

**North Carolina Global Educator Digital Badge
Leadership Brief ❖ Capstone Project
Supporting Change at Elon Elementary in Alamance County**

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EXECUTIVE COMPETENCY ALIGNMENT

Alignment to the School Administrator Evaluation Rubric

[Link to the School Administrator Evaluation Rubric](#)

[Link to School Executive Guide](#)

1. Strategic Leadership
2. Instructional Leadership
4. Human Resource Management

Global education is linked to my Professional Development Plan (PDP) as an administrator. Details of my plan highlight both the instructional and strategic leadership standards. These goals specifically align to global competencies and include supporting my students, staff and school community as we grow in becoming a global school. As a member of the administrative and global team, I support the staff through active participation in meaningful professional development. Involvement in events that enhance learning during the school year have been important to my growth as a global learner and leader. As the assistant principal my role is to support, collaborate and motivate others through the implementation of the plan to become a global school.

DISTRICT STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT

Goal 1: Exemplary Classroom Teaching and Instructional Leadership

[Link to ABSS Strategic Plan](#)

DESCRIPTION

Goal 1: Exemplary Classroom Teaching and Instructional Leadership

Elon Elementary began the global education journey in 2008 with its first Spanish Immersion class. A few years into the Immersion program the staff and school community felt as though something was missing. The sense was that there was something unique in the immersion program that enhanced the school experience and standards, but it was only available for those enrolled in the program. We began to question how the school within a school concept could be expanded to benefit all

children. When I became the assistant principal in fall 2009, the School Improvement Team was already considering options to unify the school. We looked to **Participate** (VIF at that time) for details of the Global Program. Through [Participate](#) we had access to training modules and pathways to enhance the school environment and to enrich lessons based on standards through a global lens. In small teams, we visited other global schools within the state to gain more information. Before we knew it, we were discussing it in a School Improvement Team meeting and we knew this was what was going to accomplish our goals.

The approach to globalization was not just something we desired in our school; it aligned with our district strategic plan to implement specialized programs. Along with a few other schools in the district, a planning team was formed. With guidance from district leaders and that our school principal, decisions were made for all students in our school that would shape how we would implement the “global initiative”. The district level trusted our leadership team and gave us permission to be creative.

At the school level, a global implementation team was formed with representation from across the school. We developed structural decisions that we put into practice to support all staff members to engage with training modules and team collaborations as we were creating a global environment. Slowly we began to transform our school from a traditional setting to a globally enriched setting.

It was obvious that the concept of “going global”, was immediately changing the culture of our school. These changes were observed in how we approached parents with educational concerns, with more sensitivity. We were confident that global learning through the standards was something we could infuse in every classroom setting. Through this process we could unify our school, bring more equity to our students and give our students access to a quality global education.

This Leadership Brief describes the path we took to implement a global learning program at our school to embed practices in our daily work to enrich state standards.

IMPLEMENTATION PATHWAY

At Elon Elementary we were supported by our district level administration and district global team. They did not micro manage the implementation of the global initiative; they offered all global schools guidance about the regions of study, opportunities to collaborate across the district and support as we hired International teachers.

Members of our School Improvement Team (SIT) visited global schools within our state. After school visits our SIT discussed their observations and noted questions. Our focus was always on the advantages of becoming a global school for our students and staff. The result of the collaborations allowed the emergence of a “global leadership team” (**GLT**). Members of the *GLT* met to discuss ways to incorporate the global competencies into teaching and learning. We answered questions from the staff about implementation and expectations; all questions were validated with responses. The team reached out seeking the supports from district leaders and [Participate](#) when we needed

additional answers. The *GLT* shared an excitement for becoming a global school; they were the leaders and the key communicators that shared information with the staff as research continued. There was total transparency. Without a doubt we were going global!

With excitement, the members of the *GLT* designed a global reveal for our staff, students and school community. The *GLT* provided the staff its region of focus during a festive reveal, full of music and images of each global region. Students experienced a week full of “fun facts”. Global information was imbedded in the morning announcements and throughout the building to excite the children. During an end of the year assembly slide shows and music filled our gym and with excitement the announcement “Going Global” was made, to our students and school community. Elon Elementary was now a global school; incremental change had begun.



Figure 1



Figure 2

One of the first observable changes was the look and feel of the entryway. We transformed the entryway into our “Windows to the World”. Artifacts displayed had an authenticity about them and reflected the cultural diversity of our staff and students.

As assistant principal, I helped others as they began to transform the cultural corners in their own classrooms. Our changes were intentional, visual and constant. Areas of the building inside and out were being transformed; we began to modify a variety of environments throughout our campus in relatively simple ways. My role was to listen and to support those who needed it, while I learned alongside them.

