

Teamwork Makes the Dream Work

Alex Swan

Instructional Technology Leadership

Spring 2021

Mr. Chet Fuller

*Keywords:* collaboration, digital equity

## SHARED VISION & RATIONALE

### **Teamwork Makes the Dream Work**

#### **Shared Vision Statement**

McClure Middle School is a school of excellence where all students succeed. Our school district's mission is One Team, One Goal, Student Success. Something that this course has helped me realize is that my school needs to establish a committee to help identify, create, and implement a technology plan. Through my discussions and observations with the faculty, staff, and administrators at my school, I feel that everyone would respond well to a technology committee; however, without one in place, having measurable technology outcomes will continue to be an issue. My shared vision is to help open the door for an Educational Technology Committee at McClure and begin to create a dialogue with our stakeholders to provide transparency and to ensure that all students, teachers, administrators, and parents have a voice concerning how technology is integrated at our school.

#### **Rationale**

After reading McClure's School Improvement Plan and Cobb County's district-wide Technology Plan and Technology Vision, it became clear to me that regarding educational technology there is a breakdown from the county down to the individual schools. At McClure, we do not have a specific technology plan. For this assignment, that created a concern; however, I feel that starting a technology committee would not be a huge leap. In the past our school had one, but the focus of the administration has shifted over the years and the committee dissipated. McClure needs to re-establish a technology committee and survey all stakeholders to help identify the largest areas of

## SHARED VISION & RATIONALE

concern. I fear that the longer we wait as a school to address these issues, the harder it will be to work together and create a practical solution.

Based on much of my reading, I feel that 2020 has truly given us a chance to see the reality of what virtual learning is, as well as what a hybrid model represents in a school setting. Most of the articles I read seem to paint a prettier picture than the reality of having a true digital learning solution. However, there were also some definite positives that came out of our experiences this year that no study can provide. Some of the ideas that kept resonating with me during this module are that being connected matters and that simply adding technology as a “wow” factor will not produce positive outcomes. Allen (2017) states that successful teaching combines rigor and “features both online learning and experiential face-to-face time.” My shared vision keeps that tenet at its core because I now have successful teaching experience using both online methods and face-to-face instruction, and I know that this statement is true. Where the main problem lies is that there is not just a digital divide with students, there is also a digital divide among teachers as well. The COVID disruption this year has widened that gap for teachers. Much of the technology that classroom teachers have used to augment their face-to-face instruction has been used to provide digital equity for low-income students that do not have access to these resources on their own. Although I do agree with this approach, I feel strongly that if you can’t support the technological needs of both online and face-to-face students, then you should not offer a hybrid model. At McClure, we need more laptops that can accommodate teachers and students. A recent survey conducted by a teacher at McClure showed that this was the number one need identified by teachers. My vision would include a way to make that happen. Stakeholders need to be made aware of McClure’s

## SHARED VISION & RATIONALE

technology needs and gaps. If more laptops were available to the teachers, then they would be able to provide both online learning experiences and experiential face-to-face time with their students. Our county does not provide a 1:1 solution for our teachers and students, but overall, it does a great job supporting our classroom technology needs. I also believe our local Systems Engineer and our local TTIS should be included and involved in our Technology Committee. By having consistent online learning in all facets of their educational experience, the digital literacy of the students will improve, which can in turn positively impact digital equity from both a socio-economical and gender specific approach. Having access to devices and online learning shouldn't be competitive. Instead, it should be something every student, teacher, and stakeholder has access to in all their classes. That also could contribute to the argument of why girls are not choosing specific classes. The definition of digital equity is for all students, no matter their sex, to have some level of educational technology experience in all their class settings. This also supports our county's (Cobb County School District, 2018, pg. 4) technology plan for both students and teachers.

