

Current Reality and GSAPS for McClure Middle School

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Vision

McClure Middle School (MMS) is a “school choice” middle school located in Kennesaw, GA and is part of the Cobb County School District (CCSD). The school, which opened in 2006, is in a suburb of the metropolitan Atlanta area. The demographics at MMS are as follows: Caucasian (59.8%), African American (16.3%), Hispanic (14.3%), Multiracial (5%), Asian (4.3%), and Other (0.2%). MMS’s economically disadvantaged population is 24% or 245 students. Of the 1035 students who attend MMS, 10.05% are school choice students. Although Kennesaw is a rapidly expanding area, the student population has remained somewhat steady for MMS over the past few years and dropped down from 1117 this past school year. MMS’s instructional focus is on measuring growth and intervening through Response to Intervention (RTI) to ensure that all students succeed, as well as increasing students’ reading and math performance. A major initiative of MMS for the 2020-2021 school year is to instill and develop SEL (Social and Emotional Learning) in the students. MMS has a wide range of technology available to students. Personally, I have a computer lab with 33 desktop computers and an industry standard 3D printer. MMS has three computer labs that classroom teachers can sign up to use. There is also a media center with 32 computer workstations, a Makerspace, and a 3D printer. The media center also has a laptop cart with 30 laptops; however, they currently have been distributed to students in need during virtual learning. Each grade level also has a 32-laptop traveling cart that they can use when available. MMS has one iPad cart with 30 iPads. I have always felt that MMS has a strong technological presence, but I know the classroom teachers would make the argument that more technology is needed in their individual classrooms. Last year, SMART boards were replaced with Recordex SimplicityTouch interactive flat panels. Each classroom teacher and most common areas have a Recordex. MMS

has a BYOD policy in place. I ask my students to use the workstations available in my computer lab to help with classroom management. Only in situations where an IEP calls for assistive technology do I allow students to stray from that policy. My content area (Technology/STEM) has a lot of autonomy compared to the traditional “academic” classrooms, but we are aligned with county and state standards. This autonomous approach has its ups and downs, but overall, I like the autonomy I have with my curriculum. As a school, we have licenses for EdPuzzle, NewsELA, and USA Test Prep that many teachers utilize. I sometimes offer USA Test Prep as an enrichment option in my classroom. Read 180, System 44, and Delta Math are applications used that directly address MMS’s RI and MI performance.

Needs Assessment

This is Mr. Stanley’s first year as principal at McClure. Mr. Stanley makes it clear that he believes in data-driven results. Traditionally, data has been a strong focus for MMS and the Cobb County Schools. Mr. Stanley breaks the needs of MMS down into two categories: instructional needs and operational needs. Instructional data that drives professional learning is pulled from MI results, RI results, and the Milestones testing data. Our operational needs that drive professional learning primarily come from teacher feedback, as well as an obvious need to learn more about CTLS, our new system-wide learning management system. This school year, because of virtual learning, administrators, teachers, students, and parents have had to learn how to use CTLS very quickly. When we return to face-to-face instruction and a more normal routine, the assessment component of CTLS (CTLS Assess) will be used more. Regarding professional learning, much more training has taken place regarding CTLS Assess, since that is the component CTLS was originally developed around. Subsequent components of CTLS (Learn and Parent) have been added recently more as a response to virtual learning and the needs

that have arisen out of virtual learning. According to the Cobb County School District (2020, August 13) CobbCast website, “While CTLS Learn was already in the development process, district leaders realized that our schools might need it much sooner.” CTLS is currently a work in progress and features continue to be added and developed based on the feedback and improvement requests of the faculty and staff of CCSD.

Professional Learning

McClure offers professional development to its faculty on a weekly basis. A major focus for McClure is PBIS (Positive Behavior Intervention and Supports) and SEL (Social and Emotional Learning). There are already a number of these professional learning sessions on the calendar for us to participate in. At MMS, these Professional Development days have changed quite a bit. They often revolve around the initiatives that our administration focuses upon. We have met in the past to support and address milestones data, and recently, McClure had all staff members focus on becoming MIE certified. Mr. Stanley states that he wants to use professional development to support our transition to CTLS, as well as to establish an understanding of SEL.

