

Gearity Professional Development School

Comprehensive Needs Assessment – Gearity Professional Development School

Gearity has reviewed the data from state assessments, common assessments, and the NWEA MAP testing to determine the critical areas needed for improvement in reading and math. The building leadership team identified Acquisition of Vocabulary and determining Key Ideas and Details in Literary and Informational texts as areas needing improvement. Our goal by the end of the 2015-2016 school year is for all students to make a year's worth of growth based on the appropriate measurable assessment i.e. (Kindergarten -KRA), (1 & 2 – Fountas & Pinnell), (3, 4, 5 - MAP Testing).

In order to achieve this goal we plan to improve student comprehension through focused lessons, instructional strategies and activities. The building's ELA and math blocks are structured around a coteaching model that provides students with instructional strategies around vocabulary and literary and informational texts in regards to all academic content areas. These activities will provide explicit vocabulary instruction of content area vocabulary and comprehension strategies that are used before, during and after reading. The instructional strategies that target vocabulary and comprehension instruction have been identified through monthly building level professional development opportunities and will be implemented during instruction. The building is also targeting comprehension instruction and lessons around the district's focus of close reading and questioning. Discussions regarding close reading, questioning and unpacking grade level standards will be provided to the teachers during district professional development days and TBTs throughout the school year.

Gearity has implemented an intervention period for K-5 students who need additional support in ELA. The student are provided with tier 2 and 3 interventions to help support the SAT process. Math support is provided to 1st through 5th grade classrooms. A math specialist collaborates with grade level math teachers to provide high quality instruction and materials to students.

ELA teachers in kindergarten, first and fourth grades have piloted a core reading program through the district. Teachers in grades kindergarten and one piloted the *SuperKids* program. The fourth grade ELA teacher piloted the *Reading Street* program. Gearity also uses *Storia*, *Raz-Kids* and *Lightsail* as part of their core reading program. These three resources are digitally based and provide access to e-book readers. The three resources provide post assessment resources for comprehension.

We will also use the DIBELS, a scientifically based assessment and the TRC benchmarking system two times per year to obtain comprehension data and determine appropriate reading levels. We will also be using bi-weekly pre and post vocabulary assessments to obtain vocabulary data to also help us determine appropriate reading levels and growth with vocabulary skills. This data will be used to support the ELA classrooms and our Response to Intervention (RTI) framework.

In addition, vertical (multiple grade levels), content specific teacher based teams (TBTs) will meet on a weekly basis to monitor student progress. Data will be organized and examined to

determine student progress and achievement in order to determine if students are meeting grade level goals. Students who have been identified as not meeting their goals will receive interventions. Interventions will be documented and reviewed by the teachers, an intervention teacher and the SAT (Student Assistance Team) team every month.

Indicators of the effectiveness of our building plan will include a decrease in the number of students reading below expected levels and a decrease in the number of students needing tier 2 interventions. We also expect to see an increase in proficiency in the areas of Acquisition of Vocabulary and Literary and Informational text on our assessments.

In mathematics, the building leadership team identified the concept of Number Sense and measurement as the areas of greatest need as demonstrated through the Ohio Achievement Assessment administered in April 2014. This data is consistent with the previous year state results, district common assessments, and MAP assessments. By the end of the school year our goal is to increase the amount of students achieving proficient in the Number Sense and Operations and measurement standards by 10% in grades 3, 4 and 5 as measured by the Math OAA.

We will use Math Expressions, a K-5 district adopted comprehensive math program with fidelity. This includes administering math fluency checks from Math Expressions frequently and monitoring progress. All teachers will understand the enduring understandings and essential questions for the Number, Number Sense and Operations Standard and use them in their teaching.

In order to monitor these essential understandings, teachers will collaborate during weekly vertical teacher based team meetings to explore ideas and student misconceptions at deeper levels. Teachers will also use TBTs to examine the results obtained from assessments and determine lessons and activities students can participate in to increase their achievement. We will provide more time and intensive instruction by utilizing the RTI component of the Math Expressions program to students who are not proficient. An indicator of the effectiveness of our plan will be the decrease in the number of students needing substantial intervention in Number Sense and Operations and measurement standards as well an increase of proficient students in this area on common assessments, MAP benchmark assessments and state assessments.

Implementation of School Wide Reform Strategies

Gearity is implementing the DigiLit project through a Straight A grant from the state of Ohio. DigiLit is a digital literacy project that is designed to transform the look and feel of the classroom for elementary school students in grades preK-5. The DigiLit project at Gearity Professional Development School will develop, implement and test an innovative model of English Language Arts (ELA) teaching by infusing digital tools and software (Storia, Raz-kids and LightSail) in ELA instruction to accelerate literacy learning and increase students' academic content vocabulary, especially in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math).

