GAPPS

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Powder Springs Elementary is a school in Cobb County School District that educates students in pre-kindergarten through fifth grade. Current enrollment is 810 students and 75% of students are eligible for free and reduced lunches. Powder Springs Elementary is a Title I school. Title I is a federally funded program which provides services to schools based on student economic needs. The principal at Powder Springs Elementary School, Debbie Broadnax, is the leader at Powder Springs and believes in the vision at Power Springs Elementary, “Providing pathways to big dreams” (Powder Springs Elementary School Strategic Plan, p.1). It is the responsibility to teachers to provide passageways to achievement for all students, allowing individuals to prosper and shine. It is envisioned that lessons are structured to provide students with opportunities to showcase their knowledge in multiple higher-level ways. In relation to technology, curriculum should have technology embedded within it to help students facilitate and drive their learning. Powder Springs Elementary seeks to provide professional learning to teachers to help them create challenges and opportunities for students to utilize tools to accomplish tasks and solve problems.

It is important to set high expectations and the School Strategic Plan (SSP) at Powder Springs Elementary has outlined specific areas to target to improve school and student achievement (2013). Professional learning needs are identified at Powder Springs Elementary through data driven means. The SSP requires the school to look at multiple assessment measures across grade levels and curricular areas. Test results are analyzed from high-stakes testing such as the Criterion Referenced Competency Testing (CRCT). Areas of weakness are identified, and professional learning needs surface. Professional learning is developed to improve those areas. For example, state-write writing assessment results from the 2012-2013 school year indicated that writing is an area of weakness for students at Powder Springs Elementary. Therefore, it was determined that beginning in the 2013-2014 school year, a Cobb County Literacy Coach would observe writing instruction in each classroom and determine overall school needs. Professional learning sessions would result based on observation. In addition to basing professional learning opportunities on student test results, needs assessments are administered to staff members each year to identify areas where professional learning is desired. Results are analyzed and teachers are able to receive differentiated training based on their personal needs and desires.

Professional learning occurs in multiple contexts at Powder Springs Elementary. Staff members work collaboratively in various forms of professional learning. Beyond weekly team level meetings, where staff members plan standards-based units and lesson plans as well as discuss relevant school topics, teams work together to learn new skills. Being that professional learning opportunities are based off of needs, current plans for the 2013-2014 school year include providing professional learning opportunities to refine teaching in all curricular areas. Teachers will be able to receive differentiated support in collective groups to address areas of need in Writing, Math, and Reading. For example, in the subject area of writing, teachers will learn how to apply best practices in the classroom through a mentor/coach and work together to collectively score grade level writing pieces to ensure equal student expectations throughout classrooms. Math improvements will likely results from professional development on a monthly basis in the form of Math Data Teams. Math Data Teams help teachers identify areas of focus for instruction and provide results from interventions and assessments. Workshops will also be held to increase engaged learning in classrooms through monthly technology training sessions.

Throughout the years, technology-related professional learning has occurred at Powder Springs as Cobb County Instructional Technology Integration Specialists have conducted trainings to help teachers use technology tools in the classroom. Teachers have received training on how to use SmartBoards, i-Respond systems, Skills Tutor, and blogs. Proper technology integration involves more than the actual use of devices and hardware within the classroom setting, and current technology related professional learning will reflect higher-level uses of technology integration. Powder Springs Elementary recently utilized Title I funds to purchase a cart with a set of iPads for grades Kindergarten through Second grade and a cart for Third through Fifth Grade. The access to technology is increasing within classrooms at Powder Springs Elementary and teachers are seeking ways to integrate technology effectively into their curriculum. Professional learning opportunities will exist monthly to help teachers design activities that require higher level thinking skills and take advantage of the latest Web 2.0 tools.

Some professional learning will be sustained throughout the school year to ensure that the learning community is fully supported. For example, the SSP has a goal to refine the Guided Reading/ELA program at Powder Springs Elementary. Training sessions will continue throughout the year and sessions will build off of one another. Teachers will be given opportunities to give feedback and ask questions about strategies presented and how they worked being implemented in the classroom. While Powder Springs Elementary does not have academic coaches, there are many teachers who are peer-coaches and experts in identified areas that are willing to assist individuals who need extra support. Additionally, after professional learning sessions, teachers are urged to give feedback to determine what steps need to be taken and plan future professional learning sessions.

