TO:	Members of the State Board of Education
FROM:	Dr. Sylvia Lawson, Acting State Superintendent of Schools
DATE:	October 24, 2023
SUBJECT:	Professional Learning Labs

Purpose

The purpose of this item is to present information about the Professional Learning Labs initiative. Professional Learning Labs serve as the flagship professional learning experience for the Maryland State Department of Education's (MSDE) Office of Teaching and Learning (OTL). An overview and the goals of the Professional Learning Labs will be presented.

Executive Summary

The Maryland State Department of Education's Office of Teaching and Learning is launching Professional Learning Labs for the 2023-2024 school year. Professional Learning Labs are a series of two-day, in-person, professional learning experiences that support districts with implementing new learning into their own local context. Professional Learning Labs will dive deep into a variety of content areas including math, science, social studies, literacy, and health and will address current challenges facing educators in the field. District teams will explore high leverage strategies through school visits, collaborating with colleagues across Maryland, workshop discussions, and content experts.

Action

No action is required; this information is for discussion only.

Attachments

Learning Lab_Board Presentation.pdf

Presentation Outline

1. Background

2. Overview & Goals

3. Professional Learning Lab Development & Planning

4. 2023/2024 Professional Learning Labs Topics and Objectives

5. Wrap-up

Professional Learning Labs Background: Professional Learning & Maryland's Multiyear Strategic Plan

Professional Learning Labs Background

Professional Learning & Maryland's Multiyear Strategic Plan

Professional Learning Labs Model: What are Professional Learning Labs & How are they Different?

Professional Learning Labs provide an *innovative* approach for teachers and administrators to engage in collaborative learning and planning using Maryland schools and districts as labs.

The Labs offer a *supportive environment* where educators can experiment, reflect, and refine their instructional practices based on the specific needs of their schools.

This *unique* format provides educators with opportunities to learn from their peers as well as subject matter experts.

Topics are anchored around essential & guiding questions – which *grounds* the Professional Learning Lab in real world applicability, while also providing insights into effective strategies and solutions.

Maryland's Multiyear Strategic Plan

The Maryland State Board of Education (MSBOE) and the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) have developed a multiyear strategic plan that leverages the Professional Learning Lab model as the foundational component of its professional learning framework.

Professional Learning Labs

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School Accountability System

Accountability Reporting Tools

Statewide Finance and Data System

A Precedent of Success & Impact

Last school year the Office of Teaching and Learning (OTL) implemented its first Professional Learning Lab. This Professional Learning Lab entitled, "Ready to Read: Early Literacy Learning Lab", laid the foundation for the innovative approach to professional learning that these Professional Labs are employing.

Snapshot of Engagement from the "Ready to Read: Early Literacy Professional Learning Lab"

During the Professional Learning Labs more than 78% of attendees reported being **"highly satisfied"** with the event.

On average, more than 78% of attendees reported being **"highly satisfied"** with the Early Literacy Professional Learning Labs, while the remaining 22% reported being "satisfied" with the event. Overall, respondents found the event to be well-organized and informative, and they appreciated the intentional sequence of activities and selection of presenters. Participants found the opportunity to visit classrooms and observe instruction to be highly meaningful and beneficial.

Professional Learning Labs: Overview & Goals

Overview & Goals

Goals, Teams, and Development Overview

Goals of the Professional Learning Labs

To have educators investigate and collaborate around a problem of practice.

To have field experiences with opportunities to see practitioners at work.
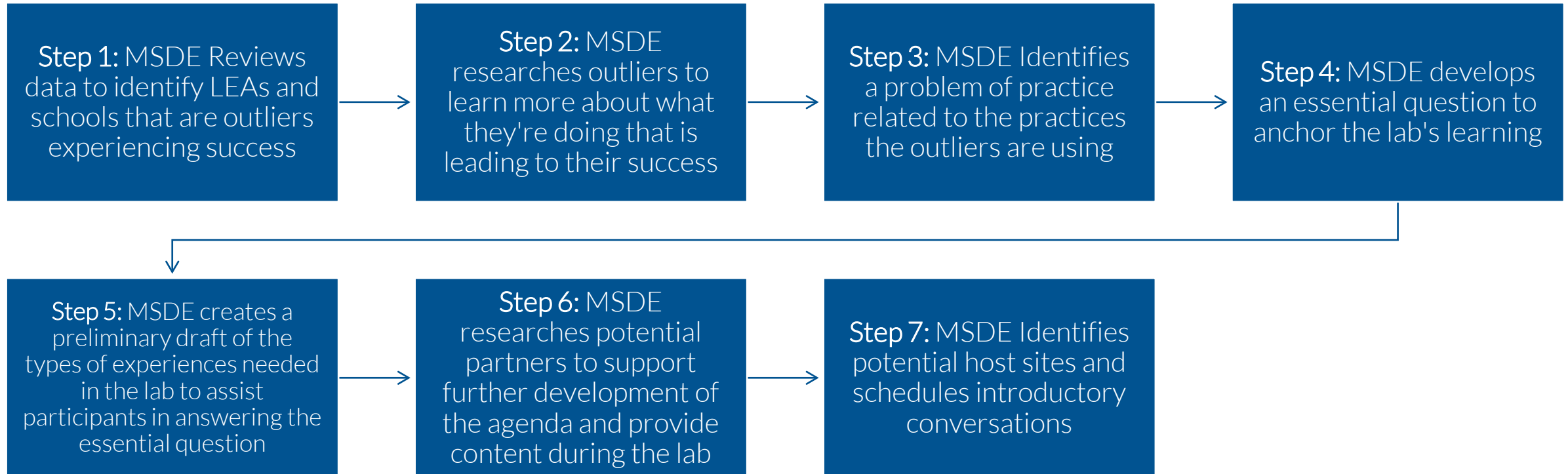
To reinforce or introduce new content.