The *GLT* mapped out the plan that would support our global journey. We explored the VIF ([Participate](#)) platform and learned about the global modules. We researched the requirements of obtaining the Global Educator Digital Badge through the state of North Carolina process. The professional development began and our world began to transform, little by little, in profound ways.

The staff at Elon Elementary has very low turnover. Through the Immersion program we have international teachers from Colombia and Honduras. Since the implementation of the global initiative we consider hiring teachers from other regions so that all of our students have the opportunity to interact with an International teacher. We have collaborated with our district leaders and partners at [Participate](#) to make this happen. Within the past two years we have hired staff members from England, Australia, Jamaica, Scotland and Spain. Beyond the classroom, these educators share a global perspective within our school community and enhance diversity, respect and cultural



Figure 3

understanding. For this process to be successful, teamwork is crucial.

As we continue to learn as global educators, we welcome new ideas and experiences. Staff considers global connections when they are preparing lessons. There is a conscious effort to plan lessons that are engaging and incorporate a variety of cultural perspectives from the citizens of the world. These experiences were made possible through the participation in global modules. The modules showed us how to use our

Figure 4



resources including technology in a creative ways that can move our knowledge beyond the walls of our school. We participated in virtual meetings, Skype, panel discussions and districtwide collaborations to enhance our learning. When you are infusing global instruction into your professional practice the only thing that can limit what you do, is

you! Our path to becoming global learners was infused with enriching experiences for all and investigating the world around us. These experiences have unified us as a school community and helped us to understand our role as global citizens.

The important aspect of this implementation is the level of support provided to teachers with professional development and resource gathering. We needed to constantly break huge concepts down into manageable parts. We used current tools and pathways in new ways. For example, we brought new value to teacher work days that already existed in the calendar. We used our professional development funds differently for substitutes and instructional funds for global materials. The support in these areas had to be there or the foundation would crumble.

PERSONAL LEARNING DIMENSIONS

Implementation has been measured through a variety of ways. As the assistant principal one of my responsibilities is to observe teaching and learning. Supporting teachers as they take risks is important; encouragement and guidance is critical. Teachers understand their lessons are to focus on instructional standards and that globally themed lessons can make instruction more exciting by enriching the standards. It was important to reassure the teachers that all lessons are not required to become globally themed. We recognized that learning how to incorporate global ideas took time, increased collaboration and the



Figure 5

willingness to think beyond your comfort zone. Offering support during grade level collaboration was also important to build trust. Teachers share a variety of needs with me. Teachers were told in planning sessions if you are alone, it is by choice, if I am unable to help you, I will find someone who can.

The impact of teachers feeling supported translated into success. The quality lessons increased and were infused with



Figure 6

creativity and thought; the quality of visual displays reflected examples of quality student work. Participating in the modules helped me learn alongside my teachers and students. I learned so much about global interdependence through service projects. Together we shared a sense of pride that grew out of learning activities. I started to receive invitations from both the teachers and students to come and be a part of their day. I became a part of the classroom not just an evaluator, but as a learner, too.

The students at Elon Elementary became more actively engaged in their learning. Students were eager to share their knowledge; learning had increased meaning and value to them. Even shy children wanted to share their knowledge, life outside of school and culture. Student displays of work accompanied a state standard to ensure focus emphasized the standards being enhanced with a global concept. Students were having so much fun they forgot they were learning.

Parents were eager to see what their children were learning. Parental involvement in activities and field trips always had superior participation at our school. Participation in school wide global activities and celebrations increased in attendance. Parents felt excited and welcomed the changes.



Figure 7

We saw an increased presence of parents that wanted to share their story, their heritage, they wanted to be a part of our school. They became guest speakers and joined assemblies and at programs such as Multicultural Day, Spring Fling and Museum Walks. We embraced the diversity in our school – not just with displays and activities, but also with thought. Acceptance and appreciation of similarities and differences became a part of who we are and not just something we learned about a few times a year.

The implementation of this process takes time. It is important to have a plan. To assist this learning project I worked with the GLT to set target dates for completion of the learning modules with flexibility. The learning modules would cover two years' worth of learning and the third year would focus on the capstone project. As assistant principal, I worked alongside of my staff cheering them on when they succeeded and together as we completed our modules. When someone struggled or felt overwhelmed, I was there to offer guidance and encouragement.

We monitored the completion of the modules through observation and badges earned through the **Participate** website (www.participate.com). Goals for global learning were also incorporated into teacher Professional Development Plans and so we could document individual growth and success. Completion of the modules was done incrementally and as a whole staff. We not only learned together, we celebrated together. There are not many times as adults that you receive public recognition; our success was shared with the whole staff, whole school and with our district leaders. As a staff we had a 100% completion rate for the first two years of modules.



