Professional Learning Current Reality: GAPSS Part A & B

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Part A: Professional Learning Current Reality

Technology Vision

"Technology allows for an unprecedented level of personalized learning, with valuable opportunities to monitor progress and engagement, follow student thinking, and digitally assess competencies (ISTE Essential Conditions). According to the Bartow County School system vision statement, "The Bartow County School System is committed to providing quality instruction and excellent educational experiences while ensuring academic achievement through technology for the students we serve" (p. 3). At Adairsville Middle School, the three primary goals are to increase student vocabulary in all academic subjects, increase student content mastery in Science, and to improve overall student engagement through the use of technology. Mrs. Lance, assistant principal at AMS states, "Even though AMS does not have a set technology vision, I see technology as enhancing student engagement. Technology is a tool to help meet our digital natives needs" (S. Lance, personal communication, September 2016).

In August 2013, Adairsville Middle School opened a new state of the art facility with each classroom consisting of an ActivInspire Board, projector, document camera, and slate. The AMS school improvement plan implies through the use of technology, the percentage of students who met or exceeded grade appropriate proficiency Lexile measures increased, formative writing skills have increased as indicated in WriteScore results, and overall student engagement in all subject areas through the utilization of technology in the classroom have greatly improved. Mrs. Lance describes her aspirations and intents for AMS as "teachers becoming the technology facilitator while applying

learner centered strategies in the classroom which encourages real world problem solving" (S. Lance, personal communication, September 2016).

Needs Assessment

Although Adairsville Middle School does not use teacher surveys to assess professional learning needs, areas of student weakness are assessed using standardized test scores, Write Scores, Lexile scores, and TKES. Based on the Scholastic Reading Inventory (SRI) results from the 2014- 2015 school year, 38% of AMS students scored below the grade level proficiency range. WriteScore results from the 2015 - 2016 school year indicated that over half of the student population scored below average. (AMS SIP, 2016, p. 8). Additionally, teachers and administrators have an open dialogue during weekly collaborative planning meetings to help decide on professional development. Using data and conducting weekly collaborative meetings allows for professional learning needs to continuously be addressed in order to improve reading and writing scores and increase student engagement through technology.

Professional Learning

Adairsville Middle School provides several opportunities throughout the school year for teachers to participate in collaborative professional learning. These include weekly collaborative meetings in which the school technology coach shows teachers new digital tools, and teacher to teacher coaching. AMS bases this teacher to teacher coaching philosophy on Knight (2007) who states, "If they believe that they are partners with others and that everyone has something to teach them, they are more inclined to be respectful and open to the people with whom they interact" (p. 60). Additionally, each summer the Bartow County School System offers the Educational Technology

Conference. The purpose of the conference is to showcase new digital tools and assist teachers with implementing strategies for effective technology use. Teachers are given the choice to attend as well as deciding on which sessions to attend based on their individual needs. Some of the most popular sessions include: 2.0 presentation tools, Mac basics, differentiation using Blackboard, advanced Apple usage, and digital assessments. Teachers find this conference meaningful because it aligns to Knight's partnership philosophy. Teachers have a choice regarding which classes they take, and a voice during the sessions. "If partners are equal, if they are free to choose what they do and do not do, they should be free to say what they think and their opinions should count (Knight, 2007, p. 43). This way of thinking ensures teacher buy in and produces positive change.

Alignment of Professional Learning to School Improvement Goals

Adairsville Middle School aligns professional learning directly with standardized test scores, TKES administrator evaluations, and teacher input during weekly collaborative planning. According to Mrs. Lance, "The best professional development happens in small groups and when teachers are actually participating and doing something." She goes on to say, "If you don't try it, you won't use it. Delivery and practice are key in professional development" (S. Lance, personal communication, September 2016). AMS offers several key contacts in the building that are proficient in technology use in the school. These include a technology coach, media specialist, and grade level teachers on each hallway. Teachers are encouraged to set up meetings with the technology coach when she is in the building to help ensure technology is implemented effectively. At AMS, teachers know they are held to high standards regarding using technology to meet school improvement goals. It is known that help is

always available no matter the topic whether it is asking about how to create a Kahoot, setting up a Skype session, or implementing a new strategy for student blogs. Knight (2007) explains why teachers and coaches must work together for school improvement. "By facilitating the professional growth of their colleagues, coaches help teachers stay alive, stay growing, and stay effective shapers of children's lives" (p. 208).