Throughout the DigiLit project, we have a balanced literacy approach that incorporates reading and writing across the curriculum. The teachers use the teaching learning cycle which

encompasses planning, teaching, reflecting/revising, and assessing as a formative assessment approach. Teachers are consciously moving through the cycle to make deliberate actions in their teaching. The data gathered from the learning supports the reflection and planning for the next activities. This is done by following the Ohio Improvement Process within TBT meetings. A protocol is used to support this learning cycle.

Our master schedule provides a balanced literacy block, five days a week. Within this block interventions are provided to students by the teachers. Intense interventions are provided to specific students who need additional support outside of the ELA block. These interventions are provided to students through a reading specialist. Our goal is that all students will increase their reading level by at least one year's growth. This will be measured at the beginning, middle and the end of the school year using the TRC benchmark system and MAP scores.. Student growth measures will be monitored through the SLO process. A 50/50 balance between literary text and informational text will be used as alternate measures of comprehension growth. Student instructional activities will include phonemic awareness, vocabulary development, reading fluency, reading comprehension and writing.

As students are identified below grade level on benchmark assessments, interventions and differentiated lessons will be implemented. Students who are significantly below grade level in the primary grades will receive an intense level of instruction targeting phonemic awareness, phonics and sight word recognition. Fluid groupings will also be utilized to ensure individual student needs are being met. Teachers, interventions specialist and ELA Title I support/reading specialist will provide scientifically research based interventions. The ELA Title I support/reading specialist will provide the following interventions to students: SuperKids intervention, Foundation and the Fountas and Pinnell LLI (Leveled Literacy Interventions)

Gearity will follow the same protocols for our mathematics goal of improving student understanding and mastery of number sense and measurement. We will identify low achieving students through the math core assessments and benchmark testing. Teachers will use the RTI resources that are provided within the core program to address skill deficits. Teachers and the math specialist will provide time to reteach targeted skills and provide enrichment opportunities for students based on data.

Highly Qualified Teachers

All of Gearity's staff members currently satisfy the HQT requirements. The district provides the building principals with staff credentials. This will be reviewed annually to insure compliance. Teachers review the HQT documentation and provide a signature indicating that the information provided is correct. This form is submitted back to the building principal. This information is also available to Gearity families.

High Quality, Ongoing Professional Development

Gearity has established a culture that supports teaching and learning. All staff members meet monthly for sixty minutes. During this time our staff participates in monthly meetings targeted to

the building's needs and goals for the school year. The administrator selects research based articles focused on timely and relevant topics that support the learning needs of the teachers and staff.

Another focus this year is to understand the new state assessments. Several teachers participated in professional development opportunities regarding the AIR assessments, Illuminate Education, Google, technology and the Ohio Academic Content Standards.. The teachers will be providing ongoing professional development during staff meetings. They have already helped to reinforce the importance of our focus on vocabulary instruction.

As part of Gearity's DigiLit Straight A grant, John Carroll University, the building Principal, the STEM Specialist and the building's Title I Lead teacher support professional development at the building level by providing information on the development and the implementation of teaching digital tools and software (Storia, Raz-kids and LightSail) in ELA instruction to accelerate literacy learning and increase students' academic content vocabulary, especially in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math).

As a STEM school, the teachers participate in professional development opportunities that are arranged by the STEM coordinator. Gearity has partnered with NASA Space Center and works with a representative who provides unique professional development that is interdisciplinary in content.

We also have two teacher representatives who attend district level meetings regarding our new data system Illuminate Education. Using a train the trainer model, the teachers help support the teachers at Gearity. They are responsible for teaching teachers how generate different types of data reports, create assessments and input data.

Gearity teachers will participate in professional development activities at a district level three times during the 2015-2016 school year. The professional development activities will be planned by the Educational Services team in the district. The purpose of these meetings is to collaboratively enhance our understanding of standards, instruction and assessment. This work will continue in our school based TBT meetings to further support our learning.

Strategies to Attract High-Qualified Teachers

As our district continues to search for the highest quality teachers, we attend local and state recruitment fairs. The district uses Aplitrack and potential teacher candidates apply with our district through our on-line application system. The job vacancy postings indicate minimum and preferred qualifications. Applicant's credentials are reviewed to ensure they have correct licensure. This narrows the pool to candidates who have both minimum and preferred qualifications. We then review the application's entire packet including any attachments (recommendation letters, etc.) and only the most promising are interviewed. Once a teacher has been hired, they participate in the residency program to support the new teacher. These first year teachers are paired with an experienced teacher in their assigned buildings. Regular meetings are established to address any additional questions or concerns from the new teacher.

Gearity Professional Development School welcomes student teachers and practicum students from neighboring universities, especially John Carroll University. We have also welcomed entry level teachers the opportunity to observe in the classrooms. Substitute teachers that have done well in the building and/or the district have been encouraged to apply for jobs and have received interviews.

