

Current Reality and GAPSS for K.E. Taylor Elementary School

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Vision

The technology vision of K.E. Taylor Elementary as stated in the Local School Plan for Improvement (LSPI) is that teachers will be able to integrate technology into the instructional practices so that students are not learning directly from technology but learning with the technology (2017-2018, LSPI). This year Taylor Elementary has started a technology team of ten teachers and members of the school community to help with technology integration. The team meets once a month to talk about any technology needs. This group consists of one teacher per grade level, three technology innovators (teachers in the school who are technologically well informed), the Local School Technology Coordinator, and the eClass Specialist for the school. The vision for this team is that they will be able to help the school reach their technology goal.

This year Taylor Elementary prioritizes technology more than it has in the past. It is the first year that Gwinnett County is working with Digital Learning Days instead of Inclement Weather Days. There has been more of a push for teachers to help students become more accustomed to using Learning Management System (LMS). The goal for working with this technology is that teachers use the LMS for students to communicate, collaborate, and use creativity and critical thinking. The students are also learning about their digital footprint and how to be a good digital citizen. Teachers use their professional learning time twice a week to talk about lessons and how to use technology in their weekly lessons.

The technology tools that are the most used at Taylor are Imagine Learning, Moby Max, and Classworks. The vision for using these tools is to differentiate instruction and create engaging lessons for students. These tool can be used for English Language Learners (ELL) or students who struggle with reading.

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Technology is being used to improve student learning by engaging students in a way that best suits their learning needs. Taylor Elementary has a goal to raise reading levels this year because students are required to pass the Milestones Assessment in grades 3-5 for promotion. This test is an online assessment where students will read and complete multiple-choice questions as well as typed constructed responses. Taylor wants to make sure that students are using technology throughout the school day so that they are ready when it comes to the test. The idea is that if students are using technology in the classroom and they are familiar with the format, they will be more likely to excel on the actual tests. Students, teachers, and administrators will benefit from the integration of technology on a daily basis because it will help raise test scores and reading levels using differentiated instruction online.

Needs Assessment

When talking with the Local School Technology Coordinator at Taylor Elementary the professional learning needs are data driven by the district assessments at the end of each nine weeks and the Milestones Assessment (Neal, 2018). The focus for professional learning this year is Math and Reading. Twice a week during planning time Taylor uses Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) to collaborate and focus on data analysis, deconstructing the standards and creating learning pathways for quality instruction in math and reading (2017-2018, LSPI). Instructional coaches at Taylor and county level coaches lead these meetings.

The annual goals in the LSPI also state that data will be used to drive instruction, stating that 100% of students will achieve Proficient on the Mathematics and the English Language Arts District Assessment (2017-2018, LSPI). Because the annual goal is specific to reading and math, Taylor provides professional development with district level leaders in these subject areas. This year teachers are also provided with resources from the county to work on raising reading levels

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through guided reading groups and strategy groups. Administrators look at the data for testing and report their findings to the teachers. Teachers are then able to use the data to form their strategy groups and their guided reading groups. These groups focus on higher order thinking skills and low strands on the district assessments that are provided and planned for in the professional learning communities

Data other than District Assessments and Milestones scores are also used to provide professional learning. Data from online tools like Moby Max, Zearn, Imagine Learning, and any other online system can be used to drive instruction and to provide evidence for needs of groups of students. This data can be used in the Student Support Team (SST) meetings, Response to Intervention (RTI) process, and to check progress for ELL students and students with an Individualized Education Program (IEP). The school also uses ACCESS to guide discussions for ELL students. Administration and teachers use data to to guide the professional learning needs at Taylor Elementary.

Professional Learning

At Taylor Elementary, there are various forms of professional development available. Each week there is required professional development for certified teachers at the school level. Every Tuesday during planning time teachers are expected to attend English Language Arts planning where they plan lessons and common assessments for the next week as well as analyze data to drive instruction. The same process is required every Thursday for mathematics planning. During English Language Arts, planning the Assistant Principal for the grade level attends to guide the meeting and discuss any specific needs or test data with the teachers. During Mathematics planning a member of the county math team assigned to Taylor Elementary is there to help analyze the standards and data and to discuss best practices.

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At the school level, all teachers are also required to be in one other professional learning community that interests them. The teams may include social studies team, science team, STEM team, Technology team, guided reading team or be a representative for their grade level. These teams meet to talk about any needs in their particular area. They can also meet to discuss any data or information that needs to be discussed with the rest of their grade level.