Alignment to School Improvement Goals

MMS’s alignment to the school improvement goals listed in the McClure Middle School Strategic Plan (2020, n.d.) are broken down into four components: *Focus on Learning; Collaboration; Results Oriented; and Initiatives, Programs or Strategies Supporting Goal*. At this time, COVID-19 has upended operations and routines in our county, and we are in a state of flux. MMS teachers continue to consistently collaborate, and the focus is still very student-centered. This has always been a major focus at MMS, but due to the COVID pandemic, many standards are currently missing or are taking on a new form, and this is affecting alignment of

learning to standards. MCC's are meeting more often due to a different teaching schedule being in place. Collectively, MMS can reinforce norms, work collectively on commitments, and make school-wide decisions, which are all part of MMS's strategic plan. Assessments are being given using CTLS, but MI and RI scores, as well as past Milestones data, is currently unreliable and, in some cases, impossible to gather. MMS's MAV Block initiative, which is a block of time scheduled weekly where RTI based data-intervention occurs, has been cancelled due to new measures and procedures put into place by the COVID disruption.

Funding and Incentives

According to Mr. Stanley, funding for professional development can be pulled from many funds, but typically it is funded by the School Focus Staff Development fund. If necessary, it can be pulled from general instructional funds. For the 2020-2021 school year, MMS has \$2500 in our School Focus Staff Development fund this year. There is no professional development stipend or incentive from MMS or Cobb County. Teachers who elect to seek higher levels of education are incentivized with a raise. Many teachers at MMS choose this option, which does inherently include professional development.

Diversity

SEL is our district-wide professional development focus that relates to diversity. We want our students to practice social awareness and appreciate diversity as we come back together. Because of this, teachers are being asked to reflect upon and incorporate SEL into their curriculum. Since the beginning of the school year, we have hosted a speaker on the importance of SEL in our school culture, as well as completed modules online that were required of all staff that focused

solely on SEL and its importance to our school and district-wide goals. Per my interview with Mr. Stanley, many more SEL sessions are scheduled for our standing professional learning dates.

Collaboration

Collaboration is a big part of our strategic plan. We have CCC's (Cobb Collaborative Communities) and MCC's (McClure Collaborative Communities) where collaboration and aligning standards and strategies are a major focus. In my CCC, where I meet with colleagues throughout the district, we have had some great professional learning opportunities. As a group, we have received training on robotics, 3D modeling, and the Project Lead the Way curriculum. Last year, as a CCC, we worked as a school to get MIE (Microsoft Innovative Educator) certified. This year, we have had a lot of teachers showcasing some of their "secrets" that have helped during this virtual learning phase in which we currently find ourselves. And lastly, we spent 2 weeks going through a dizzying crash course session to learn how to use our new LMS, CTLS Learn. Many sessions we attended were required, and we also had time to work independently from an impressive array of choices, such as how to introduce Augmented Reality and Mixed Reality into your curriculum.

Evaluation

Our county does a great job offering a solid choice of applications and software options and they also do a good job supporting them in our classrooms. The implementation of CTLS helps bring our system together, but there is a learning curve with putting something like this in place and releasing it as quickly as CCSD did. The county was obviously caught off guard by COVID-19 and had to play catch up in finalizing CTLS. Because of this, a major focus for MMS and all Cobb County schools is professional learning over the course of this year to learn

more about CTLS and all its components. As I am writing this, the platform is still being built and new features are being added. This is currently where MMS finds itself, and although it may not be ideal, this certainly provides opportunities for more professional learning in the future.

Georgia Assessment of Performance Standards (GSAPS)

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

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: Professional development is included in planning, but with our principal being new, there is a lot of data to be assessed before professional development can be effective. With our digital learning phase in place and not currently being face-to-face with our students, a lot of data is not in place for us to be able to get a clear picture of reality.			
RECOMMENDATIONS: Once students return and data is entered, more direct goals can be established. MMS Principal should use CCRPI data, MI data, and RI data to guide instructional strategies.			

