

MSOC LEA Member Profile
Part III: Full Narrative
Kent County Public Schools: Online Learning “Just Getting Off the Ground”

Overall, Kent County Public Schools’ involvement in online learning through its participation in the MSOC initiative “is just getting off the ground,” according to Steve Wilson, Supervisor of Technology/Accountability. “There has not been a great impact at this point. We probably have not taken enough of a risk yet. The superintendent is willing and we here at the board office are eager and willing, but with so many other initiatives right now at the high school, it is hard to get another one in there and get it properly managed.”

KCPS is still in the process of developing its policies and procedures for online learning. As Wilson notes, “Being a very small county, it is very difficult for us to write these from scratch. I have about four other jobs. Unfortunately, we have been a little slow in terms of getting some buy-in from the high school as we try to move this forward.” Although it is anticipated that policies and procedures will be created, the MSOC grant has turned into the “most difficult I have had to manage because it is in someone else’s hands to make sure it gets executed at the high-school level.” Nevertheless, KCPS plans to offer SAT Prep in the summer and is also currently reviewing Educational Options, Inc.’s DETC-approved remedial self-paced web-based courses to possibly be offered in the KCPS alternative school program.

Wilson said there haven’t been any professional development activities to date. However, “I did get agreement to send someone to the (NACOL) conference in April. This is a small step in the right direction.” The prospective conference attendee is a staff member from the high school involved in instruction and technology who is a former teacher. “So maybe if we get her in place, and she sees the bigger view in this, we can start something. I want to take little steps. Eventually I anticipate parents will start to call for more of this (online AP courses, for instance) rather than have their kids drive to the college or have to look for other alternatives. I’ve had a little interest already, so I hope it will pick up momentum.”

A professional development staff member is paid for from several grants and Title I funds and is expected to train faculty and mentors for anything technology related. “If we get into some specifics like SAT Prep, I would send teachers (for professional development) whom normally teach that course now.” However, obstacles to any overall progress were identified as a teacher negotiation endeavor that could possibly modify the current four-period system to three periods, along with an initiative to create a new 9th grade academy. “So, there are some internal as well as external factors that have to change in order for this to get off the ground, where I can have a teacher available to be a mentor.”

KCPS does currently participate in a distance learning program that is offered face-to-face and linked with another school district and Chesapeake College. “We are still in that, but in order to add another web-based program we would have to gear up some monitoring and really make a plan for it.”

Wilson added that he understands the need for MSOC in KCPS. “A small system like ours needs this because we can’t offer expertise in all areas, so I am holding on to hope that we can get something going. Hopefully we will see some movement, and I’d like to see it get into the plans for next year, especially if we do AP.”