### **Diversity Considerations**

Educational technology and the tools and resources that this includes serve English to Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) students and Students with Disabilities (SWD) more than any other student type. Studies show (The IRIS Center, 2011) that ESOL students benefit most from receiving instruction in both English and their native language, but often schools have a difficult time doing this. Educational technology tools can help bridge that gap. Dictate, Microsoft Translator, and Immersive Reader can help differentiate for groups such as ESOL and SWD students. STEM teachers and related

## SHARED VISION & RATIONALE

connections teachers need to spend more time educating students on tools and resources that they can utilize to help personalize their learning experience. This is a role that the TTIS can help provide also.

Gender based gaps are a more difficult area for me to address in my current setting.

Many of the articles I have read do not come to definitive conclusions as to why the gender gap exists, and my experience as a teacher has not led me to see any major differences between my male and female STEM students. I have a competitive robotics team, and although there are less girls than boys on the team, there have always been several girls who are very involved. My female students in my course often do very well and seem to be engaged by the content. However, studies clearly show that there are serious gaps in gender, specifically as it relates to STEM careers and STEM fields. The most compelling information I have found suggests that language of traditional STEM and engineering curriculum doesn't appeal to females or multicultural students (Savaria & Monteiro, 2017). Recently, a Girls Who Code program was developed at McClure, and it was a huge success. They were able to interact with teachers and high school female STEM students in an authentic way. Savaria & Monteiro (2017) also suggests "creating connections to socially relevant problems" could also help motivate female students to participate more in STEM related classes. Regarding our shared vision, I feel these initiatives could be promoted and assessed by a technology committee and shared with stakeholders in a variety of ways.

### **Stakeholder Roles**

For the shared vision to work, all our team members are going to need to work together to help close some current gaps that are impeding a technology vision to be successful.

## SHARED VISION & RATIONALE

With so much change in administration over the years, the dialogue has changed numerous times; however, McClure has a very talented staff and a positive school culture. There is no doubt that a technology plan could be implemented and thrive at McClure, but a foundation needs to be laid out that currently is missing.

### **Students**

McClure's vision is "A school of excellence where all students succeed." For students to succeed in today's world, they need to have strong digital literacy skills and understand how to be a strong digital citizen. By having a technology committee working to implement a strong technology plan at McClure, the students will be better prepared to be successful in high school and in the real world. Also, the students who will benefit from a committee the most will be students who are not being served through educational technology as they should be. Having a stronger technology vision and plan must include research-based strategies to help provide an equitable environment for all students.

### **Teachers**

My shared vision would be outlined to benefit the students and the teachers the most. McClure has a tremendously talented staff and generous stakeholder base, but regarding technology, I feel that we leave a lot missing. A committee that is open to listening to the concerns of our entire faculty should be in place to address the many issues that each area may have. A list of initiatives should then be created and prioritized once everyone has a chance to discuss their concerns as it pertains to their area. However, I feel the administration would need to make the final decisions that would best benefit our school.

## SHARED VISION & RATIONALE

### **STEM/Technology Teachers**

The number of STEM teachers in our country is growing rapidly. As a STEM teacher, I have seen my county-wide PLC grow from 7 to 17 middle school teachers over the past seven years. High school and elementary schools are also rapidly adding STEM teachers. We all have state-based standards to cover, but by regularly communicating with our school stakeholders, STEM teachers can help address concerns that are identified to help all students strengthen their digital literacy and digital citizenship skills. I feel that STEM teachers have a unique position, and many teachers and stakeholders need to be aware of the work STEM teachers are already doing, as well as benefiting from the skills that their students are being taught in these classes. We can accomplish more if we work together on our objectives.

