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Educational Leadership Action Plans

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**Introduction**

Teacher A is a high school Social Studies teacher at Huguenot High School (HHS) in Richmond, Virginia. The academic year 2020-2021 is his first year as an educator. He has no classroom experience as he could not complete his student teaching requirement due to the Coronavirus pandemic that closed all educational facilities in Virginia in March of 2020. Mr. A currently teaches two World History and Geography to 1500AD classes and one African American History class. Throughout our meetings, Teacher A has requested assistance in improving Standard 2: Instructional Planning and Standard 3: Instructional Delivery (Virginia Department of Education, 2020) by planning lessons to include all required information before the end of the semester, staying on target with the pacing guide, and including more interactive activities to promote student interaction and collect data to drive future lessons. (Teacher A, personal communication, January 21, 2021).

Last semester I created and sent a survey to the HHS teachers regarding professional development (PD). In that survey, I asked them to tell me what type of PD they needed. Several teachers asked for instruction in foundational tools, such as writing lesson plans using the current Richmond Public School (RPS) lesson plan template (see Appendix A for complete survey responses). Huguenot does not have many new teachers for the 2020-2021 school year, and some of our teachers were reassigned to George Wythe High School to assist with the Newcomers Academy. Hence, my assumption, based on the feedback I received, the majority of respondents are not first-year teachers. As a tenured veteran teacher, I need additional instruction on writing the lesson plans as mandated by the district. New teachers usually receive one session of writing

the lesson plan at the beginning of their first year and expect teachers to keep abreast of each change throughout their tenure with the district. That does not usually happen.

Considering the needs of Teacher A and the survey results, I was interested in how professional development (PD) meets those teachers' needs and the 27.3% of teachers who indicated they needed subject-related PD. I found many articles that focused on Self-Directed Growth plans versus the current SMART Goal and Growth Plan formats, and according to Nikula and et al., "Professional development should be clearly connected to teachers' work in their classrooms" (ASCD et al., 2021). For Teacher A, a self-directed growth plan begins with initiating professional development to support his SMART Goal, integrate technology, and continuing professional development.

### **Analysis and Synthesis of Research Articles**

According to Adam Fried, many teachers at Harrington Park School District were dissatisfied with the time spent preparing for observations, pre and post observational meetings and reports, on "more meaningful" preparations for professional growth, and administrators wanted to "support the growth" of those teachers (George Lucas Educational Foundation et al., 2015). Traditional professional development leans to the whole group and teacher-created SMART Goals. Both new teachers and veteran teachers in RPS are required to create a SMART Goal that focuses on student outcomes and rarely the teacher's professional growth to impact student outcomes. For Teacher A to meet the first goal of mastering the RPS lesson plan template, a self-directed plan to find resources and support would be his first step to meeting his students' needs.

Fried stated that Harrington Park School District created a long-term observation model known as the Self-Directed Growth Plan (SDGP) that applied research, student data, and teacher input which would impact “learning where it counts the most, the classroom.” Teachers created a growth plan for themselves that was continuous and long-term. The plans also addressed how they would address student outcomes at each reanalysis period and could be modified as students’ needs changed. Like SMART GOALS, the basic rules were that the growth plans had to be measurable and focused on student outcomes. The part that stood out was that teachers could be evaluated in an alternative manner such as “action research, peer coaching, collegial partnerships” PLCs, or any other “mutually agreed upon models” (George Lucas Educational Foundation et al., 2015). The analysis provided proved that this model worked. Three points of the evidence supplied are 1) additional time to address math and English time constraints; 2) standardized procedures and tools created by Exceptional Education teachers allowing for smoother transitions between grades for their students; and 3) English as Second Language (ESL) teachers were able to “effectively partner with **any** [emphasis mine] staff member” (George Lucas Educational Foundation et al., 2015).

My take-away from this article is that veteran teachers can also benefit from alternatives to the traditional growth plans or annual goal-setting process. New teachers should be paired with veteran teachers to create the growth plan for themselves, focus on reevaluating the goals when achieved, and determine whether or not their practice of teaching has the desired results. Creating a PLC to support each teacher in creating an action plan is more beneficial than the standard annual SMART goal. Teacher A would have benefitted from a self-evaluation session

with a veteran teacher to ascertain his weaknesses and strengths in the virtual classroom and used the RPS lesson plan template as a guide.

