

GAPSS Part A: Professional Learning Current Reality

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**Vision**

The vision for technology use at Lee County Primary School is outlined in the Lee County Primary School Improvement Plan and states that, “All students will use instructional technology ‘effectively’ to collaborate, create, communicate, and/or think critically in order to improve student achievement” (Devane & Murdock with Lee County Primary School, 2014). This goal was created through the collaboration of the school administrative team, specifically the principal and assistant principal, and the school leadership team, which consists of two representatives of each grade level and stakeholder group from within the school (Murdock, 2014). Currently, the school administrators use the Technology Integration Matrix which was developed at the University of South Florida by the Florida Center for Instructional Technology to better guide classroom technology integration (TIM Arizona Technology Integration Matrix, 2012). The matrix includes five characteristics of learning environments: “active, collaborative, constructive, authentic, and goal directed” (TIM Arizona Technology Integration Matrix, 2012). There are five levels of technology integration in the learning environment listed in order: “entry, adaptation, adoption, infusion, transformation” (TIM Arizona Technology Integration Matrix, 2012). Based on this tool, the administration feels that most teachers spend most of their time in the entry level part of this matrix. The aim is to have teachers use the matrix to design learning tasks which incorporate technology that are deeper into the matrix that also develop 21<sup>st</sup> century skills: creativity, collaboration, communication, and critical thinking (Murdock, 2014). Obviously the highest aspiration is to eventually have all teachers working at the transformative level but the administration aims to have teachers work towards two levels above where they are currently and all teachers have at least one lesson that is at the adoption level by the end of this

school year (Murdock, 2014). The instructional technology specialist, the media specialist, the assistant principal, and the principal will work as a team to assist teachers with meeting this goal (Murdock, 2014).

## **Professional Learning**

### **Identification of Needs and Data Analysis**

Professional learning needs at Lee County Primary School are identified by teachers and administration. The administrators send a survey every spring in which teachers identify areas where students are struggling, areas where they feel instruction or curriculum is lacking, or any other concerns they might have that can be addressed with professional development (Murdock, 2014). The administrators also identify critical areas that they feel should be addressed because they feel they provide a unique and informed perspective as they spend time in classrooms all over campus on a daily basis (Murdock, 2014). System level administrators also outline needs they feel need to be addressed and include them in the system level improvement plan (Murdock, 2014). These goals must be incorporated in each school level plan (Murdock, 2014). Once these needs have been identified, the leadership team works together to develop the school improvement plan (Murdock, 2014). Each part of the plan includes a timeline of when the target will be reached, resources needed, person(s) responsible, and the artifacts and evidence that will be collected as confirmation that goals have been met. There are very specific targets outlined in each part of the plan and evidence that data can be collected to show that the targets have been met (Devane & Murdock with Lee County Primary School, 2014). A variety of sources of data are used to support claims that targets are met including pre- and post-benchmark assessment data, state test data, common assessment data, surveys, lesson plans, walkthroughs, observations, CCRPI achievement, and student work.

### **Types of Professional Learning**

The most utilized form of professional learning at Lee County Primary School is the Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) (Murdock, 2014). PLCs are areas where teachers share in small groups the types of research-based techniques they are using in their classrooms and examples of student work (Murdock, 2014). Data analysis in particular occurs during this time and teachers learn a lot from one another about the instructional practices others are using and begin to try them in their own classrooms (Murdock, 2014). Delivery of various new instructional practices also often occurs during PLC meetings (Murdock, 2014). Collaborative lesson planning and formation of common assessments is another hallmark of these meetings (Murdock, 2014).

There are also many other professional development opportunities that occur throughout the year. Various workshops are done and often arranged at the system level (Murdock, 2014). Workshops also are led in-house by the administration or by teachers who are redelivering information from an outside workshop they have attended (Murdock, 2014). Peer observations occur on a regular basis but the administration often finds that the PLCs make those arrangements when someone wants to share (Murdock, 2014).

### **Technology-Related Professional Learning**

Until this year, technology-related professional learning has been rather limited (Murdock, 2014). In the past year, teachers have been shown new educational apps to use with their iPads (Murdock, 2014). They have also been taught various ways to share information with parents, by creating their own websites or using platforms like Remind (Murdock, 2014). They have also been asked to collaboratively plan a lesson in which students share their learning via technology and then share in a gallery walk (Murdock, 2014). This year, the goals are much

more deliberate and detailed since the school now has access to an instructional technology specialist (Murdock, 2014). Teachers will be trained on technology integration and student uses of technology and will be expected to show evidence of this in lesson plans and walkthroughs (Murdock, 2014).

