Professional Learning Current Reality and GSAPS

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**Vision**

This vision of Westside Elementary School is to prepare students to be life-long learners with the destination of graduation in mind along with college and career readiness. (Westside Elementary Schoolwide Improvement Plan, 2016). Students will develop critical thinking skills and habits of mind which will prepare them for life challenges. Westside teachers will integrate technology into daily instruction with students actively utilizing devices. Westside has a 1:1 device to student ratio in third, fourth, and fifth grades with future plans for first and second grade having a 1:1 ratio as well. Coffee County Schools is currently in an implementation phase for an online database and assessment system (Illuminate). Westside plans to implement the system with fidelity. Administrators at Westside have elected for students to complete the state assessment online for grades fourth and fifth in the past two years; they are planning to add third grade online testing this school term. Mrs. Hughes, assistant principal, hopes with the implementation of Illuminate the students will become familiar with online testing improving the percentage of students meeting or exceeds the Georgia Milestone Assessment System (GMAS). Students in grades kindergarten through second currently use technology daily with the implementation of an interactive reading program, iRead, as part of the Striking Reader’s Grant. Students in grades third through fifth also use technology daily for online assessments, web-based interactive learning programs for reading and math. Some teachers use Google Classroom to improve student learning with the use of videos and assignments. Teachers use technology daily as part of their teaching instruction through the use of videos, flipcharts, and other online resources. Although Westside does not have an official technology plan, several goals have been identified for utilizing technology within the school to improve teaching and learning.

**Needs Assessment**

Professional learning needs are determined by analysis of GMAS and benchmark assessment data collected through the use of Dibels Next and AimsWeb assessment tools. Needs assessment surveys are also used at the end of the school year to identify other professional learning needs at the district and school level for teachers. This data determines what professional learning will be available throughout the summer and what professional learning needs to be address for the upcoming school year. Coffee County Schools align professional learning schedules with the data compiled from the survey and offers courses for teachers and paraprofessionals at their Professional Learning Center. Most professional learning opportunities are offered through the summer to decrease the cost of hiring substitutes and to maximize instruction time during the school year. The learning opportunities are often face-to-face courses with online webinars available. On occasions, half-day or full day workshops are scheduled for teachers to align with job-embedded professional development from the district level that are centered on reading and writing to increase student achievement and reading levels.

**Professional Learning**

The types of professional development detailed in the school improvement plan include grade level meeting and professional planning with academic coach. All teachers participate in collaborative planning for 45 minutes every Tuesday during their planning times lead by the academic coach or teacher leaders. Professional learning through coaching and classroom demonstrations are only offered to new and struggling teachers. Most professional learning for technology is offered at the district level. On occasion, the Instructional Technology Coordinator conducts professional learning for technology based instructions such Google Applications for Education (GAFE). As the district rolls out Illuminate, training will continue to be provided for academic coaches and teacher leaders. Academic coaches and teacher leaders will conduct professional development for implementing Illuminate at the school.

The current focus for professional learning is implementing the ELA Block with the main priority being placed on interactive read-aloud. The academic coach will work with individual teachers and small groups to address any differentiated needs. Professional learning is not technology driven, most of the resources purchased are trade books. Teachers express their frustrations with administrators about the professional learning not always beneficial for student learning. The plan is for professional learning to shift from reading to technology with the implementation of Illuminate.

**Alignment**

The School Improvement Plan (SIP) has SMART goals for improving student learning and achievement in reading and math on the Georgia Milestone Assessment System. The professional learning plan is aligned with the SIP; outlining strategies to support the SMART goals. The first goal is to increase student achievement for grades third through fifth in ELA. Teachers will receive training and instructions on ways to help students build reading fluency, teaching the RACE writing strategy, reviewing the Instructional Framework and ways to increase rigor with Depth of Knowledge (DOK). Another goal is to increase student achievement in math. Teachers will receive training and instructions on ways to help build math fact fluency, implementing Number Talks, providing student-centered instruction, increasing rigor and DOK, and instruction on the ACE problem solving strategy. The plan indicates the training and instruction will be facilitated mainly by the academic coach with some assistance from administrators and teacher leaders. Additional time has been allocated for teachers to have common planning once a week for 45 minutes. This gives teachers ample time for collaboration to ensure research based instructional strategies are shared and implemented.

**Funding and Incentives**

Westside Elementary receives Title I funds based on its low socio-economics status. Coffee County Schools also receives funds from a Striving Readers Grant. Funds from the Striving Readers Grant help to paid for any reading professional learning and Title I funds pays for other types of professional learning. Most professional learning is job-embedded and facilitated by the academic coach and teacher leaders this helps cut the cost of professional learning and the need to more funding. Funding is needed for instructional resources: notebooks, tabs, expandable folders, pencils, sharpeners, markers, color pencils, highlighters, construction paper, writing paper, legal pads, composition books, pocket folders, pens, pencil sharpeners, markers, crayons, whiteboard cleaner, erasers, scissors, glue, Post-it notes, labels, tape, tape dispensers, index cards, binder clips, paper clips, sheet protectors, correction tape, rubber bands, and calendars for $4,937.00 (Westside Elementary Schoolwide Improvement Plan, 2016). Mrs. Hughes did not state any incentives for teacher to participate in professional learning and to improve their practice. She stated, “Teachers know that they are required to implement new strategies with fidelity and that observations will be conducted for evidence of implementation” (N. Jones, personal communication, September, 2016).

**Diversity**

Westside Elementary has students with culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. It is very important for teachers to understand and respect the diversity of their students. Closing the achievement gap between diverse learners is very important to our school. We have a Special Education Referral Coordinator who works the regular and Special Education teachers to provide strategies for instruction and two ESOL teachers who work with teachers to meet the needs of our linguistically diverse learners (N. Jones, personal communication, September, 2016).

