Professional Learning: A Current Reality at Smitha Middle School

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Abstract

Professional Learning in the 21st Century has the potential and need to expand beyond traditional roles of Professional Learning of the past. New research-based educational renovations are frequently being discovered (or improved) and training in best practices must be constantly made available to educators for these ideas to be learned, implemented and reflected on. In order to do this, a consistent, collaborative support environment must be available to ensure the successful implementation of these best practices in our schools.

The current reality with professional learning at Smitha Middle School is that while there is no written plan available for review, there is evidence of an "unwritten" plan. I was able to interview the principal, Clint Terza, of Smitha Middle School and many of the answers I was able to infer just from communications sent to faculty and training we received, but the interview was useful in the fact that is made clear things I wasn't sure about.

The ongoing professional development at Smitha Middle School is the three-part lesson plan and using the plan to create lessons that are more student-centered rather than teacher led. So far we have had one session during Pre-Planning Week at the beginning of the school year and so far only academic classes (core subjects) have implemented lesson planning through collaborative means. The academic teams meet 2-3 times per week during planning time to develop common lesson plans. Connections classes have not participated in any team meetings yet, but three-part lesson plans are expected soon by administration.

In November, a follow-up session is being planned to check on progress teachers have made in implementing the three-part lessons and guidance will be provided for those who need help. Technology has had no mention in any of the sessions and there is no clear expectation of its use.

Vision

There is no formal vision statement for technology use at Smitha Middle School, but through interviewing the principal, there are some expectations for its use and the principal would like to see an increase in its use with those students at extreme ends of technology skills. The principal also views technology as an enhancement to learning and not a stand-alone product. During walk-throughs and formal observations, technology is expected to be used by students during the lesson, not just by the teachers. Technology is being used by some classrooms (many teachers use Edmodo with their students, a couple teachers are experimenting with flipped classrooms) but it seems that while there is support for these initiatives, they are coming from the teachers themselves rather than the administration. I would suggest a solid technology vision that embeds ISTE standards into content area standards and that each teacher is trained on implementation of technology at the higher LoTi levels.

Needs Assessment

Professional development needs are determined primarily by data from CRCT and benchmark testing. While there is school-wide implementation of professional development, the needs of the faculty are not always equal and no provision is made for those not requiring as much professional development in this area as others might be. I would suggest a more comprehensive approach when planning professional development, such as using data to determine which teachers need the development the most and using teachers who need it less to mentor them. Teachers who feel they are "experts" get to share their knowledge and they are shown more respect than if they were "lumped in" with teachers needing the professional learning more. I think some of the teachers feel resentment towards administration for treating everyone as if they are novice teachers.

Professional Learning

At Smitha, professional development includes individual development plans as well as school-wide initiatives, the work-shop model, and support training by department. There are also trainings throughout the year in every content area. Individual development plans are used in areas where an individual needs to improve on some aspect of teaching and a mentor is usually used to assist the teacher (this is used mostly for novice teachers). The only school-wide initiative that we are involved with at Smitha is the backwards, three-part lesson design, which also incorporates a more constructivist environment for students (teacher-led beginning, student-focused work period, followed by student-led closing). This school-wide initiative will have several follow up sessions (support) and is being implemented in classrooms and lesson plans are being developed collaboratively within teams (all core subject areas are represented) several times a week. For now there are no plans for school-wide initiatives for training in the area of technology. I would suggest part way through the school year to introduce technology into the lesson plan development for those teachers who are able to successfully implement the three-part lesson development or take the role of leader/ mentor for those still struggling.

Alignment

I believe the current school-wide initiative is aligned to student success as part of the School Improvement Goals, since they are academically based (Increase student achievement in numbers and operations and algebraic problem solving; Increase student achievement in writing and literary comprehension). Teachers are required to include components of mathematics and reading/ writing into their lesson plans no matter what subject is being taught. This also aligns with Core Curriculum standards. The principal pointed out that the three-part learning model

puts emphasis on the student and from the teacher, giving students an opportunity to use higher

level thinking, which in turn improves their abilities.

Funding and Incentives

The principal stated that there is an abundance of money set aside for professional

development and the funds come from the county, Title I, and Title II grants. Expectations are

set for teachers to learn and implement strategies from professional development. Formal

observations and walk-throughs as well as lesson plans administration can check on the progress

of implementation of professional learning strategies.

Diversity

Co-teaching training is continuous throughout the school year for those involved with

diverse (ESOL, Special Needs) student groups. The ESOL department is putting together a

packet for teachers school-wide to use when developing plans that include ELL students.

Connections classes can benefit greatly from these packets since few Connections teachers are

ESOL endorsed or even trained and every ELL and Special Needs students are enrolled in

Connections classes.

