

Pickens High School Evidenced Based Literacy Plan

Pickens High School’s literacy plan follows the six building blocks identified in the document *Georgia Literacy Plan Kindergarten to Grade 12 Necessary Building Blocks for Literacy: “The What,”* developed by the Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) as well as research from the GaDOES’s *Georgia Literacy Plan: “The Why.”* The results of the Georgia Literacy Plan Needs Assessment for Literacy Kindergarten to Grade 12 follow. In the following narrative and throughout this document, the needs assessment instrument will be referred to as GLPNA.

Building Block 1. Engaged Leadership

A. Administrator demonstrates commitment to learn about and support evidence-based literacy instruction in his/her school.

The Striving Reader Grant application process highlights the Pickens High School administration’s commitment to initiate dialogue regarding the need for “evidence-based literacy instruction” in the high school. Without the support and guidance of the administration, this proposal would not have come to fruition. While personal and professional opinions may differ, only 2.32% of our staff views the school’s leadership as not being addressed in terms of evidence-based literacy. Based on the evidence from the GLPNA, strand 1.A is not an area of concern and does not require funding from the grant.

A. Administrator demonstrates commitment to learn about and support evidence-based literacy instruction in his/her school.	
Georgia Literacy Plan Needs Assessment	Pickens High School Staff Responses
Indicator	Percentage
Fully Operational	25.58%
Operational	44.18%
Emergent	27.91%
Not Addressed	2.32%

B. A school literacy leadership team organized by the administrator is active.

Through the Leadership Team, the principal designated a member of the English Department to serve as liaison for a sub-committee representative of all academic departments to include the media specialist and the gifted coordinator. It was the sole purpose of this sub-committee to complete the grant application process for the Georgia Striving Reader grant. Through the work of the sub-committee, it is now determined that literacy will be a specific component addressed at each Leadership Team Meeting; the administration recognizes the importance and value of assessing current literacy practices, determining needs, and implementing best practices for literacy development. The *Georgia Literacy Plan: The “Why”* document supports the formal establishment of teacher leaders in “a leadership group with the responsibility to read and discuss both research and research-into-practice articles on this topic in order to acquire local expertise” (156). The GLPNA survey data reflects the infancy of this component of the Leadership Team, and the Leadership Team expects to garner a combined 100% operational and fully operational by the 2014-2015 school year due to 100% staff participation in literacy across the curriculum.

B. A school literacy leadership team organized by the administrator is active.	
Georgia Literacy Plan Needs Assessment	Pickens High School Staff Responses
Indicator	Percentage
Fully Operational	16.27%
Operational	48.83%
Emergent	23.25%
Not Addressed	11.62%

C. Action: Maximize the use of time and personnel through scheduling and collaborative planning.

The GLPNA identified scheduling and collaborative planning as a major area of concern. PHS operates on a block schedule comprised of four 90-minute instruction periods, and even with recent changes in the lunch schedule to allow common lunch breaks within departments, the staff believes that improvements could be made.

Areas of Concern: According to the *Georgia Literacy Plan: The “Why,”* students “receive two to four hours of literacy instruction across language arts and in content area classes” (The “Why”

6) and does not specify if this instruction should be daily or weekly. Another component of this strand is the scheduling of “disciplinary literacy in all content areas” (The “Why” 6) which highlights an area for PHS to improve. Additionally, it is suggested that “[p]rotected time for collaborative planning teams within and across content areas” [should be] part of the school-wide calendar” (The “Why”6). PHS does not currently have established collaborative planning teams. Another aspect of this strand not addressed by PHS is intervention time “built into the school schedule for each day” (The “What” 6).

Root Cause(s): Scheduling and time constraints are the root cause of these deficiencies.

According to the GLPNA standard, to be fully operational, “Daily schedules include two to four hours of literacy instruction for all students (including disciplinary literacy in content areas) as well [as] additional time for intervention and for collaborative planning” (2). However, PHS currently is at the not addressed level because our “daily schedules do not include a two-hour block for literacy instruction for all areas of English language arts” (GLPNA 2). English language arts instruction is delivered for a 90 minute block, and with the exception of the honors/AP senior English, English Language arts instruction is offered per semester which means that a student will only have an English course for half of the school year.

A paradigm shift needs to occur at the high school level when addressing literacy needs of all students. Unfortunately, by the time a student reaches high school, an assumption is made that students already possess the literacy skill set to read and write unless they have been flagged prior to entry into high school through a special education program or an RTI program. Students not already flagged as being either special education or RTI could be identified as needing a literacy intervention based on a failing score from the grade 8 CRCT; students who do not pass part of the grade 8 CRCT are automatically enrolled in a communications course. However, if students pass the grade 8 CRCT, it is assumed they will be able to complete grade 9 level work. Because the grade 8 CRCT is treated as the high school entry literacy assessment, many students may go unidentified until the grade 9 Literature and Composition EOCT at the end of the semester. Because EOCT data is received after those students complete grade 9 Literature and Composition, another component that adds to the complexity of the block schedule is that students could effectively not be identified as having a literacy deficiency until the last week of the last semester of their freshman year.

What We Have Done: Half-way into the first semester of the 2013-2014 year, the administration recognized the need for more common planning time within departments, and the lunch schedule was subsequently changed to allow for 30 minutes common department time. While this additional time within departments is a positive scheduling change, common planning between departments has not truly been addressed.

Prior to this year, department meetings occurred infrequently and inconsistently. Now, all departments hold at least one formal departmental meeting a month; minutes are kept during each meeting and eventually will be uploaded to the Pickens County Board of Education's eBoard electronic management system to increase transparency for all stakeholders.

Action Steps to Take for Improvement: To address the root causes, PHS needs to develop a disciplinary literacy curriculum aligned with the College and Career Georgia Performance Standards (CCGPS). Ideally, this disciplinary literacy curriculum would utilize the technological infrastructure of the school and enable non-ELA teachers to deliver discipline based literacy instruction that includes both pre- and post-assessments, formative and summative assessments, all aspects of literacy instruction, as well as easy access to data based on the students' performance.

