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TO: Members of the State Board of Education
FROM: Bernard J. Sadusky, Ed.D. *BS*
DATE: December 6, 2011
SUBJECT: The Breakthrough Center: School Improvement Initiatives

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this item is to update the Maryland State Board of Education regarding the professional development offered to teachers in English language arts and mathematics through the Breakthrough Center.

BACKGROUND/HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE:

In 2008, MSDE took bold and culture-changing actions to address long-standing internal challenges that limited our ability to deliver effective and successful support to low-achieving schools. Challenges included the pervasive lack of (1) coordination in services provided by MSDE offices and external partners; (2) clarity or prioritization around which schools are required to participate in which services; (3) breakthrough vision, standards, and services to address the needs of low-achieving schools; and (4) a cohesive portfolio of turnaround services.

To address these challenges and increase the urgency for improved performance in persistently low-achieving schools, MSDE launched a major organizational and operational shift with the creation of the Breakthrough Center (the Center), which is the leading edge of Maryland's school turnaround work.

The mission of the Center is to ensure that the right services are delivered to the right districts and schools at the right time to accelerate school performance and cultivate people by improving the capacity of individuals through Breakthrough Leading and Teaching. As a result, the core work of the Center's operation is instruction. Every effort, every expectation, and every consequence leads to the same result: improved teaching, improved school leadership, and improved learning.

At its most intense level, the Center works with persistently low-achieving districts and schools – those in the bottom 5 percent (16 schools), plus their feeder schools (20 schools) – to provide targeted and intensive principal leadership development, teacher professional development, and support for improving school climate and culture.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Through use of Race to the Top funds, 10.5 English language arts and mathematics Education Program Specialists have been hired to provide professional development to teachers in persistently low-achieving schools. Once schools in the targeted group request this support through the Breakthrough Center, MSDE staff, in conjunction with school-based instructional leadership teams, develop customized professional development plans to address the needs of the English language arts and/or mathematics teachers in the schools. Activities focus on enhancing teachers' knowledge of content and effective instructional strategies.

MSDE's professional development model employs the collaborative planning process (lesson planning, lesson implementation, and debriefing/analyzing student work). After each collaborative planning cycle, the Education Program Specialists also provide differentiated professional development based on individual teacher goals identified during the debriefing of lessons. This professional development model is repeated monthly.

To determine how well the professional development is accomplishing the intended outcomes in each school, MSDE staff does the following:

- Conduct visits to schools to observe how teachers are implementing the information provided at the professional development sessions
- Analyze student work in schools
- Examine district benchmark assessment data
- Review school data from the Maryland School Assessment and High School Assessment

MSDE's Breakthrough Center will continue to provide intensive professional development in English language arts and mathematics to build capacity in schools to sustain instructional improvement over time.

ACTION:

This is for information only.

Attachments

Differentiated Professional Development

MSDE Specialist _____ School _____

Math Reading

Date: _____ Teacher/Team: _____

Focus Areas:

(Identified by the Principal, teacher, and MSDE)

Differentiated Professional Development Actions

MSDE

Administration

School Coaches/Reading Teacher/Other

STEPS FOR DESIGNING A READING COMPREHENSION SKILL LESSON

Step 1

Use the appropriate school system curriculum guide to:

- Identify the State Curriculum (SC) Objective.
- Determine the reading selection, and
- Read the text in its entirety **prior** to collaborative planning

Step 2

Unpack the SC Objective.

What are the "big ideas? Use the following resources:

- The MSDE Reading Toolkit Clarification Document (www.mdk12.org)
- "The Reader's Handbook" if accessible
- Textbook suggestions as appropriate

Step 3

Scaffold the selected SC Objective by "breaking it down" into its component parts.

What are its component parts or prerequisite skills that students need to achieve the SC objective?

Step 4

Develop a rigorous, skill-focused lesson objective.

What are students be expected to learn and do?

Step 5

Design a graphic organizer and dissect the text into portions that support the skill.

What graphic organizer will best support the development of the skill and to help students organize their thinking?

Step 6

Create a formative assessment task that is directly aligned to the lesson's objective.

How will students independently demonstrate the intended learning as stated in the lesson's objective?

Step 7

Write an exemplary response to the formative assessment.

What will a proficient/advanced student response look like?

Step 8

Plan the explicit instruction for the comprehension skill as described in the lesson's objective and formative assessment.

What instructional strategies and activities will lead to maximum student learning? What are the "Process Steps" needed to develop the skill.

Use the Gradual Release of Responsibility Model to plan the following lesson components:

- **Connect and Engage** - Plan a brief activity designed to ready students for the new learning.
- **I DO** - Plan the teacher model that consists of a think-aloud.
- **WE DO**- Plan the guided practice portions of the lesson gradually releasing learning to students.
Differentiate as needed to meet the needs of all students.
- **YOU DO** - Plan the independent practice portion(s) of the lesson providing time for students to work independently.
- **Lesson closure** - Plan the closing of the lesson providing time for students to process, explain, and share what they learned.

Collaborative Planning: **Steps for Designing a MATHEMATICS Lesson**

I. BUILD CONTENT KNOWLEDGE OF State Curriculum (SC) AND DEVELOP LESSON OBJECTIVE/FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT (Steps 1-5)

Step 1

Determine the SC Objective to be learned.

- Identify an appropriate SC Objective and Assessment Limit(s) and existing curriculum materials.
- Read the text and resource support in its entirety to verify the alignment before any further planning occurs

Step 2

Unpack the SC Objective and break it down into its component parts.

What are the "big ideas? Use the following resources:

- The MSDE Mathematics Toolkit (<http://mdk12.org/instruction/curriculum/mathematics/index.html>)
- District curriculum, text and instructional resources

What are its component parts and prerequisite skills in order of difficulty?

Step 3

Develop a lesson outcome that represents high expectations and rigor.

What will students be expected to learn?

Step 4

Create a formative assessment that is directly aligned to the lesson's outcome.

How will students independently demonstrate the intended learning as stated in the lesson's outcome?

Step 5

Write the exemplary response to the formative assessment.

What will a proficient student response look like? What will an advanced student response look like?

II. PLAN THE INSTRUCTIONAL CORE (Step 6)

Step 6

Select a representation to Explore and Model the concept and determine how it will be used in a meaningful way.

What representations (graphs, pictures, symbols, charts, diagrams, patterns, tools, or manipulatives) will be used? How will students use these representations as they explore the concept and develop their understanding? How will students translate back and forth between different representations to demonstrate their understanding of the concept?

III. PLAN THE INSTRUCTIONAL SEQUENCE (Steps 7 - 8)

Step 7

Plan the details of the instructional sequence of the lesson.

Connect and engage – *(activate prior knowledge and create a personal connection to the new learning)*

Differentiated practice - *What checkpoint for understanding will be used to monitor progress towards proficiency with the outcome? What is the specialized instruction that will occur as a result of the question? How will this happen?*

What questions will be asked to promote complex thinking by students? How and when will students share and show their mathematical thinking and language?

STEP 8

Reexamine alignment of all lesson components with lesson outcome and assessment.