Shared Vision

Tiffany Gibson

ITEC 7410

Summer 2016

Dr. Julia Fuller

Keywords: shared vision, Title 1, technology implementation, diversity, stakeholder roles, student achievement

Vision Statement

The shared vision of Westside Elementary School is to prepare all students to be flexible, adaptable, and resilient for an ever-changing world by having staff that are well prepared. All students are expected to use digital tools and environmental resources to become culturally aware, enforce self discipline, develop ethical work habits, demonstrate personal responsibility, exhibit leadership skills, explore future skills, become conscientious citizens, and achieve their highest potential.

Rationale

Westside Elementary School is a Title 1 school in Polk County Georgia. The student population is 631 students. The ethnic breakdown is <1% Asian Pacific Islander, 16% Black, 30% Hispanic, 4% Multi-Ethnic, and 50% White. 49% of students at Westside Elementary are eligible for free or reduced lunch. Westside participates in the federally funded free breakfast and lunch program. 13% of students at Westside have been identified as homeless (WES School Improvement Plan, 2015).

A random sampling of teachers, administrators and staff at Westside Elementary School were given a survey in person to help gather information to create a shared vision. They were asked several types of questions in an interview format. Of the seven that were interviewed, four said that 1-25% of teachers use student-centered learning. The other three said that 26-50% of teachers use student-centered learning. Part of the vision says that students will achieve their highest potential. One piece that it seems Westside Elementary School teachers are missing is student-centered learning. “When students take responsibility for their own learning, they become explorers capable of leveraging their curiosity to solve real-world problems” (ISTE, Essential Conditions, 2016). By putting more emphasis on student-centered learning, we will encourage students to enforce self-discipline, develop ethical work habits, and demonstrate personal responsibility.

Staff were also asked in what ways, if any, the community is involved in the school and how that is important. Answers that were given in the survey revealed that the community is involved at a moderate level. While the participants would like to see more involvement from the community, they are involved on some level. The ways that the community is involved according to the interviews conducted are donating items when asked, allowing students to come to local businesses on field trips, and visit Westside when asked. Participants would like to see more people in the community volunteer at Westside, more interest in the events at Westside, and more interest in the learning that is taking place at Westside. “An engaged community understands the role of technology in education and champions its use in the school or district” (ISTE, Essential Conditions, 2016). By helping students to become conscientious citizens, they will grow up to be able to help the school in ways that are not currently happening. Since they will know what

happens at Westside and how that has impacted them, they can be in a better position to be involved in Westside's future.

Participants were asked do you think Westside and or Polk School District has incentives for teachers who support technology in teaching and learning. If they answered yes, they were asked in what kind of incentives and if they are helpful. The results were mixed, five of the participants said they did not feel like there were any incentives offered. They were then asked what kind of incentives they would like to see incorporated. Some of the suggestions mentioned were, stipends for teachers who are effectively incorporating technology into student learning, recognition within the district, or an incentive program. The other two said they think there are incentives. When asked what kind of incentives are offered, both replied county-wide recognition at a yearly meeting. Neither of the two had any other incentives to share at this time. They were both indifferent to if they believed the incentive was helpful. While this was not specifically addressed in the vision, it is incorporated. In order for students to be able to use digital tools and resources that will help them to do all of the other things listed in the vision, they have to have teachers who can do the same things. Having incentives will help teachers become better at their job and technology.

Staff members were asked how the principal could help changes in technology occur. They were also asked how the technology specialist could help changes in technology occur. The administrator was not asked to how the principal could help changes occur. The technology specialist was not asked how she could help changes occur. Respondents said they feel that the principal and technology specialist could come up with a plan that would be basically the same for how technology, programs, and resources are implemented. It was also noted that there needs to be a follow-up plan once teachers have received new technology or Professional Development (PD). "An effective implementation plan addresses every aspect of the program, from infrastructure to professional development, and includes an ongoing process for measuring the program's effectiveness and making necessary adjustments" (ISTE, Essential Conditions, 2016). The impact and suggestions from this question is not spelled out in the vision, however it is included under the surface. Having a strong implementation and follow-up plan will allow all of the other things laid out in the vision to become reality. An implementation plan is vital for laying a strong foundation. The foundation will allow the technology implementation to go smoothly at every point.

Participants were questioned about the effectiveness of our 1:1 iPad use during the 2015-2016 school year. They were asked if the iPad usage helped increase student achievement. The respondents all agreed that they believe the iPad usage has increased student achievement. Many of the participants cited the increase in Georgia Milestone results from the 2014-2015 school year to the 2015-2016 school year. Students in grades 3-5 showed growth in the average for each subject and grade. As teachers are more seamlessly incorporating technology into their lessons and daily routines. The last line of the vision statement says students will achieve their highest potential. While there is still

a long road ahead, the 1:1 integration has set us on the right path for continuing to push students toward achieving their highest potential.

