Technology Improvement Plan

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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. In our research we found that teachers and administrators do not know if there is a technology plan or where to locate it for our 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. In order to correct this, during our back to school faculty in which the district’s acceptable use policy is reviewed, the faculty will be given a copy of the plan as well it being linked directly our school’s website.

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. In order to address this, additional training in Google Classroom will be given during a two day in-service. If pre-prepared training modules are not given during this training for review at a later time, then screencasts and videos will be developed on ways to implement various elements of a digital classroom.

Our next overarching concern regards the digital age learning culture. 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 them. This can be addressed through use of websites that give evaluation rubrics such as LearninginHand.com as well as use of rubrics during grade level planning/discussions. This will also be requested from our district level technology coach.

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. Technology staff development that is being offered will be included on the faculty monthly calendar. The media specialist will offer training at least once per month during an individual planning afterschool session to help provide training in an area of interest. Screencasts and videos will be available for any technology requested. Each grade level will be responsible for providing a technology demonstration at least once per month within their PLT.

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. This will be addressed through monthly trainings offered by the media specialist, by the monthly visits of the district technology coach, and the monthly technology demonstration during grade level PLT.

Our final overarching issue deals with Digital Citizenship. In our research we discovered not all faculty openly discusses the policies and ethics surrounding the use of electronic communications within a school setting with their students. This will be addressed by use of utilizing modules from websites such as “21 Things” from 21things4teacher.net or the YouTube video “Copyright and Fair Use Animation”. The media specialist will incorporate an introduction to safe, legal, and ethical use during her first session with each class. Videos will be compiled to review with faculty and for them to be able to use as an instructional tool with their students. The video will be created in a way that is developmentally appropriate for the grade shown to.

When considering each of these concerns as a whole, it is evident that with improvements, our technology vision can be met. When faculty is aware of what our vision is and where to refer to it for clarification, they can be sure to meet the demands. Everyone will be aware of what is expected and the goal of our district. Teachers that are willing to step out of their comfort zone and use instructional technology effectively will be fully meeting the needs of our students or preparing them for 21st Century learning or careers. As teachers become better able to evaluate the programs they are using, then they will be able to discontinue ineffective teaching practices, programs, and applications. Effective use of guided technology can help students performing below grade level to make gains that may not have been possible with independent work alone.

Excellence in professional practice will improve with additional professional development. Technology changes daily and we must be willing to pursue knowledge in the use of it and how it can benefit our students. The safety of our students is paramount. With the knowledge of how to safely navigate the internet as well as to legally and ethically use information gathered there will make our students genuine digital citizens.

In conclusion, it is our belief that with minor improvements, that Andrews Elementary can fully live up to our technology vision. With the help of administration, teachers, the media specialist, and district technology coach, we are capable of meeting each of the ISTE NETS-A standards.

References

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