During professional learning days at the beginning of the year, throughout the year, and at the end of the year, there is also extra planning that depends on the needs of that time. In the past, there has been professional development on the new science and social studies curriculum, best practices in writing, Lucy Calkins training, and classroom management training. This professional development can change depending on the time of year and what is needed at any point in time. This year we have also done extra technology training due to the digital learning days. Teachers need professional development on using the LMS system to engage their students. Throughout the school year, we also have professional development meetings on ELL training. Teachers are required through the district to work with the ELL leader at the school to talk about best practices for teaching ELL students. Taylor Elementary uses many resources at the district and school level to prepare teachers for the needs that may arise throughout the school year.

Follow-up strategies are also used to guide professional learning programs. After any professional learning at Taylor, a survey is sent out asking teachers to talk about their experiences. The survey asks what was helpful about the learning and what teachers got out of the training. The survey also looks at the negatives asking what teachers need more training on and what could have been better about the learning in the professional development. The administration also discusses next steps at the end of every professional development session.

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Teachers receive a slip of paper that lists the goal before we meet again, which usually is something that teachers should try to implement in their classroom. For example, in the technology meeting, the target may be that all teachers will have students use the LMS to do one assignment a week until the next meeting. At the next meeting, we will then debrief about how the teachers felt about using technology and advice on what worked and what did not. Taylor is very proactive when it comes to making sure the follow up is meaningful.

Alignment

When talking with the Local School Technology Coordinator, Mrs. Neal, she stated that all funding for any professional development of teachers at the Collins Hill Cluster Schools is through Gwinnett County Public School District (Neal, 2018). Any professional development that is done during planning time has no extra cost unless a district representative is present which is then paid for through the district. The costs associated with outside professional development is budgeted through the county. The school submits a request for payment of substitute teachers if teachers are out for professional development. As stated in the Gwinnett County Board of Education Adopted Budget, Elementary schools receive \$4.12 per student and per school for substitutes for in-service staff development activities (2017-2018). The school also has a budget to send coaches and teachers to professional development outside of the school like conferences or workshops. Other funds for the classroom are provided at the cluster level. Teachers can apply for a CHEF Grant, which is the Collins Hill Education Foundation. Teachers can apply for and receive a grant for classroom supplies or funds to attend further professional development. Gwinnett County Schools offers other funding for Title I schools, but Taylor does not meet the Title I standards, which are based on the “percentage of students qualifying for free or reduced-price school meals” (Howard)

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Teachers at Taylor Elementary are always encouraged to look for professional development that they are interested in and will better their teaching strategies to ensure they are using best practices. The incentives are to receive PLU credit. Teachers are required to have a PLU credit each year so that they are up to date on the teaching strategies. Teachers are also incentivized through recognition by the administration in staff meetings and the ability to bring back valuable information and share it with the rest of the school. Because Gwinnett County Public schools offer so many opportunities for professional development, teachers can easily meet goals and gain credits.

Diversity

Many of the professional learning opportunities at Taylor Elementary are focused on diverse needs of students, and if it is not the focus, it is always something that is touched on in professional development. We have a population of ELL students in every grade so each year the administration provides professional development on teaching strategies for ELL students. The ELL teacher at Taylor teaches this program and this year it was a web-based training course. We also have training on how to work with special education students and with students in the speech program. This training could include teaching strategies as well as professional development on how to recommend a student for special education services. Taylor also always touches on diverse students' needs in math and language arts professional development each week. We discuss how to differentiate for gifted students as well as students that are low achieving in the EIP programs. Diversity is a primary focus in all staff development courses at Taylor.

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using best practices. The incentives are to receive PLU credit. Teachers are required to have a PLU credit each year so that they are up to date on the teaching strategies. Gwinnett County Offers credits to teachers who attend staff development. Teachers are also incentivized through recognition by the administration in staff meetings and the ability to bring back valuable information and share it with the rest of the school. Because Gwinnett County Public schools offer so many opportunities for professional development, teachers can easily meet goals and gain credits.

Collaboration

Professional learning communities create collaboration among grade levels as well as throughout the school. Since all teachers meet with their grade level every Tuesday and Thursday as well as during planning whole days and half days, teachers can work together to collaborate on analyzing the standards, learn new teaching strategies, and plan lessons. Teachers plan their lessons, so grade levels are on the same lessons throughout the week and are then able to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of their planning and implementation with the students. In these planning meetings, teachers also collaborate with county representatives and coaches to discuss Quality Plus Teaching Strategies. These formal meetings are required by the local school, but teachers also meet informally as a grade level to discuss ideas and innovations in-between meetings. Because teachers work together so often the collaboration between grade levels is very smooth at Taylor Elementary, teachers respect others opinions and work together to take the advice of other teachers.