Professional learning is aligned to the school improvement goals outlined in the SSP. According to the School Strategic Plan, which contains all school improvement plans, professional learning is directly aligned to the school-wide goals. In order to initiate a professional learning plan, the professional learning must be necessary for student and school improvement. Professional learning focuses on math, reading, and writing, as those areas are integral in the school improvement goals.

Professional learning is funding is clearly stated on the School Strategic Plan. Both Title I and Title II funds help fund certain professional learning initiatives. Title I funding is used to purchase supplies and learning resources, while Title II funds are used to pay for substitutes while teachers are engaging in professional development. In addition to these funding sources, the school uses School Focused Professional Learning Funds from Cobb County School District to fund professional learning opportunities. No specific numerical figures associated with professional development are available to report.

The extrinsic incentives associated with teachers participating in professional learning and improving their teaching practice are limited. Stipends are not offered for teachers to improve their professional learning, but small rewards are sometimes given, such as “dress down days” or “early release days”. The most powerful incentive teachers have to engage in professional learning is improving their practice to become the most effective educators possible. Having students learn, make gains, and prosper is the most powerful motivation source that comes intrinsically.

Professional learning based on culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds are not available and offered to teachers at Powder Springs Elementary. Professional learning opportunities focus on the learning needs of all students, no matter their cultural or linguistic background. Teachers who teach Target, Special Education, as well as English as a Second or Other Language (ESOL) classes attend specific professional development sessions conducted by Cobb County School District.

Teachers participate in professional learning teams in a collaborative effort with their grade level. While a desire has been expressed to collaborate and plan vertically throughout the grade levels, and plans in the future may include vertical collaboration, grade level professional learning teams are able to focus on their grade-specific standards when working together to improve student performance. Team planning and collaboration is led by the team leader and is maintained through common planning time. This type of communication and collaboration is incredibly important because it has a direct effect on student performance and overall learning. This directly relates to the school improvement plan because the School Strategic Plan identified specific desired results. These results include increased percentages of students meeting and exceeding standards in Math, Reading and Writing. Common planning and collaboration regarding daily standards based lessons directly have an effect on these results.

The impact of professional learning is evaluated through student results on state-wide, district-wide, and local assessments. Students’ scores and collected, reviewed, and analyzed to determine areas that students as well as teachers have strengths and weaknesses in. The Powder Springs Elementary administrative staff and School Strategic Planning team participate in focus walks throughout the school. These are unannounced visits to the classroom that focus on professional development skills that should be put into place into the classroom.

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| 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. GAPSS Review Template | | | |
| 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:  At Powder Springs Elementary, each teacher is a part of a grade level team or a professional learning team, and each team is equipped with a lead. Grade level teams across the school meet twice a week to collaborate, develop as professionals, and plan for instruction. Every three weeks week, teachers participate in data teams to examine and monitor student progress. Teachers additionally meet to discuss progress of individuals in analyzing student responses to intervention (RTI). Instruction plans are based on grade level needs in math and literacy, which directly are aligned to student learning goals. As stated by the principal, “Grade level professional learning teams are able to focus on their grade-specific standards when working together to ultimately increase student performance” (D. Broadnax, personal communication, September 5, 2013). | | | |
| RECOMMENDATIONS:  Learning teams should also be vertical in nature to include individuals from multiple grade levels. This would benefit student learning and performance because teachers would have the opportunity to discuss gaps and weaknesses noted in certain standards or subject areas. | | | |

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| **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:  During the 2012-2013 school year, the administration at Powder Springs changed. This resulted in a supportive community of leaders who currently maintain and assist in facilitating professional learning teams. The administration team works collaboratively to reinforce professional learning and improve school performance. Team building activities are planned and executed during the district’s preplanning meetings. The administrative team is active and present at all data team meetings and many team level meetings to support teacher performance and student learning. Not only are professional learning opportunities directly aligned with school improvement goals, but administration is active in training, monitoring, and collaborating with teachers on best practices to utilize in the classroom to increase student learning. | | | | |
| RECOMMENDATIONS:  Additional incentive systems would ensure increased teacher involvement in effective learning communities. | | | | |