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
<p>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).</p> <p>Teachers conduct action research and assume ownership of professional learning processes.</p>	<p>Administrators and staff routinely collaborate to improve individual and collective performance (e.g., construct knowledge, acquire skills, refine practice, provide feedback).</p>	<p>Administrators and staff routinely collaborate to improve individual and collective performance (e.g., construct knowledge, acquire skills, refine practice, provide feedback).</p>	<p>Administrators and staff routinely collaborate to improve individual and collective performance (e.g., construct knowledge, acquire skills, refine practice, provide feedback).</p>
<p>EVIDENCE: ILT and OLT Committees meet routinely to discuss strategies and exchange information that is pertinent to our school culture. In the weeks since the beginning of the school year, numerous SEL professional development sessions have been scheduled. Also, several teachers have shared some strategies and tools that have worked for them in collaborative Zoom sessions. Pre-planning was two action packed weeks where we focused on learning many aspects of our new LMS (CTLS) and other resources that contributed to our success in our digital classroom.</p>			
<p>RECOMMENDATIONS: Continued training on CTLS. It is a very complex system and is being updated continuously. We will need training and work sessions where we can compare notes with other teachers in our MCC's and CCC's. I like the idea of teachers within MMS teaching/sharing ideas and best practices with one another. I think this approach helps build community on campus. In the past, you would often not interact as much with other departments and grade levels worked separately. During this distance learning phase, we have been working together as a united school, and I believe there is power in this approach.</p>			

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: In my interview, the Mr. Stanley stated that he obtains operational ideas about professional development from the teachers themselves. I like this idea and have seen evidence of it in the “expert” sessions where teachers are sharing some of their resources that they feel others would benefit from.			
RECOMMENDATIONS: I feel surveys need to be generated and sent out to the school. Right now, this information is being dispersed through the ILT and OLT committees, and I feel this could stifle ideas. Also, as school opens and the administration team can visit classrooms and have dialogue with teachers, I feel ideas will develop through this interaction. Mr. Stanley has a way of making teachers feel comfortable and supported. I think this personality trait will help pave the way to a more successful collaborative community.			

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: For the most part, all our professional learning currently is done via Zoom calls. MMS, as well as all other Cobb County Schools, are currently limited in their ability to meet as a professional development community. In the past, MMS had “cluster” meetings which are a little more personalized, but due to time constraints, most professional learning now takes place in larger group settings.			
RECOMMENDATIONS: I believe that meeting a level three or four for this standard is not practical in our current situation. Most school finances and teacher schedules do not allow for that level of personalized learning. It would be great if districts gave teachers a budget for professional development. This would encourage them to be able to pursue a more personalized approach. Scheduling CCC meetings for professional learning, curriculum development and coaching during collaborative sessions as a district would be a benefit. In the past, there has been more of this evident.			

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.
<p>EVIDENCE: MMS has many promising aspects to support professional learning; however, there are also aspects that could use more development. Funding is very tight, CCC has had much less professional development for our programs over the last few years, and not much time is scheduled for professional development. Much of our planning is packed with meetings to discuss data that is related to behavior and standardized testing, leaving little time to focus on things like individualized professional learning. MMS and all Cobb Schools have a TTIS, but they serve more as technical support as opposed to instructional or technology coaches.</p>			
<p>RECOMMENDATIONS: I feel all Cobb County schools should have a technology or instructional coach on staff for every subject area, or at the least, in every school. There should be a professional development fund for teachers to utilize at least every 2-3 years. Any technology that is unique to a classroom or curriculum should be supported through training, and periodic collaboration sessions should be held with all CCC's. During these sessions, coaching and modeling should be administered.</p>			

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: I am not aware of anything like this at MMS. MMS evaluations focus on data surrounding standardized testing and classroom observations as they relate to standards.			
RECOMMENDATIONS: Perhaps an evaluation system that encompassed technology integration, like TPACK or something similar, should be put into place. If technology integration strategies and technology skills aren't evaluated, then I don't feel that administrators are going to focus on monitoring professional learning in this area. Another idea might be to have instructional coaches involved in the evaluation process, where dialogue and development are the focus of the evaluation. Then you would see data as it relates to professional development.			

<p>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.</p>			
<p>Level 4 Exemplary</p>	<p>Level 3 Operational</p>	<p>Level 2 Emerging</p>	<p>Level 1 Not Evident</p>
<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p>
<p>EVIDENCE: MMS promotes a positive school culture. Initiatives over the past few years have been PBIS, reinforcing our DARE matrix, and SEL. All of these focus on nurturing social and emotional learning, as well as promoting respect and setting expectations of our students and teachers alike. By setting clear expectations and rewarding good behavior, MMS tries to change the paradigm related to student behavior. Different cultural backgrounds are respected, and MMS is very student-focused in its goals.</p>			

RECOMMENDATIONS: I would recommend that more professional training in culturally responsive education, as well as differentiation integration strategies, would be helpful to all teachers and administration. Assistive technology training and training for students with disabilities would help promote a more positive and inclusive school culture as well.

References

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