Collaboration

This is probably the strongest area for the current professional development project as the

very core of it is working with others and collaborating common themes amongst the core

subject areas. Collaboration happens in a variety of ways at Smitha. Lesson development is done

by team (with each of the core subject represented) or within department (within the same

subject area, but across grade levels). Some professional learning is offered according to teacher

interest and some of it one-on-one (coaching or mentoring). The lesson development

professional development is aligned to school improvement as are meetings to discuss data

(benchmark or CRCT) and meetings are attended by team, department, or school-wide depending on the assessment and its relevance to teachers involved.

Evaluation

Professional development and the success of implementation is completed in several ways. Informal observations (walk-throughs) are one way and feedback can be instant or addressed through email or face-to-face meetings. Formal observations are followed up with a face-to-face meeting and each category of the PAI is discussed. A follow-up observation may be necessary if there are any areas that need improvement from the PAI. Newer teachers automatically get two observations and is optional for the administrator to have a second observation for veteran teachers. Student achievement data is another way professional development can be measured and if professional learning has improves student achievement. Professional development has made an impact already as I hear how teachers have implemented the strategies learned and how the students are taking more of the responsibility of learning away from the teachers. While the implementation of these lesson plans are still in the initial stages, it will be interesting to see what, if any difference it makes with student achievement.

PROFESSIONAL LEARNING - *Professional learning is the means by which teachers, administrators and other school and system employees acquire, enhance and refine the knowledge, skills, and commitment necessary to create and support high levels of learning for all students.*

Professional Learning Standard 1: **The context of professional learning--the who, when, why and where—contributes to the development and quality of learning communities, ensuring that they are functioning, leadership is skillful and focused on continuous improvement, and resources have been allocated to support adult learning and collaboration.**

PL 1.1 Learning Teams

☐ Not Addressed	☐ **Emergent**	☒ **Operational**	☐ **Fully Operational**
Teachers do not participate in learning teams or meet regularly to plan for instruction.	Some teachers in some grade levels or subject areas meet to plan for instruction, but meetings do not occur regularly and the work is not aligned with school improvement goals.	Most teachers meet regularly in learning teams to plan for instruction (e.g., develop lesson plans, examine student work, monitor student progress). This collaborative work would be enhanced by clear alignment of group expectations with the school improvement goals.	All teachers participate in learning teams throughout the year and meet regularly to plan for instruction (e.g., develop lesson plans, examine student work, monitor student progress). The collaborative work is aligned with the school improvement goals.

EVIDENCE: In the space below, provide detail evidence supporting your rating above –

Core Curriculum teacher meet regularly (once a week) to plan for instruction while Connections teachers are not required to meet since subjects vary from teacher to teacher (one Art teacher, one Business Technology teacher, etc.) Teams that do meet are required to provide evidence (lesson plans) to demonstrate knowledge of requirements. Connections teachers, while not working in teams, will be providing the same evidence in the near future according to administrative communications.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

I would recommend Connections teachers meet once a week to discuss lesson plan design concepts, even though content is unrelated.

PL 1.2 Learning Community

☐ Not Addressed	☐ Emergent	☐ Operational	☒ Fully Operational
There is little or no evidence that the principal, administrative team or related human resources (e.g., leadership team, coaches, central office) supports or reinforces the creation and maintenance of a learning community.	There is some evidence that the principal, administrative team, or related human resources (e.g., leadership team, coaches, central office) support or reinforce the creation and maintenance of a learning community, but additional support in this area is needed. Although administrators have created structures for meetings to occur, they have failed to provide teachers with professional development related to the collaboration process.	The principal, administrative team, and other human resources periodically support the creation and maintenance of an effective learning community to support teacher and student learning. In key aspects of the school, these individuals work collaboratively to reinforce collaborative forms of professional development and learning for staff members. Although this process is operational, it would improve if greater emphasis were given to monitoring its impact on school improvement goals and student achievement.	The principal, administrative team and other human resources consistently support the creation and maintenance of an effective learning community to support teacher and student learning. These individuals work collaboratively to reinforce teachers' skillful collaboration (e.g., facilitation skills, conflict resolution, and group decision-making). They also help to create structures to support collegial learning and implement incentive systems to ensure collaborative work. They monitor the impact of these collaborative processes on school improvement goals and on student learning, and participate with other individuals and groups in the operations of the learning community.

EVIDENCE: In the space below, provide detail evidence supporting your rating above –

School improvement is data-driven, which suggests there is a lot of support and call for evidence that goals are being met. Collaborative work is monitored by administration and teams meet regularly to collaborate lesson development. As I am a Connections teacher, I lack participation in these meetings but know of them through talking to other teachers.

RECOMMENDATIONS:
It would be nice if these meetings could be recorded and made available for all to see.