Funding

Adairsville Middle School qualifies as a Title I school. The majority of professional learning provided through the school is paid by Title I funds or is free. Mrs. Lance states, "We are fortunate enough to have technology savvy teachers within our building who offer their skills and knowledge for free. I am proud to say, the majority of professional learning has taken place within our own walls which has helped build a supportive community." Interactive student support programs and researched based strategies help to drive professional learning at AMS. According to Adairsville Middle School's Improvement Plan (2015), professional learning is addressed in following ways: "We have included teachers, principals, paraprofessionals and, if appropriate, pupil services, personnel, parents, and other staff in our staff development that addresses the root causes of our identified needs. Our professional development is tied directly to our Root Cause needs which are Math, Social Studies and Writing. We have aligned professional development with the State's academic content and student academic achievement standards. For our three identified goals we did not meet state standards, but we did show improvement. We have devoted sufficient resources to carry out effectively the professional development activities that address the root causes of academic problems. We have devoted designated collaborative time for professional

development that is tied to our three goals. We will use Title 1 funds and local school

funds to support. We have included teachers in professional development activities

regarding the use of academic assessments to enable them to provide information on, and

to improve, the achievement of individual students and the overall instructional program

in the following ways by providing training on the LDS, SRI data, and the Student

Growth Model." (p. 44).

AMS does not contract out for professional learning; instead Title I funds are

currently used for student support and technology equipment. These include several

software programs such as Write Score ($6600), iLearn Math ($8500), USA Test Prep

($4000), IXL math and ELA ($5775), Lexile e-books ($5,000), and Scholastic Reading

Inventory ($2,600). These programs help to enhance student engagement, achievement

and provide differentiation. Throughout the school year, AMS offers weekly

collaborative planning for 21st century technology training. Grade level teachers work

together to model and discuss new technology tools. Assistant Principal, Mrs. Lance,

feels this is the best use of Title I funds at this time.

Incentives

When asked about incentives, Mrs. Lance was perplexed that this was an

interview question. Her response was, "The more engaged you can get your students by

using technology, the less behavior problems you will have in the class and the more they

will learn. The more efficient you become with technology, the better your classes will

be. Learning to implement technology is really for your benefit and the students'

benefit" (S. Lance, personal communication, September 2016).

Diversity

At Adairsville Middle School, professional learning is offered to assist teachers in working with students who come from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. The ESOL coordinator provides support for teachers through weekly collaborative meetings. Each year, teachers participate in ESOL training by learning about student Can Do's, accommodations, and assistive technology. The lead special education teacher makes sure all special education teachers are up to date on ways technology can enhance student learning. Trainings for special education teachers are assigned as needed. Mrs. Lance says, "There is always room for improvement for special education teachers and regular education teachers in regards to collaboration." Mrs. Lance's future aspirations include using technology to provide equitable access for all students, including special needs and diverse backgrounds (S. Lance, personal communication, September 2016).

Collaboration

Mrs. Lance feels collaboration is essential in a successful school. Collaboration involves all stakeholders including administrators, teachers, parents, and other community members. Teachers (general education, special education, and ESOL) participate in weekly grade level meetings lead by all three members of the administration team. During these meetings faculty members discuss upcoming events, at-risk students, new strategies, and effective ways to implement technology that will continue to improve student engagement as outlined in the school improvement plan (AMS SIP 2016). According to the school improvement plan, "AMS teachers work collaboratively to plan, evaluate and execute lessons in their content area. They use historical and current data to determine appropriate placement for students and to

determine enrichment and remedial opportunities to improve student learning" (AMS SIP, 2016, p. 19). Adairsville Middle School strives to collaborate with parents by inviting them to open house, 6th grade orientation, freshman orientation, Milestones parent education night, Title I night, and the student technology showcase. AMS also uses social media to communicate with parents through Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Remind, and the school website. Parents are encouraged to subscribe to all feeds.

