ISTE NETS-A Current Conditions Synthesis Report

Alexe Miles and Sharon Thornell

EDIT 760: Instructional Technology Leadership

In order to look more closely at the ISTE NET-A standards, Alexe Miles and I conducted surveys using SurveyMonkey.com. Andrews Elementary School is a large, rural Title I elementary school in Georgetown County. Many of the students that attend this school do not have consistent access to technology outside of the school setting. The limited access that they do have is not regularly used for educational purposes but for entertainment only. Due to this research being conducted during the summer break, only a small portion of the teachers/administrators responded. We looked at the five different standards: 1) visionary leadership, 2) digital age learning culture, 3) excellence in professional practice, 4) systemic improvement, and 5) digital citizenship. In doing so, we found overarching issues with four of them.

The first overarching issue is with visionary leadership, which states, “Educational Administrators inspire and lead development and implementation of a shared vision for comprehensive integration of technology to promote excellence and support transformation throughout the organization” (ISTE Standards Administrators, Visionary Leadership). In our research we found that teachers and administrators do not know if there is a technology plan or where to locate it for Andrews Elementary School. While our school does not have its own specific technology plan, we follow the technology plan for Georgetown County School District. Only three of the respondents answered that they did have a copy of our technology plan. This was very concerning to us that the majority of our respondents do not have a copy of our technology plan even though it is available on the district’s webpage or have the knowledge that it is located there.

Another area of concern is the risks that teachers would be willing to take in increasing their technology use now that our school will be a 1:1 school with the addition of Chromebooks. While all indicated that they would be using them for educational websites, the number of teachers that are willing to begin to use online writing portfolios, or implementing a digital classroom with online assignments, quizzes, tests, and homework was not as high as we would have liked. One of our concerns is that some of the teachers will overuse websites for drill/practice or entertainment purposes rather than engaging, interactive, and meaningful learning.

Our next overarching concern regards the digital age learning culture. ISTE Standards Administration, Digital Age Learning Culture states that, “Educational Administrators create, promote, and sustain a dynamic, digital-age learning culture that provides a rigorous, relevant, and engaging education for all students.” We are concerned with the ability to identify procedures for selecting, using, and evaluating various instructional technologies. Many were confident in their ability to use given instructional technologies but not in selecting and evaluating. Teachers should be able to evaluate the effectiveness so that their input can be given on the effectiveness of district provided technologies.

Another concern is that all staff does not feel they are provided equal access to professional development support in technology in terms of time and funding. With the availability of our media specialist in working with individual teachers/classes and with the monthly visits from our district’s technology coach, there are opportunities for development. The technology coach shares various strategies as well as sets up times to work directly with interested teachers and their classes. The concern to us is why these respondents feel that they are not being equally supported. Along this line another area of concern is the number of teachers that are in the medium to low confidence level in using technology for instructional use. With the amount of staff development that has been offered, we were surprised that more of our faculty is not confident in their instructional technology use.

The next overarching issue is in regards to excellence in professional practice.

When asked how often each respondent participated in professional development regarding technology use, the majority of respondents indicated that it is once a year or more that they participate, with nine indicating once per year and five indicating that they participate at least once every 1-2 years. This is of concern that more teachers are not taking advantage of the many opportunities for technology staff development that is being offered.

Our final overarching issue deals with Digital Citizenship. ISTE Standards Administrators, states that “Educational Administrators model and facilitate understanding of social, ethical and legal issues and responsibilities related to an evolving digital culture.” In our research we discovered that our faculty promotes, models and establishes policies for safe, legal, and ethical use of digital information and technology in their daily use, however, not all faculty openly discusses the policies and ethics surrounding the use of electronic communications within a school setting with their students.

When considering each of these concerns as a whole, it is evident that without improvement that the state of our technology vision will deteriorate. If the visionary leadership is not being met, then faculty and staff do not have a grasp on what our vision is. Without knowledge of what the plan is or where to locate it when needed, there is no way for our staff to be sure their practices are in accordance with our plan. Teachers without the willingness to take risks in using technology will continue teaching in the same fashion that they have for 20+ years and will not be fully meeting the needs of our students or preparing them for 21st Century learning or careers. Along this same line is the ability of teachers to evaluate technology tools. If they do not gain the skills to do so, they will continue to adopt ineffective teaching practices, programs, and applications. This is increasing the learning gap between students with effective teaching and those without.

The only way to combat all of this is in regards excellence in professional practice and digital citizenship. If teachers are unwilling or unable to obtain effective professional development if various technology tools, their skills will stagnate in the ever changing world of technology. Faculty must be willing to not only learn how to safely, legally, and ethically use technology but also must train the students in that as well. The legal ramifications are too great to ignore.

In conclusion, it is our belief that while Andrews Elementary has many strengths, there are weaknesses that must be addressed as we forward to developing and implementing a technology improvement plan. We must be willing to critically examine our efforts and results on a regular basis in order to continue making improvements.

References

ISTE Standards for Administrators. (2017). Retrieved June 23, 2017, from <https://www.iste.org/standards/standards/standards-for-administrators>