Collaborative planning teams across content areas need to be established (The "What" 6). Course schedules, policies, and procedures need to be routinely evaluated to "identify and eliminate inefficient use of student and faculty time within the schedule" (The "What" 6), and protocols need to be established for the review process and implementation of any revised policies and procedures resulting from such a review process.

Course schedules need to be evaluated to ensure that we are providing our students with the best practices in literacy. On the current block schedule, students only have access to formal English Language Arts instruction for one semester per year. Even with the implementation of a disciplinary literacy curriculum, students cannot be expected to improve their scores on all state assessments if they do not have access to a year-long English Language Arts curriculum.

Literacy screening needs to be implemented for all freshman students as well as all students transferring into the school system. According to *The "What,"* "a screening helps determine the

level of intervention needed to assist individual students” (97). Screening would improve teacher knowledge of students’ needs and school-wide knowledge of skill levels.

Needs Summary:

- 1. Disciplinary Literacy Curriculum**
- 2. Collaborative Planning Teams**
- 3. Year-long Schedule**
- 4. Literacy Screenings**

Sustainability: Instructional budgets within each department and student generated funds

C.2. (NOTE: C.1 applied only to K-5, and it is not included in the high school needs assessment. The effective use of time and personnel is leveraged through scheduling and collaborative planning (6-12).	
Georgia Literacy Plan Needs Assessment	Pickens High School Staff Responses
Indicator	Percentage
Fully Operational	6.97%
Operational	34.88%
Emergent	23.25%
Not Addressed	34.88%

D. Action: Create a school culture in which teachers across the curriculum are responsible for literacy instruction as articulated in the Common Core Georgia Performance Standards.

According to the GLPNA, 53.48 percent of our staff perceives teachers as accepting responsibility for literacy instruction per the CCGPS. Pickens High School is in the process of aligning curriculum and instructional practices with literacy across the content areas as defined by the CCGPS, and while the school has a myriad of instructional initiatives in place, it is in dire need of a systematic process to ensure that formal literacy instruction is consistently implemented.

Areas of Concern: The primary area of concern for this strand is that the GLPNA survey results showed that PHS is not 100% fully operational.

Root Cause(s): Many content area teachers outside of English Language Arts view literacy as something that only happens within the ELA classroom. The transition to CCGPS drastically

changes the charge for all content area teachers in term of literacy, and many content area teachers do not have formal literacy training.

What We Have Done: As a whole, PHS has not implemented a formal cross disciplinary literacy program. The TKES process is in place and will serve as an observation form “to ensure consistency of effective instructional practices that include disciplinary literacy across content areas” (*The “What” 6*).

Action Steps to Take for Improvement: PHS needs to implement a formal cross-disciplinary literacy program and to provide opportunities for “staff [to] participate in targeted, sustained professional learning on literacy strategies within the content area” (*The “What” 6*).

Sustainability: Instructional budgets within each department and student generated funds

Needs Summary:

1. Disciplinary Literacy Curriculum

D. A school culture exists in which teachers across the content areas accept responsibility for literacy instruction as articulated in the Common Core Georgia Performance Standards (CCGPS).	
Georgia Literacy Plan Needs Assessment	Pickens High School Staff Responses
Indicator	Percentage
Fully Operational	11.62%
Operational	41.86%
Emergent	30.23%
Not Addressed	16.27%

E. Action: Optimize literacy instruction across all content areas

While only 53.48 percent perceived that teachers accept responsibility for literacy instruction in content areas as articulated by the CCGPS, 60.45 percent believe that literacy instruction is either fully operational (11.62%) or operational (48.83) in all content areas. The wording “as articulated by CCGPS” could be the source of the discrepancy in perception between accepting responsibility for literacy and optimizing literacy instruction in all content areas. Nonetheless, the GLPNA demonstrates an opportunity to address literacy instruction across the curriculum.

Areas of Concern: Literacy across the curriculum

Root Cause(s): Traditionally, literacy was viewed as the sole responsibility of an ELA classroom.

What We Have Done: PHS is incorporating the CCGPS and TKES.

Action Steps to Take for Improvement: PHS needs to implement a formal cross-disciplinary literacy program and to provide opportunities for “staff [to] participate in targeted, sustained professional learning on literacy strategies within the content area” (*The “What”* 6).

Sustainability: Instructional budgets within each department and student generated funds

Needs Summary:

1. **Disciplinary Literacy Curriculum**
2. **Professional Learning**
 - a. **Incorporating the use of literary texts in content areas** (*The “What”* 6)
 - b. **Selecting text complexity that is appropriate to grade level as required by CCGPS** (*The “What”* 6)

E. Literacy instruction is optimized in all content areas.	
Georgia Literacy Plan Needs Assessment	Pickens High School Staff Responses
Indicator	Percentage
Fully Operational	11.62%
Operational	48.83%
Emergent	27.91%
Not Addressed	11.62%

F. Action: Enlist the community at large to support schools and teachers in the development of college-and-career-ready students as articulated in the Common Core Georgia Performance Standards.

A unique aspect of Pickens High School is the close relationship between the high school and the community; according to the GLPNA, 65.11% of the staff believes that the community supports the curriculum alignment with CCGPS. According to the *Georgia Literacy Plan Kindergarten-to-Grade 12 Necessary Building Blocks for Literacy: “The What,”* a community advisory board, “a network of learning supports within the community,” and the use of social media to both “promote the goals of literacy” and to share and celebrate “public successes” should be part of a successful literacy plan (8). Pickens High School already has the infrastructure in place to satisfy these objectives. A School Advisory Council which includes teachers, parents, administrators,

Board of Education employees, and business leaders meets quarterly. The 2013-2014 meeting dates are September 6th, December 4th, March 5th, and May 7th. Another aspect of the infrastructure in place is the use of social media; PHS has a social media presence through Facebook pages and a Twitter feed. Some attention should be given to ensure that the School Advisory Council and the social media outlets are utilized to their full extent to support the school's literacy plan.

Areas of Concern: Only 65.11% of the staff viewed a positive connection with the community. PHS may not be using the School Advisory Council and the social media outlets to capacity. More interaction, beyond sports and extra-curricular programs, needs to occur.