PL 1.3 Instructional Leadership Development and Service			
☐ Not Addressed	☒ **Emergent**	☐ **Operational**	☐ **Fully Operational**
There are few if any opportunities for teachers to participate in instructional leadership development experiences, serve in instructional leadership roles, or participate in supporting school-based professional learning.	There are opportunities for teachers to participate in preparing for and serving in instructional leadership roles and contributing to the school-based professional learning plans. However, the opportunities are limited to a small number of teachers.	There are many opportunities for teachers to serve in instructional leadership roles and develop as instructional leaders. They are highly engaged in planning, supporting, and communicating professional learning in the school. This would be enhanced if there were more opportunities for instructional leadership roles among various personnel.	A variety of teachers take advantage of opportunities to participate in instructional leadership development experiences and serve in instructional leadership roles (e.g., instructional coach, mentor, facilitator). They plan, advocate for support of, and articulate the benefits and intended results of professional learning.
EVIDENCE: In the space below, provide detail evidence supporting your rating above – There is a committee of teachers and administration who pretty much run the school and if you are not a part of the group, it takes quite a bit of effort to get an opportunity to do things like provide professional development. I personally asked for an opportunity to provide some professional development for teachers who want to use Edmodo but was ignored.			

RECOMMENDATIONS:
Learning communities should be created for all teachers to be able to collaborate on an array of subjects and skill-based learning. Within these learning communities, a variety of subjects and skills can be explored with no one person being a leader, but all teachers have a chance to lead professional development sessions on something they wish to share with others. Within these learning communities, teachers can mentor or coach each other as well.

PL 1.4 School Culture for Team Learning and Continuous Improvement

☐ Not Addressed	☒ **Emergent**	☐ **Operational**	☐ **Fully Operational**
There is little or no evidence of the principal and other leaders establishing ongoing team learning with clearly articulated expectations for professional learning.	There is some evidence the principal and other leaders support a culture involving ongoing team learning and continuous improvement. However, there is not a clearly articulated plan for professional learning for teachers and administrators.	There is general evidence the principal and other leaders support a culture involving ongoing learning and continuous improvement through a plan for professional learning for teachers and administrators. The professional learning would be enhanced by including a variety of designs (e.g., lesson study, peer observations, modeling, instructional coaching, collaborative teacher meetings, etc.) constituting high-quality professional learning experiences.	The principal and other leaders support a school culture that reflects ongoing team learning and continuous improvement. The principal and other leaders plan for high-quality professional learning, articulate intended results of school-based professional learning, and participate in professional learning to become more effective instructional leaders.

EVIDENCE: In the space below, provide detail evidence supporting your rating above –

At Smitha, we do not have a plan specifically for professional development. The culture is there and evident through collaborative planning and improvement through implementation of lesson plan development.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

While administration is involved in team learning and professional development, a clear plan should be in place to formally (rather than verbally) spell out expectations of professional development. This plan should be made available for all teachers to view, whether they are academic or connection teachers.

PL 1.5 Job-Embedded Learning and Collaboration			
☐ Not Addressed	☐ Emergent	☒ Operational	☐ Fully Operational
Teachers spend little or no time during the work-week learning and collaborating with colleagues to improve their use of curriculum, assessment, instruction, and technology.	Some teachers spend a small amount of time during the work-week collaborating with colleagues. However, this time is often focused on non-curricular topics and typically occurs after school.	Most teachers spend time during a workday each week collaborating with colleagues about curriculum, assessment, instruction and technology use in the classroom. This professional learning would be enhanced by allocating more time each week for job-embedded learning (e.g., lesson study, peer-observations, modeling, instructional coaching, teacher meetings).	Teachers spend a significant part of their work-week in job-embedded learning and collaboration with colleagues addressing curriculum, assessment, instruction, and technology. They receive sufficient support resources (e.g., materials, time, training) and assist with securing additional resources necessary (e.g., funding, time, technology) to sustain their learning. (NSDC Standards recommend that formal and informal job-embedded learning take place during at least 25% of educators' professional time. Such time can be devoted to lesson study, peer observations and coaching, modeling, conferencing, teacher meetings, mentoring.)

EVIDENCE: In the space below, provide detail evidence supporting your rating above –

According to teachers I have spoken with, in the academic areas teachers are asked to collaborate on core curriculum lesson planning once a week. There is little evidence that anything is being done to increase technology use in lessons amongst teachers – they are on their own for the most part. As far as funds are concerned, the principal claimed there are a lot of resources available for professional development.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Teachers should be given a suggestion list of things they should work on during their planning times. Planning has been reduced this year for most teachers significantly. All periods are 70 minutes long, and since Connections classes are blocked, this has reduced the time from 90 minutes to 70 minutes for academic teachers. This can be a significant amount of time when using planning time to develop professionally or for planning purposes (a reduction of 100 minutes a week). I would suggest going back to the previous schedule where all teachers had 90 minutes of planning a day, but use the time for not only lesson plan development, but for professional development and other things such as peer observation and mentoring.

