



PLC AT WORK[®]

Success Story

Clear Lake Community School District CLEAR LAKE, IOWA

Because of the trust and foundation they have in the PLC process, Clear Lake CSD in northern Iowa transitioned through the pandemic with minimal disruption and have even discovered an accelerated pathway for students to thrive through expert advice from Solution Tree.



Solution Tree

Clear Lake Community School District

CLEAR LAKE, IOWA

▶ DEMOGRAPHICS

- ▶ **1,411** students
- ▶ **28.96%** free or reduced lunch
- ▶ **0.93%** limited English proficient
- ▶ **13.41%** special education

▶ RACIAL/ETHNIC PERCENTAGES

- ▶ **84.44%** White
- ▶ **6.39%** Hispanic
- ▶ **2.56%** Black
- ▶ **5.51%** Multiracial
- ▶ **1.03%** Asian
- ▶ **0%** Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- ▶ **0.07%** American Indian or Alaska Native

Clear Lake CSD is situated just 30 minutes south of the Iowa/Minnesota border and nestled next to the beautiful lake from which the town derived its name. From throughout the town and surrounding area in Cerro Gordo County, over 1,400 K-12 students enroll at Clear Lake CSD, which includes one high school, one middle school, and one elementary school. Follow Clear Lake Community School District on Twitter @ClearLakeCSD



▶ CHALLENGE

Though Clear Lake CSD had a substantial professional learning community (PLC) in place, their community of educators struggled to maintain their professional development needs. After close evaluation, even though the students were generally achieving success, the data suggested a lack of consistency from grade to grade or even within each subject. As Clear Lake CSD strives to reach every child, superintendent Doug Gee looked to further develop their professional development by reestablishing a commitment to the three big ideas: a focus on learning, a collaborative culture and collective responsibility, and a results orientation. "These ideas provided the perfect focus to guide us to a new and exciting culture of growth as professionals," said Gee.

▶ IMPLEMENTATION

The first step in their journey was to reestablish a firm understanding of the PLC at Work® process for all their educators. They started with their administrative staff going through a book study of a core title in the PLC at Work canon, *Professional Learning Communities at Work®*, Third Edition (Dufour, Dufour, Eaker, Manny, and Mattos 2016). Afterward, in 2017, administrative staff and teacher leaders attended a PLC at Work conference where they discovered how best to focus their efforts for the students.

Clear Lake was already performing well as a district. On most of their state assessments, the students were scoring 81% or higher in percent proficient. But, as they started looking at that 81–95% proficiency, they calculated that on average 29 students per grade in grades 3–8 were not proficient in either math, reading, or science, and 50 high school students had failed at least one course the year before. They realized that every child deserved to succeed and that they needed a course correction to reach the students getting left behind.

They implemented subtle changes at first, such as turning staff meetings into focused groups that solely discussed their work in terms of the four critical questions, and devoting all of their Wednesday early dismissals to time for their collaborative teams to meet. They then made larger changes with set expectations for each school, and each principal was expected to work with their building to meet those expectations.

Over the course of the next few years, their focused efforts included changing the makeup of their teacher teams, setting grade-specific expectations, and training staff on formative assessment. This was amplified with the assistance of Luis F. Cruz, who, in August of 2019, came to Clear Lake for two days to work with their entire staff to establish their purpose and a clear understanding of their role in the culture and climate of their building.

As their plans came to fruition, so came the pandemic, and as a result of the previous years of PLC work, Clear Lake CSD managed to get through the school year with as little disruption as possible. Now, as they continue their journey, they are ready to double down on their huge successes.

“As we looked to grow as a district, we realized the best people to provide professional development were our very own professionals in our buildings. We understood the value of learning from one another.”

—Doug Gee, superintendent, Clear Lake Community School District, Iowa

► RESULTS

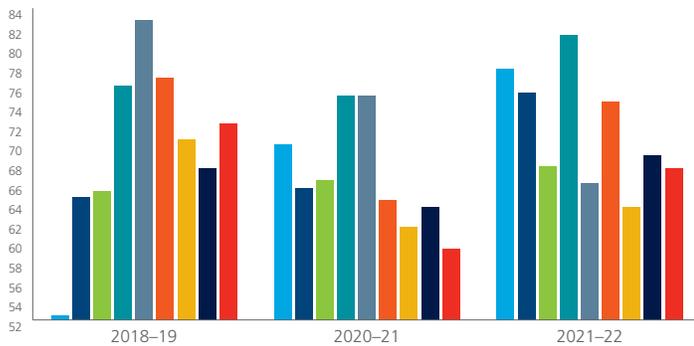
Clear Lake CSD started the 2020–21 school year with key elements in place to accelerate learning. Their PLC journey has been a huge success for the district and the staff are all on the same page of understanding the “why” and the process.

Noteworthy achievements include:

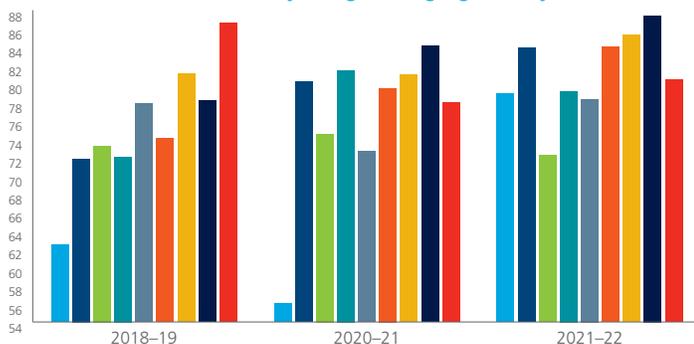
- 1st Grade Fall FAST (Reading Fluency) improved from 63% in 2017 to 85% in 2019.
- 5th Grade Fall FAST (Reading Fluency) improved from 71% to 77% in the same time frame.
- Composite ACT results went from 21.7 to 23.3 in just two years.
- Graduation rate for free/reduced lunch students has increased from 89.8% in 2016–17 to 92.6% in 2018–19.



Percent Proficiency in Math by Grade



Percent Proficiency in English Language Arts by Grade



■ 3rd Grade ■ 4th Grade ■ 5th Grade
■ 6th Grade ■ 7th Grade ■ 8th Grade
■ 9th Grade ■ 10th Grade ■ 11th Grade



Start Your Success Story

You have a vision for change and improvement in your school or district. You want to see results in the classroom for the lifelong betterment of your students. Like many educators, you may be doing more with less, and you are always looking for ways to improve.

At Solution Tree, we share your vision to transform education to ensure learning for all, and we can help you make this vision a reality.

OUR PROMISE: No other professional learning company provides our unique blend of research-based, results-driven services that improve learning outcomes for students.

► Start your school's PLC at Work® journey at SolutionTree.com/PD or call 800.733.6786 ext. 440