Deputy Superintendent’s Corner

Servant Leadership: Prevailing and Promising Practices from Instructional Leaders

Daylight lingers, and new growth surrounds us, signaling the fast-approaching end of another school year. Many of you use this quarter to review formative data to determine what practices have worked well and which ones need adjustment for the upcoming year. Reflection is a critical element to success, so I encourage you examine the data and take the time to celebrate your growth. Finally, remember to share your accomplishments with us so we can acknowledge those successes alongside you.

We believe working to reduce variability in student learning among schools is a win for our students, families, and entire communities. Reducing variability is challenging, but you can do it. We are committed to helping you every step of the way. I want to thank you all for the work you are doing to support schools by providing opportunities for optimal learning experiences to ensure positive outcomes for all students.

Kudos to the practitioners who participated in the 2022 Instructional Leadership Conference and everyone who contributed to the event’s success. Information on the “Implementing Resources and Strategies with Fidelity” utilizing Georgia’s Systems of Continuous Improvement’s problem-solving cycle presentations can be found at GaDOE Community/Office of School Improvement. This GaDOE Community group is recommended for district and school leaders to discuss common problems of practice, share resources, and provide essential information to support district and school improvement efforts.

Please enjoy this quarter’s newsletter about servant leaders committed to continuous improvement to meet the needs of the whole child using prevailing and promising practices. Stewardship is vital for effective servant leaders who cultivate a collaborative culture and a commitment to growth. Our goal remains for each child and staff member to experience success in a safe and orderly environment conducive to learning.

Division News

We hope the articles on servant leadership will inspire you to embrace this season of growth and reflect on all the progress you have made this year.

Dr. Stephanie Johnson
Deputy Superintendent/Chief Turnaround Officer

Office of School Improvement
Professional Learning Needs Survey

The GaDOE Office of School Improvement requests your input regarding school and district leaders’ professional learning needs for the 2022-2023 school year. The Professional Learning Needs Survey will be open April 4-May 20, and we ask that all district leaders, principals, assistant principals, and teacher leaders complete this brief survey. Our office will use responses to provide tiered and tailored support through our ongoing professional learning offerings. Thank you for your valuable feedback!

Title I-A School Improvement Grants

The U.S. Department of Education granted Georgia’s waiver request to extend the availability period for FY20 Title I, Part A, 1003 School Improvement funds to September 30, 2022. Therefore, LEAs will have the opportunity to carry over remaining FY21 Title I, Part A, 1003 School Improvement funds to September 30, 2022. In addition, the deadline for the Rural Resource, GSCI, and Digital Learning Grants, including the final grant report, was extended to September 30, 2022. If you have any questions, please contact your assigned district effectiveness specialist.

School Improvement Listserv

We are excited to share our Office of School Improvement listserv, which provides timely information to subscribers, including professional learning opportunities, quarterly newsletters, resources, conference information, grant opportunities, and other statewide school improvement information. To join, send a blank email to join-schoolimprovement@list.doe.k12.ga.us.
Spotlight on Servant Leaders and Promising Practices

Learning Loss Support Team News
Dr. Taijuan Clayton-Brookes, Lead Academic Recovery Specialist

Learning Loss Support Initiative
GaDOE created the Learning Loss Support Unit to address learning resulting from the pandemic. The team piloted the Learning Loss Support initiative at Lovejoy High School in the Clayton County Public School District on February 28.

The Academic Recovery Specialists (ARSS) observed classroom instruction, reviewed lesson plans, attended professional learning community (PLC) meetings, interviewed key stakeholders, and hosted focus groups to determine areas of need. In addition, the ARSSs met with Lovejoy’s administrative team to share feedback, propose support strategies aligned to the continuous improvement process cycle, and outline the next steps.

The ARS team provided school and district representatives with a site visit summary and a proposed plan of action for learning loss support. The ARSs are excited and honored to collaborate with Lovejoy High School’s fantastic faculty and staff, and they look forward to a wonderful school year.

Access forms and resources at Learning Loss Support.

Follow our ARSSs on Twitter and Instagram as they highlight strategies and schools on their journey to effectively address learning loss.

Alternative Education News
Dr. Samuel Taylor, Area Program Manager

Leading the Way
Cobb Horizon High School is an alternative school available to students in the Cobb County School District. Students can earn their high school diplomas in a blended, non-traditional setting. School and district leaders are exceeding all expectations of creating a positive, safe, alternative academic environment that focuses on providing students with the support needed to maximize instructional time and ensure student success.

The instructional format at Cobb Horizon High School differs from a traditional high school. Instruction is primarily completed through various online platforms, with teachers available to answer student questions and assist with online assignments. Direct teacher support allows students to work at their own pace to accelerate their learning. Students work in small classroom settings and receive one-on-one attention when needed. Although students complete most coursework online, they are also expected to complete offline assignments and participate in small group instruction. All Cobb Horizon teachers maintain Georgia certification in their respective fields.

Cobb Horizon High School serves students who may need a different path to obtain the credits required to earn a high school diploma. As a non-punitive alternative school, Cobb Horizon offers a unique experience to students who need to improve their academic performance, work or family commitments that conflict with the hours of traditional high schools, social/ emotional/behavioral reasons, or transfer from an out-of-state school and may need additional credits to graduate. Students, parents, and staff work together to make Cobb Horizon a place where students become enthusiastic learners. As a result, students secure the required credits and real-world soft skills that enable them to succeed and thrive after graduation and become positive contributors to their communities.