Root Cause(s):

What We Have Done: Created Pickens High School Facebook page where upcoming events and school accolades are shared daily. A partnership between the PHS journalism classes and the locally owned and operated newspaper *The Pickens Progress* publishes the bi-monthly *Dragons' Lair* included in the newspaper. Local community organizations like Amicalola Electric Membership Corporation, Bent Tree Foundation, Inc., and the Big Canoe Chapel fund scholarships and grants for both PHS students and staff. Local businesses support our students by participating in the Work-Based Learning program and the Youth Apprenticeship program.

Action Steps to Take for Improvement: Implement a monthly parent/community night.

Sustainability: This portion is one of the easiest to sustain because it is already funded through the current budget.

Needs Summary:

- 1. Establish monthly or quarterly parent/community input workshops.**
- 2. Solicit more community partnerships.**
- 3. This portion of the PHS Literacy Plan does not require formal funding from the Georgia Striving Reader Grant.**

F. The community at large supports schools and teachers in the development of students who are college-and-career-ready as articulated in the Common Core Georgia Performance Standards (CCGPS).	
Georgia Literacy Plan Needs Assessment	Pickens High School Staff Responses
Indicator	Percentage
Fully Operational	11.62%
Operational	53.49%
Emergent	13.95%
Not Addressed	20.93%

Building Block 2. Continuity of Instruction

A. Action: Ensure a consistent literacy focus across the curriculum through the use of collaborative teams (See Leadership Sections I. D., E.)

According to the description for the indicator of not addressed for this strand, PHS staff should have selected a 100% response to not addressed because “[c]ross disciplinary teams are not currently meeting” (GLPNA 4). These have not been created at PHS.

Areas of Concern: A glaring area of concern with this strand is the number of responses for fully operational and operational because PHS has not established cross disciplinary teams for the purpose of reviewing student work and allocating literacy instruction across the disciplines (GLPNA 4). Staff availability to serve on a cross disciplinary team poses a potential hindrance.

Root Cause(s): Scheduling and common planning time between departments is the main reason why cross disciplinary teams have not been created.

What We Have Done: PHS is developing a literacy plan to address these issues.

Action Steps to Take for Improvement: PHS needs to establish cross disciplinary teams comprised of one teacher per class offering to meet once per month.

Sustainability: PHS does not require funding to establish across the curriculum collaborative teams. These teams can be sustained within the current budget.

Needs Summary:

- 1. Identify one teacher per class offering to be part of a cross disciplinary team.**
- 2. Utilize existing technology to conduct virtual meetings and post meeting minutes and information.**

A. Active collaborative school teams ensure a consistent literacy focus across the curriculum.	
Georgia Literacy Plan Needs Assessment	Pickens High School Staff Responses
Indicator	Percentage
Fully Operational	9.30%
Operational	34.88%
Emergent	20.93%
Not Addressed	34.88%

B. Action: Support teachers in providing literacy instruction across the curriculum

In the GLPNA, only 44.18% of the staff viewed us as being operational while 55.81% perceived us as being either emergent or not addressing this focus. We need to develop and implement a consistent approach to literacy across the curriculum to include standard writing rubrics (“The What” 7). A mixture of traditional writing as well as “new” writing to include social media, wikis, blogs, etc. needs to be incorporated into daily practice in all classes (“The What” 7).

Areas of Concern: A formal and systematic program is not utilized to deliver literacy instruction across the curriculum. Historically, literacy instruction has been contained in the English Language Arts classroom, and PHS has traditionally followed this practice; however, with the implementation of the CCGPS, PHS recognizes the need to provide a systematic approach to ensure that students have access to literacy instruction in all subject areas.

Root Cause(s): The perception that literacy instruction wholly belongs in the realm of the English Language Arts classroom may contribute to the lack of literacy instruction across the curriculum. Another cause is that literacy across the curriculum has not been a defined objective for the school as a whole.

What We Have Done: In courses other than English Language Arts, disciplinary vocabulary is probably the one element of literacy that is consistently taught. Writing activities may be present, but they are not administered with fidelity.

Action Steps to Take for Improvement: To support teachers in providing literacy instruction across the curriculum, PHS needs to adopt a formal literacy plan, implement a formal system to deliver instruction, and to provide professional development opportunities for the staff.

Sustainability: The Georgia Striving Reader Grant money will be used to assist in the establishment of a formal literacy program. Once established, these services will be maintained by funding through instructional budgets within each department and student generated funds.

Needs Summary:

Funding requested to implement the initial literacy program.

- 1. Adopt a formal literacy program**
- 2. Implement a formal system to deliver consistent instruction**
- 3. Provide professional development**

B. Teachers provide literacy instruction across the curriculum (See Engaged Leadership, 1. D, E).	
Georgia Literacy Plan Needs Assessment	Pickens High School Staff Responses
Indicator	Percentage
Fully Operational	9.30%
Operational	44.18%
Emergent	30.23%
Not Addressed	16.28%

C. Action: Collaborate with supporting out-of-school agencies and organizations within the community

While the high school enjoys a close relationship with the community, it is evident that the staff recognizes missed opportunities with the community in terms of utilizing available resources to support and augment literacy instruction. Out-of-school agencies and organizations need to be targeted for wraparound services (“The What” 7). This aspect of the literacy plan could easily be incorporated into the School Advisory Council which already identifies key community stakeholders.

Areas of Concern: Out-of-school agencies and organizations are not leveraged for maximum resources.

Root Cause(s): With the demands of daily operations, entities outside of the school often go underutilized.

What We Have Done: PHS has a School Advisory Council.

Action Steps to Take for Improvement: The Pickens County Central Office can assist in the identification and establishment of more community partnerships. The Central Office should provide local businesses and organizations with a central point of contact that provides continuity. Additionally, by utilizing the Central Office as the central point of contact, it prevents multiple representatives from individual schools within the county from repeatedly bombarding the same businesses and organizations which could induce a negative response from these entities. Developing and establishing a district level policy for fostering community relationships to support literacy provides the school system with a consistent and efficient process.