Evaluation

Mrs. Lance and the other administrators observe teachers using TKES. While in the classroom, she wants to see teachers using technology on a regular basis to ensure student learning. Mrs. Lance is looking to see how and if teachers are utilizing new digital tools and methods that were discussed in previous collaborative meetings. Mrs. Lance provides feedback based on her formal and informal classroom observations. She says, "As the year progresses, I expect to see students and teachers using technology on a much deeper level to produce authentic products instead of drill and practice activities" (S. Lance, personal communication, September 2016).

Professional learning has improved student learning by dramatically improving science scores. Throughout the past five years, science scores have been low at AMS. In order to increase the scores, Mrs. Lance insisted that teachers collaborate on science lesson plans. Teachers also discussed how to effectively implement technology to increase student engagement, in which Mrs. Lance felt would directly improve scores. This professional learning experience greatly improved student learning, which was shown by increased test scores (68% meeting/exceeding in 2012 to 80% meeting/exceeding in 2014).

References

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PROFESSIONAL LEARNING
The means by which teachers, administrators, and other staff acquire, enhance, and refine the knowledge, skills, practices, and dispositions necessary to create and support high levels of learning for all students

Professional Learning Standard 1: Aligns professional learning with needs identified through analysis of a variety of data

Level 4 ☐ **Exemplary**	Level 3 ☐ **Operational**	Level 2 **X** **Emerging**	Level 1 ☐ **Not Evident**
Professional learning needs are identified and differentiated through a collaborative analysis process using a variety of data (e.g., student achievement data, examination of student work, process data, teacher and leader effectiveness data, action research data, perception data from students, staff, and families). Ongoing support is provided through differentiated professional learning.	Professional learning needs are identified through a collaborative analysis process using a variety of data (e.g., student achievement data, examination of student work, process data, teacher and leader effectiveness data, action research data, perception data from students, staff, and families).	Professional learning needs are identified using limited sources of data.	Professional learning needs are identified using little or no data.

EVIDENCE: Professional development opportunities are assigned to teachers without any input from teachers. The central office identifies what they feel is necessary professional development based on Milestones scores and benchmark data.

RECOMMENDATIONS: In addition to just looking at test scores, allow teachers to provide input as to what types of professional development would be most beneficial to them. Provide opportunities for subject area teachers from each school in the county to meet together to discuss data, student work, etc.

Professional Learning Standard 2: Establishes a culture of collaboration among administrators and staff to enhance individual and collective performance

Level 4 ☐ Exemplary	Level 3 **X** Operational	Level 2 Emerging	Level 1 ☐ Not Evident
Administrators and staff, as a foundational practice, consistently collaborate to support leadership and personal accountability and to enhance individual and collective performance (e.g., construct knowledge, acquire skills, refine practice, provide feedback). Teachers conduct action research and assume ownership of professional learning processes.	Administrators and staff routinely collaborate to improve individual and collective performance (e.g., construct knowledge, acquire skills, refine practice, provide feedback).	Administrators and staff routinely collaborate to improve individual and collective performance (e.g., construct knowledge, acquire skills, refine practice, provide feedback).	Administrators and staff routinely collaborate to improve individual and collective performance (e.g., construct knowledge, acquire skills, refine practice, provide feedback).

EVIDENCE: All grade level teachers at AMS are required to meet on a weekly basis (Wednesdays) with administration to discuss lesson plans, current issues, technology use in the classroom, and upcoming events. AMS also holds monthly subject area meetings and monthly faculty meetings, but these are often not attended by all staff members as they are not seen as "important". All teachers are required to keep detailed lesson plans out on their desk for administration to easily access.