PL 1.6 Resources Support Job-Embedded Professional Learning

☐ Not Addressed	☐ Emergent	☒ Operational	☐ Fully Operational
Resources are not allocated for job-embedded professional learning that is aligned with high-priority school improvement goals. Little if any professional development is devoted to helping teachers use technology to enhance student learning.	Some resources are allocated for professional learning. However, much of the professional learning is conducted primarily after school and is not aligned with the high-priority school improvement goals. There is limited professional development devoted to helping teachers use technology to enhance student learning.	Most resources for professional learning are allocated for the identified high-priority school improvement goals. However, providing more job-embedded learning opportunities and professional development would enhance teachers' use of technology to support student learning. In other cases, these forms of professional development need to be more ongoing and sustained to ensure actual classroom implementation of training strategies and processes.	Resources are allocated to support job-embedded professional learning that is aligned with high-priority school improvement goals and technology supporting student learning. There is sustained commitment to ensuring that these professional development activities result in successful classroom implementation. There is also a process in place to determine the value-added of key strategies and processes, i.e., how they impact student achievement and related organizational short- and long-range goals.

EVIDENCE: In the space below, provide detail evidence supporting your rating above –

According to the principal, funds are not an issue for providing professional development. While professional development does align with school improvement goals (through three-part lesson design), there really is no mention of technology being used. On the administration's behalf, there is a commitment (and expectation) that the current professional development skills are being implemented in the classroom and results are data driven.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Student use of technology and a degree of proficiency needs to be added into the school improvement plan. By not including it tells teachers it is not important enough to develop skills for themselves or for their students.

Professional Learning Standard 2: The process—the how—of professional learning is aligned with articulated goals and purposes, data-driven, research-based, evaluated to determine its impact, aligned with adult learning theory, and collaborative in design and implementation.

PL 2.1 Collaborative Analysis of Data			
☐ Not Addressed	☐ **Emergent**	☐ Operational	☒ **Fully Operational**
Teachers and/or administrators use personal experiences or opinions to determine student and adult learning needs and goals. Data is not collected and analyzed in monitoring school and classroom improvement strategies,	Teachers and/or administrators work in isolation or with limited representation to review student summative data and determine student and adult learning needs and goals. Student and teacher data is collected and analyzed at the end of the year to monitor the accomplishment of classroom and school goals.	Teachers and administrators collaboratively analyze disaggregated student learning, demographic, perception, and process data to identify student and adult learning needs and goals. They collect and analyze relevant student and teacher data at the beginning and end of the year to monitor and revise school and classroom improvement strategies. Accomplishments are celebrated and results are regularly reported to family and community.	Teachers and administrators collaboratively analyze disaggregated student learning, demographic, perception, and process data to identify student and adult learning needs and goals. They continuously (minimum of 4 times a year) collect and analyze relevant student and teacher data (e.g. action research, analyzing student work, classroom observations, Awareness Walks, and surveys) to monitor and revise school and classroom improvement strategies. Accomplishments are celebrated and results are regularly reported to family and community.

EVIDENCE: In the space below, provide detail evidence supporting your rating above –

Student data is collected regularly using benchmark testing as well as summative assessments which can be used to decide how much emphasis needs to be placed on certain aspects of content curriculum. This is done at all levels (except Connections) and information is made available on the network drive. I would say in this regard, the school is (and has been since I was hired at Smitha) fully operational. I am not sure as to the extent of reporting the data, but I know teachers are made aware of results and accomplishments are celebrated.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

I think if the school is not reporting to the community on a regular basis the accomplishments of student achievement we need to start. What the community thinks of the school is important and can have a bearing on student enrollment.

PL 2.2 Evaluating Impact of Professional Learning

☐ Not Addressed	☒ Emergent	☐ Operational	☐ Fully Operational
The principal and other leaders develop and implement a plan for evaluating teachers' reactions to professional development events. Teachers' contributions to the evaluation are limited to providing satisfaction ratings. The evaluation identifies changes in teacher knowledge and skills as a result of participation, but it does not evaluate changes in practice or impact on student learning.	The principal and other leaders develop and implement a plan for evaluating professional development events. Teachers contribute to the evaluation by collecting and analyzing summative student learning data. The evaluation identifies changes in teacher knowledge and skills as a result of participation and year-end student performance, but it does not evaluate change in teacher practice.	The principal and other leaders develop and implement a comprehensive plan for conducting ongoing (formative and summative for a one- to two-year period) evaluation of the impact of professional development on teacher practices and student learning. The evaluation also emphasizes changes in school culture, organizational structures, policies, and processes. Teachers contribute to the evaluation by collecting and analyzing relevant student learning and process data.	The principal and other leaders develop and implement a comprehensive plan for conducting ongoing (both formative and summative over a three- to five-year period) evaluation of the impact of professional development on teacher practices and student learning. Evaluation also emphasizes changes in school culture, organizational structures, policies, and processes. Teachers contribute to the evaluation by collecting and analyzing a variety (student learning, demographic, perception, and process) of relevant data. The plan specifies the evaluation question(s), data sources, data collection methodology, and data analysis processes.