Sustainability: A Parent & Community Involvement Coordinator position currently exists at the Central Office, and resources from this grant will not be used.

Needs Summary:

- 1. Utilize the Parent & Community Involvement Coordinator to identify potential literacy relationships between the community and the high school.**
- 2. The Parent & Community Involvement Coordinator will work closely with the Pickens County Chamber of Commerce and the PHS Leadership team to implement literacy connections between the school and the community.**

C. Out-of-school agencies and organizations collaborate to support literacy within the community.	
Georgia Literacy Plan Needs Assessment	Pickens High School Staff Responses
Indicator	Percentage
Fully Operational	4.65%
Operational	37.21%
Emergent	27.91%
Not Addressed	30.23%

Building Block 3. Ongoing formative and summative assessments

A. Action: Establish an infrastructure for ongoing formative and summative assessments to determine the need for and the intensity of interventions and to evaluate the effectiveness of instruction

The responses in the GLPNA indicate inconsistent use of formative and summative assessments to gauge the appropriateness of interventions. Ideally, we should at least be operational; however, 39.53% views us as being emergent and 9.31% views us as not addressing this aspect. Clearly, we need to establish a system in which teachers can easily and quickly assess students and implement appropriate interventions (“The What” 8). PHS is making gains in implementing common assessments other than the state mandated EOCTs in select courses; benchmark assessments are being widely used to assess students at the start of a course; however, a clear deficiency is present in mid-course assessments. To promote consistency between teachers of same subject courses as well as to establish a system where early intervention can be administered, common mid-course assessments need to be created within departments and administered with fidelity (“The What” 8).

Areas of Concern: Inconsistent use of formative and summative assessments to determine interventions.

Root Cause(s): One specific cause does not contribute to this concern. Instead, it seems to be a combination of historical practice and the absence of specific and clearly outlined goals.

What We Have Done: PHS is utilizing more benchmark assessments. A common lesson plan format was implemented in 2013-2014 and requires staff to list both summative and formative assessments as well as a rationale for choosing those assessments. The academic culture of the school is transitioning to one that uses common terminology and common practices. The TKES system has been the catalyst for this change.

Action Steps to Take for Improvement: As budgets diminish and school systems must come to terms with dwindling resources, staff members must do more with less. PHS is no exception. To

adequately provide school-wide literacy screening and monitor progress, staff members require an efficient and user-friendly process to implement formal literacy instruction.

Sustainability: Once a formal literacy curriculum is implemented, the process will be sustained through instructional budgets within each department and student generated funds.

Needs Summary:

- 1. Formal literacy curriculum to include formative and summative assessments**
- 2. The curriculum must be easy to implement.**

A. Ongoing Formative and Summative Assessments	
Georgia Literacy Plan Needs Assessment	Pickens High School Staff Responses
Indicator	Percentage
Fully Operational	16.28%
Operational	34.88%
Emergent	39.53%
Not Addressed	9.31%

B. Action: Use universal screening and progress monitoring for formative assessment

The results from the GLPNA indicate that 34.88% of PHS staff believes that we are operational in the use of universal screening and progress monitoring for formative assessment. It is true that EOCT courses provide summative assessment data. However, PHS does not utilize universal literacy screening. PHS has an opportunity to implement a streamlined process to assist teachers with the evaluation of literacy levels for all students, administer and evaluate formative assessments, and evaluate the need for RTI services. Because a common system is not currently in place, PHS is poised to initiate a process that will provide consistent assessments as well as a process to review results and utilize the data to direct instruction (“The What” 9).

Areas of Concern: A universal literacy screening process in conjunction with the ability to quickly analyze and use data to monitor the progress of all students is an area of concern.

Root Cause(s): Historically, the primary focus of instruction at PHS has been placed on summative assessments like the EOCTs and the Georgia High School Graduation Test series. The focus has not been on the screening and evaluation of students in a formative manner. As

evident in the ongoing instructional initiatives like Credit Recovery and EOCT remediation courses, the academic focus has been reactionary.

What We Have Done: PHS has implemented common assessments in core courses to establish benchmarks and to direct instruction.

Action Steps to Take for Improvement: PHS currently uses USATest Prep software to assist with EOCT preparation, and the capability of this software is grossly underused. The focus for the use of this software needs to change to a formative capacity to help assist staff with evaluating students' mastery of specific standards. Additionally, a staff member has not been designated as a database manager for this software program since this duty was left vacant when a former staff member left the school's employment. To maximize the data available from the use of this system, two staff members need to be designated as co-administrators of the database and trained on how to generate usage reports and to interpret data to provide formative assessments. By re-establishing responsibility to specific staff members for the usage of this program, the program should be maximized, and the integrity of the data should be accurate.

Sustainability: PHS currently subscribes to the following programs which are not due for renewal until September 1, 2016:

- 9th Grade Literature and Composition (CCGPS) EOCT
- American Literature and Composition (CCGPS) EOCT
- Algebra (GPS) EOCT
- Analytic Geometry (CCGPS) EOCT
- Coordinate Algebra (CCGPS) EOCT
- Geometry (GPS) EOCT
- Mathematics II (GPS) EOCT
- Biology (GPS) EOCT
- Physical Science (GPS) EOCT
- Economics (GPS) EOCT
- US History (GPS) EOCT

The financial sustainability of the program is not a factor; however, to maximize the usage of the program as a formative assessment for all students requires consideration. Class access to computers may be a factor in the usage of this software. Departments would greatly benefit from having departmentally dedicated computer labs or a set of 40 electronic devices per department.

Needs Summary:

- 1. Maximize usage of currently licensed USA Test prep software**
- 2. Establish two staff members as database managers to ensure student logins are accurate, current, and not duplicates**
- 3. Provide staff training opportunities for best practices**
- 4. Use it as a formative assessment tool**
- 5. Evaluate current usage of computer labs to assess departmental needs**

B. A system of ongoing formative and summative assessment (universal screening and progress monitoring) is used to determine the need for and the intensity of interventions and to evaluate the effectiveness of instruction.	
Georgia Literacy Plan Needs Assessment	Pickens High School Staff Responses
Indicator	Percentage
Fully Operational	13.95%
Operational	39.53%
Emergent	44.18%
Not Addressed	2.33%

C. Action: Use diagnostic assessment to analyze problems found in literacy screening

The varying responses to this component of the literacy survey suggests that some teachers may be administering and evaluating diagnostic assessments within individual classrooms, but a consistent and formal process is not in place. A routine diagnostic screening process needs to be established (“The What” 9). Many times, at the high school level, teachers and administrators take for granted that students possess adequate literacy skills to function at the high school course level; however, too often, students have already learned coping skills that may disguise their low literacy level.

