PROFESSIONAL LEARNING CURRENT REALITY & GSAPS REVIEW

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PROFESSIONAL LEARNING CURRENT REALITY & GSAPS REVIEW

I have the pleasure of working at Russell Elementary school in Smyrna, Georgia. Over the years, my school’s enrollment has multiplied. The city has grown from a sleepy rural town into a bustling community(http://www.cobbk12.org/russell/aboutus.aspx). My school is a Title I school that receives financial assistance from the state, due to the high numbers of children from low-income families. Of the 676 students attending, 41% are Black, 38% are Hispanic, 18% are White, and the other 3% are Multiracial or Asian /Pacific. Islander. 17% of our school population is made up of Students with Disabilities (SWD). In addition, 76% of our students are eligible for free/reduced meals ("Russell Elementary School," 2018). There are 43 certified staff members; four Special Education Pre-Kindergarten, four kindergarten teachers, six first grade teachers, five-second grade teachers, six third grade teachers, five fourth grade teachers, and five fifth grade teachers. We also have three ESOL (English Speakers of Other Languages) teachers, one Advanced Learning teacher, two Academic Coaches, two full-time EIP (Early Intervention Program) teachers and other teachers that specialize in other content areas.

Russell’s goal is not only to be creative and resourceful but also help to prepare students to become digital age learners. While we do not have a computer teacher that can provide explicit instruction for students in technology, we can build on the skills students have when entering our school. My principle has purchased many devices such as classroom computers (five), mobile carts (one laptop cart and three iPad carts), and computer labs (two). If needed, teachers can either go to the computer lab or check out iPads and laptops. My principle’s vision for the use of technology at Russell is for teachers to be as knowledgeable about technology as children are and find ways to engage students through technology, all while utilizing devices to support whole class instruction, independent work, centers or small group, and independent learning (Tammy Watson, personal communication, September 10, 2018).

Schools are required to provide many forms of professional training that aligns with each school's improvement plan, which is designed to increase teacher effectiveness and improve student learning. According to Cobb County School District (CCSD), the professional development interventions included in the school-focused plan must be data-driven, results-oriented, and research-based. Using the data from Teacher Keys Effectiveness System (TKES) ratings, TKES self-assessment, professional development survey, grade level request, and teachers’ individual needs, Russell can identify professional learning needs for all teachers. After the results have been analyzed, teachers can join many collaborative professional learning groups with money received from Title I, local funds, and instructional funds. The following are the professional learning groups offered at Russell this current school year: Building Leadership Team (BLT), Mentors and Mentees, Positive Behavior and Intervention Support System (PBIS), Dual Language Immersion (DLI), School Culture and Climate, Response to Intervention (RTI), and Coaches Support. Also, the CCSD Collaborative Community Groups which has a grade level representative for Math, English Language Arts, Science, and Social Studies that meets twice, every nine weeks. Russell also has professional learning that is offered to assist teachers who with English as a Second Language (ESOL), Special Education preschool, Mild Intellectual Disability (MOID), and Moderate Intellectual Disability (MID).

Furthermore, teachers can go to training throughout the county, based on their needs and interest. For example, I moved grade levels last school year. Since it was my first time teaching second grade, I wanted to enhance my teaching practice in teaching guided reading in second grade. I went to six weeks training on guided reading and learned so many unusual reading strategies to implement in my classroom. This past summer, I also had the opportunity to attend a positive classroom environment training. As you can see, Russell elementary has some professional learning opportunities for teachers.

CCSD ensures that every school has a Technology Training/Integration Specialists (TTIS). A TTIS is a technology coach that aids teachers in transforming their technology teaching practices within their classroom by providing resources and training. The goal of a TTIS is to ensure that all CCSD schools reach a consistent technology standard that enhances the teaching and learning process in each classroom through the effective use of technology ("Instructional Technology," 2017). Hence, when it comes to technology-related professional learning, teachers can arrange one on one or group meetings with our school’s TTIS which is pretty hard to do because we share her among three other elementary schools. Within the last year, our TTIS have offered training on Cobb Teaching Learning System (CTLS), Microsoft’s One-Note, Microsoft’s Office 365, and Microsoft Certification Training.

To help teachers master new strategies, content, and integrate them into their classroom practice, Russell has a few procedures for follow-up supports. As mentioned earlier, CCSD has Collaborative Community Groups with a grade level representative for each subject. After teachers attend their training, they are required to redeliver the information that they learned; this is the same process for teachers who are on the BLT. If teachers attended a PBIS or Coaching training, they are required to redeliver in a newsletter or a short presentation. When it comes to professional learning goals, TKES requires all teachers to meet with their administrator for mid-year and end-of-the-year conferences. Furthermore, my principle has a conference with all teachers every month called Tammy Talks. During this conference, we focus on our student’s academics (lowest and highest 25 percentile, greatest potential to move from one level to the next, writing and CTLS data), any issues or concerns we might have, and how can she support us.