To provide opportunities to apply learning to local contexts.

To change practice across a system from the district level to classrooms.

Who Should Attend? District Teams of 4-6

Role	Rationale
Chief Academic Officer (CAO)	Director or equivalent who has influence in decision making for content and who has expertise in the subject and topic.
Content Department Staff	Staff who support the content area at a district level.
School Leader	A campus leader whose school is doing well in implementation, who has influence with other leaders in the district, and who is invested in developing their success at scale districtwide.
Lead Teacher	Lead teachers that work with the school leader and have a track record of success around specified topics. The Lead Teacher may have strong content knowledge and/or influence with the staff.
Campus Instructional Coach	Instructional experts at the campus level(specialists, coaches, etc.) that interact with teachers at the classroom level. Their voice and perspective is crucial as CAOs and Content Directors make decisions.

Professional Learning Lab Development Steps

Step 1: MSDE Reviews data to identify LEAs and schools that are outliers experiencing success

Step 2: MSDE researches outliers to learn more about what they're doing that is leading to their success

Step 3: MSDE Identifies a problem of practice related to the practices the outliers are using

Step 4: MSDE develops an essential question to anchor the lab's learning

Step 5: MSDE creates a preliminary draft of the types of experiences needed in the lab to assist participants in answering the essential question

Step 6: MSDE researches potential partners to support further development of the agenda and provide content during the lab

Step 7: MSDE Identifies potential host sites and schedules introductory conversations

Professional Learning Lab Development & Planning

Collaboration, Planning, & Professional Learning Lab Development

Step 1: Data Review

Academic Performance Data

- Do any schools/districts perform significantly better on state assessments?
- Do any schools/districts have certain grades that performs significantly better on state Assessments?
- Do any schools/districts perform significantly better on national standardized tests such SAT/NAEP?

Specific Subpopulations

- Do any schools or districts have historically underserved populations that have significantly better results when compared to other groups using the assessments described?

Student Growth Data

- Do any schools or districts have extreme growth in the designated content area?
- Do any schools or districts have continued growth over time pointing to a positive trend?

Perception Data

- Do any districts have teacher survey data that correlates to instructional models, curriculum or that indicates factors associated with teacher retention or effectiveness?

Step 2: Outlier Investigation

💡	Can LEAs articulate how they got their success?	LEAs should be able to identify actions or strategies they intentionally used to get their results.
👀	Can this be observed in the field?	The action/strategy should be something that participants can see and witness to gain a deeper understanding.
🎭	Is this something that can be replicated?	The action/strategy should be able to be to be showcased, replicated, and adapted for local contexts within other LEAs.
👨‍🏫	Has this been scaled within the LEA?	The data should be consistent and coordinated across classrooms and/or schools within the LEA.

Step 3: Identify a Problem of Practice

A problem of practice should . . .

- Address a current problem facing Maryland educators that is **relevant and specific.**
- Be within educators' scope of control and that they can **change their influence and decision making.**
- Be complex and thought provoking enough to **require engagement and analysis.**
- Driven by current data and **national research on best practices** in their field.
- Address disparities in achievement and access and if solved will **ensure all students have a greater chance to succeed.**

Step 4: Essential Question Development

Effective essential questions . . .

- Are open ended and invite multiple perspectives, deep thinking, and discussion.
- Provide focus within the problem of practice and begin to investigate solutions to the problem.
- Solve problems of practice when answered.
- Will drive activities within the Learning Lab.

How are high school teachers using strategic questioning to increase student discourse?

What innovative strategies and resources can elementary science educators leverage to facilitate inquiry-based learning?