Areas of Concern: Establishing a uniformed literacy assessment should be a priority of the school’s literacy plan.

Root Cause(s): The perception that if students pass the grade 8 CRCT then they possess the necessary literacy skills to succeed in high school.

What We Have Done: By using the grade 8 CRCT as a literacy screening, PHS has been able to identify some students who are deficient in literacy skills; however, this screening does not identify all of the students who could benefit from a universal screening protocol.

Action Steps to Take for Improvement: The first step for improvement is to establish a universal screening process as identified in GLPNA. As outlined in the “What” section of the Georgia Literacy Plan, PHS should establish a protocol “for ensuring that students identified by screenings routinely receive diagnostic assessment” (9). Additionally, “diagnostic assessments [should] isolate the component skills needed for mastery of literacy standards” (The “What” 9). PHS should provide “[i]nterventions [to] include diagnostic assessments and multiple-entry points to avoid a one-size-fits-all approach” (The “What” 9).

Sustainability: Instructional budgets within each department and student generated funds

Needs Summary:

- 1. Provide routine diagnostic assessments to students who are identified by literacy screenings.**
- 2. Use diagnostic assessments to isolate the skills required for mastery of literacy standards (The “What” 9).**
- 3. Establish interventions to utilize diagnostic assessments and multiple-entry points (The “What” 9).**

C. Problems found in literacy screenings are further analyzed with diagnostic assessment.	
Georgia Literacy Plan Needs Assessment	Pickens High School Staff Responses
Indicator	Percentage
Fully Operational	6.98%
Operational	39.53%
Emergent	41.86%
Not Addressed	11.63%

D. Action: Use summative data to make programming decisions as well as to monitor individual student progress

The responses to this portion of the assessment indicate that the staff is moderately confident in their use of summative data to inform programming choices and to monitor student progress. However, the low percentage (6.98%) of staff members who view us as being fully operational indicates a deficiency that can be improved. Departments need to participate in actual discussions of the summative data and work together to “identify needed program and instructional adjustments” (“The What” 9).

Areas of Concern: Many times, test results are not distributed in a timely manner to guide instruction for the remainder of a course, and EOCT results are not often discussed vertically with teachers within the same department nor are they discussed with cross-curricular departments. Also, test data are not disaggregated; instead, test scores are discussed in general terms and testing variables are not discussed.

Root Cause(s): Time seems to be the primary cause for this concern. PHS must wait on test results from the test administrators with the state of Georgia. Then, one staff member at the high school is designated as the contact person for the test results. If this person is out of the office or otherwise detained on another project, the distribution of the test scores is delayed.

What We Have Done: LDS is used to access historical test results. However, this system is not user friendly, and teachers experience difficulty in navigating through the data. At the teacher level, class reports cannot be generated. Instead, it is an exhausting process to collect the data. Individual departments now meet at least once a month, and these meetings offer opportunities to discuss assessments and student progress.

Action Steps to Take for Improvement: An additional staff member needs to be identified to serve as a contact for state test score distribution. As the LDS system becomes more robust, we need to provide targeted training for staff. LDS offers a tremendous amount of data, but it is not useful if it cannot be accessed and evaluated in a manner that informs instruction.

Sustainability: Additional staff development is needed to satisfy these action steps. This funding is already included in staff training funds.

Needs Summary:

- 1. Identify an additional staff member to serve as a secondary contact for summative test scores.**
- 2. Provide staff training for LDS.**
- 3. Allow teacher-level staff to have access to reports in SLDS.**
- 4. Present summative data in a disaggregated format.**
- 5. Increase the frequency of departmental meetings.**

D. Summative data is used to make programming decisions as well as to monitor individual student progress.	
Georgia Literacy Plan Needs Assessment	Pickens High School Staff Responses
Indicator	Percentage
Fully Operational	6.98%
Operational	46.51%
Emergent	30.23%
Not Addressed	16.28%

E. Action: Develop a clearly articulated strategy for using data to improve teaching and learning (See V. A.)

Clearly articulated strategies exist in some departments, but a clear and consistent strategy for using data to improve teaching and learning is not present systematically in all departments. PHS needs to develop a plan to consistently use available data in the LDS system as well as the data generated from state assessments.

Areas of Concern: PHS does not maximize the use of data; therefore, crucial opportunities in guiding student instruction may be missed.

Root Cause(s): Previous lack of strong leadership and lag time between data availability and data distribution contribute to ineffectual use of data. Staff is not adequately trained to utilize current data systems. Pertinent data reports that disaggregate test scores are not provided to the staff.

What We Have Done: The establishment of routine departmental meetings increases the opportunities for staff to discuss data in general terms.

Action Steps to Take for Improvement: Provide staff training on best practices for data collection and analysis.

Sustainability: Instructional budgets within each department and student generated funds

Needs Summary:

1. **Staff training on data analysis**
2. **Increase staff access to data sources**

E. A clearly articulated strategy for using data to improve teaching and learning is followed	
Georgia Literacy Plan Needs Assessment	Pickens High School Staff Responses
Indicator	Percentage
Fully Operational	9.30%
Operational	41.86%
Emergent	41.86%
Not Addressed	6.98%

Building Block 4. Best Practices in Literacy Instruction

A. Action: Provide direct, explicit literacy instruction for all students

PHS does not provide direct, explicit literacy instruction for any students.

Areas of Concern: PHS does not provide direct, explicit literacy instruction for any students.

