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Mount Airy City Schools (MACS) recently welcomed 23 principals from the city of XuZhou in Jiangsu Province, China. This group is one of three groups of visiting principals that have been hosted by the Center of International Understanding (CIU) this month. The purpose of this trip was to expand the partnership initiated in November 2014 and to continue the collaborative efforts in enhancing educational programs in Mount Airy and China.

In Fall 2014, Mount Airy High School began offering Mandarin Chinese and later that semester, Mount Airy City Schools sent administrators and board members to China. The result of the trip abroad was a partnership with educators from across the world. Since this partnership began, Mount Airy High School sent nine students to China and plan to send more in Spring 2015.

The international travel and experience provides students with a greater appreciation for other cultures and brings a global awareness that will serve them well in their future careers. Through travel and Mandarin Chinese, students have experienced dynamic learning that is hard to find.

“North Carolina students will be working with people all over the world, and making international connections helps prepare them to succeed and thrive in the global community and marketplace,” said Julie McGaha, CIU Director of Education. “International education is a two-way street; we can all learn from each other through global experiences from traveling abroad to making a connection in a North Carolina classroom with a visiting educator from another country and culture.”

“It is such a great compliment to the hard work and effort of our teachers and staff to be selected as one of North Carolina’s host sites for this international exchange,” said Dr. Greg Little, Superintendent. “Knowing that our district has such a tremendous reputation for innovation and success is so exciting. We are proud to highlight the incredible opportunities taking place in our district.”

While in Mount Airy, the principals toured Mount Airy High School and Tharrington Primary School. The visit focused on the district’s national award winning K-12 STEAM program as well as MACS’ efforts in global education. Principals were able to visit the Mandarin Chinese class at Mount Airy High School as well as the Language Leaders (dual language immersion) class at Tharrington Primary. In addition to the tours, visiting principals had the opportunity to speak with local administrators about their leadership. The goal of these discussions is to develop a cross cultural collaboration of administrators to better understand how different cultures conduct school. Visiting principals also submitted questions for MACS principals to answer and discuss during a panel discussion following lunch. This discussion’s focus was American education and the vision of administrators for MACS.

Dr. Kim Morrison, Chief Innovation and Academic Officer noted, “MACS is excited about this global partnership where our administrators and students are able to share their expertise with principals from China. This connection with schools from around the world will help our students be better prepared to work in a global society.”