How can 3rd-5th grade educators leverage content rich texts to cultivate knowledge and improve comprehension?

Step 5: Draft Learning Experiences

District/School/Classroom Visits

Strategic decisions-making by teachers, school leaders, and district leaders

Teachers in action

Teachers' coaching experiences

Action Planning

Time for moving the work forward and applying learning

Strategizing implementation

Feedback from experts in the field

Participant Collaboration

Interaction with experts in the field

Collaboration with other LEAs to leverage stakeholder voices

Collaboration with other LEAs by role, need, and interest

Step 6: Partners

Finding a Partner

When selecting a professional learning lab partner, prioritize organizations with **expertise in current research and best practices**. Ensure they can **create relevant content** in line with lab objectives and department vision. Common partners might include consulting groups, professional organizations, and nonprofit communities.

The Partner's Role

The partner plays a crucial role in the professional learning lab. They will be responsible for **designing, planning, and presenting content-specific sessions** and **supporting districts in how to apply new learning** to their local context. They will also ensure **content is aligned to and reinforces the lab's field experiences**.

Step 7: Identifying Host Sites & Introductory Conversations

When selecting a host site for a Professional Learning Lab:

- **Look at data over time to see upward trends and outliers** in areas such as student growth, student growth of a particular demographic, student performance above the state average.

- **Identify strategic actions that districts are intentionally taking** to move the needle for student learning.

- Locations should be in a different area of Maryland to give participants options for attendance. Locations could also have different focus areas within the objective.

- Once a potential LEA has been identified, **conversations to gauge their capacity** for hosting and coordinating school visits are planned.

2023/2024 Professional Learning Lab Topics & Objectives

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2023/2024 Professional Learning Labs

Professional Learning Labs Topics and Objectives

Math

Essential Question	How can effective math Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) be prioritized, planned, and facilitated to ensure implementation of curriculum with fidelity that leads to significant student growth?
Learning Objective	To provide teachers with job-embedded training focused on data analysis, effective teaching models, and curriculum alignment is crucial. To show how schools that successfully improve student math outcomes often leverage systemic & consistent PLCs.
Details	Implementation in late February and early March.

Social Studies

Essential Question	How do elementary social studies teachers effectively implement lessons that highlight identifying evidence and information drawn from multiple sources in response to a compelling question?
Learning Objective	For participants to be able to implement & leverage lessons that highlight the foundational skill of evidence identification and analysis. For participants to build the knowledge and skills necessary for effective, inquiry based social studies instruction in the elementary classroom.
Details	Implementation in fall and winter 2023/2024

Comprehensive Health Education

Essential Question	How can secondary health education courses leverage formative and/or summative assessment data to drive student learning across the health standards?
Learning Objective	Participants will review formative and/or summative assessment data to enhance their understanding and application of Maryland's Comprehensive Health Education standards Participants will investigate potential solutions to the effective use of data in developing comprehensive, skills-based curricula while supporting teachers who teach health education
Details	Implementation during late winter and early spring 2024.

Science

Essential Question	How can school districts accelerate proficiency for elementary science through the strategic deployment of job embedded coaching and innovative professional learning?
Learning Objective	To provide school and district leaders effective, innovative models for job-embedded coaching and professional learning to accelerate student proficiency for elementary science. To highlight current practices of Maryland districts and schools that serve as exemplars of job-embedded coaching and professional learning models.
Details	Implementation in late spring.

Literacy

Essential Question	How do educators leverage intervention strategies or other student supports aligned to the science of reading to improve literacy outcomes for struggling readers in grades 4-8?
Purpose	Participants will be able to implement differentiated reading instruction for students in grades 4 through 8 using methods rooted in the Science of Reading.
Details	Implementation during early spring.

Wrap-Up: Scalable Impact & Next Steps

Washington County Professional Learning Lab Adoption

- The Professional Learning Lab model, first introduced in Spring 2023 by MSDE OTL has already had scalable impact.

- Washington County Public Schools (WCPS) has adopted this model of professional learning – specifically targeting school administrators. The following Professional Learning Labs were implemented in Fall 2023.

Literacy Professional Learning Labs for Principals	Math Learning Lab for Principals
Administrators engaged in a learning experience to develop a shared understanding of high-quality teaching and hone their leadership practices by drawing on the expertise of others.	Administrators engaged in a learning experience to develop a shared understanding of what a high-quality problem-based math classroom looks and sounds like.

Impact Going Forward

- The power of Professional Learning Labs is WCPS's focus on **practicality** and **scalability**.

- This model of professional learning is designed to build on **results based best practices** of local contexts and leveraging them for positive impact across the state.

- MSDE will continue to work in tandem with LEAs to identify and spotlight schools where **innovation, creativity, and expertise** are contributing to outlier results.