RECOMMENDATIONS: Teacher leaders and administration can take more of an active role in addressing teachers who do not actively participate within the learning community and more professional learning opportunities could be provided for teachers.

Professional Learning Standard 3: Defines expectations for implementing professional learning

Level 4 ☐ Exemplary	Level 3 X Operational	Level 2 ☐ Emerging	Level 1 ☐ Not Evident
Administrators, teacher leaders, or both consistently define expectations for the implementation of professional learning, including details regarding the stages of implementation and how monitoring will occur as implementation progresses.	Administrators, teacher leaders, or both regularly define expectations for the implementation of professional learning.	Administrators, teacher leaders, or both occasionally define expectations for the implementation of professional learning.	Administrators, teacher leaders, or both rarely, if ever, define expectations for the implementation of professional learning.

EVIDENCE: The School Improvement Plan includes planned professional development activities including: collaborative planning meetings, technology conference held each summer, and technology training/support (AMS SIP). The principal at AMS attends all grade level meetings to ensure teachers are collaborating and sharing ideas. The majority of our collaborative professional learning time is spent discussing how to use technology in the classroom, as one of the goals in the SIP is to improve student engagement through utilizing technology.

RECOMMENDATIONS: The planned professional development activities could be more specific and provide training on topics such as: using technology to support content standards, support differentiation, and promote collaboration. These learning opportunities could also include days for teachers to observe peers and participate in coaching sessions where lessons are modeled by a coach or a teacher leader who is skilled in using technology in the classroom.

Professional Learning Standard 4: Uses multiple professional learning designs to support the various learning needs of the staff

Level 4 ☐ Exemplary	Level 3 X Operational	Level 2 ☐ Emerging	Level 1 ☐ Not Evident
Staff members actively participate in job-embedded professional learning that engages collaborative teams in a variety of appropriate learning designs (e.g., collaborative lesson study, analysis of student work, problem solving sessions, curriculum development, coursework, action research, classroom observations, online networks). Professional learning includes extensive follow-up with descriptive feedback and coaching.	Staff members actively participate in professional learning, most of which is job-embedded, which includes multiple designs (e.g., collaborative lesson study, analysis of student work, problem-solving sessions, curriculum development, coursework, action research, classroom observations, online networks) to support their various learning needs. Professional learning includes follow-up with feedback and coaching.	Some staff members are engaged in professional learning that makes use of more than one learning design to address their identified needs.	Staff members receive single, stand-alone professional learning events that are informational and mostly large-group presentation designs.

EVIDENCE: Teachers at AMS meet every Wednesday within their grade level to discuss curriculum, upcoming assessments, and new ways to use technology in the classroom. After each grade level meets, teachers break into subject area groups to discuss unit plans and student achievement and data. The technology coach also meets with grade levels when she has new technology-related information to share, as well as the media specialist.

RECOMMENDATIONS: Allocate time each month for teachers to participate in peer observations so they can see other teachers "in action" using new ideas and tools in their classes. Allow teachers to participate in outside job trainings so they can experience new technology from an "expert". Administration could be more specific regarding their expectations of professional learning participation. Based on NSCD

standard recommendations, AMS should meet much more frequently so more time can be devoted to job embedded learning.

Professional Learning Standard 5: Allocates resources and establishes systems to support and sustain effective professional learning

Level 4 ☐ Exemplary	Level 3 ☐ Operational	Level 2 X Emerging	Level 1 ☐ Not Evident
Extensive resources (e.g., substitute teachers, materials, handouts, tools, stipends, facilitators, technology) and systems (e.g., conducive schedules, adequate collaborative time, model classrooms) are allocated to support and sustain effective professional learning. Opportunities to practice skills, receive follow-up, feedback, and coaching are provided to support the effectiveness of professional learning.	Adequate resources (e.g., substitute teachers, materials, handouts, tools, stipends, facilitators, technology) and systems (e.g., conducive schedules, adequate collaborative time, model classrooms) are in place to support and sustain professional learning.	Some resources and systems are allocated to support and sustain professional learning.	Few, if any, resources and systems are provided to support and sustain professional learning.

