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## Case Study: Gale K-6 Elementary School

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### I. Community and School Data

Gale Elementary School is located in a diverse, suburban community of 69,000 (a pop. increase of 7,000 in two years), about 20 miles from a major metropolitan city. The area is transitioning from agricultural to high-tech industry. The region also has experienced a steady increase in the Hispanic community.

Gale Elementary is a K-6 school serving 540 students. Twenty-one years old, its yellow bricks bear no graffiti and the grounds are green and inviting. The school is designed around a central hub, with pods of classrooms radiating from the core media center and specialist area. Parent involvement is greatest among parents of primary students, and highest among white, middle class families. There is a small but involved parent-teacher organization that helps raise about \$6,000 annually. There are 21 schools in the district and Gale ranks in the lower third in socio-economic status for the district. There is no college nearby.

### II. Student Data

Student demographics at Gale: 55% Hispanic, 2% Asian, African American, or 'other'; and 43% white. Over the last five years Gale's Spanish-speaking ELL population has increased from 23% to 52% (to 280 students), almost a third of whom are migrant. Almost all the Hispanic families speak no English and require interpreters when they need to interact with the school. Last year about 8% of the ELL students returned to Mexico for the winter (22 students), returning to school in Spring. Other ELL students include 2% Russian speaking and Guatemalan Indian. Total ELL population is 54%. The free and reduced lunch rate is 62%. Mobility rate is 26%.

This year the ELL population in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade was 61%, in 5<sup>th</sup> grade it was 42%. The district tests students in the benchmark grades of 3<sup>rd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade. Last year math scores increased slightly, but reading scores are still in the lowest third for the district. Writing scores are among the lowest. And, more 3<sup>rd</sup> graders overall met benchmarks than did 5<sup>th</sup> graders.

% Met Standard 1999	Third Graders		Fifth Graders	
	Gale	District	Gale	District
Math	54%	62%	52%	58%
Reading	49%	68%	47%	59%
Writing	37%	74%	34%	58%

### III. Administrative and Staff Data

The school's new principal, Anne T. Emme, received a whirlwind tour of Gale when she arrived from Kansas a year ago. The staff has experienced nearly a complete turnover in the last 5 years. Half of all newly hired teachers were first-year teachers, and the other half came from in-district transfers. The staff includes 18 classroom teachers and 23 certified specialists with their respective instructional assistants:

- 1 Special Education teacher
  - 3 assistants
  - 5 inclusion assistants
- 1 Title I teacher

- 3 assistants
- 2 ESL teachers
- 1 ESL/migrant teacher
  - 3 assistants

Other specialists include one each of music, library media, P.E. and a counselor.

#### **IV. Instructional Information**

Although Gale does not have a bilingual program, Spanish is taught to Spanish speakers until they achieve third-grade literacy, then they transition into regular English instruction. The ESL program includes both pull-out and in-class teaching. The last three years the school focused on math and reading, but this year the focus is on writing, which will continue next year. The general instructional style at Gale is mixed, with about two-thirds who favor traditional, teacher-centered, direct instruction. A few classroom teachers use thematic, student-centered instruction; specialists employ small group and individualized instruction.

#### **V. Technology Context**

The district has made it a goal to have all school buildings fully wired for Internet access by the end of the 2001 school year, and started wiring Gale in June of this year. A Mac lab of 15 machines and a PC lab of 8 Pentiums (all outdated) are in the media center and have Internet access. In the area used by specialists for instruction, 8 computers have been set up as a mini lab. This lab is used more extensively than either of the other labs, though the machines are of the same age.

In February Gale received a grant that provided 3 PCs for each classroom, but the 54 machines did not arrive until May. They are being connected to the Internet. Prior to this grant, teachers have never had computers in their classrooms, though AlphaSmarts have been used in classroom sets for writing. The number of computers at Gale is now 85. The school also has a two-year-old InFocus projector, six printers, a scanner, and two digital cameras.

Gale used to have its own technology coordinator, but the position was cut two years ago. Currently the Instructional Assistant in the media center does much of the trouble-shooting. There have been no technology-related staff development classes at the school since the coordinator left. The school no longer has a technology committee.

#### **VI. The Narrative**

A new Director of Instructional Technology was recently hired for the district. Information Technology (technology-focused) and Instructional Technology have been separate in this district, with different technology-related course offerings coming from each office. Typically, short, after-school classes are offered on use of email, Web research, and various software tools.

A few years ago the district initiated a small stipend for one teacher in each school to support the activities of the ad hoc technology trouble-shooters who had been identified in each school. These people meet occasionally, and are not expected to help with instructional activities. The teacher at Gale who received this support recently moved to a new school.

Gale's principal expects the new classroom computers to create renewed interest in technology use by the teachers. She had heard that the school was a model of technology use when it had a coordinator, so she knows some of the teachers aren't new to the idea of technology. She created a new technology committee, and suggested every teacher take two surveys: a technology skills survey and an instructional practices survey. Each survey is a self-reporting tool. Ms. Emme wants the technology to be an integral part of the overall school improvement plan, and asked teachers to self-assess their needs and reflect on their practice. Over the summer two teachers, Ms. Lyon and Mr. Tinmann, offered to summarize the survey results. Though neither have high technology skills, they were determined to help the school move forward.

## VI. Data Tables

Summary of Survey Results: Each teacher's answers are included. (Teachers ranked the skills in order of highest need, 1-3, with 1 being highest; then were asked to use a star to indicate the skill they chose as their goal in two years. In other words, what skills did they need *first*, but also, where did they want to go?)

Technology Skills Needs Survey				
	K-6 Classroom Teachers (18)	Certified Specialists (9)	Instructional Assistants (14)	Administrative (3) principal/2 secs.
Basic Computers (troubleshooting)	1 *		1,1 2	
Email: for students and staff use	1,1,1,1,1,1 2,2,2 3,3,3	1,1 2,2,2,2 3,3	1,1 2,2	1 2,2
Tools Suite (word, spreadsheet, etc.)	1,1,1 2,2,2,2 3,3,3,3,3,3,3,3,3,3,3,3 *****	1 2,2,2,2 3,3	1,1,1 2,2 3,3,3 *	1,1 2 *
Internet search: for staff and students.	1,1,1 2,2,2,2,2, 2,2,2,2 3,3,3, *****	1,1 3 **	2,2,2,2 3,3,3,3,3	3,3,3
Specialized content software	2,2	1,1,1 2 3,3,3	1,1,1,1,1,1,1,1 2, 2,2 3,3,3,3,3,3 *****	
Multimedia presentation tools	1,1,1,1,1 3 **	1 **	2	*
Web publishing: Web pages		3 *****	2 *****	*

Instructional Practices Survey			
	<i>I direct the learning of my students; students need to do what I have planned.</i>	<i>I want my students to take more responsibility for their learning.</i>	<i>My students make many of the learning decisions.</i>
Classroom teacher (18)	6/18	8/18	4/18
Specialists (9)	5/9	3/9	1/9
Instructional Assts.(14)	10/14	4/14	0/14