Mainstay Academy Technology Plan

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General information

Mainstay Academy is part of the Georgia Network for Educational and Therapeutic Support (GNETS) and serves students with severe emotional/behavioral disorders who cannot be safely accommodated within the general education classroom. While academics are taught, the emphasis is on behavior modification and emotional support so that students can be transitioned out of the program. The program is located in Griffin-Spalding, and while that district serves as the overall fiscal agent for Mainstay, Mainstay is also independent in many ways and also serves students from multiple counties.

The student population fluctuates due to students moving between less restrictive (general education) and more restrictive (hospitalization, residential services) settings. As of January 15, 2021, there are nine school age, 14 middle school, and 15 high school students enrolled. There are also two self-contained classrooms, one for students with mild to moderate intellectual disabilities (seven students) and one for students with moderate to severe to intellectual disabilities (six students), for a total of 51 students from five different counties (Butts, Lamar, Pike, Spalding, and Upson). Most students qualify for free or reduced meals. In terms of racial breakdown, 50% of students are white, and 50% are black.

Mainstay has a smaller than average staff due to the smaller than average student population. There is a total of seven support staff (two administrators, two behavioral interventionists, one counselor, and two social workers). For educational staff, there are two teachers and two paraprofessionals (paras) for school age, four teachers and two paras for middle school, and three teachers and one para for high school, for a total of 14. The self-contained rooms have two teachers and five paras.

The mission of Mainstay is "to provide an emotionally safe environment that promotes therapeutic and academic growth for students and families." ("About Us," n.d.).

Stakeholders

The list of stakeholders responsible (and available!) for the implementation of this technology plan is minimal. We do not have a media center, involved parents, or a dedicated technology specialist, although general requests can be made via an online IT request system. The primary stakeholders include my director and me. My director is very keen to increase the technology usage of the school and is the one in charge of the budget. I am committed to technology because I feel strongly that it is a necessary component for 21st century learning. If one of the districts educational technologists is available to help, that would be great, but she may not be able to assist due to funding issues (GNETS programs have different funding sources) and because we serve several counties and the district does not want district services to be used/benefit students from other counties. One last potential stakeholder would be an elementary teacher named Grant Adams. He is an early adopter of any technology changes and was the only one to fill out my interview questions. He would be an excellent beta tester even if he did not have the time to actually develop any professional development material.

Current status of technology

All staffers have access to computers during the day, with teachers and a few select support staff having laptops that can take home. Some desktop computers are available in some classrooms for para and student use. There is no media center but there is one computer lab with eight desktop computers. Each classroom plus the conference room and the sensory room have a ceiling mounted projector (12 total), and all classrooms are equipped with an Audio Enhancement system, ceiling speakers, teardrop microphones, and multiple video cameras. It is

suggested, although not required, that teachers use their own personal phones for pictures and video, although there is one digital camera somewhere. There are four touch screen TVs, with one reserved for the conference room, one for school age/middle school, and two for high school. Wired and wireless internet is available in the building. The school is moving towards one-to-one with students and Chromebooks, with high school going one-to-one during the 2019-2020 school year and middle and elementary during the 2020-2021 year. Three newly repaired ipads are available for check-out. Both staff and students use Google products such as Gmail, docs, slides, and online websites and resources, so there is minimal installed software. Due to Mainstay serving students from multiple counties, no one county wants to pay for any sort of subscription or access to online learning tools, so websites and online tools have to be free. Furthermore, while the school is serviced by IT for technical problems, we have very limited access to the Education Technology Specialists (EdTechs). Griffin Spalding county schools employs two EdTechs, but they are very busy and do not come to the school. Furthermore because of funding and how programs are paid, since Mainstay is under a different funding model, staff cannot attend most of professional development technology trainings because of how they are funded.

Technology vision

Griffin-Spalding County Schools Technology Department exists to make technology an integral, meaningful part of the learning, teaching, and operating processes for students, teachers, and administrators. The Technology Team provides support to make this process happen; we believe that our duties assist in making learning possible and achievement attainable for our students. Our role goes beyond the school setting to work to make technology accessible for our parents and our community so that technology is a

> vital part of the lives of people in Griffin and Spalding County. Technology should be used effectively to increase productivity and efficiency in the enterprise of education. (Griffin-Spalding County Schools, n.d., p. 5)

Needs discovered

Need 1: Increasing access to online educational websites and tools

Based on technology surveys and the one interview I received, one area of need clearly jumped out: educational websites. Most staff rated themselves as intermediate or proficient users of educational websites, with moderate to heavy usage, and almost all respondents marked that they liked or extremely liked it. Inability to access online tools was one of the top limitations, and two out of the nine respondents listed it as the most important limitation. Thus, in educational websites, we had a technology tool that people felt comfortable using, used a lot, and had a highly favorable opinion of it, but just couldn't get the access they needed. Access was limited by: sites being blocked on the Chromebooks, sites being blocked district-wide, or lack of paid subscription to sites. Addressing the first two limitations would take minimal time and effort, but getting the money for the third would be time consuming and require a cost-benefit analysis to determine where to spend the money.

