Shared Vision Paper

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**Vision Statement**

McCleskey Middle School aspires to create a culture of greatness. It is McCleskey’s desire that each student and teacher who is a part of the school will be equipped with the skills they need to learn, lead, and flourish in the 21st century classroom and workforce. In the school’s vision for technology, McCleskey would like to use technology to encourage students to take ownership of their learning by teaching them to use technology as a tool to research, grow, and engage with the curriculum.

Currently, there is a wide-variety of technology on campus, but they are quickly aging and becoming increasingly frustrating to operate. Students and staff often complain about the accessibility and reliability of the technology and the school’s WiFi connection. In the next five years, McCleskey has set to update the technology in the building to guarantee that each student will be able to use technology with ease to complete their assignments. As McCleskey begins to do this, the county has provided us with an instructional technology coordinator to provide on-going professional development and to help us research the best tools to use with our students.

McCleskey Middle School desires to use technology as a way for the learning environment to shift from direct instruction to a blended model. This will allow the teachers to give struggling students more one-on-one attention, and provide students with extensions that they need to be challenged academically.

In addition to funding resources for the students, McCleskey Middle School is also supporting a Bring Your Own Device- BYOD- program where students can bring their own technology into the classroom for learning purposes. With the iPads the McCleskey Foundation and generous partners in education have helped fund, McCleskey will be able to provide a class set of devices during a lesson that requires technology.

A general consensus among McCleskey’s staff and stakeholders were the limits of technology. Everyone loves using technology, and many of the staff desire to use it more than they currently do. However, the faculty and staff feel like technology should not take top priority, but function as a tool for students and teachers to use as a way to promote students being engaged and using higher-order thinking skills. In conclusion, McCleskey’s vision for technology is, “We desire to have readily available, functional technology that empowers our students. It is our goal to use technology as a tool to increase rigor, promote student ownership, academic growth, student engagement, and collaboration.” In order to accomplish our goal, we will need continual professional development to make sure our methods are relevant, and obtain data from the technology. In ISTE’s policy briefing on the link between student growth and technology implementation states, “Correct implementation of technology is key.” These two factors will help the faculty and staff achieve this goal.

Throughout this spring semester, McCleskey Middle School has been given a technology specialist that is in the building for a portion of the week. This makes on-going professional development less of a hassle and allows teachers to come with questions and concerns at their leisure. In order to maintain this, it is critical that the county continues to hire technology specialist until there is a permanent resident in every building. In order for teachers to truly benefit from professional development, they need to feel at ease with the instructor. This professional development needs to happen frequently so teachers are not using new technology that is inappropriate for students.

After teachers are educated and prepared to implement the new skills they have acquired during the professional development, the students need to know the rules and expectations of technology. After the teachers have taken the time to educate the students on technology usage expectations and procedures, it is then time to let the students use the technology. Ideally, these tools will customize their learning and result in an increase in student achievement and engagement.

In order for the students and teachers to do this, it would be most beneficial for them to receive instantaneous feedback on the students’ and teachers’ accounts. The data will be the key to school system recognizing the value of the technology and continuing to implement it. Data that assess the value of incorporating technology into the classroom will also increase accountability among the technology specialists, teachers, and students. While teachers use data to give concrete numbers to assess the technology, they will also use informal interviews about how the technology is performing. For example, if the technology works, but can not support an entire class accessing it simultaneously, that is a problem that needs to lead to changes. This assessment can also be sent out to stakeholders to show visible results.

Both continuing professional development and data collection will help McCleskey change their methodology and ensure they are adequate for instruction. With the new technology specialist from the county these goals are practical and obtainable. In addition, this will not create too much of a burden on each teacher, no matter their current level of comfort with technology. When each teacher sees the visible results of applying new technology based strategies in the classroom and feels comfortable using them, the higher likelihood of school-wide success.

**Rationale**

A wide-variety of stakeholders were involved in developing a vision that would represent each population seen within McCleskey Middle School. The faculty and staff surveyed continually mentioned the availability of technology as a reason they do not incorporate more frequently. Another key insight reflected in the survey is the value of this technology. The teachers want to use technology more often, but they do not have the time to explore and experiment with what is available to them. One key player in this initiative is the school media specialist, who takes it upon herself to help teachers by selecting resources to present to teachers. This has been a huge asset to McCleskey staff, but it would be best if teachers were receiving the continual professional development that allows them to have a hands-on approach with the tools.

The McCleskey Foundation’s partners in education have also been very big stakeholders and key advocates for as the school pushes to guarantee that each student is having the best learning experience possible. These stakeholders have been an integral part of proposing and carrying out fundraisers to provide funds for technology and assessing apps and uses for the technology that will eventually provide the students with job skills they will need in the future.

This outside expertise has been very helpful to the McCleskey staff. With both of the staff and business partners working together, technology can be assessed from multiple perspectives. ISTE affirms this method of assessment in their Effective Digital Learning Environments by stating, “By reflecting together, the group identifies essential conditions for realizing their preferred future. This step, often referred to as a gap analysis or needs assessment, is best accomplished collaboratively, so that is represents the needs of the community as a whole” (Williamson, 20). When the school’s technology policies and procedures are supported by the community, they are more likely to in place.

