Shared Vision & Rationale

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ITEC 7410

Spring 2019

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**Vision Statement**

The vision of the Ware County Learning Center is a clean, positive, safe learning environment that produces high academic achievement while leading students to become lifelong thinkers and learners. To help this vision come to fruition, the use of technology to enhance learning will help students become lifelong thinkers and learners. With the use of technology for learning, WCLC will use technology to make lessons authentic by providing students with the opportunity to apply real-life applications with their learning to make their learning authentic and meaningful. Also, teachers will use technology to implement differentiation instruction into lessons and assignments to help meet students learning needs. Teachers will also use technology to engage and motivate students to become active participants in their learning while using higher order thinking skills. Lastly, students will use technology to demonstrate their learning.

**Rationale**

I collaborated with a few colleagues to use information gathered from conversations and observations to help me as I created this shared vision paper. I conversed with stakeholders, such as the principal, teachers, and paraprofessionals that are in our classrooms. I created a survey and also used those questions and data to help build this shared vision paper. WCLC is an alternative route to education learning environment and students have a 1:1 ratio of technology devices provided to complete their courses virtually online. However, although students have equitable access to 21st Century Technology, student’s motivation and goal setting to meet attainable goals that will help them complete their courses are the main goals of the stakeholders. All teachers are required by the principal to set achievable weekly goals with students and discuss their grades and progress within their courses to help students reach the overall goal, which is to pass all their classes and return to their home-based school once they have fulfilled the requirements on their waiver form that was set before enrolling into WCLC as an alternate route to education. While discussing with the stakeholders, the most common concerns and goals are student motivation, students taking on a more responsible role to increase and enhance their learning by being more engaged and an active participant in their education. The last concern is for students to read and comprehend the information to use their critical thinking skills while working on assignments instead of using Google to find answers while working on Chromebooks.

Although WCLC is an alternate route to education and students complete their course virtually the strategies discussed can be achieved by implementing various integrated technology resources in the classroom. These strategies will be addressed through professional learning communities and training that will help teachers learn about various Web 2.0 tools that are designed to help engage students to enhance learning. According to Sheninger (2010), “A vision begins with talk, but it will only become a reality with action.” Web 2.0 tools that will be discussed and implemented to help students enhance their learning use higher order thinking skills become motivated, engaged, active participants, and become responsible learners are Quizziz, Kahoot! Nearpod, Edmodo, Google Suites, IXL, and teachers will also use ClassDojo. These are a few Web 2.0 tools that teachers will learn about to implement to engage students and help promote higher order thinking skills.

Since WCLC is an alternate route to an education learning environment and students complete their courses online, it is important for teachers to make the learning environment a blended learning environment, because although students enjoy learning online, they still need direct instruction at times. I believe that a blended learning environment is what works best for my math students. Also, I and the stakeholders think that having a well-implemented student-centered environment will help students learning as online and blended-learning environments are student-centered. In a study done by Zakaria, Zaid, Harun, and Abdullah, they found that implementing MRSP120 instructional design to develop higher-order thinking skills (HOTS), which consisted of whole class teacher instruction or traditional method, Online Collaborative Learning (OCL) and Team-Based Learning (TBL) collaboration activities. Students are found to be attracted to OCL the most, which is due to their nature and interest in utilizing numbers of digital devices and resources. Also, their willingness to argue, collaborate, and share knowledge has contributed to the development of HOTS.

Nevertheless, the traditional method is also emphasized by the students as they agree with the importance of content validity by the content expert while learning in the classroom. Face-to-face interaction allows students to seek better motivation, which enforces their confidence on the learned topics (2018). The use of various teaching approaches will help teachers reach their students and meet each student learning needs. With blended learning environments that include real-life applications along with the use of effective Web 2.0 tools, students will become more engaged, motivated, and take ownership of their learning while improving their higher-order thinking skills.

According to Luna, Ernst, Clark, DeLuca, and Kelly, (2018) “Creativity requires critical thinking. Many students are not exposed to a creative-thinking process and, thus, are not easily able to apply knowledge creatively. With the right environment and a guided plan, educators can teach and foster each student's creative process, being careful not to stifle ideas.” After discussing with the stakeholders, we feel that the best way for a teacher to have the right environment and an effective guided plan that integrates technology into their lessons to help students apply and improve their critical thinking skills and creatively apply their knowledge is through professional learning. Also, I am the professional learning coordinator at my school, and I have offered to help collaboratively plan and teach lessons with the teachers who are willing so that can begin to implement technology effectively and engagingly into their lessons.

 One of the strategies discussed was for students to use technology to demonstrate their learning creatively. As stated, many students have not been exposed to using and applying their creative thinking skills, and without being exposed to the creative-thinking process, students cannot easily apply their knowledge and learning creatively. Which is why it is essential to not only engage students but to ensure they have an environment where they are comfortable and safe to ask questions to deepen their understanding and enhance their learning while using the creative-thinking process during learning time. Overall, for the shared vision to work, all stakeholders and teachers will work hard to use these strategies consistently in our classrooms for the student’s success.