John Kelly, Principal, and Chris Jackson, Assistant Principal
North Area News
Anthony Pack, Area Program Manager

Shared Vision or Isolated Thinking?
R. Steven Jones is Bibb County School District's (BCSD) Executive Officer for School Improvement. He regularly asks principals if ideas and practices are examples of a shared vision or isolated thinking. In addition, Jones leads them in discussions to develop and refine a shared vision for teaching and learning that translates to #Tier1Strong instruction in every classroom every day.

At the 2021-2022 district kickoff meeting, BCSD Superintendent Curtis Jones reminded district leaders that focusing on learning loss and intervention shifted focus away from Tier 1 instruction, putting students even further behind. The district-wide challenge, #Tier1Strong, was born! To help meet this challenge, district leadership leveraged Jones' experience as a servant leader and stewardship skills to work directly with the district's federally identified schools. He shares his experience with school leaders in his #ZoneStrong meetings. Jones clusters federally identified schools so they can share ideas, address struggles, and celebrate victories.

Jones’ persuasiveness and foresight earned him recognition as a successful turnaround principal in the BCSD. This recognition is another reason why district leadership chose him to guide others eager to support the district’s mission, Victory in Progress. Jones realizes the foundation for effective classroom instruction increases when teachers hold common beliefs and can articulate them as a shared vision for teaching and learning. Simply put, we are better together than we are as individuals. Additionally, collective teacher efficacy ranks first on John Hattie’s list of effective practices. The vehicle for developing collective teacher efficacy is a shared vision for teaching and learning. Therefore, utilizing the promising approach of creating a shared vision will increase the district’s success. This shared vision for Victory in Progress is blazing the path in the Bibb County School District!

Metro Area News
Susan Patrick, Area Program Manager

Discovery, Debriefing, and Next Steps Planning
Jonesboro Middle School in the Clayton County School District examines promising practices that support reducing classroom variability and ensuring evidence of collaborative lesson planning. The school utilized a servant leader approach by implementing a discovery, debriefing, and next steps in planning process. They focused on distinct action steps to monitor standards-based instruction and the instructional framework based on content planning. The core academic leadership team designed a schedule to conduct instructional walkthroughs and engage in planning discussions based on focused data collection.

Principal Kimberlee Barnett encouraged her staff to work together to increase student achievement and better meet students' needs. This servant leadership strategy built a stronger sense of community.

First, Barnett implemented the discovery phase by utilizing a blended team of school leaders, academic support staff, district staff, and external agency teams. The group discussed the observational focus based on the priorities outlined in the school improvement plan. Then, the team used Thinksheets for consensus-building using the eWalk classroom observation instrument. Next, the group began the debriefing phase to highlight the school's trends, strengths of practice, areas of growth, quick wins, and reflections. Finally, Barnett emphasized using collective data by reflecting on next steps in planning to address instructional practices.

Drawing on servant leadership, administrators provided a continuum of coaching support for teachers to receive guided, collective feedback to address instructional planning and delivery. Jonesboro Middle School’s leadership remains committed to the school's goal of reducing instruction variability by monitoring discovery, debriefing and next steps in planning—a promising practice that servant leaders can embrace!
South Area News
Janie Fields, Area Program Manager

Principal Spotlight

Cloud and Wilson implemented school improvement processes to better serve the students, staff, and community. The approaches focus on turning around academic achievement and ensuring students move in a positive direction. Because servant leaders must be aware of changes that need to occur, Cloud recognized the importance of analyzing data to influence school improvement and expanded her stewardship role to a newfound level.

Cloud benefitted from working collaboratively with GaDOE and Southwest Georgia RESA staff. She became a master at using a data workbook resource to collect and compile pertinent data regarding assessments, literacy levels, subgroup performance, lesson plan proficiency, instructional effectiveness during classroom observations, attendance, and discipline. The data workbook serves as a one-stop-shop for data that reinforces the schools improvement efforts. It is also the resource staff use to showcase their commitment to growth.

The consistent utilization of the data workbook drives the work at the school and serves as a valuable resource. Cloud refers to the data workbook when she presents to district office staff, works with her leadership team, and engages with various stakeholders. Her ability to conceptualize and see potential in her teachers and students confirms that Cloud is indeed a servant leader. She and her staff are well on the way to improving student achievement by utilizing data and providing a collaborative culture!

GaDOE Community News

We invite all district and school leaders to join the Office of School Improvement Community!

Step 1: Register
Go to community.gadoe.org. Create an account using your professional, work-provided email.

Step 2: Complete Profile
After you log in for the first time, complete your user profile so others can connect with you.

Step 3: Join Group
Search available groups hosted by GaDOE. Some groups are public, and other groups require GaDOE permission to join.

GaDOE Professional Learning Events

Our GaDOE professional learning events catalog, housed in GaDOE Community, contains registration information for upcoming webinars, workshops, and conferences. Pre-recorded sessions are also available to meet educators’ professional learning needs and interests. Professional learning events are updated quarterly. Educational stakeholders are encouraged to visit GaDOE Community often to view the latest opportunities. Click here to access the professional learning events catalog.

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