Steve Barkley agrees (Barkley, 2020). In his recent article, *Developing and Coaching Teachers' Professional Growth Plans*, he believes that current Professional Growth Plans (PGPs) created at the beginning of the year and evaluated mid-year and or year-end are inadequate for both educator and student. Goals are usually chosen based on the minimal outcome. These goals provide limited opportunity for teacher growth and, therefore, limited student outcomes. Barkley's plan is to maximize both teacher growth and student outcomes. His five-step program starts with the end in mind. By asking, 'what are the outcomes for teacher and students,' the teacher, administrator, or team can identify the critical "skills, knowledge, attitudes, and/or dispositions" needed by each teacher and student (Barkley, 2020). The second step is to determine how to assess students' current levels, and then step three is to assess and identify the students' levels to determine desired outcomes. Barkley believes that this is where the hypothesis for student outcomes is created. Similar to the SMART Goal, teachers determine the somewhat random percentage of students who will increase learning or outcomes. Nikula's team stated this as a first step in creating the growth plan, "Plan how to implement tasks and strategies with ... students' strengths and needs in mind" (ASCD et al., 2021). Step four is where the teacher's growth plan is created. The question, "what teacher behaviors or actions are most likely to generate the student learning production behaviors?" is asked at this point (Barkley, 2020). The teacher then creates another hypothesis about how they can initiate the plans and how it will impact students' outcomes. Step five is the action plan for the teacher. The growth plan should include the action plan and resources, such as; the research, the PLC, modeling, teaching, and

coaching for him/her self. The teacher should continually ask whether or not the actions included in the plan will impact and use student data to determine if the measures have had the desired effect on student incomes. Step three for Nikula's team encompasses the "reflect, share, and discuss what they saw in the classroom and what they saw in analyses of their students' work on the tasks" actions found in Barkley's and Fried's plans of using the PLC to further growth (ASCD et al., 2021).

Barkley quotes Jean Ross's article, *Why Hypotheses Beat Goals*, "Hypotheses can force individuals to articulate in advance why they believe a given course of action will succeed. A failure to expose an incorrect hypothesis can more readily convert into organizational learning." (Barkley, 2020). We, as educators, tell students that failure is growth. So then we should understand that a hypothesis that cannot be flushed out is also growth. Barkley also focuses on evidence as a form of growth in his article as he points out that evidence proving or disproving provides for growth and change in the current hypothesis. Teachers should assess themselves throughout the growth plan as often as they assess their students. The cycle is Assess, Implement, Document, and Assess again. He states that through this process, educators have continuous learning opportunities. Nikula and her team "found that cycles of planning, implementing, and reflecting can create connections between the professional learning teachers undergo and those teachers' practice" (ASCD et al., 2021).

The Alliance for Excellent Education website, Future Ready Schools (FRS), defines professional growth plans through a process very similar to the traditional one used in many schools. School leaders follow the "development, implementation, monitoring, and assessment" process of teachers' growth plan. However, the last two sections of the definition include

“differentiated by staff members” and “evaluated based on student outcomes” (Alliance for Excellent Education, n.d.). I was surprised that the Future Ready Schools plan for professional growth was very structured, considering many of the newer articles I found less. I do not believe the process is flawed, but it was very controlled. Before reading the first step, the article states that the leader/administrator and teacher need to “work from a common understanding of what constitutes effective teaching.” Instead of a step for the individual, I think this concept first needs defining as a school or a district. Shouldn’t the entire district understand what constitutes effective teaching and then reinforce it in the school?

The concept of the Future Ready Schools plan is similar to all professional growth plans. It focuses on student outcomes and how a teacher manipulates teaching to achieve a set goal. The FRS plan also includes teacher actions to identify student priority “areas of improvement” and the process; however, the plan mentions accountability measures, which are vacant in the previous two articles. I feel judged already just by the terminology. I prefer the hypothesis and evidence method of reassessing whether or not the measure was successful for students and reassessing to move forward from where the students currently reside.

FRS does list common pitfalls in using a compliance mindset. The second section focuses on a Growth Mindset to create and implement the growth plan. After reading the brief article, I believe using the FRS plan to set guidelines for the Self-Directed Growth Plans would be beneficial if they changed some words to remove the associated fear of recrimination or punishment. Using Barkley’s growth plan that includes creating hypotheses in conjunction with the self-directed plans would greatly benefit new teachers and veteran teachers. The use of a PLC to help guide teachers at any point in their careers would provide a safe place to discuss student

outcome goals and create plans to achieve them via individual growth plans. The self-directed growth plan would also provide teachers with resources to support their action plans as a part of the SMART goal/growth plan processes.