EVIDENCE: Teachers do not have a voice in regard to professional development participation, nor do they formally share their feedback after sessions have occurred. Central Office assigns professional development to teachers without any input from specific schools. Funding is not provided for teachers who would like to attend professional development opportunities of their choosing.

RECOMMENDATIONS: Provide teachers the opportunity to suggest professional development opportunities that would directly impact them in the classroom. Teachers could attend more professional learning sessions that they want to participate in which would be more meaningful. Provide funding for teachers to attend professional development of their choice, instead of central office always assigning professional learning.

Professional Learning Standard 6: Monitors and evaluates the impact of professional learning on staff practices and student learning

Level 4 ☐ Exemplary	Level 3 ☐ Operational	Level 2 Emerging	Level 1 X Not Evident
Monitoring and evaluating the impact of professional learning on staff practices and increases in student learning occurs extensively. Evaluation results are used to identify and implement processes to extend student learning.	Monitoring and evaluating the impact of professional learning on staff practices and student learning occurs routinely.	Monitoring and evaluating the impact of professional learning on staff practices occurs sporadically.	Monitoring and evaluating the impact of professional learning on staff practices occurs rarely, if ever.

EVIDENCE: Teachers do not have a voice in choosing their professional development opportunities. We are rarely asked to evaluate the impact of the professional learning, and if so it is usually in the form of just a quick survey of how satisfied we were with the training. Changes in practice are not evaluated.

RECOMMENDATIONS: Provide meaningful professional development opportunities that teachers will truly benefit from, by allowing them to have a say in the types of professional development sessions they are required to attend. Determine a way for teachers to provide a follow-up to the training by documenting or showcasing how they have used what was learned in the training in the classroom.

KSU ITEC **Professional Learning Standard:** Professional learning reinforces educators' understanding and use of strategies for promoting equity and high expectations for all students, application of research-based teaching strategies and assessment processes, and involvement of families and other stakeholders in promoting student learning.

Level 4 **X** Exemplary	Level 3 ☐ Operational	Level 2 ☐ Emerging	Level 1 ☐ Not Evident
Classroom practices (e.g., considering interests, backgrounds, strengths, and preferences to provide meaningful, relevant lessons and assess student progress, differentiating instruction, and nurturing student capacity for self-management) of all teachers reflect an emotionally and physically safe environment where respect and appreciation for a diverse population is evident. There are high achievement expectations for all students and teachers. The principal and other leaders provide professional learning for teachers lacking understanding of the impact that attitudes regarding race, disabilities, background, culture, high expectations, and social class of both students and teachers have on the teaching and learning process.	Classroom practices of most teachers reflect skill in communicating high expectations for each student and adjusting classroom activities to meet student needs. Respect for students' cultures and life experiences is evident through the emotionally and physically safe learning environment where students of diverse backgrounds and experiences are taught the school code of conduct (customs) to help them be successful in the school context.	Classroom practices of some teachers reflect evidence of teachers' training in understanding the impact that attitudes regarding race, disabilities, background, culture, high expectations, and social class of both students and teachers have on the teaching and learning process.	Classroom practices reflect little or no evidence of teachers' training in understanding the impact that attitudes regarding race, disabilities, background, culture, high expectations, and social class of both students and teachers have on the teaching and learning process.

EVIDENCE: AMS has a high expectation for all teachers and students to treat one another with dignity and respect. All teachers are expected to differentiate lessons according to individual student needs. Teachers receive training each year for both ESOL and ESS students provided by the lead teachers in each area. Teachers conduct bi-weekly advisement sessions dealing with a wide variety of issues that middle school students face including bullying, life decisions, and college/career guidance. These resources are given to teachers by the guidance counselor.

RECOMMENDATIONS: While training is offered at the beginning of each year, it would be ideal to incorporate follow-up sessions to provide teachers with new resources, ideas, and strategies to ensure that all diverse student needs are being met. More advisement sessions could be spent on acceptance, diversity, and culture instead of always focusing on bullying.