GSAPS Analysis for Lake Forest Elementary School

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**Current Realities**

Lake Forest Elementary School (LFES) is a Fulton County school located in Sandy Spring, GA, in suburban Atlanta. 95% of students are Hispanic, 3% are African-American, 1% Asian, and 1% are Caucasian. LFES is a Title 1 school with a very high English Language Learning (ELL) population. 100% of the students at LFES qualify for free or reduced lunch. 99% of the students are economically disadvantaged with 82% of students qualifying as Limited English Proficient; 11.9% of students are in the special education program (K-12 Public Schools Report Card, n.d.).

**Vision**

Due to the needs of Lake Forest Elementary School’s students, the vision of technology usage is to assist students who are behind grade level the tools and engagement needed to meet state learning standards, provide ELLs tools to learn English quickly and easily, and provide all students experiences which stimulate their desire to learn and enrich their learning. Blended learning with gradual release of responsibility to students to make learning choices is the ultimate goal of the vision.

In the beginning of the 2016-2017 school year, the school received laptop computers. These computers were distributed to 4th and 5th grade students. While the 4th and 5th grades are 1:1, grades PK-3 have at least 2 desktop computers per classroom and one to five iPads depending on availability. The vision for students in the lower grades, which do not currently have access to 1:1 devices, is to provide them ample learning opportunities to get them ready for 1:1 devices. In kindergarten through third grade, students would begin learning the mechanics of using a device such as logging in, basic keyboard skills, mouse skills, basic navigation of the internet, basic productivity tools such as Office 365, and frequently used web-based tools to demonstrate their knowledge. Additionally, they will use adaptive content programs such as Imagine Learning, IXL, Red Bird Math, and iRead to engage with content to meet or exceed state learning standards. Teachers will use the data from these programs to plan instruction, identify students in need of extra support by targeting the skills that are deficient and designing personalized learning plans to get students caught up to grade level standards. In turn, teachers will use this information to communicate with administration regarding students’ needs and professional learning to address the specific needs.

Students in grades kindergarten through three will have at least one lesson during first semester to introduce them to digital citizenship and the expectations of safe computing. By the end of each grade level, students will have used at least one learning program on their device to access learning or an enrichment activity. These students will also have at least one learning acivitity in which they use web-based tools such as academic databases or general internet searches to gain knowledge not otherwise provided in a lesson. In grades one through three, students will build on the knowledge of computing tools each year as outlined by horizontal planning by grade level teachers.

Students in grades four and five will utilize 1:1 devices daily for just-in-time direct instruction based on adaptive learning programs such as IXL, iReady, Discovery Education, and Redbird Math to provide standards based content as well as enrichment opportunities. Students will use data these programs to monitor their learning based on state standards and goals they have co-created with the help of their teachers and parents. Students who are behind grade level will be provided additional time on adaptive programs with guidance from their teachers to provide adequate practice and support in skills they need to improve in order to meet state learning standards and be prepared to advance to the next grade by the end of the school year. Students will be introduced to collaboration tools and use these tools to collaborate on a variety of content tasks. Before the end of fifth grade, students will know how to communicate and collaborate with their teacher and classmates. Additionally, students will use productivity tools such as spreadsheets, word processing, and other tools found in the Office 365 suite tools to demonstrate their learning. Teachers would still utilize delivery models that are not technology based to meet the complex needs of all students such as mini-lessons, small group instruction, and one-on-one conference. Finally, the students will learn digital citizenship and demonstrate their skills with safe and respectful interactions. The outcome of this vision is to prepare all learners for middle school where they will experience an increase in rigor.

Teachers in grades four and five will use a classroom management system to communicate with students. Office 365 Class Notebook, Google Classroom, Edmodo, or similar tool will provide means for teachers to communicate with students while allowing parents a way to be informed about what students are learning. In grades kindergarten through third, students will create portfolios of their work. Seesaw is a portfolio tool teachers can use to evaluate student learning, track standards a students have mastered or are working on, and communicate with both student and parent. Administration at LFES views web-based communication as a means of increasing parent involvement, so using tools that allow for parent communication is a part of their vision.