The final question participants were asked is how do you envision future technology integration. While each person surveyed had a slightly different answer many of them shared the same opinion, educational technology is here to stay. Three out of seven were very optimistic about technology and its use to enhance learning. Two out of seven believe that technology is here to stay and they will use it, however it is not their choice to do so. The remaining two of the seven said they feel that technology is already a part of their day-to-day routine and could not imagine their classrooms or professional work without it. “A shared vision becomes the paddle the organization uses to steer toward the future” (ISTE, Essential Conditions, 2016). The information received from this question is really what the shared vision is all about. Staff members that were surveyed envision technology being part of the curriculum and classroom that is integrated seamlessly and effortlessly. This is a long term goal. It will take time to get to the point where every teacher and staff member can effectively use technology seamlessly and effortlessly.

In order to help the shared vision become a reality, there are several research-based instructional strategies that can and will be used. First, we can “ensure all stakeholders are able to define the vision and understand how it applies to them in their roles” (ISTE, Essential Conditions, 2016). Ensuring this will make sure the vision is carried out. If all stakeholders are aware of the vision and know how they are working to make it a reality, it will ensure the vision is being worked toward. It will make sure that milestones and timelines are met. Next, we can make sure “all individuals know whom to turn to for assistance, enabling teachers and students to find answers to their questions and solutions to their problems” (ISTE, Essential Conditions, 2016). The success of the vision will require seeing results. This can only happen if teachers know what to do or who to go to if they need help. Also, Westside Elementary School can “develop incentive structures to encourage participation,” and “helping educators implement new knowledge and skills” (ISTE, Essential Conditions, 2016). These two strategies go hand-in-hand. If we develop incentive structures, it will help educators implement new knowledge and skills. Making sure teachers have the support and incentives they need will help the process of the vision along. Finally, in order to achieve the vision, we must incorporate student-centered learning. According to the ISTE Essential Conditions (2006), “Teachers address content standards in ways [that are student-centered] that not only support the material, but also help students develop the essential digital skills outlined in the ISTE Standards.”

Diversity Considerations

SHARED VISION & RATIONALE

Many students at Westside come to school with little to experience using digital tools and resources because they do not have equal access. At Westside, we make it our responsibility to to ensure that students have equitable access to technology and digital resources through our 1:1 iPad program. CoSN released a Digital Equity Infographic (2015) that says "5 million households with school-aged children do not have high speed internet service at home. Low-income households-and especially black and Hispanic homes-make up a disproportionate share of that 5 million." Students who come from low income families are less likely to have access to digital tools and resources at home. If those students also happen to be black or Hispanic, there is a high possibility that they do not have internet access at home. Westside Elementary is a Title 1 school. A Title 1 school as defined by the U.S. Department of Education (2015) is, a school that receives financial assistance, that has high numbers or high percentages of children from low-income families to help ensure that all children meet challenging state academic standards. Scott (2009) said, "The digital divide is no longer about who has access to computers, but what happens during that access." Scott also said that "the Kaiser Family Foundation (2005) revealed that African American and Hispanic youth spend more time with media (e.g. video games) than White youngsters." It seems while more and more students from low-income or racially diverse families have access, the problem now is how the technology is being used. "Digital equity for young children, therefore, includes access to computer resources that are used in developmentally appropriate ways with teachers who have the knowledge and skills to integrate technology into meaningful activities of interest and relevance to children" (Judge, S, Puckett, K & Cabuck, B., 2004).

Another issue with digital equity that WES faces is the digital divide of gender. "Women are vastly underrepresented in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math) jobs and among STEM degree holders despite making up half of the college-educated workforce" (Beede et.al, 2011). "When girls start reaching middle school age, they become very self-conscious about being smart and raising their hands and showing an interest in male-dominated fields" (Ring, 2008) quoting (Rodgveller, 2008). It is highly important at the elementary level to get girls interested and involved in technology. Ring (2008) goes on to give some suggestions for how to get girls more engaged in technology. She lists giving girls a professional role model who is a woman. Many girls do not know anyone who is successful and work in the technology industry. She also suggests creating hands-on service projects, girls generally prefer to use their knowledge in context. Another idea for helping to close the digital divide is to give more teacher training. Sometimes, as teachers, we may inadvertently be not asking thought provoking questions to the girls in class. The last idea that Ring gives is something that Westside already has. She suggests student-run clubs, Westside has a robotics club. While due to the age of the students there is a faculty leader, the students are very much in charge. At this time the club breaks down into 42% girls and 58% boys. While the genders are almost equally represented, we need to ensure girls are taking just as much ownership of the club as the boys.

