

District Support Visit Report

County: Howard

Schools visited:

- Howard High School
- Mt. Hebron High School
- Veteran's Elementary School

Teacher Classroom Participation:

- The MSDE specialists were divided into four teams at Howard High School. Each team visited two teachers. In total, 8 teachers were observed in English 9 and 11; Algebra 1 and 2; Chemistry; Earth Science; US History; and American Government.
- The MSDE specialists were divided into four teams at Mt. Hebron High School. Each team visited two teachers. In total, 8 teachers were observed in English 9 and 10; Algebra 1; Geometry; Biology (standard and GT); and American Government.

Participation at meetings:

- Approximately ten central office staff attended a meeting in the morning with MSDE staff. Information regarding the county's status in the transition to the new College and Career Ready standards was shared.
- At both high schools, MSDE staff met with teachers after the observations in order to hold candid discussions with teachers regarding their needs. Approximately 16 teachers met with and talked to MSDE staff throughout the day.
- In the late afternoon, MSDE staff travelled to Veteran's Elementary School and met with elementary teachers in order to hold candid discussions with teachers regarding their needs. Approximately 15 elementary teachers participated in the discussion.

Summary of MSDE resources and support that teachers and district personnel found most useful:

- Resources from Educator Effectiveness Academies have been useful.
- MSDE units/lessons/lesson seeds are being used by central office to revise and create the Howard County curriculum
- Teachers are unaware of the MSDE resources on Blackboard Learn and are also unaware of the MSDE professional learning webinars. C & I staff stated that information and links to these resources are placed on the Howard County Teacher Hub.

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

- Professional development needs from MSDE:
 - State-wide collaboration:
 - On-line professional learning community where teachers share and discuss resources, perhaps with a peer-rating system.
 - Discussion on the use of digital content and how other school systems are dealing with the issue of "Terms of Use" when it comes to using apps and other digital platforms with their students
 - Establishing a "UDL classroom." Teachers are still seeing the shifts and UDL as two separate entities, not integrated.

- Assisting students to become more independent—scaffolding independence so that students meet with success; knowing when to “let go.”
 - Dealing with gaps in student learning
 - Disciplinary Literacy:
 - webinar for Fine Arts teachers on integration of CCR Standards
 - How all the content areas fit together
 - Using portfolios with students
 - NGSS
 - Differentiation/scaffolding/interventions for special education/ELL students
 - Formative assessment modules
 - UDL training for general education teachers.
- Additional Resources Needed from MSDE:
 - Models/videos of instructional practices aligned to shifts
 - Case studies
 - Examples of formative assessments
 - PARCC-like assessment items, both PBA and EOY
 - Frameworks and guidelines for special education and ESOL
 - Summary/flowchart/visual of what students are learning at different grade levels/bands from elementary to middle to high school
 - Resources that are kid-friendly and short
 - Parent/public resources where student voices explains the CCSS
 - Curriculum snapshot with information about what students really need to know.
 - Interventions and lesson supports; dealing with gaps in student learning
 - Mathematics
 - Support for Algebra II and Geometry
 - Literacy, especially reading, is more important than ever in mathematics
 - English Language Arts:
 - Narrative writing
 - Close reading
 - Language standards
 - How to integrate standards into lessons
 - Disciplinary Literacy
 - A graphic from MSDE distributed state-wide that shows that the ELA/Literacy test is assessing more than ELA
 - Math and science teachers: examples and strategies, especially on summarizing text.
 - Social studies teachers: credible resources and links to websites
 - Fine Arts: exemplary integration models; lesson plans; lesson seeds; demonstration lessons.
 - Trans-disciplinary units
 - Elementary DL resources targeted to schools that are departmentalized and non-departmentalized
 - Special Education and ELL
 - Frameworks, guides, tutorials, and other resources designed specifically to meet the needs of these students.
 - “Can do” descriptors for Special Education

Overview/Key Messages

- Teachers clearly and enthusiastically expressed appreciation that MSDE visited and asked them what they need.
- Teachers were pleased with the professional learning and resources provided by Howard County.
- Classroom visits showed students learning, engaged, and actively participating in their learning. Students were actively using technology, using subscription databases to research and using digital tools to organize and report information.
- Teachers expressed frustration with information channels and with the reliance on the Teacher Hub for communication. They stated that time was a challenge and that they didn't have the time to go to the Hub and, as a result, were not getting the information that was available.
- In general, Howard County teachers are positive and working hard in transitioning to the College- and Career- Ready Standards. They are focused on the students and how to move them forward; they are dealing with all of the challenges realistically and strategically, especially the challenge of time. It is clear that the teachers who met with MSDE care about their students and the needs of those students.