### **ITTS and Systems Engineer**

The ITTS and Systems Engineer should also be involved in our technology committee and could certainly benefit from the information being discussed during regular committee meetings. Currently, our ITTS and Systems Engineer are shared among three different schools. This is a concern that the district would need to address, because I believe that ideally, they should be serving just one school so that they could be used in a very targeted and meaningful way. The ITTS and the Systems Engineer need to be a part of the committee, because they help provide very critical information regarding how implementation might work, as well as what is practical. I have seen how the lack of communication and cohesion creates problems, and this is a concern that affects every school in the district. On a positive note, our Systems Engineer does a good job keeping labs running smoothly and finding resources when there is a need. I have colleagues in

## SHARED VISION & RATIONALE

the district who are on their own if something is broken or not working in their lab. I am blessed to be at a school that provides the resources and help needed in these situations. These are discussions and issues that could be discussed and handled more efficiently if a technology committee were in place and then standardized among schools in the district. Our ITTS has been actively pursuing initiatives that are directed by the district. This year, due to our new learning management system, we have not had much interaction with our ITTS at all. My argument against this is that they should serve the needs of the specific schools they are serving. If they are not working effectively, then the school's leadership should be held accountable. There seems to me to be plenty of need for their services, especially since they are serving three separate schools. If disconnect is the reasoning behind why we don't see or use our ITTS as often as we should, then that is even more of a reason as to why there needs to be more of a dialogue about this issue.

### **Administrators**

Ultimately, the administration should have the final say for anything regarding their school, including educational technology needs. A great way for them to serve in my shared vision would be to be a unifier of the district's vision to their own school's vision. They should also develop meaningful relationships with nearby schools and feeder schools. I know there are many aspects of concern for the administration, but technology should absolutely have a seat at the table in our school. It serves way too much of a purpose in education not to be. Administration also serves a very important purpose in helping our community understand where we are going as a school and what needs we have in the area of technology.

## SHARED VISION & RATIONALE

### **Foundation**

Although my vision and rationale depend heavily on open communication, I don't believe that we should just let anyone weigh in on important matters. Personally, I feel that this is already a problem in education. However, I feel there should be some community members that should be involved. At McClure, we have a Foundation that issues grants. They are extremely generous and issue grants yearly to teachers within the school. I believe that their role in a technology committee would be a great benefit since this would give them an excellent view into our technology needs. There are parents and community members that would be very interested to know more about what we are doing and how we are utilizing technology in our school. By including the Foundation, we are involving a community that has demonstrated that they care enough about our school to donate to and provide money and resources to help our school's mission.

### **District**

Overall, I feel that the Cobb County School District has a very good vision and technology plan. What our district needs to do now is to focus on how to make the vision a reality. Most importantly, I feel the district needs to do a better job balancing their expectations of the ITTS to include the vision of the school he or she serves. If the schools must share an ITTS, then the district needs to do more to help unify the individual schools. That certainly is not going to be easy to do, but it is very important for our schools to truly benefit from educational technology.

## SHARED VISION &amp; RATIONALE

**References**

- Allen, S. (2017, February 7). *Blended learning transformed our school*. ISTE. Retrieved March 28, 2021, from <https://www.iste.org/explore/Lead-the-way/Blended-learning-transformed-our-school>
- Cobb County School District. (2018, August 6). *2018-2020 CCSD TECHNOLOGY PLAN* [PDF]. <https://sbcobbstor.blob.core.windows.net/media/WWWCobb/fgg/5/CCSD%20Technology%20Plan.pdf>
- McClure Middle School. (n.d.). *McClure Middle School 2018-2019 Strategic Plan* [PDF]. <https://sbcobbstor.blob.core.windows.net/media/WWWCobb/medialib/2b664214021.pdf>
- Savaria, M. C., & Monteiro, K. A. (2017). A Critical Discourse Analysis of Engineering Course Syllabi and Recommendations for Increasing Engagement among Women in STEM. *Journal of STEM Education*, 18(1), 92-97.
- Sheninger, E. (2019). *Digital Leadership: Changing Paradigms for Changing Times: Digital Leadership: Changing Paradigms for Changing Times* (Second ed.). Corwin.
- Steele, C. (2019, February 22). *What is the Digital Divide?* | *Digital Divide Council*. *Digital Divide Council*. from <http://www.digitaldividecouncil.com/what-is-the-digital-divide/>
- The IRIS Center. (2011). *Teaching English language learners: Effective instructional practices*. Retrieved from <https://iris.peabody.vanderbilt.edu/module/ell/>