**Diversity Considerations**

 Ware County Learning Center is an alternative school within the Ware County Schools District. All of Ware County Schools are Title 1 schools, and all students receive free lunch. Numerous students within our school do not have access to technology and the internet at their home. It is vital for all students to have equitable access to technology devices and the internet while they are not at school. However, this is not an issue that can be easily fixed overnight. However, within the next three to five years I would like to see all students in the Ware County School District have 1:1 ratio devices to take home along with a hot spot for internet and not just 1:1 ratio at school. All the schools have access to Chromebooks for the students. WCLC and the other schools have Chromebooks for the students in the classroom, but students are not allowed to take them home. Also, teachers have access to Chromebooks, some school’s teachers have iPads, but not all the school’s teachers have those. Also, all classrooms have Smart Boards.

 Even though students have equitable access to devices at school, there is still an issue with students having access to devices and the internet at home. I would like to see the district technology department provide a device for low-income parents for the school year for students use and also collaborate with community partners to get hotspots per household for low-income families that cannot afford devices and internet to reduce the digital divide gap amongst the students in the district. I will continue to advocate for students with low-income parents to have access to devices and the internet at home because the students miss opportunities to complete assignments that require the use of technology at home. Although students are allowed by their teachers to come to class early in the mornings if their permits, this is still an issue. I and teachers at my school allow class time for students to work on assignments that require the use of technology and internet to complete so they will not have the stress and pressure of not completing their task promptly due to the lack of devices and internet at home. Also, all students, faculty, and staff have Google accounts and access to Google Suites, so students can access their work on any device using their Google accounts, we require students to submit their assignments and projects via Google. With the use of Google students who have a reading and writing ability can use Google add-ons to help them with their work, such as Speak-it and add-ons to help them put their words into text.

I reviewed an educational journal that conducted a study on differences in genders in a Malaysian international school students’ in grade four on their mathematics performance in higher order thinking skills by Kashefi, Yusof, Ismail, Men, Lee, and Joo (2017) the results showed that there is not a difference on gender on mathematics performance in higher order thinking considering both applying and reasoning skills; which shows that both males and females have equitable competency of applying and reasoning in the cognitive domain. This study shows that it does not matter about gender. If students are exposed and provided an opportunity to use their critical thinking skills, they have the chance to close the achievement gap not only in math but in other subject areas, which does not depend on gender, but on providing students with adequate resources, opportunities and strategies to successfully enhance their learning and higher-order thinking skills. Although there are no differences in performances for male and female students, there are still a need for both genders to be provided with equitable access to all learning resources, technology, devices and internet so that they will have a fair opportunity to achieve their goals and pass their courses, while improving and demonstrating their learning creatively.

**Stakeholder Roles**

Ware School District continues to partners with community stakeholders with schools within the district. The district purchase devices and resources for the schools using Title 1 and ESPLOST funding. The technology specialist also makes sure that all devices and internet connections are operating so that students and staff can use them daily.

Within my school, the principal role is crucial to the shared vision of the school. The principal is expected to monitor the teacher’s performance and students’ progress to ensure that everyone is meeting their goals and are on the right track. However, the principal role is also to continue to make adjustments to help enhance student learning.

The professional learning coordinator, which is me, will also have a crucial role in the shared vision which is to continue to learn about integrated technology resources, instructional research-based practices to use in the classroom and provide professional learning communities to help teachers stay knowledgeable of these resources as well. Also, my job is to provide teachers and paraprofessionals with training on different technology resources that are used daily within our school. Another job is to provide coaching when needed to teachers and para’s to provide effective assistance needed to help them successfully and effectively implement technology and other resources in the classroom.

Lastly, teachers also play an essential role in the shared vision. Teachers are responsible for communicating with students and setting attainable goals with students weekly that they can meet. Teachers are required to submit a bi-weekly report to the principal that includes students’ progress and averages in their class. Along with the progress, teachers are asked to share their list of At-promise students, which are students who are at risk of failing due to grades and absences, and also provide a short synopsis of why the student is at risk. Not only are teachers required to set goals with students, but they are also required to check for student understanding and provide remediation when needed. Also, teachers are expected to use technology and appropriate Web 2.0 tools that are approved to be safe and student-friendly by the board. Teachers are expected to use technology appropriately and for the use of educational purposes to use various instructional approaches to help maintain an engaging, yet safe learning environment that promotes a student-centered authentic learning environment that fosters higher-order thinking skills among learners. Teachers are also asked to design and develop tasks and projects that allow students to demonstrate their learning creatively while using technology. All stakeholders are expected to communicate with one another to reflect on their practices and areas of strengths and weaknesses and learn what strategies others are using that are successful that could be used in others practices to promote not only student growth but teacher growth as well. Not only does the faculty and staff plays a huge role in the shared vision, students and their parents or guardians also have a part. The students must be an active participant in their learning and put forth their best effort. Parental involvement is crucial for student success, so parents are encouraged to help and motivate their children and communicate with the teachers.

**References**

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**Appendix**

Survey Questions

1. Do you think WCLC has proactive leadership and support for the implementation of technology in teaching and learning from the entire educational system? Why or Why not?
2. Do you believe that as educators, we have access to current technologies, software, and telecommunications networks?
3. As an educator, do you feel that you are skilled in the use of technology for learning?
4. With our current professional learning communities, in what way would you like to see integrated technology for teaching and learning incorporated to help you implement it in your classroom?
5. What are your thoughts on student-centered approaches to learning in the classroom?
6. How comfortable are you with creating a student-centered learning environment?
7. Would you like to learn more concerning student-centered learning environments?
8. In what ways would you like to see more community partners and support in our school?