Root Cause(s): Two incorrect assumptions exist in education: 1. All students know how to read by the time they enter grade 9; 2. All teachers know how to teach reading and writing. These two assumptions account for the absence of a formal reading program at PHS. None of the classroom teachers hold a reading endorsement. Additionally, daily schedules are elastic and allow for various topics within a 90-minute class. Even in an English Language Arts class, direct instruction in reading does not occur, and even if direct reading instruction did occur in the ELA classroom, it would only happen for half of the year because of the block schedule; consequently, a semester-long course offering once a year cannot expect to accomplish the literacy needs for a struggling reader.

What We Have Done: By reviewing grade 8 CRCT data, PHS attempts to identify students who may have literacy deficiencies and schedule these into a communications course which provides remediation.

Action Steps to Take for Improvement:

PHS needs to adhere to a core literacy program and to provide an actual reading course as opposed to a course in communications. A universal literacy screening needs to be implemented. Specific aspects of “student data [needs to be] examined regularly to identify areas of instruction with greatest needs” (The “What” 9). PHS staff needs to be provided with professional development by a literacy specialist. Staff should be encouraged to attend professional conferences. PHS needs to implement a literacy program that allows literacy instruction in all subject areas; “[s]pecifically, content-area teachers at all grade levels must include reading comprehension and processing subject-specific texts in all areas: mathematics, science, social studies, Career Technical and Agricultural Education (CTAE), world languages, English Language Arts (ELA), fine arts, physical education, and health” (The “Why” 26). Literacy instruction and development are no longer the sole responsibility of the English Language Arts department.

Sustainability: Instructional budgets within each department and student generated funds

Needs Summary:

Funding requested to implement a core literacy program.

1. Core literacy program implemented across the curriculum
2. Offer a reading course
3. Professional development conducted by a literacy specialist

A.2. All students receive direct, explicit instruction in reading	
Georgia Literacy Plan Needs Assessment	Pickens High School Staff Responses
Indicator	Percentage
Fully Operational	13.95%
Operational	53.49%
Emergent	23.25%
Not Addressed	9.30%

A. 3. All students receive direct, explicit instruction in reading.	
Georgia Literacy Plan Needs Assessment	Pickens High School Staff Responses
Indicator	Percentage
Fully Operational	23.25%
Operational	32.55%
Emergent	34.88%
Not Addressed	9.30%

A.4. Extended time is provided for literacy instruction.	
Georgia Literacy Plan Needs Assessment	Pickens High School Staff Responses
Indicator	Percentage
Fully Operational	6.98%
Operational	37.21%
Emergent	23.25%
Not Addressed	32.55%

B. Action: Ensure that students receive effective writing instruction across the curriculum

Areas of Concern: The operative word in this strand is “effective.” To what degree is effective writing instruction administered across the curriculum? According to the GLPNA, 37.21% of the staff believes that we are operational and have “a coordinated plan . . . developed for writing instruction across the curriculum that includes explicit instruction, guided practice, [and] independent practice” (9). In the second portion of this strand B.2, 34.88% of the staff believes that we are operational because we, “at least one time per month . . . provide instruction in and opportunities for developing an argument, writing coherent informational or explanatory texts, or writing narratives to explore content area topics” (GLPNA 9). However, PHS’s test scores from the fall GHSWT suggest that otherwise.

Root Cause(s): Tradition holds that writing instruction belongs in an English Language Arts classroom, and educators outside of the ELA classroom may either not have the training or confidence to provide effective writing instruction in their respective disciplines.

What We Have Done: We have not implemented a formal writing across the curriculum initiative. If anything is currently being done or has been previously attempted, then it is from the individual efforts of classroom teachers and not from a school-wide vision.

Action Steps to Take for Improvement: We need to develop and implement a writing curriculum that transcends the ELA classroom.

Needs Summary:

- 1. Professional learning opportunities in writing within a particular discipline**
- 2. Writing curriculum**

Sustainability: Instructional budgets within each department and student generated funds

B.1. All students receive effective writing instruction across the curriculum.	
Georgia Literacy Plan Needs Assessment	Pickens High School Staff Responses
Indicator	Percentage
Fully Operational	13.95%
Operational	37.21%
Emergent	34.88%
Not Addressed	13.95%

B.2. All students receive effective writing instruction across the curriculum.	
Georgia Literacy Plan Needs Assessment	Pickens High School Staff Responses
Indicator	Percentage
Fully Operational	6.98%
Operational	34.88%
Emergent	32.55%
Not Addressed	25.59%

C. Action: Teachers work to develop and maintain interest and engagement as students progress through school.

Out of all of the strands in the GLPNA, 18.60% of the PHS staff viewed themselves as being fully operational in their “intentional efforts to develop and maintain interest and engagement as students progress through school” (9). Only 4.65% of the staff, who completed the assessment, viewed this strand as not being addressed which suggests that the leadership of the school supports staff development.

C. Teachers are intentional in efforts to develop and maintain interest and engagement as students progress through school.	
Georgia Literacy Plan Needs Assessment	Pickens High School Staff Responses
Indicator	Percentage
Fully Operational	18.60%
Operational	37.21%
Emergent	39.53%
Not Addressed	4.65%

Areas of Concern: An area of concern is that 39.53% view this strand as being emergent which indicates that we still have room for improvement.

Root Cause(s): Obviously, the 2013 student is accustomed to instant gratification and instant information. The traditional roles of teacher and student are changing. Some teachers embrace this change while other teachers simply refuse to modify teaching techniques based on new technology and resources.

What We Have Done: PHS implemented a student technology initiative called Bring Your Own Device (B.Y.O.D.) to embrace student supplied technology. Departments have worked together to create school-wide, cross-curricular events such as Shakespeare Day and “Once Upon a Midnight Dreary” that combine literature, theatre, and production. During the popularity of the *Hunger Games*, PHS developed their own version of the hunger games that included the ELA, science, and math departments.

Action Steps to Take for Improvement: PHS needs to take advantage of cross-curricular instructional opportunities and participate in professional development opportunities.

