

Professional Learning Current Reality & GSAPS Review

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## **Vision**

The primary goal for Harmony-Leland Elementary School is to enhance student learning through integration of technology in an engaged and productive way. “I think we would like to see technology be integrated seamlessly into what we do. Not viewed as something extra but the means in which we teach our students,” says our principal Mrs. Whitehead. At HLES we use many technological assessments such as CTLS to help identify our school’s progression. We also strive to promote a school of student leaders who will display great behavior which is why classroom management is another one of our goals. Many of our teachers, including myself use a tool called *Class Dojo* to promote positive behavior and track how our students are progressing. In Knight (2007) it talks about developing, teaching expectations, and how a teacher should go about them. “Teachers need to clarify, activity structure by activity structure, exactly what is appropriate behavior and what is inappropriate behavior.” (p.143) This is what our teachers model daily to promote appropriate behavior in the classroom and throughout the school building.

## **Needs Assessment**

Right before the 2017-2018 school year began, our new principal Mrs. Whitehead welcomed our staff to sit with her one-on-one to have a meaningful conversation about our goals for learning and school improvement. Acknowledging that she was new to our school, she understood the value of building relationships with our teachers and wanted us to know that she welcomed an open-door policy. My colleagues, as well as myself, were very grateful for her openness and felt more at ease knowing that our new principal was excited about helping us grow. As the year gradually passes it’s very clear that our voices were heard. We have weekly

assigned PLC days and assigned days with each of our coaches (literacy and math). Teachers are always receiving emails about workshops they can go to that may meet their individual needs.

We also have in-house trainings. On Tuesdays and sometimes one other day throughout the week we have an awesome technology trainer/integration specialist who comes to assist teachers with unique ways of integrating technology into instruction. Some examples include using CTLS Assess and I-Respond. Using these sources allows teachers to create assessments and motivate students to take their assessments on computers or use the Smart board and clickers to login their answers. My students are always excited about using the clickers to put in their answers. They seem to think it's pretty cool and encourages them to practice our goal of modeling positive classroom behavior which is a plus. On scheduled Mondays, several of my colleagues as well as myself attend our technology trainer's classes that focuses on Microsoft Office 365 training. Even our paraprofessionals have been provided the opportunity to learn Microsoft Office 365 from my grade level team leader, which assures that our school is dedicated to growing staff skills in technology.

### **Professional Learning**

Professional learning is very important and plays a significant role at HLES. Integrating technology into learning is one of our primary goals. Going back to needs assessments, through our surveys and conversations with our principal we were able to identify ways in which our professional learning could improve (CTLS Assess/Teach, Office 365). We also strive to strengthen behavior throughout our school by using Positive Behavior Intervention Support (PBIS). At HLES, we acknowledge "how technology has become an integral part of everyday living," says our assistant principal Dr. McKinney. Every year we try to add new technology

such as *Plickers* to help make teaching more powerful and authentic. The thing we really love about this new integrated technology is that we can collect data without having to physically grade papers which is wonderful because that allows more planning time for teachers. Knight (2007) states that “In a well-run classroom, students are focused on learning, they are respectful, and they are growing.” (p.139) We believe this quote to be true which is why we put so much effort forward to reach our vision of building respectful, responsible, and intrinsic learners.

Coaching is another excellent form of professional learning provided to our staff and is how follow-ups are displayed. Coaching is done individually to meet teachers personal needs and also as a team during team meetings. Our staff continues to learn so much from all of our coaches because they teach us how to use provided tools more effectively. We discuss lesson plans and what they should include in them. Our principal created an ideal look of what lessons should specify and the roles of both students and teachers. We have professional learning with grade level and during staff meetings. Our staff meetings always focuses on ways to engage learning and promote new ideas to increase student development and academic achievement.

We use blogs to provide and share resources. Whiteboards are also used for classroom interactions. My students are more amp to participate when they know that they have a chance to use the whiteboard. They love to work on activities that I get from *Smartboard Exchange* during rotations after I have taught a lesson. Anything that integrates technology and allows students to be hands on is an excellent way of getting my class excited about learning.