Need 2: Providing professional development on usage and integrating touchscreen TVs into lessons

During survey data, the majority of respondents rated themselves in the awareness/beginner category for touchscreen TVs, with light or no usage, but was still viewed favorably, thus appearing to be the type of technology that respondents would be most likely to want to learn about. Aiding in that decision was the fact that the only real suggestion for a professional

development topic was touchscreen TVs. The following key points indicated a potential reason for using the technology:

1. "However technology is used as a hook to get students interest in the classroom." (G. Adams, personal interview, February 25, 2021).
2. Student behavior was the most frequently selected limitation.
3. Negative student behaviors decrease when they are interested and involved in the academic material, which I know from personal experience.
4. Not enough time to research and implement was also cited as a limitation.

With these in mind, I decided that a possible major outcome would be that teachers could benefit from general hands on instruction on how to operate the touchscreen TVs and personalized one-on-one assistance on integrating the technology and determining potential hooks for teachers' individual lessons in the hopes of reducing negative student behavior.

Proposed technology goals

Goal: Increasing access to online educational websites and tools

Student	Teacher	School
By the end of the 2021-2022 school year every elementary, middle, and high school student will use an educational site or tool at least once a week.	By the end of the 2021-2022 school year all teachers will have received training on how to use Blocksi and the IT IncidentIQ system to unblock necessary educational websites.	By the end of the 2021-2022 school year, using budget or grant monies, the school will purchase a subscription for the educational website deemed the most cost-effective.
Steps to achieve	Steps to achieve	Steps to achieve

• Determine baseline usage – how frequently are students currently using sites • Ensure that students have consistent access to computers • Using self-reporting or noting when sites are included in lesson plans, collect data on how frequently students are accessing the sites • At the end of the year, use data to determine if goal was met	• Create separate screen recordings of accessing and using Blocksi, and accessing and using IncidentIQ • Share videos in Professional Development folder in the Shared Google Drive for the school • During a staff meeting, show the steps in person • Use staff meeting sign-in sheet to see if any staff missed the meeting, and follow up with them individually • Remind staff that the walkthrough video is on the Google Drive	• Consult with admin as to what, if any, budget is available for sites • Survey teachers for site requests • Contact sites for quotes • Complete a cost-benefit analysis – who will use the site(s) and how frequently; is it more efficient to purchase a site that many people will use occasionally or one that only a few will use frequently, etc. • Present findings to admin and complete a PO form if budget money is available • If no budget money is available, research

		different funding opportunities and grants • Write grants and apply • Continue to complete the funding process until enough money is available • Track which teachers are using which sites and how frequently to determine which would warrant a subscription renewal

Goal: Providing PD on usage and integrating touchscreen TVs into lessons

Student	Teacher	School
By the end of the 2021-2022 school year, every student in elementary, middle, and high school will physically use a touchscreen TV in the course of an academic lesson.	By the end of the 2021-2022 school year, at least 75% of teachers will have at least one lesson that utilizes the touchscreen for educational purposes.	By the end of the 2021-2022 school year, the school will develop a collection of PD materials and sample lessons that teachers may refer to as needed.

Steps to achieve	Steps to achieve	Steps to achieve
• Determine baseline – how many and how frequently are students already using touchscreens educationally? • Ensure that students have consistent access to the TVs and help create a schedule if need be so that all teachers have time slots • Using self-reporting or noting when TVs are included in lesson plans, collect data on when students have a chance to use the technology • At the end of the year, use data to determine if	• Create simplistic tutorial material on how to use the general features of the TV • Schedule several small PD sessions at various times during the day • Identify which teachers would like one on one assistance on integrating tech into their lessons • Consult with teacher on the potential lesson or topic they would like to use, or what activity they would like the TV to do • Research potential ways the technology can be used for the lesson and/or consult	• Decide on folder hierarchy plan to keep all material orderly • Collect all tutorial and professional development materials used and save to a folder on the shared Google Drive • Ask teachers to share their lessons or activities on the Google Drive • Add to the folder as needed

goal was met	the shared Google Drive, and present to teacher • Be on hand for troubleshooting when staff presents the lesson • Using self-reporting, collect data on when teachers use the TVs • At the end of the year, use data to determine if goal was met	