Needs Summary:

1. Professional development
2. Cross-curricular planning

Sustainability: Instructional budgets within each department and student generated funds

Building Block 5. System of Tiered Intervention (RTI) for All Students

A. Action: Use information developed from the school-based data teams to inform RTI process (see Section 3. E.)

Collectively, emergent and not addressed account for 53.49% of the staff who viewed that we have deficiencies in using information developed from the school-based data teams to inform RTI process (GLPNA 10).

Areas of Concern: Staff may not be aware of protocols associated with data collection for RTI.

Root Cause(s): This year is the first time that RTI has been formally introduced to the staff. One RTI informational meeting has been held for all staff which probably accounts for the 41.86% of the staff who viewed this strand as being emergent because at least the staff was exposed to the terminology of RTI and vaguely understands that PHS is doing something in conjunction with RTI.

What We Have Done: Recently, all staff members attended an RTI information meeting, and staff members are aware of an attempt to create a systematic process to address RTI needs. Staff needs “[p]rofessional learning in intervention techniques . . . to incorporate strategies that allow students to access texts, to practice communication skills, and to use information” (The “Why” 124). PHS has held an informational meeting about RTI and has created an RTI team.

Action Steps to Take for Improvement: Need to provide staff with information about how the RTI process works and which staff members have input into RTI. Inform the staff if we have data teams. Then, identify the data used, and how this data determines the RTI process.

Sustainability: Protocols need to be established and followed. All PHS staff needs to be aware of who is a member of the RTI team.

Needs Summary:

- 1. Provide information about the RTI team and make sure that all staff members are aware of the protocols.**
- 2. Utilize a cross disciplinary literacy program that includes formative and summative assessments and use data from this program to direct RTI processes.**
- 3. Provide staff with professional development in intervention techniques.**

A. Information developed from the school-based data teams is used to inform RTI process.	
Georgia Literacy Plan Needs Assessment	Pickens High School Staff Responses
Indicator	Percentage
Fully Operational	9.30%
Operational	37.21%
Emergent	41.86%
Not Addressed	11.63%

B. Action: Provide Tier I Instruction based upon the CCGPS in all grades to all students in all classrooms (See Sections 4. A & B)

The results from the GLPNA suggest not all of the staff is fully aware of RTI Tier I instruction because 48.84% viewed us as being either emergent or not addressing this strand; however, after reviewing the description of “Interventions at Tier 1” in the *Georgia Literacy Plan: The “Why,”* the staff may simply not understand what Tier I instruction means. According to *The “Why,”* Tier 1 interventions “include seating arrangements, fluid and flexible grouping, lesson pacing, collaborative work, demonstrations of learning, differentiation of instruction, and student feedback” (126). Our staff does all of these things daily; however, they may not understand that their daily practices are actually part of interventions at Tier 1.

Areas of Concern: Staff is not familiar with the student achievement pyramid of interventions.

Root Cause(s): Staff has not been provided with RTI professional development opportunities.

What We Have Done: PHS has held an informational meeting about RTI and has created an RTI team.

Action Steps to Take for Improvement: Provide professional development opportunities that explain the student achievement pyramid of interventions.

Sustainability: Professional development is an ongoing initiative at PHS.

Needs Summary:

1. Professional development about the student achievement pyramid of interventions.

B. Tier I Instruction based upon the CCGPS in grades K-12 is provided to all students in all classrooms. (See Sections IV. A & B)	
Georgia Literacy Plan Needs Assessment	Pickens High School Staff Responses
Indicator	Percentage
Fully Operational	16.28%
Operational	34.88%
Emergent	41.86%
Not Addressed	6.98%

C. Action: Implement Tier 2 needs-based interventions for targeted students

More than half of the staff, 53.48%, viewed us as being either emergent or not addressing this strand (GLPNA 10). The “What” document provides tangible steps that we can take to improve how we deliver Tier 2 needs-based interventions for targeted students.

Areas of Concern: Data confirms that we are deficient in implementing Tier 2 of RTI.

Root Cause(s): The root cause of a student’s poor performance in a course outside of an ELA class may be the student’s reading ability, and oftentimes, it goes undiagnosed.

What We Have Done: We are in the process of reviewing different literacy across the curriculum products so that literacy instruction can easily be implemented in all courses.

Action Steps to Take for Improvement: Interventionists should be identified and participate in professional learning on how to use appropriate supplemental and intervention materials, diagnose reading difficulties, chart data, graph progress, and differentiate instruction (The

“What” 12). We need to establish “[s]pecific times for collaborative discussion and planning between content area T1 teachers and interventionists” (The “What” 12). Professional learning opportunities need to be provided to “ensure school-wide understanding of assessment data and anticipated levels of student mastery during the school year” (The “What” 12). Then, we need to ensure intervention effectiveness by “[p]roviding sufficient blocks of time in the daily schedule for intervention, [p]roviding adequate space in places conducive to learning, and [p]roviding competent, well-trained teachers and interventionists” (The “What” 12).

PHS needs a systematic process to deliver literacy instruction across the curriculum. ELA teachers need to be aware of reading intervention strategies. A universal screening process needs to be established along with protocols on how to evaluate the data provided from such screenings.

Sustainability: Instructional budgets within each department and student generated funds

Needs Summary:

- 1. Literacy program**
- 2. Universal screening for literacy**
- 3. Professional development for reading intervention strategies**
- 4. Establish intervention sessions within the daily schedule**
- 5. Identify interventionists**
- 6. Expand morning and afternoon tutoring**
- 7. Provide transportation for afternoon tutoring sessions**

C. Tier 2 needs-based interventions are provided for targeted students.	
Georgia Literacy Plan Needs Assessment	Pickens High School Staff Responses
Indicator	Percentage
Fully Operational	4.65%
Operational	41.86%

Emergent	32.55%
Not Addressed	20.93%

D. Action: In Tier 3, ensure that Student Support Team (SST) and Data Team monitor progress jointly

While Student Support Teams do exist for students, no data team meets with the SST to monitor progress. Also, SSTs do not meet on a regular basis; they just meet when a need arises which is once again a reactionary stance as opposed to be proactive. According to the GLPNA survey, 60.46% identified this area as needing the most improvement. Data needs to be reviewed, interpreted, and disseminated in a manner to provide timely, consistent, and accurate feedback on a student’s progress as well as recommendations for future instructional opportunities. (The “What” 12).