### **Alignment to School Improvement Goals**

In order to assure that we remain on track with our goals our administrators regularly monitors classrooms by completing walk-throughs, collect data from TKES and CTLS, and we

also have a technology coach who comes in every Tuesday to support any teachers with technology needs. Learning Forward (2011) states that “Technology is rapidly enhancing and extending opportunities for professional learning.” By using data-driven sources such as *TenMarks* for Math and *Istations* for both ELA and Math we are able to examine the strengths and challenges of our students and can track the progression they make. We also are really big on using AR to help us keep track of how students are doing with reading comprehension. Every quarter our students are rewarded in some form for making their Accelerated Reading (AR) goals and they also get to attend our school store where they can use earned points to purchase fun goodies.

Even during Specials, such as Music and STEM, students get to interact with technology. . In Music, the children use Ipads to listen to and play notes. STEM is utilized to increase students’ understanding of science and problem solving. Our STEM teacher enhances student learning through the use of technology by allowing students to use robots and practice coding. My students are always excited to go to STEM because they look forward to what cool thing Dr. Grizzle will have them to explore next.

### **Funding & Incentives**

Harmony-Leland Elementary is considered to be a Title I school so most of our funds come from Title I funds and our professional learning county funds. The county supports CTLS so that enables our school to have more needs met which leads us closer to reaching our goals. Title I Funds cover professional development including classified subs (\$2,500), general supplies and (\$1,000). Professional conference such as math and literacy trainings are also included. The incentives our school receives is through student success. We are always so excited to see our

students win. The moment you see that child who has been shy and holding back finally blossom is rewarding and confirmation that all of the time and effort put forth was not in vain. We love intrinsic learners. The PL days are also a great incentive because it provides more time for teachers to collaborate and look forward during our planning time. As educators, we feel that there's never enough time in the day. So having the PL days is a big deal at our school.

### **Diversity**

For special needs and culturally and linguistically diversity, we have a special student services administrator who steps in to assist teachers who work with students with special needs. We recently welcomed a new member to the staff who uses sign language to help develop student learning and we have an awesome speech teacher who assists teachers with students who are having challenges. Our school has a high Hispanic population so our staff is very grateful to have an ESOL teacher who also shares technology strategies that we can implement into instruction. Understanding that all children are different and have different learning styles, teachers work to find different resources that will accommodate student needs. For example, a technology piece that some of my colleagues use called *Math Magician* helps students with learning their facts in place of using flash cards or paper based tests. It's appears to be more interesting which is a plus because now the student is being drawn for distractions, therefore, leading towards another opportunity for behavioral achievement. Also, our staff utilizes the RTI process to support students by implementing effective strategies that match identified deficits.

### **Collaboration**

Teachers meet every Thursday to collaborate in PLC meetings. We have a weekly agenda where we discuss things like standards, common assessments, future events and goals, areas

we're doing well in and challenges we still would like to tackle in order to reach our goals (vision) for actively engaging technology skills and classroom management. After each meeting, we submit our agenda and recorded minutes to administrators to review. Learning Forward (2011) "Technology exponentially increases possibilities for personalizing, differentiating, and deepening learning..." Also, during meetings our coaches come to review data and then use that as a way to identify how they can coach us on improving skills or introduce new ideas/strategies to implement in the classroom in hopes of making teaching more seamless.

### **Evaluation**

Knight (2007) states that "A good learning experience is motivating, challenging, meaningful, and inspiring." (p.139) Our administrators are able to evaluate if each classroom models this quote through TKES (Teacher Keys Effectiveness System). With this tool we are able to see what is working and what still needs improvement. It's a great way for both teachers and administrators to collaborate and have discussions on what our vision is for our students. I would say that having PLC meeting and TKES has a big impact on how we go about improving and developing strategies to promote student achieve. We believe in building relationships with our students and families and also look for ways to support their needs. We even utilize parent surveys to gather parent perception and input regarding school improvement.

To sum everything up, we value the use of technology and the many ways it benefits our students. Our vision is to build intrinsic learnings who will utilize interactive technology sources and school appropriate behavior. We strive in excellence to increase higher order thinking skills while providing a safe learning environment for our students. "Technology should be who your school is," says our assistant principal and that's what we hope to model.

## References

Knight, Jim. (2007). *Instructional coaching: A partnership approach to improving instruction*.

Corwin Press: Thousand Oaks.

Learning Forward (2011). *Standards for Professional Learning*