

MSOC LEA Member Profile

Part II: Synopsis of MSOC Participation

Background:

- Involved in online learning since 1998
- Has been working on getting its leadership on board with online learning throughout that period
- Implementation of online learning focused on evening school and alternative education programs
- FCPS has elected to use a very slow, evolutionary process for implementing online learning, building from web-enhanced classroom courses to using online curriculum to supplement classroom courses to offering blended/online courses in its Evening High program

Benefits and Impact:

- MSOC has enabled funding of resource material and support for building capacity in the system
- Grant has funded auxiliary resources to build capacity, facilitate course development, and opportunities to attend conferences and workshops to broaden understanding of online learning
- MSDE has provided valuable leadership through the project, including resources and knowledgeable presence
- Students take online courses in Frederick County because available online course curriculum is better than that available in the evening high curriculum

Implementation Issues:

- Availability of quality courses is biggest barrier to expanding implementation of online learning
- FCPS believes that using grant money to buy online courses or course seats is not sustainable
- FCPS is going the course development route, partly because of aversion to “canned” vendor-supplied courses. This route poses its own set of challenges, including the need to train teachers in online course development, develop a culture of sharing, and work on course development projects as overload.
- Dealing with the duplication of effort required by participating in multiple state-funded grant programs.

Lessons Learned:

- Using funds from various grants to pay for the related part of a teacher’s entire professional development process.
- Being a ‘mid-sized’ district facilitates staff coordination by enabling multiple staff in the same office to work collaboratively on administering various grant programs
- “Go-slow” implementation approach facilitates stakeholder buy-in

Next Steps:

- Continue course development projects
- Continue slow, evolutionary approach to online learning implementation as a better long-term strategy for offering a wide array of online courses