To ensure that all teachers prioritize standards, each grade level at Russell Elementary has a Cobb Collaborative Community (CCC). At the beginning of each quarter, the CCC meets to designate priority standards. CCC meets weekly to utilize CTLS TEACH and CTLS ASSESS and create common formative and common summative assessments on the selected priority standards. We also have weekly, collaborative, teacher team meetings based on the four critical questions; What do we want students to learn? How do we know that they have learned it? What do we do when students don’t learn it? What do we do when students do learn it? These questions help drive instruction through accelerated, and enriched instruction ("School’s 2018-2019 Strategic Plan," 2018). As mentioned earlier, each school in CCSD offers school-focused professional learning programs that are aligned with its school improvement plan, designed to increase teacher effectiveness and improve student learning.

The impact of professional learning on teacher practice and student learning is evaluated and measured in many ways. One way it is through professional dialogue, a series of conversations between collogues which investigates a teacher’s assessment of their practice (Tammy Talks). Teachers are also evaluated through TKES reflection goals, TKES evaluation, and classroom walkthroughs. Russell believes that hen teachers attend professional development trainings, they are not only developing themselves as a better teacher by improving their professional knowledge, expertise, skills, and efficiency, but they are also renewing their certificates and becoming a leader (Tammy Watson, personal communication, September 10, 2018).

*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: The evidence of this standard is outlined in the school’s strategic plan. | | | |
| RECOMMENDATIONS: For Russell to move from a level 2 (emerging) to a level 3 (operational), I would suggest using action research data. Currently, Russell is getting various data from RI, MI, mini touchstones, and Milestones. I believe that if all teachers were able to investigate issues within their classroom, discuss their findings among peers, they would find a commonality amongst these students within. As a result, teachers would be able to better assist in helping students meet challenging state standards. | | | |

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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: The evidence of this standard is outlined in the school’s strategic plan. | | | |
| RECOMMENDATIONS: Teachers can collaborate with the administrators through conferences and meetings regularly. However, teachers are not conducting action research which can help them understand their classroom through ongoing data collection. Also, action research will help aid teachers in the ownership of the professional learning process. | | | |

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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: The evidence of this standard is outlined in the school’s strategic plan and from my own personal experience. | | | |
| RECOMMENDATIONS: Russell’s administrators define expectations for implementing professional learning, but not all teacher leaders define expectations for the implementation of professional learning. To move from a level 3 to a level 4, teacher leaders need to state the expectations for employing professional learning that teachers attend on consistent basis. | | | |

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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 evidence of this standard is outline in the school’s strategic plan. | | | |
| RECOMMENDATIONS: Russell differentiates the types of professional learning provided based on teachers needs and interest. However, teachers are not always actively engaged or energetic about professional development for many reasons. I feel that if teachers (not just administrators) understood the importance of it professional development, then they would have a better attitude towards, and change this professional learning standard from a level 2 to a level 3. Having teachers participate actively in action research would also increase our professional level. | | | |

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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 evidence of this standard is outlined in the school’s strategic plan and from first-hand experience. | | | |
| RECOMMENDATIONS: Russell does provide some resources to support learning, but when it comes to any new program, they seem to lack. For example, Dual Language Immersion (DLI) program has been a part of Russell Elementary for two entire years now. Each year, the program adds on a new grade level. DLI is currently in second grade. My partner teacher (Spanish speaking teacher) was given a limited amount of resources (posters with colors, days of the week and months of the year on it). She was overwhelmed and did not feel like she could effectively teach because she lacked resources. Besides, this is her first-year teaching in Georgia and doing this program. It was said that we could visit a modeled school implementing this program, but we have yet to go. As you can see, I scored Russell a 2 in this category. For Russell to establish systems to support and sustain active professional learning, we do not just need to hold a monthly DLI meeting, and resources need to be provided for the program as well as school visits. | | | |

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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 evidence of this standard is outlined in the school’s strategic plan. | | | |
| RECOMMENDATIONS: Russell does monitor and evaluates the impact of professional learning on staff practices and student learning through the Cobb Teaching and Learning System (CTLS), but it is geared towards mathematics. For Russell to move to level 4, Russell needs to have the same ambition in language arts as they do about math. | | | |

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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: The evidence of this standard is outlined in the school’s strategic plan and from first-hand experience. | | | |
| RECOMMENDATIONS: Teachers at Russell have high expectations for students and adjust to meet student needs through small group, one on one, and differentiated activities. Sadly, all teachers at Russell do not understand or respect students’ cultures and background and lack compassion. To move Russell from a level 3 to a level 4, administrators should provide a culturally responsive teaching professional development for all teachers. Administrators should also follow-up with coaching and ongoing support. | | | |

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