**Collaboration**

As mentioned earlier, teachers have approximately 90 minutes for collaborative and common planning each week. During collaborative planning, teachers receive professional learning on research based best practices for improving teaching and learning. Data analysis called ‘Data Dig’ is also completed once a month during this time. During common planning, teachers use this time to plan lesson for the upcoming week and to collaborate about resources and learning experiences and share student work. Common planning is facilitated by the grade level chairperson and teachers take turns recording minutes each week. The minutes are shared with the administrators for review on Thursday and returned to chairperson no later than Monday. The grade level chairperson shares the feedback with the teachers at the next common planning if there is not anything urgent needing to be addressed.

**Evaluation**

At Westside Elementary School, the impact of professional learning is evaluated through the use of informal focus walks and formal observations. The leadership team establishing 10 focal point for focus walks to be conducted three times a year. During the focus walks, it is noted if teachers are following the Instructional Framework. Lesson Plans are reviewed along with minutes from common planning on Thursday by the administrators. Feedback is provided to teachers through grade level chairperson. If any problems or concerns occur, meetings are scheduled by administrators to find suitable situations. Formal observations are performed by administrators using the Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES) after all the first focus walk to note in detail the use of best practices by teachers. Mrs. Hughes states, “We analyze data to see if the applied strategies are effective. If not, we go back through the Plan Do Check Act cycle” (N. Jones, personal communication, 2016).

**References**

Westside Elementary Schoolwide Improvement Plan, 2016

N. Jones, personal communication, September, 2016

*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

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| **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**  **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 learning is aligned with the data analysis from state assessment (GMAS) and benchmark assessments from Dibels Next and AimsWeb assessment tools. Ongoing support is provided through differentiated professional learning by the use research based strategies and best practices that may only apply to a specific grade level. Teachers are given needs assessments at the end of the school year to guide professional learning for the upcoming year. Climate surveys are also given to parents and students to gain input about the school’s environment and how it can be improved to meet their needs. (Westside Elementary Schoolwide Improvement Plan, 2016). | | | |
| RECOMMENDATIONS: It is recommended that teachers have more choices in professional learning decisions and choose which one would be better for improving teaching and learning for them. | | | |
| **Professional Learning Standard 2:** Establishes a culture of collaboration among administrators and staff to enhance individual and collective performance | | | |
| **Level 4**  **Exemplary** | **Level 3**  **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: Time is allocated for administrators and teachers collaborate during collaborative planning every Tuesday during teachers’ planning time. During common planning, teachers meet the grade level chairperson and collaborate. Teachers record the minutes and share with administrators; administrators provide feedback and suggestions for teachers to refine the practices.  (N. Jones, personal communication, September, 2016). | | | |
| RECOMMENDATIONS: Collaboration can sometimes be one sided. Administrators can use this opportunity to help teachers feel valued by taking into considerations their viewpoints. Administrators could also attend more common planning meetings with each grade level. | | | |

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| **Professional Learning Standard 3:** Defines expectations for implementing professional learning | | | |
| **Level 4**  **Exemplary** | **Level 3**  **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: Mrs. Hughes, assistant principal, stated, “Teachers know that they are required to implement new strategies with fidelity and that observations will be conducted for evidence of implementation” (N. Jones, personal communication, September, 2016). Administrator and teacher leaders define expectations for implementation of professional learning. Focus walks conducted by the leadership team are used to observe implementation. Informal and formal observations are conducted by administrators as well to monitor implementation progresses. | | | |
| RECOMMENDATIONS: It is recommended that more collaboration about professional learning occur between teachers and administrators. Teachers feel like they are working under a dictator. | | | |

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| **Professional Learning Standard 4:** Uses multiple professional learning designs to support the various learning needs of the staff | | | |
| **Level 4**  **Exemplary** | **Level 3**  **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: Most professional learning workshops are make and take sessions for teachers. Teachers are allowed to participate in hands-on activities that can be used in their class to improve instructions. Example: Teachers recently completed professional learning on interactive read aloud. After the professional learning, teachers had notes to use for their first week’s lesson. (N. Jones, personal communication, September, 2016). | | | |
| RECOMMENDATIONS: It is recommended that teachers are given an opportunity to work on more make and take activities. Some sessions may need to carry over to the next week since 45 minutes is not really a long time to achieve a lot. | | | |

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| **Professional Learning Standard 5:** Allocates resources and establishes systems to support and sustain effective professional learning | | | |
| **Level 4**  **Exemplary** | **Level 3**  **Operational** | **Level 2**  **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: State and federal funds are allocated to support professional learning. Most professional learning is facilitated by the academic coach and teacher leaders during planning times or afterschool; not much funding is used for acquiring substitute teachers. (N. Jones, personal communication, September, 2016). | | | |
| RECOMMENDATIONS: It is recommended that the academic coach model more lessons. The responsibilities of the academic coach have changed over the years; they are not modeling enough lessons. | | | |

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| **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**  **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: Focus walks conducted by the leadership team are used to monitor and evaluate the impact of professional learning on staff practices and student learning. Informal and formal observations are conducted by administrators as well to monitor and evaluate the impact of professional learning on staff practices and student learning. (N. Jones, personal communication, September, 2016). | | | |
| RECOMMENDATIONS: It is recommended that more focus walks are conducted and that administrators conduct more informal observations. | | | |

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| **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**  **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: A select few are chosen to attend training to support diverse learners. There are little opportunities for teachers to receive training that will assist teachers in positively impacting diverse learners. | | | |
| RECOMMENDATIONS: It is recommended that the more training is provided to all teachers to help diverse learners a | | | |