As stated previously, teachers are also a part of a team that meets once per month to collaborate about other areas. For example, the guided reading team consists of one teacher per grade level and discusses the best practices for working with students in guided reading and

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strategy groups. These development sessions are collaborative with the reading coach, country reading specialists, other teachers, and administrators.

These collaborative learning opportunities are outlined in the LSPI under professional learning communities. It states that all teachers will engage in PLCs twice weekly and that the focus of the collaborative planning will be on “data analysis, deconstructing the standards, creating learning pathways for quality instruction, developing common assessments that meet desired learning outcomes, integrating new science and social studies AKS and determining the most effective instructional strategies for students” (2017-2018, LSPI). This form of collaboration is strictly enforced at Taylor, and it is beneficial to teachers who use what they learn in this collaborative planning to engage their students and work as a team with their grade level.

Evaluation

Professional learning is evaluated by administration through the use of surveys, student data, and evaluations in the form of walkthroughs. First, throughout the process of collaboration, there are many checkpoints where administration looks to see if teachers feel they are getting what they need out of professional development. They want to be sure that teachers are honest about their feeling about the time they are taking in their training. Teachers are encouraged to talk about the positives and the negatives of what they learned and what other services the administration could give to support teachers more.

Student data also evaluates professional development. Student achievement is a crucial factor to ensure that teachers are using what they have learned in their professional development sessions to better their classroom techniques by utilizing the pedagogy explained. Student achievement is not the most significant form of evaluation, but it is used.

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Lastly, the administration does walk through evaluations to see how teachers are using what they are learned. Teachers are evaluated on their teaching strategies as well as classroom management. Veteran teachers are evaluated twice a semester, and new teachers are evaluated three times a semester. Administration looks for teachers to use what they have learned in staff development and to see if it is working when it comes to students and their learning.

Administration can evaluate the quality of what is being taught and if it is meeting their LSPI goals. If teachers are practicing what is being taught in the meetings and then the data is improving the administration can see that professional development is benefiting the teachers and the students and can evaluate the future course of action.

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References

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PROFESSIONAL LEARNING

The means by which teachers, administrators, and other staff acquire, enhance, and refine the knowledge, skills, practices, and dispositions necessary to create and support high levels of learning for all students

| Professional Learning Standard 1: Aligns professional learning with needs identified through analysis of a variety of data | | | |
|--|---|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Level 4 Exemplary | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Level 3 Operational | <input type="checkbox"/> Level 2 Emerging | <input type="checkbox"/> Level 1 Not Evident |
| Professional learning needs are identified and differentiated through a collaborative analysis process using a variety of data (e.g., student achievement data, examination of student work, process data, teacher and leader effectiveness data, action research data, perception data from students, staff, and families). Ongoing support is provided through differentiated professional learning. | Professional learning needs are identified through a collaborative analysis process using a variety of data (e.g., student achievement data, examination of student work, process data, teacher and leader effectiveness data, action research data, perception data from students, staff, and families). | Professional learning needs are identified using limited sources of data. | Professional learning needs are identified using little or no data. |
| <p>EVIDENCE: In the space below, provide detailed evidence supporting your rating above – At Taylor Elementary, professional learning needs are identified by looking at the data and what is most needed. Administration uses student work as data when doing evaluations in the classroom as well as test data in the form of the Milestones Assessment and the District Assessments. They also use data from parents, students, and teachers in the form of surveys to check for needs in other areas.</p> | | | |
| <p>RECOMMENDATIONS: I rated Taylor at a level 3 because there is room to grow in this area. While Taylor does talk about differentiation there needs to be more support in this aspect of professional learning. Team should meet and talk about not just reading and math but all subject areas. Social Studies and Science should be more of a focus. I also think teachers should have more time to observe leaders in the school. Just like students, teachers have many differentiated learning styles so there should be more professional learning environments that support those learning styles. Teachers could observe lessons as well as try out lessons and be observed by peers for a more collaborative environment.</p> | | | |