According to the article, *How to Integrate Technology*, one of the steps is to integrate learning new educational technology tools into the professional growth plan (George Lucas Educational Foundation, 2007). Teacher A can reach out to his PLC team, department members, Instructional Technology Resource Teacher (ITRT), or his mentor to assist with learning about the types of technology currently being used in RPS. They can also assist with other technology to help in Standard 3: Instructional Delivery (Virginia Department of Education, 2020). Teacher A can determine if they are helpful by creating a plan to learn one or two specific types of technology before integrating them into the lesson plan. He needs the technology to provide student interaction, data for him to use in creating new lessons, data to assess comprehension and student outcomes. The article also provides specific tools that can be used for “quick-checks” and to create “personalized feedback” to determine comprehension before moving on to the next topic or concept (George Lucas Educational Foundation, 2007).

The article contains six sections that can help either a new teacher or a veteran teacher who is now teaching in a virtual classroom to learn why and how to integrate technology and which tools are available. Although the article was written in 2007, many of the tools mentioned are still in use today, such as Poll Everywhere, Edmodo, Evernote, and Common Sense Media. All of the articles focused on creating self-directed growth plans, either in an official professional development plan or a personal growth plan.

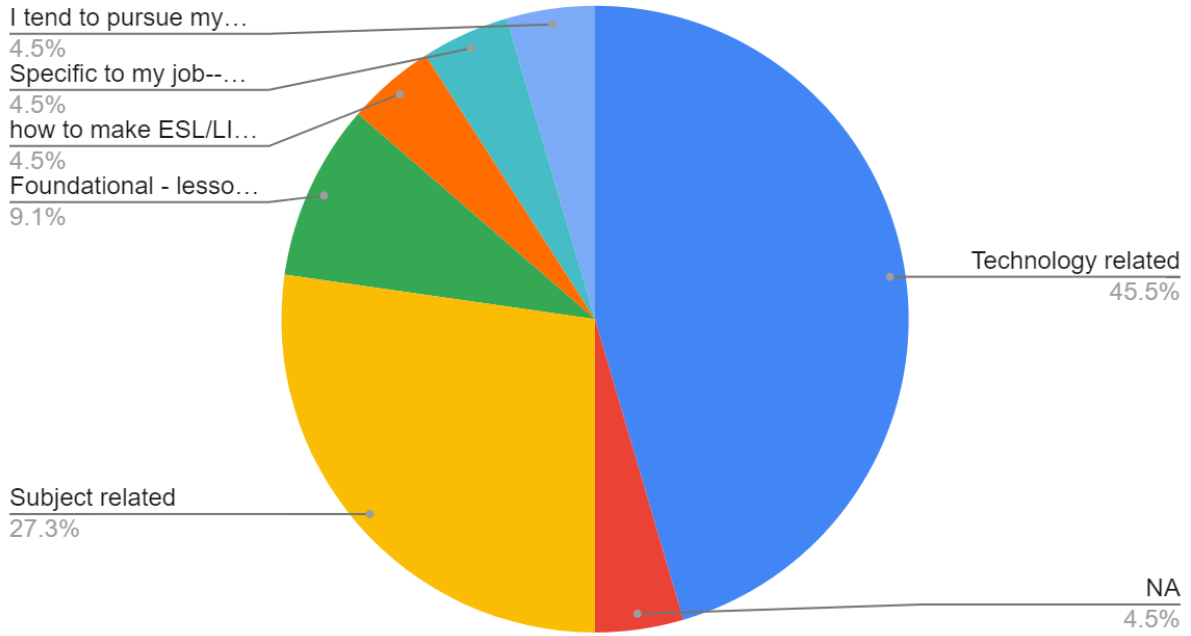
### **Implementation**



Mr. A has been open to creating a self-directed growth plan with support from me and his department chair. At our last observation, he instituted the use of the Google Meet polling feature during his class period to gauge student comprehension and the use of Jamboards to add in the introduction to the following day's lesson. He is also meeting more with his department as a PLC to work on planning. He has also reached out to me to teach him about the resources available to him and his students via RPS and the supporting community. Although he still uses the same format to introduce his lessons after conducting a "check-in" with students, he has provided students with a link to the video in Google Classroom to watch a second time if needed and a copy of the slides he uses to guide the lesson. He has already begun the process of self-directing his professional growth as an educator, as described in the articles mentioned above, by meeting with his department to create lesson plans that keep him on a timeframe necessary to meet the pacing guide goals. He has reviewed his lessons to determine what tools he needs to use in his classroom and initiate the learning process.

**Appendix A**

Count of What kind of professional development do you need?



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