### **Professional Development Support**

The administrators aim to provide as much support and resources as possible after professional development has occurred. Administrators analyze lesson plans for evidence that the professional development is being implemented in classrooms (Murdock, 2014). The administrators both do periodic walkthroughs and what they call “blitzes,” which are very brief classroom visits where they count specific occurrences of a specific nature (Murdock, 2014). A common blitz that occurs at the moment is a “technology blitz” since that is one of the goals in the school improvement plan (Murdock, 2014 and ” (Devane & Murdock with Lee County Primary School, 2014). Administrators discuss their findings with the faculty after a blitz or after a few days of walkthroughs (Murdock, 2014). They outline both areas of strengths and weaknesses (Murdock, 2014). They also discuss individual results and offer more support and training if needed (Murdock, 2014). The instructional technology specialist also offers specific support in technology-related professional development (Murdock, 2014).

### **Alignment of Professional Development to School Goals**

Some type of professional development occurs for every goal outlined in the school improvement plan (Murdock, 2014). One particular area outlined in the plan which is included for every goal is “Actions/Strategies/Interventions” (Devane & Murdock with Lee County Primary School, 2014). In this area of the school improvement plan, words that identify an action as professional development are evidenced: train, develop, collaboration session, discussion of

strategies, and monitor are a few (Devane & Murdock with Lee County Primary School, 2014). Most professional development that occurs, at least that which occurs on a school level or PLC level, is directly tied to school improvement plan goals (Murdock, 2014 and Devane & Murdock with Lee County Primary School, 2014).

### **Funding for Professional Learning**

Funding sources are rather limited for professional learning and mostly come directly from the school system (Murdock, 2014). Much training is done by school or system employees (Murdock, 2014). The administration does send various teachers to trainings and workshops related to the school improvement plan and there are limited system level funds allocated to meet this need (Murdock, 2014). However, a statement must be generated about which goal is being addressed prior to a teacher or administrator attending the training in order for the system to approve it (Murdock, 2014). In addition, the person is expected to redeliver the material (Murdock, 2014).

### **Professional Learning Incentives**

School administration offers small rewards for teachers who actively seek out their own development (Murdock, 2014). These teachers are recognized at faculty meetings or at system leadership meetings (Murdock, 2014). Teachers are also often given small gifts, like gift cards as incentives for professional development (Murdock, 2014).

### **Professional Development and Diversity**

Due to the high increase in the population of culturally diverse and students with disabilities, there are two specific goals to address both of these areas in the school improvement plan (Murdock, 2014 and Devane & Murdock with Lee County Primary School, 2014). Since these goals are in the plan, the administration must hold professional development directly

related to that goal (Murdock, 2014). The goal related to culturally diverse students is that “All limited English proficient students will become proficient in English and reach high academic standards, at a minimum attaining proficiency or better in reading, language arts and math” (Devane & Murdock with Lee County Primary School, 2014). The plan then states more specific targets with percentages (Devane & Murdock with Lee County Primary School, 2014). In the “Action/Strategies/Interventions” section, the plan states that training will be provided to “promote understanding of identification/eligibility, instruction, and assessment of ELs,” and this training is the responsibility of the instructional supervisors and the Title III Coordinator (Devane & Murdock with Lee County Primary School, 2014). There are also to be “collaboration sessions between ESOL specialists and general Ed teachers” and there is a list of specific strategies targeted at the instruction of ELs that teachers will be trained on (Devane & Murdock with Lee County Primary School, 2014).

Students with disabilities are also specifically addressed in the school improvement plan: “Improve the provision of a free and appropriate public education to all students with disabilities” (Devane & Murdock with Lee County Primary School, 2014). The actions listed in this section focus primarily on the monitoring of instructional delivery and training to inclusion teachers to increase the number of students that can be served in inclusion settings for part of the school day (Devane & Murdock with Lee County Primary School, 2014).

### **Professional Learning Teams**

Most professional learning communities (PLCs) are grade level teams that meet weekly to discuss instructional strategies, collaboratively plan lessons, and analyze data (Murdock, 2014). The data analysis that occurs in these meetings is directly tied to the school improvement plan in Goal 2: “All staff will effectively evaluate, interpret, and use data to adjust instruction

and improve student achievement” (Devane & Murdock with Lee County Primary School, 2014). However, these PLCs are organized by the administration. Administrators often find that these teams break up into smaller teams: by subject area in the upper grades and by instructional strategy in the lower (Murdock, 2014). Administrators encourage this practice as this makes their data analysis and instruction adjustments more relevant to their own classroom (Murdock, 2014).

### **Evaluation of Professional Practices**

As stated earlier, the administrators do walkthroughs and “blitzes” to evaluate instructional practices (Murdock, 2014). Administrators also do formal observations that last thirty minutes or more (Murdock, 2014). In addition, administrators evaluate lesson plans on a regular basis to ensure that teachers are including instructional practices that are shared in professional development in their instruction (Murdock, 2014). Administrators encourage teachers to come to them with concerns, questions, or requests regarding any need, even if it is not related to professional development, so teachers feel supported and free to go to them with their concerns (Murdock, 2014). Administrators also evaluate professional learning by talking with teachers about their feelings about implementation, whether they feel it is working and positively affecting student achievement, and what could make it better (Murdock, 2014).



## References

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