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| Professional Learning Standard 2: Establishes a culture of collaboration among administrators and staff to enhance individual and collective performance | | | |
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Level 4 Exemplary | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Level 3 Operational | <input type="checkbox"/> Level 2 Emerging | <input type="checkbox"/> Level 1 Not Evident |
| <p>Administrators and staff, as a foundational practice, consistently collaborate to support leadership and personal accountability and to enhance individual and collective performance (e.g., construct knowledge, acquire skills, refine practice, provide feedback). Teachers conduct action research and assume ownership of professional learning processes.</p> | <p>Administrators and staff routinely collaborate to improve individual and collective performance (e.g., construct knowledge, acquire skills, refine practice, provide feedback).</p> | <p>Administrators and staff routinely collaborate to improve individual and collective performance (e.g., construct knowledge, acquire skills, refine practice, provide feedback).</p> | <p>Administrators and staff routinely collaborate to improve individual and collective performance (e.g., construct knowledge, acquire skills, refine practice, provide feedback).</p> |
| <p>EVIDENCE: In the space below, provide detailed evidence supporting your rating above – Administration is present at Tuesday meetings as well as providing follow up information and follow up questions after staff development. They make sure to check in with teachers through a one-on-one meeting once semester.</p> | | | |
| <p>RECOMMENDATIONS: Taylor would be able to score in the level 4 category if teachers were encouraged to take ownership of professional learning processes more often. Many times administration tells teachers what they will be learning based off data and they do not have a lot of say in taking action. There have been times that teachers are able to do a short 3-minute presentation about a good practice that they have been working with in their classroom but many of those teachers would be willing to be more involved in professional development planning. It would be good for teachers to have more ownership in this way.</p> | | | |

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| Professional Learning Standard 3: Defines expectations for implementing professional learning | | | |
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Level 4 Exemplary | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Level 3 Operational | <input type="checkbox"/> Level 2 Emerging | <input type="checkbox"/> Level 1 Not Evident |
| Administrators, teacher leaders, or both consistently define expectations for the implementation of professional learning, including details regarding the stages of implementation and how monitoring will occur as implementation progresses. | Administrators, teacher leaders, or both regularly define expectations for the implementation of professional learning. | Administrators, teacher leaders, or both occasionally define expectations for the implementation of professional learning. | Administrators, teacher leaders, or both rarely, if ever, define expectations for the implementation of professional learning. |
| <p>EVIDENCE: In the space below, provide detailed evidence supporting your rating above – Taylor is on their way to the exemplary category in standard 3. There is still more work to do in all areas of professional development but in many categories they are exemplary. For example in guided reading team there are many details about the stages of implementation and how we will roll out what we are learning in stages. There is also a lot of information on how administration will monitor teachers in the implementation phase by conducting evaluations as well as videos of guided reading and strategy groups. Taylor is working toward doing this in every aspect of professional development.</p> | | | |
| <p>RECOMMENDATIONS: The same practice listed above should be done in every form of professional development given to the teachers. In some cases, teachers are given information on what they should be doing in their classrooms and then there is no follow up to the implementation process. Administration and teachers should work together to make sure they are held accountable for the learning as well as implementing what they have learned.</p> | | | |

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| Professional Learning Standard 4: Uses multiple professional learning designs to support the various learning needs of the staff | | | |
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Level 4 Exemplary | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Level 3 Operational | <input type="checkbox"/> Level 2 Emerging | <input type="checkbox"/> Level 1 Not Evident |
| <p>Staff members actively participate in job-embedded professional learning that engages collaborative teams in a variety of appropriate learning designs (e.g., collaborative lesson study, analysis of student work, problem solving sessions, curriculum development, coursework, action research, classroom observations, online networks). Professional learning includes extensive follow-up with descriptive feedback and coaching.</p> | <p>Staff members actively participate in professional learning, most of which is job-embedded, which includes multiple designs (e.g., collaborative lesson study, analysis of student work, problem-solving sessions, curriculum development, coursework, action research, classroom observations, online networks) to support their various learning needs. Professional learning includes follow-up with feedback and coaching.</p> | <p>Some staff members are engaged in professional learning that makes use of more than one learning design to address their identified needs.</p> | <p>Staff members receive single, stand-alone professional learning events that are informational and mostly large-group presentation designs.</p> |
| <p>EVIDENCE: In the space below, provide detailed evidence supporting your rating above – Teachers are now involved in professional learning communities with their grade level as well as with one other team in the school. Sessions with grade levels are twice a week and sessions for the other teams are once a month. There is coaching during mathematics planning where a representative from the county is always present and runs the meeting to help all staff members participate in job-embedded professional learning.</p> | | | |
| <p>RECOMMENDATIONS: My recommendation would be that teachers should have more opportunity for multiple designs. Right now, we stick with the collaborative lesson study and analysis of student work. It would benefit teachers to have more classroom observations and online support networks. Peer classroom observations would give teachers a better understanding of what they are learning and they could really see it in action. The online support networks would give teachers an opportunity to share what they learned, provide feedback, and share resources related to the professional development.</p> | | | |