EVIDENCE: In the space below, provide detail evidence supporting your rating above –

While the school may be looking at a 3-5 year plan, I am not sure there is sufficient evidence. The only evidence I have seen is data from years past, but only for CRCT and not data from other assessments. I know the "data room" displays measures of student achievement throughout the year.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Benchmark and data from other assessments should be included in a 3-5 year plan and more evidence of changes in teacher practice needs to be included with student data. There needs to also be more methodology involved to measure how data was collected and the process for analysis (other than just looking at and comparing raw data).

PL 2.3 Interpreting and Using Research Results

☐ Not Addressed	☒ Emergent	☐ Operational	☐ Fully Operational
The principal and other leaders review professional journals that summarize research instead of actual research or they do not recognize a need for reading and interpreting research when making instructional decisions regarding professional development and school improvement approaches.	The principal and other leaders review educational research. They create opportunities for a few, select teachers to study educational research. They work with them to conduct reviews of research when making instructional decisions regarding the adoption of professional development and school improvement approaches.	The principal and other leaders demonstrate modest skills in interpreting educational research (validity and reliability, matching populations, and interpreting effect-size measures). They create opportunities for teachers to learn to use educational research. They work with them to conduct extensive reviews of research to make informed instructional decisions regarding the adoption of professional development and school improvement approaches.	The principal and other leaders demonstrate advanced skills in determining appropriate research design, interpreting research results, and determining whether results can be generalized. They ensure that teachers and community members learn to use educational research. They work with them to conduct extensive reviews of research to make informed instructional decisions regarding the adoption of professional development and school improvement approaches.

EVIDENCE: In the space below, provide detail evidence supporting your rating above –

I believe through talking with the principal that educational research is important, but it seems like only a few are actually involved with the process. The principal talks about research-based learning and provides professional development, but only a few teachers are involved in the leadership of professional development in this area. When it comes to providing other opportunities of professional development, only a select few are involved with it.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

I would suggest other teachers be allowed to take the leadership role and provide professional learning to others. Everyone has a different skill set and everyone has something to offer. It should be required teachers learn about leadership roles in professional development and implement development in learning communities. These learning opportunities need to be research-based and administration needs to work collaboratively with these learning communities.

PL 2. 4 Long-Term, In-Depth Professional Learning

☐ Not Addressed	☒ Emergent	☐ Operational	☐ Fully Operational
Teachers experience single, stand-alone professional development events that are typically large group, workshop designs. There is little if any evidence of implementation or change in practice in classrooms. No emphasis is given to enhancing teachers' content knowledge or understanding.	Teachers attend multiple workshops on the same topic throughout the year to gain information about new programs or practices. They experiment with the new practices alone and infrequently with limited school-based support for implementation. No emphasis is given to enhancing teachers' content knowledge or understanding.	Teachers participate in long-term (two- to three-year period), in-depth professional learning that includes a variety of appropriate professional development designs including the use of technology. The various designs are aligned with the intended improvement outcomes. They include but are not limited to follow-up support for implementing new classroom practices (e.g., collaborative lesson design, professional networks, analyzing student work, problem solving sessions, curriculum development, coursework, action research, and classroom observations). Some evidence is present of attention to enhancing teachers' content knowledge.	Teachers participate in long-term (two-to three-year period), in-depth professional learning that engages learning teams in a variety of appropriate professional development designs including the use of technology. The various designs are aligned with the intended improvement outcomes. They include but are not limited to extensive, follow-up support for implementing new classroom practices (e.g., collaborative lesson design, professional networks, analyzing student work, problem solving sessions, curriculum development, coursework, action research, and coaching with feedback). A major focus of ongoing professional development is a commitment to maintaining and updating all teachers' knowledge and understanding of the content they are teaching and changes occurring in their field(s).

EVIDENCE: In the space below, provide detail evidence supporting your rating above –

Although I give this section emergent it is because I have not heard anything about our professional development (three-part lesson planning) being extended beyond this year, but we are supposed to meet several times this year to make sure implementation is going as planned. From what I hear so far some teams are doing better at implementation than others. Some teachers also have the attitude that this professional development is not needed. Also there is no emphasis given to enhancing teachers' content knowledge or understanding, but focusing on lesson plan development and increasing student engagement (taking some of the responsibility of learning from the teacher and giving it to students, allowing for higher-level thinking from students).

