropriate mythological text.
  - o   Examples of using primary source analysis and tools to assist teachers through that process.
  - o   Teaching Resources videos, toolkits, etc. involving more innovative uses of technology in the teaching and learning process related to CCSS.

Overview/Key Messages

- The tone of the visit was wonderful—warm, inviting, friendly—they embraced MSDE and seemed genuinely happy that we were there.
- The visit was extremely well organized. The structure provided by Dr. Teigland allowed the schedule of the day to flow nicely and to stay on schedule, from speaking with Central Office staff to classroom visits and then to conversations with the teachers.
- Most of the classroom visits demonstrated that students were engaged with learning that was personally meaningful or relevant and reflected the rigor of the Common Core. There were positive examples of Common Core and formative assessment practices in a number of the elementary classrooms visited. Technology was readily available and being used by both teachers and students in both the elementary and high schools we visited.

- Because of the many resources that Cecil County has provided to the teachers, few teachers have availed themselves of the resources on the MSDE LMS; however, Cecil County has an MSDE Blackboard presence and was highly complementary of our MSDE course "Online Teaching in Maryland." They stated that the pedagogy underlying the course was "extraordinary."
- It is very clear that the implementation of the Common Core in Cecil County has been strategic and well planned. Cecil County is in its second year of full implementation and the teachers are clearly into the practice level of the Common Core and comfortable with the shifts in instruction. Teachers commented on how the Common Core has transformed their teaching practices:
  - "I feel that the Common Core has liberated me from the curriculum and pacing guides we used to have to follow."
  - "The Common Core is especially wonderful for my special education students. Everyone uses manipulatives now. They see everyone using them and this helps boost their confidence."
  - "The Common Core moves kids beyond the 'I think' and requires them to cite factual support of their thoughts and gives them real opportunities to discuss what they have read."
  - "Common Core give all teachers more independence and freedom"
  - "Students who had not previously excelled under our old curriculum are starting to shine under Common Core"