**Needs Assessment**

Currently, the professional learning needs at LFES are reactive. The administration responds to state test scores, district mandates, and requirements of various programs to dictate professional development. At the beginning of the school year, teachers were surveyed by administration to find out what areas they identified a need for professional development; however, that plan was abandoned after pre-planning due to needs being identified by outside forces. The first reactive change in the direction of data driven professional development was when the school was informed of personalized learning objectives ahead of the 1:1 device rollout. This caused a fury of PD on devices and the productivity tool Office 365 which all teachers were expected to use immediately. When school testing data was finally released in November of this school year, the school immediately determined that they needed to adopt close reading strategies across all grade levels. Although close reading strategies is not the only way to address poor testing scores, there was not any data collected on which teachers needed professional development in this area and identified teachers could have been trained in other strategies.

School-wide professional development is regularly provided at Lake Forest Elementary School on the first Tuesday odd numbered months throughout the school year. This PD is directed by the principal with assistance from a teacher and the staff coordinator for the IB program. Additionally, professional development can be addressed through grade level PLC meetings; this PD is typically more structured to the unique needs of each grade level. PLC chairs communicate with administration each month in a leadership meeting where they provide feedback on the progress and needs of their PLCs. Individual teachers can identify PD needs and seek out district provided PD, but if teachers desire outside PD, administration has discretion as far as providing funds to support it. Information regarding the PLCs are typically collected orally; there are no procedures in place to systematically collect data on specific actions or needs of the PLC. PLC leaders go back to their PLCs to implement changes, communicate general information, and pass on other needs of administration.

The types of professional development at LFES are limited. They typically use whole group sit-and-get style professional development. These groups are not broken up into workshops or study groups for those who want or need to dig deeper into a topic. While the administration has suggested teachers may benefit from peer observations, the teachers pushed back and this idea has been dismissed for this school year. Teachers felt that they were too busy to give up a planning period to sit in another teacher’s class to observe instruction.

Recently, there has been an addition of a technology coach at LFES. She mainly offers one-on-one coaching in the form of collaborative planning, modeling, and co-teaching for teachers. Teachers request PD from her on specific tools or to solve specific problems identified by the teachers. Follow up on large group professional development has been minimal; however, follow up on coaching provided to individual teachers has been improved. Teachers have access to the coach until they feel they no longer need intensive support. Then, the coach follows up 1-2 week later to make sure the teacher is using what they have learned. At any time, the teacher can reach back out to the coach for support or to add additional information to their knowledge. Recently, after a flipped professional development activity, teachers completed a Nearpod activity in which they set a goal for themselves. The coach is following up with all teachers individually on this goal.

**Alignment to School Improvement Plan**

Lake Forest Elementary School has three parts to their school improvement plan. The first objective of the plan is to: “Identifying and prioritizing opportunity areas to improve student achievement results.” Administration has identified literacy as a way to improve student achievement results; data from the Milestones test was used to make this determination. Professional development has been provided to target this objective. The technology coach recently provided teachers with strategies for close reading by using NewsELA. Teachers were shown how to access this resource and strategies for using it tools and data to help students improve reading skills, build vocabulary, and increase fluency. In PLC meetings, teachers have reported an increase in literacy standards; however, teachers are mainly using analog methods for collecting student data.

The second objective states: “Creating plans to achieve specific student performance gains and meet student needs.” This objective is very vague; administrators were not able to clearly explain what this objective addresses or how the school is currently meeting this goal. Due to the very low state test scores, it appears that the creators of the school achievement plan wanted an objective that was broad enough to encompass personalized learning or IB goals.

The final objective is “Increasing transparency and accountability.” Again there is a distinct vagueness to this improvement objective. According to LFES administrators, this objective was written with parent communication in mind. The vast majority of parents at LFES are Spanish speaking; for many years communication has been an issue because none of the prior principals could directly communicate with parents. Now, the principal at LFES speaks Spanish fluently; also, more Spanish speaking support staff has been brought on. The teachers at the school do not utilize translation apps or resources that come in English and Spanish.

The school improvement objectives not aligned to professional development or technology usage at Lake Forest Elementary School. Two out of the three objectives are not being effectively used to benefit students, teaching, or learning.

**Funding**

Professional development at LFES is largely funded by the district; therefore, the school receives the professional development the district prescribes rather than specific professional development for the unique needs of the school. The district also is providing a technology coach to the school for four semesters at the cost of $45,000 a semester. Some PD is provided by funds from Title 1; these PD programs are more responsive to the needs of the school because there is local control of those funds. Due to the requirements for spending Title 1 funds, the school only earmarked $5,000 for professional development this year; however, at the end of the budget year, $3,000 in additional funds were able to used for professional development during the summer. With these additional funds, summer teachers will be given a stipend to develop lesson plan aligned with IB guidelines. Administrators have not considered utilizing technology tools in the development of these plans.