RECOMMENDATIONS:

I believe the principal has a great idea about how teachers should be creating lesson plans that are more engaging to students and using the three-part lesson plan. I believe there needs to be more long-term professional development in this area (and there might be). I think it makes planning more efficient if once we as teachers learn how to design more effective lessons that we be allowed to continue with this type of lesson planning rather than have to develop another kind in a few years. Having a 3-5 year plan I think improves the attitude of teachers if they know that what they are developing now will still be usable in a few years.

PL 2.5 Alignment of Professional Learning with Expected Outcomes

☐ Not Addressed	☒ Emergent	☐ Operational	☐ Fully Operational
The principal and other leaders provide single, stand-alone professional development events that are typically large group, workshops with no expectations for implementation of new classroom practices. Generally, activities are not aligned with the school improvement plan or related priorities.	The principal and other leaders provide multiple workshops on the same topic throughout the year. They articulate the learning goal, but do not discuss expectations for implementation. Teachers receive limited school-based support for implementing the new classroom practices. Activities are only generally aligned with the school improvement plan or related priorities.	The principal and other leaders align a variety of professional development designs with expected adult learning outcomes (e.g., collaborative lesson design, professional networks, analyzing student work, problem solving sessions, curriculum development, coursework, action research, and coaching with feedback). The professional learning is long-term (two-to-three year period) and in-depth with extensive school-based support for the implementation of new practices. They clearly communicate the expectations for implementation by providing rubrics that describe the desired classroom practices and communicate how those practices connect to the school improvement goals. Generally, activities are aligned with major priorities within the school improvement plan.	The principal and other leaders align a variety of professional development designs with expected adult learning outcomes (e.g., collaborative lesson design, professional networks, analyzing student work, problem solving sessions, curriculum development, coursework, action research, and coaching with feedback). They ensure that teams of teachers are engaged in long-term (two-to-three year period), in-depth professional learning with extensive school-based support for the implementation of new practices. They clearly communicate the expectations for implementation with collaboratively developed rubrics describing desired classroom practices and communicate how those practices connect to the school improvement goals.

EVIDENCE: In the space below, provide detail evidence supporting your rating above –

Communication is something that needs to be improved on in this area. We are receiving professional development and support for implementing the three-part lesson plan, but there is no rubric or other device to help measure the success of the plans. Lesson plans are not required to be turned in on a regular basis and because we have not had to turn any in at this point (in Connections), I am not sure what kind of feedback (if any) we will get or changes we are expected to implement.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Teachers should be given clear, measurable expectations on how teachers should be designing and implementing the three-part lesson. Teachers should also be given a few models and be encouraged to share exemplary examples they have created. Right now it feels like teachers (in teams) are on their own and little direction is given from administration, so communication would help the professional development be more meaningful.

PL 2.6 Building Capacity to Use Research Results

☐ Not Addressed	☒ Emergent	☐ Operational	☐ Fully Operational
Professional development is planned with no regard for research about adult learning needs and individual and organizational change processes. The sessions provided include strategies that do not mirror the instructional strategies teachers are expected to use with students (e.g., lecturing on inquiry method, covering material instead of helping participants to use and internalize it), and sessions are the same for all teachers regardless of their career stage.	Professional development is planned using research about adult learning needs and how individuals experience the change process. The professional development sessions demonstrate classroom practices through videotapes and simulations. The experiences focus on procedural learning - "how to do it"- rather than on developing deep understanding of concepts and problem solving strategies. Some professional development is specialized for new and mentor teachers.	Professional development is planned using research about adult learning needs and individual and organizational change processes. The professional development sessions include modeling and demonstrations of expected classroom practices. The experiences impact teachers' depth of understanding enabling them to use the new strategies routinely. Some professional development is specialized to reflect career stages of new teachers, mentor teachers, and teacher leaders.	Professional development builds the capacity of the staff to use research about adult learning needs and individual and organizational change processes as they implement new strategies. Professional development sessions consistently employ the same instructional strategies that are expected to be used in their classrooms. The experiences impact teachers' depth of understanding enabling them to solve problems and adapt new strategies to classroom circumstances. Professional development is differentiated to reflect career stage needs and interests (e.g., mentoring, leading learning teams, coaching, utilizing technology, and curriculum development).