Strategies to Increase Parental Involvement

We begin our school year with a welcome letter from the principal, and each classroom teacher sends a welcome letter to all of his/her students. Before the year begins, we invite new kindergarten families in to get to know the school and the teachers. Individual assessments are given. On the first day of school all students and families are greeted by the principal and teachers. We have curriculum night within the first few weeks of school for parents/guardians and an ice cream social for families.

Gearity's PTA parents are very supportive. They support Gearity's educational needs by purchasing materials and sponsoring school events. Throughout the year, we have monthly PTA meetings. Every PTA meeting includes updates from the principal. One teacher representative participates at each meeting. The goal is to keep parents informed of school goals, activities and events.

We offer multiple math/STEM events, literacy events, a black history performance and music/instrumental performances throughout the school year for our families. We have school wide parent/guardian conference nights twice during the school year. Interim progress reports are mailed home three times per year. Student progress report cards are mailed home at the end of each trimester. Parents may schedule conferences with teachers at any time during the academic year.

Plans for Assisting Preschool Children in the Transition for Early Childhood Programs

Gearity welcomes new kindergarten families before the beginning of the school year. Our kindergarten students contact families and invite them in to the school before the year begins. This is a great way to help ease the transition. The Heights Parent Center provides events for preschool families to learn about literacy initiatives and parenting support.

The CH-UH partnership program, KinderNet, introduces prospective preK children and families to kindergarten, easing the transition through on-site programs in buildings, information through newsletters, and an annual fair including the principal and representatives from all elementary schools. Additional transitional steps include elementary kindergarten teachers participating in transition meetings at area preschools. New kindergarten students begin the year on a staggered schedule during the first days of school that includes a limited number of students to ease the transition and begin the establishment of a relationship with the kindergarten teacher.

Measures to Include Teachers in Decisions Regarding the Use of Academic Assessments

At Gearity, all teachers are responsible for collecting and analyzing student assessment data. Weekly TBT meetings provide time to plan for common assessments, collect data, analyze student work, and plan learning activities. The team consists of teachers, intervention specialist and the building principal. They work collaboratively to discuss student needs and instructional goals. RTI (SAT) meetings are held monthly which include additional staff support (speech pathologist, counselor, and psychologist) to further review student data and intervention progress monitoring. Student information is updated and saved to building level teacher drives for review.

Activities to Ensure that Students Having Difficulties Mastering the Proficient and Advanced Levels of Standards Shall Have Effective , Timely Additional Assistance

As a result of a proactive approach for monitoring student achievement, our RTI framework provides a tiered system of support. When a student is identified as in need of additional support the following intervention are utilized.

- Phonemic Awareness –Foundations program, SuperKids
- Phonics, Decoding- Language program and SuperKids
- Vocabulary, Comprehension- DigiLit Grant Protocols
- Phonics, Vocabulary, Comprehension- LLI (Fountas and Pinnell intervention system) and SuperKids
- Flexible Grouping practices
- Number Sense- Math Expressions RTI component
- After school Tutoring- Reading/Math
- Family Connections –Kindergarten

For students meeting the academic standards, there are enrichment activities provided by a gifted specialist. ELL students are supported by an ELL teacher from the district.

Coordination and Integration of Federal, State and Local Services and Programs

Special education services and Title I services are both components of our RTI framework. Gearity has a comprehensive approach to assisting students who are not performing at proficient levels. We utilize the intervention specialist and general education teachers in the resource room and in the classroom. We use parent volunteers, adult volunteers, specials teachers, ELA support staff teachers and support staff to increase student achievement.

Gearity's building Principal, Title I lead, BLT, Illuminate team, math committee, reading committee and SAT team coordinate the academic programs, academic evening events, Straight A grant structures and building/district wide professional development sessions in the building.

Most (67%) of our students at Gearity receive a free and or reduced breakfast and lunch. Our lunch supervisor and aides support proper nutrition and wellness of all of our students. Gearity offers a before and after care program for working families that is tuition based and accepts government vouchers. This program is housed within our school building and provides arts, games, literacy and homework support. Our social worker works with local agencies to support families needing afterschool activities for their children. All of our students at Gearity

participate in the Second-Step program. The counselor and classroom teachers teach problem solving skills and support their social/emotional health.

Gearity was awarded a Straight A grant through the State of Ohio in July 2014. Straight A is a highly competitive grant opportunity using Ohio Lottery funds for innovative projects in education. Awarded projects are required to show that the project will be sustained for five years after initial implementation while maintaining or reducing costs. The Straight A grant will fund Gearity's DigiLit, or digital literacy project which is expected to engage students in an innovative model of English Language Arts (ELA) teaching by infusing digital tools and software (Storia, Raz-kids and LightSail) in ELA instruction to accelerate literacy learning and increase students' academic content vocabulary, especially in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, Math).