In ISTE’s Policy Brief, it states that in order to have optimal results for technology implementation you must adhere to the following seven factors:

1. Effective professional development for teachers in the integration of technology into instruction is necessary to support student learning.
2. Teachers’ direct application of technology must be aligned to local and/or state curriculum standards.
3. Technology must be incorporated into the daily learning schedule (i.e., not as a supplement or after-school tutorial).
4. Programs and applications must provide individualized feedback to students and teachers and must have the ability to tailor lessons to individual student needs.
5. Student collaboration in the use of technology is more effective in influencing student achievement than strictly individual use.
6. Project-based learning and real-world simulations are more effective in changing student motivation and achievement than drill-and-practice applications.
7. Effective technology integration requires leadership, support, and modeling from teachers, administrators, and the community/parents. (ISTE, 2008).

Currently, McCleskey’s biggest obstacle relates to number three, providing equal access to quality machines with reliable WiFi at the teacher’s discretion. Often, there is a waiting period before being able to obtain the computer lab. By using SPLOST funding to obtain more access, providing on-going professional learning for teachers, and assessing the technology, McCleskey is on the path making great strides in technology education.

**Diversity Considerations**

All students who have accommodations related to technology services in their IEP or 504 plan will receive services that meet their individualized learning needs. Although our school has a high percentage of students receiving some kind of academic support, it is a rarity to find a student who uses technology as a result of their accommodations. This is partially due to the way the will stand out in the classroom. By making technology a part of each mainstream classroom, students will ideally get the services they need and be able to work at the pace they need when students are one-on-one with technology on a more regular basis.

Significant learning gaps exist between students who do have internet access at home and those who do not. Students who come from low SES backgrounds will also benefit from having technology incorporated into teacher’s lesson plans. Currently, students are in the labs approximately once a week at the most. Because most of these students are only on the internet during these time periods, there is a significant gap in the students with internet access and the students without. When McCleskey provides these students a chance to have regular interactions with technology, it will allow them to be more competitive with their peers that have access to devices at home.

Additionally, because the teachers will have thorough training on how to create content-area based lessons using technology, the whole school will be performing at their maximum potential. Naturally, teachers will be able to incorporate more project and problem-based learning into their instruction because research will be at the students’ fingertips. According to Edutopia, “Studies have proven that when implemented well, project-based learning (PBL) can increase retention of content and improve students’ attitudes towards learning, among other benefits” (Vega, 2012). Each student regardless of ability, gender, or socio-economic status will be given equal time to use the new technology, and with PBL will be given more ownership of their own learning. When McCleskey unites and carries out the goal of acquiring and utilizing reliable technology in the classroom, there will be significant improvements made in the area of academic achievement.

**Stakeholder Roles**

The entire staff at McCleskey desires that there would be a healthy percentage of students participating in the school’s Bring Your Own Device program. For the students who do not have a device, the school would like to provide iPads carts or other wireless devices for them to use in order to have internet access in the classroom. The SPLOST funds scheduled to be used by out school will seek to update our current technology and perhaps provide more relevant technology that is not mainstream at this time.

All teachers and stakeholders agree that technology is an excellent asset to our school, but optimistically remark that the availability and reliability of the technology are large obstacles the school is facing currently. The school understands how serious these problems are, but has dedicated themselves to doing as much as possible to alleviate them. Once the minor issues are extinguished, McCleskey will be able to fully implement their vision for technology. When the vision is made a reality, the teacher’s role in the classroom will have a dramatic shift from instructor to facilitator. While the teacher will still be preparing the lessons for students, students will be given much more individual responsibility during a typical class period.

Teachers and administrators are most excited about conducting more activities that are self-paced and involve critical thinking skills. The school also realizes that students who are flourishing can move at a more accelerated pace, which would give teachers the freedom to concentrate their time on a smaller group of students. Feedback is also a critical component to implementing technology in the classroom. Teachers realize that my creating assessments online, students are given immediate feedback and thus can correct their mistakes. Students will be given much more independence when technology is in use and be more accountable for advocating for themselves in the learning process. This new found freedom will increase student responsibility. Teachers will also be held accountable by administration to utilize this technology and beyond basic functions to encourage problem-solving skills in students.

Despite the fact that these innovative changes will cause a paradigm shift, McCleskey believes that the administration, staff, parents, and students are ready to see changes that will equip them during their time at McCleskey and beyond. After this vision of routine technology usage is in place, McCleskey will see students who are better prepared for whatever facets of life they will encounter.

**References**

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**Appendix**

Survey Questions

1. How long have you been teaching?

* 0-3 years
* 4-7 years
* 8-10 years
* 12+ years

1. I know the technology vision for our school.

* True
* False

1. I feel comfortable doing basic troubleshooting.

* True
* False

1. How often do you use technology in your classroom?

* Daily
* Weekly
* Bi-weekly
* Monthly
* Rarely

1. How often do students use technology in your classroom?

* Daily
* Weekly
* Bi-weekly
* Monthly
* Rarely
* Never

1. Students have the background knowledge necessary to use the technology I would like to use in the classroom.

* True
* False

1. In my classroom, I use technology as much as I would like to.

* Strongly Agree
* Agree
* Neutral
* Disagree
* Strongly Disagree

1. What skills do you need to feel more comfortable integrating student-centered technology into your lessons?
2. Please list the technology currently available to you.
3. Please list the technology you would like to be made available to you.
4. How could we improve our technology use at McCleskey Middle School?
5. What is your vision for technology at McCleskey?