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| **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:  Each grade level appoints a team leader to serve in a leadership role for the school each school year. This role allows grade level leaders to serve as the representative for the grade level at the monthly Building Leadership Team Meeting. Teachers are not given opportunities to serve in instructional leadership. According to the School Strategic Plan, professional development is led by administration and academic coaches. Sometimes leadership opportunities arise, but they are given to the same teachers each time. | | | |
| RECOMMENDATIONS:  The School Strategic Plan team can adjust the plan in the future to include options for various teachers to serve as leaders within the school. | | | |

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| **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:  As noted in the interview with the principal of Powder Springs Elementary, professional learning is provided in a variety of formats. These include peer observations and collaborative teacher meetings. They are often differentiated to meet teachers’ interests and needs. Professional learning is encouraged and advocated by school administration, and it is a main focus of the School Strategic Plan. Weekly updates from the school office sent in the “Monday Morning Memo” indicate where administrators are located if they are not in the building. This indicates they participate in their own professional learning. Specifics of these professional learning sessions are rarely shared with the staff. | | | |
| RECOMMENDATIONS:  Teachers should review the School Strategic Plan to understand the results that are expected to be achieved from professional learning. | | | |

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| **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:  Teachers spend two planning periods a week meeting to work together to address curriculum and student learning concerns. Teachers meet every three weeks in data team meetings as well as Response to Intervention team meetings to discuss student progress. Teachers also collaborate in faculty meetings as well as Key Team Meetings one day a week after school. As noted in the principal interview, support resources are funded through Title I funds, Title II funds, and School-Focused Professional Learning funds. Teachers are aware of what opportunities are available for professional learning and support resources are readily available. If a need arises for support, administration is quick to offer resources to help the teacher or grade level. For example, the Kindergarten, First and Second Grade teams expressed a concern that their Phonics Instruction was not sufficiently meeting the needs of their learners. Administration researched resources and provided materials as well as training to implement a system to help increase phonemic awareness in primary grades. | | | |
| RECOMMENDATIONS:  Teachers should have the opportunity for coaching and modeling from a diverse group of leaders from within the school. | | | |

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| **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:  Professional learning resources focus on the needs listed in the school improvement goals on the school strategic plan. Teachers receive differentiated support in collective groups to address areas of need in writing, math, and reading. Additional professional learning opportunities are provided after school hours; therefore, they are not job-embedded. The principal states that, “professional learning will likely be sustained throughout the school year” (D. Broadnax, personal communication, September 5, 2013). This indicates that the plans for professional development as well as school improvement will be focused and goal-oriented, but it is not guaranteed. | | | |
| RECOMMENDATIONS:  A process needs to be put into place that assess the value of professional learning and determine actual classroom implementation. | | | |

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| 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:  Grade level teams and administration actively and regularly participate in data analysis teams. The Data Team process is ongoing throughout the school year and monitors student performance. Team members discuss strategies to improve student performance and monitor student progress. They also focus on student assessment, observation, research instructional strategies, and set goals. Classroom data is collected every quarter and reviewed by the principal and assistant principal who are instructional leaders. At Powder Springs Elementary, grade level teams have their team data reported to the staff annually. Teachers analyze data to determine areas of weaknesses as well as steps that need to be taken to move students to help them meet and exceed standards. Professional Development is often held after school, indicating that it is not always job-embedded. | | | |
| RECOMMENDATIONS:  Provide teachers with support and encouragement to celebrate accomplishments throughout the data analysis process. Host professional development sessions that occur only during the school day. | | | |

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| **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:  A plan for professional development is established and maintained through the School Strategic Plan. The evaluation of professional learning focuses on participation and yearly standardized test scores. There is no evidence of change in collective teacher practice. Teachers contribute to the evaluation by sending summative student data to the assistant principal. | | | |
| RECOMMENDATIONS:  The professional development plan should be enhanced to emphasize change in school culture. | | | |

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| **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:  School-wide instructional decisions are based on current educational research. According to the principal, research is obtained through professional journals as well as information passed down to them from county-wide instructional coaches. Teachers have limited opportunities to learn how to use educational research. Teachers express that the opportunities they have to research is merely through personal choice. | | | |
| RECOMMENDATIONS:  Teachers should have increased opportunities to use educational research. | | | |

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| **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:  Each year, professional learning is made an area of focus at Powder Springs Elementary. Multiple workshops and learning sessions are provided to cover content that is similar or correlating, but sessions do not consistently have follow up support. Educators often lean best through experience, and this is lacking in many professional development sessions. In relation to technology, professional learning focuses on new technology tools and resources, but not necessarily on engaging student sin higher order thinking and learning through the use of embedding technology within lessons. | | | |
| RECOMMENDATIONS:  Teachers should be offered follow up training that continues to strengthen and sustain their learning | | | |

