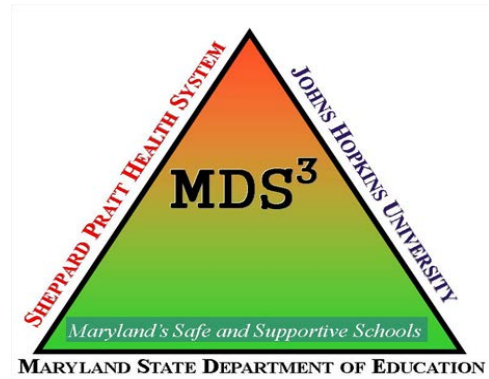


Maryland's Safe and Supportive Schools (MDS³) Initiative



What is the MDS³ Initiative? The MDS³ Initiative is supported through a grant awarded to the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) by the Office of Safe and Drug Free Schools at the United States Department of Education. The Initiative was funded to develop a sustainable state-wide system to measure school climate, the school environment, student engagement, and school safety in high schools. Participating schools will receive training, resources, support, and coaching in the implementation of evidence-based programs (EBPs) to meet the needs of their students and school community. Sheppard Pratt Health System and Johns Hopkins University are collaborating with MSDE in the implementation and evaluation of the Initiative.

What is the purpose of the MDS³ Initiative? This Initiative is built around evidence that shows additional support and more intensive interventions are needed for high schools to provide a continuum of strategies to meet the needs of their students. The MDS³ Initiative provides the opportunity to meet this need in order to improve school climate and reduce discipline problems, bullying, and substance use problems through the implementation of multi-tiered interventions. The data, coaching, professional development, and ongoing technical assistance provided through the MDS³ Initiative are designed to improve conditions for learning and, as a result, student achievement.

Who is participating? There are currently 58 high schools from 12 Maryland school districts participating in the three-year initiative. Cohort 1 schools (52) from the following districts enrolled in Spring 2011 and will complete their participation in Spring 2014: Anne Arundel (8), Baltimore County (22), Caroline (2), Charles (6), Dorchester (2), Queen Anne's (2), Somerset (2), Washington (2), Wicomico (4), and Worcester (2) Counties. A second cohort of 6 schools enrolled in Spring 2012 and will complete their participation in Spring 2015: Anne Arundel (1), Calvert (2), and Frederick (3).

What Does MDS³ provide? An online climate survey was administered to students, parents, and staff at all newly enrolled high schools and annually thereafter for three years. Upon completion of the spring survey, a climate profile for participating schools is developed and posted on the MSDE, MDS³ webpage. Schools were randomly assigned to one of two groups: intervention schools or comparison/focus schools. The intervention schools use their climate data to identify and prioritize specific needs for their school. Based on these needs, the schools select one or more interventions from a menu of Evidence Based Programs (EBPs). Staff members are trained, and School Climate Specialists are assigned to facilitate the implementation of those strategies with high fidelity. The schools in the focus group have access to the survey data and receive an annual honorarium for their participation. At the end of the grant period, the comparison schools will receive the training in the EBPs selected by the school.

How to learn more? Contact Ms. Andrea Alexander (aalexander@msde.state.md.us) at the MSDE for more information.