EVIDENCE: In the space below, provide detail evidence supporting your rating above –

When provided with initial professional development, it was very much a "how-to" kind of session. Follow up sessions are planned, but have not been implemented yet. There was a little modeling at the initial session, but not as meaningful as the session could have been – although we were broken down in groups (teams) and were instructed to work on a three-part lesson plan which was supposed to be implemented the first week of school. To be honest, I would suggest this is borderline between Emergent and Operational if the professional development was differentiated for levels of teaching experience.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

I suggest not having the initial session on the last day of pre-planning week since some teachers had lesson plans already created by then and plus there could have been a series of sessions during the week to get more in depth with the teacher development rather than have a session for 90 minutes and told to have a three-part lesson finished and developed in the next 60 minutes right before lunch (it felt rushed). Also teachers who were more experienced were treated the same as everyone else and may have created some resentment. These teachers should have had the opportunity to be leaders in their teams and help mentor the newer teachers.

PL 2.7 Knowledge about Effective Group Processes

☐ Not Addressed	☒ Emergent	☐ Operational	☐ Fully Operational
Teachers and administrators lack knowledge about effective group processes and/or work alone, disregarding collective responsibility for student learning.	Teachers and administrators have knowledge of stages of group development and effective interaction skills, but lack skill in group process strategies needed for productive collaborative work. As a result, colleagues work in temporary groups often encountering unresolved conflict or frustration. Technology (e.g., email, chat rooms, and websites) is used to support collegial interactions.	Teachers and administrators have knowledge and skills regarding group processes (e.g., group decision making strategies, stages of group development, effective interaction skills, and conflict resolution) that are necessary to accomplish tasks and satisfy the interpersonal expectations of the participants. As a result, the school culture is characterized by trust, collegiality, and collective responsibility for student learning where colleagues work collaboratively. Technology (e.g., subject area networks, lesson sharing, seminars) is used to support collegial interactions.	Teachers and administrators have knowledge and skills to monitor and improve group processes (e.g., group decision-making strategies, stages of group development, effective interaction skills, and conflict resolution) that are necessary to accomplish tasks and satisfy the interpersonal expectations of the participants. As a result, the school culture is characterized by trust, collegiality, and collective responsibility for student learning where colleagues work collaboratively in established, ongoing learning teams. Technology (e.g., online discussions, web casts, and seminars, educational blogs, listservs, downloadable resources) is used to support collegial interactions and to ensure effective and sustained implementation.

EVIDENCE: In the space below, provide detail evidence supporting your rating above –

I marked this as emergent because there is collaboration with professional development, but it has worked better with some teams than others and as a result there is some frustrations amongst some teachers. Technology is only being used to support collegial interactions if the teachers initiate its use and implementation. Some of the groups are accomplishing more than others and for these groups I would assign a higher category, but since there are still a few groups lacking, and because the technology component is not present, this category got the "Emergent" rating.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

I think extra effort from administration for the frustrated teachers and maybe a little extra training might help (along with clear, measurable expectations). Also I think that the use of technology to collaborate (either a wiki or Edmodo) would help.

Professional Learning Standard 3: **The content—the what—of 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.**

PL 3.1 Classroom Practices Reflect an Emotionally and Physically Safe Learning Environment

☐ Not Addressed	☐ **Emergent**	☒ **Operational**	☐ **Fully Operational**
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.	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.	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.	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.

EVIDENCE: In the space below, provide detail evidence supporting your rating above –

I believe at Smitha most teachers provide a safe, secure learning environment with high expectations of achievement and respect of diverse learners. There are a few teachers how have lowered expectations of achievement or show little regard for student diversity in their attitudes (maybe no in front of the students, but it is there and can be evident through their actions). I do not believe any professional development exists for these teachers for this specific scenario.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

All students need to feel welcome and safe in our classrooms so their primary focus is on learning (and not worrying about other things). Teachers need to show that they care for the students, no matter what background they come from or academic level. Expectations should be high for all students and the learning environment needs to be a safe place for students to grow.

PL 3.2 Deep Understanding of Subject Matter and Instructional Strategies

☐ Not Addressed	☐ Emergent	☐ Operational	☒ Fully Operational
Teachers demonstrate superficial knowledge of subject matter and mostly rely on textbooks. They primarily use lecture, seatwork, and discussion as instructional strategies and paper-and-pencil tests for assessment.	Teachers demonstrate breadth of subject matter, but the content they teach is often not aligned with required learning goals (e.g., GPS, district standards). They may use some engaging instructional strategies and a variety of assessment strategies in some contexts; however, most of their instruction is presented in traditional whole-group, teacher-centered fashion.	Teachers exhibit a deep understanding of subject matter, use a variety of appropriate instructional strategies, and use various assessment strategies to monitor student progress toward meeting rigorous and required standards. They plan interdisciplinary units with colleagues and can articulate a rationale for why specific instructional strategies and assessments are appropriate to specific content or objectives.	Teachers exhibit a deep understanding of subject matter; differentiate instruction based on needs, interests, and backgrounds; use a variety of appropriate instructional strategies; and use various assessment strategies (e.g., constructed-response test items, reflective assessments, academic prompts, culminating performance tasks and projects, interviews, rubrics, peer response groups) to monitor student progress toward meeting rigorous standards. They plan interdisciplinary units with colleagues and can articulate a rationale for why specific instructional strategies and assessments are appropriate to specific content or objectives.