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| **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:  Professional development is designed with specific outcomes in mind, as stated in the School Strategic Plan. Activities are aligned within the School Strategic Plan. Expectations of implementation are addressed and support is provided by administration and instructional leaders. Professional learning is generally short term and based on immediate needs. The School Strategic Plan outlines areas of need, and was designed to gradually strengthen teacher and student performance over a period of time. | | | |
| RECOMMENDATIONS:  Professional learning should be sustained over a two to three year time frame. | | | |

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| **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:  Professional development focuses on procedural learning especially in regards to technology-related professional learning. New teachers do not receive any specialized training. Professional development does not employ the same instructional strategies that are used in the classroom, but some professional development is differentiated. | | | |
| RECOMMENDATIONS:  Professional learning needs to move beyond procedural learning and focus on implementing strategies within the classroom. | | | |

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| **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:  Teachers collaborate in group process, which is fully supported by teachers and administration. Teachers work collectively to effectively and efficiently help students meet their individual goals. Common planning times are encouraged by administration. Teachers share instructional resources and lessons utilizing technology, which encourages collegial interaction. The ownership and collective responsibility for student learning is shared by teachers, students, and administration. | | | |
| RECOMMENDATIONS:  Collegial interactions could be supported through additional technology such as educational blogs and blackboard groups. | | | |

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| 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. |

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| EVIDENCE:  Teachers expect the very best of all students at Powder Springs Elementary. Expectations are set high and this is communicated to all learners. Teachers plan for differentiation daily to ensure that student needs are met in a variety of ways. Learning environments are structured so that students are safe, and when needs arise, modifications are made. For example, the Code Red and Code Yellow drills at the school were recently revisited and revised to ensure they were effective. Children are caught the code of conduct and are expected to perform at their personal best. Success is thoroughly encouraged each day. |
| RECOMMENDATIONS:  Additional professional learning should be provided that focuses on cultural differences and needs of students. |

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| **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. |

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| EVIDENCE:  Teachers use a variety of research based instructional strategies to promote student centered learning. They do this through a balanced literacy program included guided reading, guided math, and Writer’s Workshop. This is noted in the School Strategic Plan. Assessment strategies are varied within classrooms at Powder Springs Elementary and include rubrics, prompts, and performance tasks. Both informal and formal assessments take place on a daily basis. Units and lesson plans are created during collaborative planning times. Teachers take it upon themselves to schedule time within their planning periods to create units and plan for instruction each quarter. There is no definitive time set or encouraged by administration for these types of tasks. |
| RECOMMENDATIONS:  Administration should set aside specific time each quarter for grade levels to plan units and create curriculum maps throughout the curricular areas. |

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| **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. |

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| EVIDENCE:  Teachers are provided with common planning time daily to promote and encourage grade level collaboration. Teachers are encouraged to attend frequent professional development sessions. Trainings are provided in small group settings with grade level teams and sometimes based on the needs and skill of the teacher. Sessions are sometimes performed in large-scale situations, with the entire staff participating. This does not allow for differentiation and does not address the needs of participants. Application of strategies is monitored through focus walks, where leaders of the school come to classrooms to observe certain practices are put into place. |
| RECOMMENDATIONS:  Large-scale trainings should be avoided and replaced with professional learning that meets the diverse needs of teachers. |

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| **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. |

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| EVIDENCE:  The school design team develops programs to support the community of Powder Springs. There is a support position of a Parent Facilitator who helps maintain a positive, active relationship between school and home. The School Strategic Plan includes goals to improve participation in family involvement. It is a focus of Powder Springs to get parents involved in the PTA, volunteer around the school, and have family participation at school functions. Some grade level teams utilize blogs to communicate with parents, and the school website is available for parents to receive general school information. |
| RECOMMENDATIONS:  Workshops that help parents implement strategies to support student learning can be planned and implemented. |

References

Powder Springs Elementary School Strategic Plan. (2013). Student Learning and Performance. Powder Springs GA: Debbie Broadnax.

Debbie Broadnax (Principal of Powder Springs Elementary) in discussion with Sherry Graham, September 5, 2013.