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| Professional Learning Standard 5: Allocates resources and establishes systems to support and sustain effective professional learning | | | |
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Level 4 Exemplary | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Level 3 Operational | <input type="checkbox"/> Level 2 Emerging | <input type="checkbox"/> Level 1 Not Evident |
| <p>Extensive resources (e.g., substitute teachers, materials, handouts, tools, stipends, facilitators, technology) and systems (e.g., conducive schedules, adequate collaborative time, model classrooms) are allocated to support and sustain effective professional learning. Opportunities to practice skills, receive follow-up, feedback, and coaching are provided to support the effectiveness of professional learning.</p> | <p>Adequate resources (e.g., substitute teachers, materials, handouts, tools, stipends, facilitators, technology) and systems (e.g., conducive schedules, adequate collaborative time, model classrooms) are in place to support and sustain professional learning.</p> | <p>Some resources and systems are allocated to support and sustain professional learning.</p> | <p>Few, if any, resources and systems are provided to support and sustain professional learning.</p> |
| <p>EVIDENCE: In the space below, provide detailed evidence supporting your rating above – Gwinnett County Public Schools allocate resources for professional learning mostly through providing substitute teachers for the teachers that are out for professional development. Model classrooms are used for specific staff development days like the guided reading team for others to observe. Gwinnett County Public Schools also provides facilitators for after school and weekend professional development that teachers can sign up for online.</p> | | | |
| <p>RECOMMENDATIONS: Not all-professional development has a stipend. My recommendation would be that if teachers are participating in professional development that is outside of their normal working hours they receive a stipend. Teachers are always working outside of their normal working hours to make sure their lessons are planned and their papers are graded it would be beneficial for teachers as well as more teachers would be willing to attend professional development outside of working hours if they were getting some sort of stipend.</p> | | | |

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| Professional Learning Standard 6: Monitors and evaluates the impact of professional learning on staff practices and student learning | | | |
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Level 4 Exemplary | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Level 3 Operational | <input type="checkbox"/> Level 2 Emerging | <input type="checkbox"/> Level 1 Not Evident |
| <p>Monitoring and evaluating the impact of professional learning on staff practices and increases in student learning occurs extensively. Evaluation results are used to identify and implement processes to extend student learning.</p> | <p>Monitoring and evaluating the impact of professional learning on staff practices and student learning occurs routinely.</p> | <p>Monitoring and evaluating the impact of professional learning on staff practices occurs sporadically.</p> | <p>Monitoring and evaluating the impact of professional learning on staff practices occurs rarely, if ever.</p> |
| <p>EVIDENCE: In the space below, provide detailed evidence supporting your rating above – At Taylor Elementary, administration does two walkthroughs a semester for veteran teachers and three walkthroughs a semester for new teachers. This is a way to monitor and evaluate professional learning practices in the classroom. They also check on student progress online. Administration leaves a note on your desk when they are finished to say something positive that they saw in your classroom while they were there. After the observation, they send feedback and a rating on an online system.</p> | | | |
| <p>RECOMMENDATIONS: The recommendation that I would make would be that teachers meet with administration in a face-to-face conversation after the observations/walk through. It would be good to be able to discuss what they saw and go further with learning through a collaborative conversation. This would extend teacher and student learning in the classroom.</p> | | | |

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| <p>KSU ITEC Professional Learning Standard: 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.</p> | | | |
| <p><input type="checkbox"/> Level 4 Exemplary</p> | <p><input type="checkbox"/> Level 3 Operational</p> | <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Level 2 Emerging</p> | <p><input type="checkbox"/> Level 1 Not Evident</p> |
| <p>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.</p> | <p>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.</p> | <p>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.</p> | <p>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.</p> |
| <p>EVIDENCE: In the space below, provide detailed evidence supporting your rating above – Many teachers at Taylor Elementary reflect the understanding of race, disabilities, and social class and how they impact teachers and students. Most teachers take time to get to know their</p> | | | |

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students and differentiate learning so that they feel comfortable being who they are. This is something that is talked about but not emphasized in all professional development.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is recommended that there is professional development on working with students with multiple backgrounds and learning needs. Teachers should be trained on how to work with multiple types of students to create different learning environments. There should also be training on multiple learning styles that create a more differentiated learning environment.