EVIDENCE: In the space below, provide detail evidence supporting your rating above –

I believe all teachers use differentiated instruction and are experts in their fields. Interdisciplinary units are planned through collaboration at team meetings. Teachers monitor student progress toward meeting rigorous standards (Core Curriculum) and assessments are appropriate to specific content or objectives.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

I think teachers should move towards more student use of technology to enhance the learning of content standards.

PL 3.3 Sustained Development of Deep Understanding of Content and Strategies

☐ Not Addressed	☒ **Emergent**	☐ Operational	☐ Fully Operational
The principal and other leaders encourage but do not require teachers to participate in district-based professional development opportunities to increase knowledge of content, research-based instructional strategies, and assessments. There is minimal if any evidence of school-based professional development to promote student achievement. They create work schedules that result in teacher isolation and individual practice.	The principal and other leaders emphasize the importance of teachers' deep understanding of content knowledge, research-based instructional strategies, and assessment strategies. They create work schedules to support collegial interaction and sharing and encourage teachers to participate in district-based professional development focused on content, pedagogy, and assessment.	The principal and other leaders promote teachers' deep understanding of content knowledge, research-based instructional strategies, and assessment strategies as a high priority. They avoid large-scale trainings that may not address the needs of all participants. They create work schedules to support collegial learning and differentiated professional development focused on content, pedagogy, and assessment. Teacher learning time and application of strategies and assessments is closely monitored.	The principal and other leaders promote the sustained development of teachers' deep understanding of content knowledge, research-based instructional strategies, and assessment strategies. All professional development activities are purposeful and aligned with specific individual and group needs. They create work schedules to support *ongoing*, collegial learning and differentiated professional development focused on content, pedagogy, and assessment. Teacher learning time and application of strategies and assessments is closely monitored.

EVIDENCE: In the space below, provide detail evidence supporting your rating above –

Largely, the professional development atmosphere is a one-size-fits-all approach to professional development. Some teacher attitudes are negative and they believe it really does not apply to them. I believe the professional we are receiving this year is a step in the right direction and is at the emergent level because it is still in its basic stages. I believe that if this is a long-term, ongoing teacher development it will eventually reach other categories and that support and meaningful aspects of this training will address the needs of all teachers. I believe that teacher learning time and application of strategies and assessments are being closely monitored.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

I recommend teachers evaluate the effectiveness of the training and suggest ways in which it might better adapt to their situation and that administration not make training a "one-size-fits-all" approach. I also believe teachers need to be more open to ideas and rather than viewing them in a negative way, try and embrace new ideas and implement them, reflect on how new ideas can be implemented better and make suggestions.

PL 3.4 Partnerships to Support Student Learning			
☐ Not Addressed	☐ Emergent	☒ Operational	☐ Fully Operational
There is no collaboration with parents or the community in developing activities to support learning. Communication through only written correspondence is limited to encouraging parents to attend school functions, yearly conferences, and performances.	There is a school committee to focus on developing community partnerships to support student learning. Communication through written correspondence or phone is about school programs, student progress, and encouraging attendance at school functions, yearly conferences, and performances.	There is a committee that works with families and the community through partnerships that develop programs to support student learning. Strategies are implemented to increase family involvement such as offering suggestions about ways parents can support student learning at home and communicating with families about school programs and student progress (e.g., information about report cards, grading practices, student work, homework, and school events) through a website, phone, email, voice mail, and written correspondence.	Partnerships among teachers, families, and the community are maintained to develop programs that support learning and enhance student skills and talents. Strategies are implemented to increase family involvement such as providing parent education workshops with information on child development and supporting student learning at home and communicating with families about school programs and student progress (e.g., information about report cards, grading practices, (student work, homework, and school events) through an interactive website, phone, email, voice mail and written correspondence.

EVIDENCE: In the space below, provide detail evidence supporting your rating above –

Opportunities for parent involvement come largely from the parent liaison (I would also say committee because some teachers are involved as well as administration). Some examples would include Open House, Curriculum Night, family game nights, programs involving Math, and English for Spanish-speaking parents, and programs to help parents with student study skills at home. There are also parent conferences once a year.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

I believe more parent workshops need to be made available for all content areas the students are involved in. Communication with parents should be ongoing and part of developing family-oriented learning communities. Tools like Edmodo can help involve parents in their child's studies. Blogs and regular emails can help as well.