Figure 8

The value of working alongside the staff is an experience that is hard to describe. It was important to me to participate in every aspect of the process including all of the training modules. I participated in presenting modules, developing plans, observing modules developed from lessons, assisting teachers with modules and clarifying

Figure 9



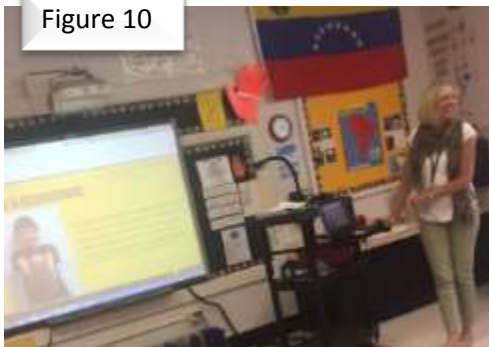
confusion when necessary. My learning was strategic and intentional. If the expectation was for the teachers to participate in the process as part of the school improvement plan, then as an instructional leader I felt it necessary to participate as well. Through this experience I understood the learning that was taking place, which was a unifying experience. Alone this process would have seemed impossible; together with my teacher leaders we were strengthened by knowledge, compassion and understanding that we brought to the experience.

OUTCOMES OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Our plan for providing professional development was critical to success. I observed a shift in not just *what* we learned, but *how* we learned. Leaders emerged through the professional development as staff members found success in the variety of global modules. As we worked to encourage teachers to move out of their comfort zone they asked to lead professional development and to mentor other teachers.

Technology was more than a word processor; it became a way to connect and share information formally and informally. I know this was an important lesson for me as I supported staff to move beyond the classroom through: online google hangouts, tweets and even Skype. The result was so exciting. Teachers that were terrified of social media learned and how to use it educationally and became key communicators of using technology. Many of the staff had virtual online collaborations, and even took virtual field trips with their classes; these experiences were enriched through the global lens.

Figure 10



When I consider the question about what or how I could have done something differently, I think back to the application process for NC Global Ready Schools. Much of our learning as a staff and a global team emerged out of the natural progression of the modules. I wish I knew to more formally document each event (whether digitally or in a journal form), as keeping this information organized is crucial. I think this would have made completing the “application” easier. As a

Figure 11



GLT we had many opportunities to tell our story and reflect upon our learning as leaders and individuals and as a team. Collecting that narrative data seems important to me now. Many moments in time were encapsulated into digital images, tweets, modules and individual stories. I believe going through this process reminds me that everyone has a story to tell. How one collects, displays and shares one's story is so valuable.

NEXT OPPORTUNITIES FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT (district/school level)

For continued growth, I will support my students and staff as we move forward. As assistant principal, I provide guidance to our "Year One" staff with the same structure for support we had in place with the first group that focused on the completion of global modules. We have been enriched by so many wonderful activities and lessons through this experience. The cycle continues and we reflect and revisit our experiences with new staff each year.



Figure 12

Continuing to nurture and support others is critical. We cannot take our success for granted. Once we achieve recognition at one level, we have to ask, what is next? What do we need to do to get to the next level? I will continue to support my school principal and school community with encouragement. Alongside my *GLT* we will reflect on this process and consider what we have learned and what our plan will be as we move forward. Global citizenship begins first and foremost with participation and reflection. Our learning cannot stop if we are planning to sustain change. Once we meet a goal, we need to have the next one in sight. We need to keep growing and developing competencies in all of us.

As a member of the global team, I helped support my teachers as they grew in the process. I was able to continue fueling the momentum as we work toward our vision of being a North Carolina Global Ready School. My role is to support the vision of my school and district. I plan to continue to supporting others on their journey as global educators. I am a reflective learner. Opportunities to present Elon's global journey at state conferences, district events and team panels have been enriching experiences. I



Figure 13

learn every time I share my journey and our transformation: my skills as an educational leader have been enhanced. I once heard someone say the most challenging roads can lead to beautiful destinations; this is true! With a plan, support and collaborative structures the beauty of our work is evidenced throughout the school in displays, lessons and the voice of our children that we now hear differently.

Credits for Visuals

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Photo taken by Carolyn Tracy Pennington
- Figure 2: ***The Window to the World Display~entryway***.
Photo taken by Jack Davern, used with permission.
- Figure 3: ***Spotlight on our International Staff***.
Photo taken by Sandra Bays, used with permission.
- Page 4** Figure 4: ***Using Skype...collaborating beyond the classroom***.
Photo taken by Carolyn Tracy Pennington.
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Photo taken by [Participate](#), used with permission.
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Photo taken by Carolyn Tracy Pennington.
- Figure 13: ***Sharing our global journey***.
Photo by [Participate](#), used with permission.

Resource:

Participate-www.participate.com