

## **MSOC LEA Member Profile Part III: Full Narrative**

### **Harford County Public Schools: Searching for a Workable Process**

The focus in HCPS was to seek solutions for learning opportunities for alternative education students. The county has succeeded in this endeavor using EdSolutions software – an online learning environment that offers a rolling enrollment and thus fits well, from a scheduling point of view, with alternative education students. However, unlike the standard distance learning model, there is no distance teacher provided in these courses and therefore the county must provide a local teacher resource.

In addition to the aforementioned focus on alternative education and the adoption of EdSolutions, HCPS is using Cognitive Tutor to support Algebra, and EdLine and GradeQuick to support the county goal for a community portal solution. Teachers are developing template-driven web pages to communicate with parents, and parents in turn, have private access codes to review student grades.

Participating in MSOC has been beneficial to HCPS; one of the biggest benefits realized to date is related to professional development; four teachers trained to be online mentors which is essential in building background knowledge of the online learning environment. In addition, a team from HCPS participated in training in December for the Online Algebra/Data Analysis course.

Harford County is exploring uses of the Online SAT Prep course. While five high schools are currently using Triumph software for SAT prep, the online course may be an option for the other high schools.

As far as lessons learned, HCPS will make efforts to coordinate SAT Prep course offerings with taking the actual test. Students averaged 80 point increases on pre-tests from the Summer 2003 SAT Prep course, but lost that gain when they took the real SAT because of the time lapse of approximately two to three months between taking the course and taking the actual SAT. HCPS does not have a learning management system so the current MVLO courses are expensive to sustain without grant funds. Additionally, the online Health course requires local approval for Focus Area 3 and a process to review and modify the health course has not been established.

HCPS continues to pursue learning options for students. An online learning environment that is highly interactive, video-enhanced, geared for the at-risk student, and provides diagnostically based instruction can be one of these options.