

Addressing the Needs of High Performing Learners in Worcester County

Worcester County has four times the wealth per pupil as that of Wicomico County. Consequently, Worcester County was able to allocate \$14,459 per student compared to the \$11,754 per student expenditures found in Wicomico County for 2008-2009. A major result of greater funding in Worcester County has been the ability to increase teacher staffing and thus reduce class sizes. Aside from more money and smaller classes, a fundamental difference between these two neighboring schools systems lies in how students are grouped for instruction.

While homogeneous grouping is widespread throughout Wicomico County, Worcester County uses heterogeneous grouping from Pre-K through 8th grade. Students are purposefully grouped to provide a wide range of academic achievement levels within each classroom. Gifted students, high performing learners, and low performing learners can be found working within the same classroom. Administrators in Worcester County believe this grouping strategy has not only contributed greatly to their academic success, it has also helped build a positive school climate that spills over into the community.

To address the specific needs of high performing learners within these diverse classrooms, teachers use differentiated instruction, flexible grouping strategies, and enrichment. For example, all students in grades 3-5 receive 150 minutes of instruction in Reading Language Arts each day following these guidelines:

- 5 minutes to review yesterday's learning and today's objectives
- 45 minutes of Interactive Reading where all students work with reading anthology through whole group instruction, teacher led small group, independent small group, and independent student reading.
- 40 minutes of Guided Reading where students work in small groups or independently with materials at each student's appropriate reading level
- 30 minutes of Writing/Language Arts through whole group instruction, teacher led small groups, and independent student work.
- 30 minutes of Enrichment/Acceleration/Intervention. During this 30 minutes, the high performing learners are pulled out of their normal classroom to work with the Gifted and Talented Teacher on extension and enrichment activities that integrate subject areas beyond Reading Language Arts.

Below are some specific data and information comparing the Worcester County schools Wicomico representatives visited in March of 2010 with Wicomico County Schools:

Comparison Data for Snow Hill Elementary, Snow Hill Middle, and Wicomico County

Snow Hill Elementary School (2004) and Snow Hill Middle School (2010) are both Maryland Blue Ribbon Schools.

2008-09 Demographic Comparison

Snow Hill Elementary is a school-wide Title I school serving 359 students in grades Pre-K-3
72 students per grade level on average with average class size of 14

Snow Hill Middle is a Title I eligible school serving 381 students in grades 4-8
76 students per grade level on average with average class size of 18

Wicomico County has the following for comparison:

Average number of students per grade level per school:

Grades K-2: 106; Grades 3-5: 105; and Grades 6-8: 194

Average class size (Kindergarten homeroom and reading class for grades 1-8):

Grades K-2: 22; Grades 3-5: 22; and Grades 6-8: 20

Subgroup Comparison: % of students in subgroup

Subgroup	Snow Hill Elementary	Snow Hill Middle	Wicomico County Grades K-8
White	62%	68%	54%
African Am.	33%	29%	37%
Asian	2%	2%	4%
Hispanic	3%	1%	5%
FARM	47%	43%	55%
Special Ed.	10%	13%	12%
ELL	4%	0%	3%

2009 Maryland State Assessment Comparison

% of Students Scoring Proficient or Advanced

Grade	MSA in Reading		MSA in Math		MSA in Science	
	Snow Hill ¹	Wicomico ²	Snow Hill ¹	Wicomico ²	Snow Hill ¹	Wicomico ²
3rd	96%	84%	98%	83%		
4th	86%	85%	83%	93%		
5th	87%	89%	82%	79%	51%	53%
6th	91%	82%	93%	70%		
7th	86%	78%	83%	70%		
8th	90%	76%	86%	60%	70%	59%

% of Students Scoring Advanced

Grade	MSA in Reading		MSA in Math		MSA in Science	
	Snow Hill ¹	Wicomico ²	Snow Hill ¹	Wicomico ²	Snow Hill ¹	Wicomico ²
3rd	51%	18%	43%	26%		
4th	39%	23%	58%	49%		
5th	45%	42%	18%	23%	7%	4%
6th	46%	37%	52%	20%		
7th	49%	39%	25%	20%		
8th	49%	32%	44%	27%	6%	3%

¹3rd grade results are from Snow Hill Elementary while grades 4-8 are from Snow Hill Middle

²All MSA results from Wicomico County were used for comparison

Comparing 2009 Wealth, Expenditures, and Staffing for Worcester and Wicomico County

	Wicomico	Worcester
Wealth Per Pupil	\$258,047	\$1,039,354
Per Pupil Expenditures	\$11,754	\$14,459
Instructional Staff per 1000 Pupils	75	90
Professional Staff per 1000 Pupils	11	12
Instructional Assistants per 1000 Pupils	28	31

Other Comparison Data for 2008-2009

Student Mobility

Snow Hill Elementary	Snow Hill Middle	Wicomico County Grades K-8
10%	10%	27%

Middle School Performance on the Algebra HSA in May 2009

% of Tested Students Passing	
Snow Hill Middle	Wicomico County Grades 7 & 8
86%	97%

Note: Students are heterogeneously grouped for all subjects including math at Snow Hill Middle. Therefore, all 71 8th graders took Algebra I and thus took the Algebra HSA in 2009. In Wicomico County, students are homogeneously grouped for math. 17% of 7th graders took Algebra I and the Algebra HSA in 2008-09 while 22% of 8th graders took the Algebra HSA. So the results above reflect the performance of the top 40% of middle school students in Wicomico County in terms of math achievement. The remaining 60% of students take the Algebra HSA after 8th grade.