Areas of Concern: The apparent lack of coordination between SSTs and a data team prevents this standard from being fully operational or even operational.

Root Cause(s): SSTs are structured to be reactive and respond after it is too late to prevent an academic digression. If a data team exists, the staff is not aware of it.

What We Have Done: The first step in solving a problem is to identify what the problem is. By analyzing the staff responses to the GLPNA, we, as an institution, are becoming aware of our perceived deficiencies as well as our actual deficiencies.

Action Steps to Take for Improvement: We need to better inform teachers about SST options, and a data team needs to be created. Required meetings between SST/data teams need to occur with frequency (The “What” 12). Interventions need to be delivered 1:1 – 1:3 “during a protected time daily by a trained interventionist” (The “What” 12). We need a trained interventionist. Additionally, we need to establish protocols to “determine the specific reason when an EL fails to make progress (i.e., language difficulty or difference vs. disorder)” (The “What” 12).

Sustainability: Instructional budgets within each department and student generated funds

Needs Summary:

1. **Create a data team**
2. **Identify SSTs**
3. **Implement required meetings between SST/data teams**
4. **Deliver interventions 1:1 – 1:3 daily by a trained interventionist**
5. **Establish protocols to determine the specific reason when an EL fails to make progress**

D. In Tier 3, Student Support Team (SST) and Data Team monitor progress jointly.	
Georgia Literacy Plan Needs Assessment	Pickens High School Staff Responses
Indicator	Percentage
Fully Operational	6.98%
Operational	32.55%
Emergent	41.86%
Not Addressed	18.60%

E. Action: Implement Tier 4 specially-designed learning through specialized programs, methodologies or instructional based upon students’ inability to access the CCGPS any other way

Over half of the faculty view PHS as being operational in this indicator, but only 16.28% believed that we are fully operational. A formal process for identifying and implementing specialized programs could increase the operational capacity of the staff.

Areas of Concern: We can improve on the 16.28% fully operational.

Root Cause(s): Schedules are created to serve the most students in the best manner possible.

Consequently, not all students’ needs may be met all of the time.

What We Have Done: PHS does a good job of scheduling students in the least restrictive environments. In co-taught classrooms, the same special education teacher is consistently paired with the same content area teacher which establishes continuity in instruction and in the

relationship between the special education teacher and the content area teacher which ultimately improves the level of instruction offered to the students.

Action Steps to Take for Improvement: Review class data in co-taught classrooms to ensure that the teacher pairings are producing the expected results on summative assessments. If so, then continue to schedule successful co-teacher teams together. Provide opportunities for these “teachers to participate in professional learning communities to ensure strict alignment with delivery of CCGPS, even in separate settings” (The “What” 13). PHS needs to review the current course offering schedule to evaluate its effectiveness.

PHS currently uses a block schedule to deliver courses; we need to consider offering more year-long classes. PHS already offers math support classes; we need to also offer reading support classes.

Sustainability: Staff development funding.

Needs Summary:

- 1. Identify successful co-teacher pairings and continue to schedule them together.**
- 2. Provide professional learning opportunities.**
- 3. Offer more year-long classes**

E. Tier 4-specially-designed learning is implemented through specialized programs, methodologies, or strategies based upon students’ inability to access the CCGPS any other way.	
Georgia Literacy Plan Needs Assessment	Pickens High School Staff Responses
Indicator	Percentage
Fully Operational	16.28%
Operational	51.16%
Emergent	27.91%
Not Addressed	4.65%

Building Block 6. Improved Instruction through Professional Learning

A. Pre-service education prepares new teaches for all aspects of literacy instruction including disciplinary literacy in the content areas.

The varying responses to this indicator suggest that individual teachers have experienced different pre-professional learning opportunities; the data also suggests that literacy professional learning opportunities have not been consistently accessible to all staff members.

Areas of Concern: A correlation exists between the quality of teacher instruction and the quality of teacher preparation programs.

Root Cause(s): Pre-professional programs need to be structured to provide instruction on how to deliver literacy instruction in all subject areas not just English Language Arts.

What We Have Done: PHS provides opportunities for professional development.

Action Steps to Take for Improvement: According to *The “What”* document, “[r]epresentatives from the community and/or leadership meet with representatives from Professional Standards Commission to enlist support for ensuring that [pre-service] teachers receive coursework in disciplinary literacy within content areas” (13). The PHS Leadership Team can communicate needs to the PHS Central Office. Then, a representative from the school district needs to convey this information to the Professional Standards Commission.

Sustainability: Funding is not an issue for this component because it can easily be incorporated into the existing Leadership Team.

Needs Summary:

- 1. Establish a protocol to convey teacher preparation needs to the central office.**

<i>A. Provide professional learning for in-service personnel</i>	
Georgia Literacy Plan Needs Assessment	Pickens High School Staff Responses
Indicator	Percentage
Fully Operational	6.98%
Operational	41.86%
Emergent	34.88%
Not Addressed	16.28%

B. Action: In-service personnel participate in ongoing professional learning in all aspects of literacy instruction including disciplinary literacy in the content areas.

According to the GLPNA survey, 44.18% of the staff viewed this strand as being operational which suggests that we still have room for improvement.

Areas of Concern: PHS needs to ensure that professional opportunities are provided that focus on literacy instruction.

Root Cause(s): Prior to this literacy initiative, literacy has been the primary responsibility of elementary and middle-school English Language Arts departments.

What We Have Done: We are in the process of identifying literacy needs and recognizing areas of instructional improvement.

Action Steps to Take for Improvement: PHS needs to implement a literacy program that extends beyond the ELA classroom.

Sustainability: Instructional budgets within each department and student generated funds

Needs Summary:

1. Literacy program

B. In-service personnel participate in ongoing professional learning in all aspects of literacy instruction including disciplinary literacy in the content areas.	
Georgia Literacy Plan Needs Assessment	Pickens High School Staff Responses
Indicator	Percentage
Fully Operational	11.63%
Operational	44.18%
Emergent	27.91%
Not Addressed	16.28%