Proposed plan duration

All times and durations are incredibly generous because:

a. The student population is stressful
b. The school is currently short-staffed
c. Teachers and staff are feeling overwhelmed with COVID and teaching in-person and online
d. I have a full time job as a teacher, not an educational technologist, so it will take me time to complete what needs to be done
e. Stakeholders available to assist are few in number

f. The 2020-2021 school year is nearly over and it would be difficult to start any major new initiatives in the time left

Timeline for securing funds

Timeframe	Activity
April 2021	• Meet with admin about budget
July 2021	• Submit PO when new fiscal year begins
Summer 2021	• Research and write grants, as needed

Timeline for acquiring equipment/websites

Timeframe	Activity
April 2021	• Survey teachers for site requests • Contact sites for quotes
May 2021	• Complete cost-benefit analysis • If possible, ask Grant Adams to review my findings • Present needs to Admin
July – November 2021	• Use available funds to purchase subscriptions

Timeline for professional development

Timeframe	Activity
Summer 2021	• Create professional development materials for

	Blocksi, IncidentIQ, and the touchscreen TVs • If possible, have Grant Adams preview the material • Create and update materials that will be in the PD folder on shared Google Drive (ongoing)
August 2021	• During staff meetings, demonstrate using Blocksi and Incident IQ
September – October 2021	• Schedule several small TV PD sessions at various times during the day • Identify which teachers would like one on one assistance on integrating tech into their lessons
October 2021 – January 2022	• Consult with teacher on the potential lesson or topic they would like to use, or what activity they would like the TV to do
January 2022 – March 2022	• Research potential ways the technology can be used for the lesson and/or consult the shared Google Drive, and present to teacher • Be on hand for troubleshooting when staff presents the lesson
January 2022 – May 2022	• Provide on-going professional development if teachers have issues • Follow-up with staff

Timeline for implementing goals

Timeframe	Activity
July-August 2021	Collect baseline data on student usage of educational websites and TVs See other timelines for additional information

Timeline for evaluating technology plan

Timeframe	Activity
April 2021	• Ask admin, Grant Adams, and Leslie Fagin if they would be willing to serve on a technology committee to oversee the implementation of the plan
May 2021	• Review potential budget information and cost-benefit analysis information
August 2021 – April 2022	• Meet monthly to discuss data and any recommendations for changes
May 2022	• Assess student usage data to determine if goals were met • Review website usage to see what website subscriptions should be renewed

	• Present findings to interested stakeholders

Proposed budget

Budget requirements for additional website subscriptions/license

Site	Cost
Flocabulary.com	$96/year per teacher, $2/year student access
Gizmos.com	$674/year for one teacher & students $1,995/year minimum for math/science department $2,995/year minimum for school
Brainpop.com	$1,695/year for school & student accounts
MobyMax.com	$8/year per student
Teachtown.com	$239/year per student

The actual cost per website is unknown until staff is specifically surveyed on which sites they would use, and which students would benefit.

Salary requirements based on 2020-2021 salary schedule

Person/position	Hourly Rate	Estimated hours	Total
Me (teacher)	$35	50	1,750
Director (admin)	$49	15	735
Grant Adams (teacher)	$35	15	525
Leslie Fagin (edtech)	$44	10	440
Michael (IT tech)	$20	5	100

Internet safety

All staff and students have to read over and sign an Acceptable Use Policy before using any technology. There is web filtering software that is used on a district level, and students on Chromebooks are covered by a much stricter policy than teachers; so strict, in fact, that some educational websites are blocked and must be unblocked using Blocksi. Teachers must frequently change their passwords and must complete an internet safety module at the start of each school year. In March 2021, all staffers have to attend a Cybersecurity Awareness Training webinar. The district provides digital citizenship lessons and material from Common Sense Media (Griffin-Spalding County Schools, n.d., p. 15) that up until a few days ago I had no idea existed. I will be sharing this material will all of the teachers at Mainstay.

Monitoring and evaluating the technology plan

Hopefully a technology committee can be gathered so that I am not the only person monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the technology plan. Assuming that I am not, a very small, volunteer committee would be responsible for overseeing the process. These members would be responsible for gathering baseline data and concluding data to assess whether student access goals were met. They would monitor if activities were occurring according to the proposed timelines and whether or not the money earmarked for the projects is spent according to plan. Members would seek out formative feedback from teachers during the course of implementation to make recommendations and changes during the entire timespan of the plan. Finally, at the conclusion of the plan, this committee would use student data to determine if goals were met and review website usage information to decide which website subscriptions, if any, should be renewed.

References

About Us. (n.d.) Mainstay Academy. Retrieved March 15, 2021, from http://mainstayacademy.education/About-Us/

Griffin-Spalding County School System. (n.d.) *Three-Year Technology Plan July 1, 2019 - June 30, 2022.* Fagin's Instructional Technology Site. https://sites.google.com/gscs.org/faginsinstructionaltechnology/gscs-technology-plan