**Diversity**

At Lake Forest Elementary School, diversity is defined in terms of Spanish language speakers. Little attention is given to students with disabilities, ethnic minorities, or gifted students in the terms of addressing diversity. Professional development aimed at exploring the diversity of the student body at Lake Forest Elementary School is lacking. However, when exploring literacy strategies to improve learning objectives, all strategies are focused on targeting ELLs. Strategies that have been proven to help ELLs are the focus of all professional development in this area which is why close reading strategies are a main focus.

**Collaboration**

In grade level PLCs, teachers do focus on data collected on students. Much of this data is collected by hand, not using any of the data from web-based programs the students use. The data evaluated typically focuses on reading and language arts because of the heavy emphasis on literacy. Often the literacy coach attends grade level PLCs to look at and reflect on student data. Teachers are very responsive to this information and adjust their teaching based on the findings. However, the adjustments to the curriculum is typically not reflected in technology usage. Teachers use PLC to share information but little to no collaboration takes place in evaluating the data or creating learning opportunities for students.

**Criterion and Evaluation**

There are no criteria at LFES for professional development. The basic attitude regarding professional development is to provide teachers PD sessions on research based strategies that address low testing scores from the previous school years; however, a measurement tool or reflection on how these strategies are being used, if they are being used, and the effectiveness is not in place. Haphazard anecdotal evidence may make its way to the leadership team, but there is not a process or protocol in place to use that information to improve professional development.

*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**  x  **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: LFES does not use any data collection tool to identify professional learning needs as reported by school administration. | | | |
| RECOMMENDATIONS: LFES should survey teachers 1 per semester to determine PL priorities for staff. | | | |

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| **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: Administration provides PL for all teachers, whole group without differentiation, to improve the teaching of literacy with close reading strategies. | | | |
| RECOMMENDATIONS: A peer observation protocol could be used to provide constructive, non-evaluative feedback for teachers as they adopt and learn new teaching strategies (“Teachers Observing Teachers: A Professional Development Tool for Every School,” 2017). | | | |

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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: Administration does have a clear expectation of PL for the school which is increasing literacy levels throughout all grade levels. The staff does understand this goal; however, realistic goals have not been established. For example, the general goal seems to be to get all students up to grade level in reading in one school year regardless of where the students are starting. | | | |
| RECOMMENDATIONS: Train administration and staff in creating data-based, realistic goals and to set learning targets together using a Critical Friends, or other established, protocol. | | | |

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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: The close reading and IB professional development activities for all staff have all been whole group sit-and-get professional development. This is known to be an ineffective professional development learning method. | | | |
| RECOMMENDATIONS: Survey teachers to find out their proficiency level with the professional development objectives formulated by the administration to determine groupings. Although PD groups need not be proficiency leveled, they can be content or interest leveled, but teachers who have a high level of proficiency can be utilized to facilitate some professional development activities. These professional development sessions should have multiple hands-on activities for teachers so they have repeated opportunities to learn their new skills (Gulamhussein, 2013). | | | |

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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: The administration does provide opportunities and support for teachers to attend district provided professional development individual teachers show interest or need in attending by providing all teachers with PD when requested. | | | |
| RECOMMENDATIONS: Have teachers identify yearly professional development goals at the beginning of the school and create a schedule for teachers to redeliver or conduct action research to further the reach of the professional development. | | | |

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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: The PD team does reflect in meetings on previous PD actives when planning the next PD activity, although there is no formal or consistent protocol for doing so. | | | |
| RECOMMENDATIONS: Teachers should be given a variety of strategies to access, practice, and apply professional development through continuing support and feedback from peers and non-evaluative feedback from administration (Gulamhussein, 2013). | | | |

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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: Some teachers at LFES incorporate Hispanic heritage and culture in their content lessons when applicable. For example, the art teacher provided lessons on the art of the Day of the Dead in Mexico in early November. | | | |
| * RECOMMENDATIONS: Teachers should incorporate students’ culture in content learning when possible (Quinton, 2013). | | | |

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