

District Support Visit Report

District: Montgomery County

Schools visited:

- Meadow Hall Elementary School
- Earle B. Wood Middle School
- Quince Orchard High School

Teacher Classroom Participation:

- The MSDE specialists were divided into two teams in the morning visit at Quince Orchard High School. Nine (9) teachers were observed at the high school.
- For the afternoon, MSDE specialists separated into two teams to visit Meadow Hall Elementary School and Earle B. Wood Middle School. Eight (8) teachers were observed at the middle school and eight (8) teachers were observed at the elementary school.

Participation at meetings:

- School administration at Quince Orchard met with the MSDE team prior to the observations and reviewed the school-wide initiatives aligned to the College- and Career-Ready Standards. The student handbook was shared and highlighted the school-wide initiative on academic vocabulary.
- Approximately 15 central office staff attended a meeting in the late morning with MSDE staff. Information regarding the county's status in the transition to the new College- and Career- Ready standards was shared.
- In the afternoon the MSDE team divided between Meadow Hall Elementary School and Earle B. Wood Middle School. At both schools, MSDE staff met with teachers after the observations in order to hold candid discussions with teachers regarding their needs. The middle school is focusing on a school-wide initiative on student discourse and the Speaking and Listening Standards. Approximately 20 teachers met with and talked to MSDE staff at the two schools.
- In the late afternoon, MSDE staff met with teachers county-wide in an open-forum format in order to hold candid discussions with teachers regarding their needs. Approximately 30 teachers participated in the open forum discussions.

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

- Materials from Educator Effectiveness Academies
- Communication between MSDE and the county

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

- *Professional development needs from MSDE:*
 - Unpacking the standards and connecting them with the SLOs
 - Understanding writing expectations
 - Cross disciplinary close reading
 - Differentiation strategies within the various content areas

- How to change the mindset of the students relative to this “new way” of learning
 - Questioning techniques and the kinds of questions appropriate for the standards.
 - Performance-Based Learning: how to do it; how to best support the students during the PBL process; what is it supposed to look like; how to assess it
 - Enriching lessons for high performing students
 - Math and science content training for upper elementary teachers
 - Opportunities to visit other school districts and observe/collaborate
 - Dealing with gaps in student learning due to shift to Common Core
 - Supporting students in special education and ELL
 - Time management
 - How to assist GT parents who are resisting change
- *Additional Resources Needed from MSDE:*
 - List of academic vocabulary across disciplines
 - Interdisciplinary resources for disciplinary literacy and STEM
 - Video clips of implementation of the standards in the classroom
 - Resources for parents in understanding the shifts in the CCSS
 - List of good websites on Blackboard Learn
 - List of vetted fiction and non-fiction texts
 - Student writing samples
 - Priority list for standards in Algebra II—too many standards to teach deeply
 - “What’s New” section on the Welcome page of Blackboard Learn, so that educators do not have to search to find out what’s been added.
 - Practical day-to-day strategies and models of what Common Core implementation looks like in the classroom.
 - A blog or open-forum on Blackboard Learn
 - Teaching author’s craft in elementary school

Overview/Key Messages

- Teachers enthusiastically expressed appreciation to MSDE for the opportunity to express their concerns openly and candidly. Most teachers were unaware of the MSDE resources on Blackboard Learn, but were enthusiastic about the resources when shared. Classrooms visited were student-centered with a focus on student needs and individualized instruction.
- MCPS has done extensive work in providing resources for teachers, including Curriculum 2.0 and producing a newsletter focusing on the standards. The science office done PD on complex text; as a result, it is a natural conversation among science teachers. Montgomery County offers literacy workshops in the summer for teachers in all content areas.
- In general, teachers seemed to have a good basic understanding of Maryland College and Career-Ready Standards and are trying hard to appropriately and effectively implement them in instruction. They expressed a need for time to collaborate and reflect, and to visit other counties. Teachers 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 and understand the instructional shifts aligned to the College- and Career- Ready Standards.