SHARED VISION & RATIONALE

Diverse student needs were taken into consideration when developing the shared vision. By saying all students, this includes everyone. Students from low-income families, black, Hispanic, girls, and students with disabilities are all taken into account where the vision says all. The vision above is meant for each and every student that attends Westside Elementary School. Part of the vision is also for students to be culturally aware. We want students to understand and respect that everyone does not have the same resources that some people may have. We want students to be sensitive to this, but not let it be a barrier in student growth and achievement.

Stakeholder Roles

Stakeholders at Westside Elementary School (WES) include, but are not limited to administrators, the technology coach, teachers, parents, students, and anyone who has a vested interest in the future of students at Westside Elementary School. Each stakeholder has a different role to play that will be vital to ensuring the success of the shared vision for students at WES.

Administrator

The administrator of WES will support, encourage, and pursue excellence in the area of technology usage in the classroom. The administrator, will be responsible for making sure that an implementation plan is created and followed. “An effective implementation plan addresses every aspect of the program, from infrastructure to professional development, and includes an ongoing process for measuring the program’s effectiveness and making necessary adjustments” (ISTE, Essential Conditions, 2016). He/she will make sure there is a follow-up plan in place after Professional Development (PD) takes place. The administrator is the leader of the school. As such he/she will ensure that the other stakeholders are aware of the vision. They will also ensure that other stakeholders are aware what role they play in making the vision become reality. He/she will also be responsible, along with the leadership team, for creating long and short-term goals and a detailed road-map for how these goals will be accomplished.

The Technology Coach

The technology coach will support the principal. He/she will be responsible for providing ongoing PD. According to the ISTE Essential Conditions (2016), “Educators need ongoing training to keep up to date with rapid changes in educational technology.” The technology coach will also ensure that a needs assessment is completed and kept un-to-date for each teacher. This will allow individual needs to be met and start on a new goal. The ISTE Essential Conditions also suggest that PD be implemented regularly and the PD be continually updated to reflect the current trends and technologies. The technology coach will also model effective classroom technology use, help encourage participation, and help teachers learn to use the technology and use the technology to learn. He/she will serve on the Leadership Team and be responsible for creating long and short-term goals and a detailed road-map for how these goals will be accomplished.

SHARED VISION & RATIONALE

Teachers

Teachers will play a huge part in the vision becoming reality. The first responsibility of teachers is to ensure that they themselves are comfortable using technology, so that they can help the students learn using technology. “Increased student engagement, for example, can happen only if teachers and staff are also engaged and invested in the transition to a standards-ready system” (ISTE, Essential Conditions, 2016). Teachers will be on the front line so to speak, for getting students to the place where they are “using digital tools and environmental resources to become culturally aware, enforce self discipline, develop ethical work habits, demonstrate personal responsibility, exhibit leadership skills, explore future skills, become conscientious citizens, and achieve their highest potential” (Shared Vision Statement above). Some teachers will also serve on the Leadership Team and be responsible for creating long and short-term goals and a detailed road-map for how these goals will be accomplished.

Parents

Many parents feel they do not have a role in helping the vision of Westside. We feel that is not the case. Even though most parents are not physically at the school, they are still a vital part of the success of the vision. Parents of students who have low-income or fall into one of the racially diverse categories mentioned in the Diversity Considerations section above are especially susceptible to believing that they do not have any impact on how well their students do in school. WES will continue to implement Family Reading Nights, Family Math Nights, Technology Nights, and other events geared toward helping parents help their kids.

Students

All parts of the shared vision lay out the student expectations. Our top priority at Westside is student achievement and overall well-being. Students will be expected to learn how to use digital tools and resources to become culturally aware, enforce self discipline, develop ethical work habits, demonstrate personal responsibility, exhibit leadership skills, explore future skills, become conscientious citizens, and achieve their highest potential. In order to do this students will have to be committed to learning and take ownership of their learning.

When the vision above is realized, all teachers will be 100% comfortable with using the technology that is available to them to teach students using student-centered learning strategies. “Successful student-centered teaching emphasizes both creative and effective use of technology to meet students’ learning goals” (ISTE, Essential Conditions, 2016). Students will be using higher order thinking skills to be independent, have self-discipline, and solve real-world problems. Parents will be very supportive of Westside. They will feel confident sending their children to Westside for a quality education. Administrators will know that all teachers are implementing technology in an effective way. There will be a seamless process for introducing, implementing, and following-up on technology

implementation. The Technology Coach will be know what any given teachers PD needs are at any point in time and will be actively working to meet the needs and goals of PD. The school as a whole will be actively pursuing the vision.

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