



PLC AT WORK®

Success Story

Lake County Schools

LAKE COUNTY, FLORIDA

Lake County Schools experienced decreases in student achievement that were less than the state average in many areas during school shutdowns due to the pandemic. In addition, math achievement saw an increase in the number of subgroups performing above the state average.



Solution Tree

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DEMOGRAPHICS

- › **36,829** students
- › **42** campuses
- › **100%** Economically disadvantaged
- › **4%** English learners
- › **18%** Special education
- › **15.5%** African American
- › **26.9%** Hispanic
- › **0.5%** American Indian or Alaska Native
- › **2.7%** Asian
- › **4.1%** Multiracial
- › **48.8%** White
- › **1.5%** Other

Lake County Schools is the 19th largest public school district in the state of Florida. The 2018 population of Lake County, Florida, was estimated to be more than 342,000, with a growth rate of 3.16% in the past year according to the most recent United States census data. Lake County has ranked among the top 10 fastest-growing counties in Florida.



► CHALLENGE

Just prior to committing to the process of becoming a Model PLC at Work® District, Lake County Schools hired Diane Kornegay as superintendent, who then hired Emily Feltner as assistant superintendent. Both women brought with them a belief system deeply rooted in supporting all students, and Emily quickly shared with Diane the importance of the vision and process of Professional Learning Communities at Work.

As a struggling school district that ranked 47th out of 67 school districts in student achievement statewide, the message to Lake County Schools staff was clear. The goal of the new leadership was to end the educational lottery among schools and create a school system that guaranteed learning at high levels for *all* students.

► IMPLEMENTATION

Collaboration among support staff, teachers, school leaders, and district leaders helped determine what was working and what wasn't working for Lake County Schools students, which led to open communication and collaboration from day one. This created trust and a clear message that the three big ideas of focusing on results, collaboration, and learning would be a priority both at the district and school levels.

Each summer, over 400 lead learners, including district staff, principals, assistant principals, and teacher leaders, check in on systemwide progress, set goals, and learn together. They have used select Solution Tree resources, such as *Learning by Doing*, 3rd edition, *Transforming School Culture*, *Time for Change*, and *Overcoming the Achievement Gap Trap* as anchor texts.

Principal meetings have included time to review student subgroup achievement data at the school and district level, identify areas of focus, and determine next steps. As a result of this work, district progress monitoring results show a reduction in the achievement gap in some areas. The district, along with each school, created a guiding coalition that analyzed gaps in data and created an action plan to eliminate these gaps.

Since starting PLC at Work implementation, 183 leaders and teachers have attended a PLC at Work Institute. Having a team trained at every school allows the district to create a common vision, vocabulary, and expectations for implementation of the PLC process. When COVID-19 canceled several institutes, teams participated in a districtwide virtual institute. This learning opportunity allowed first-time attendees to hear directly from the PLC at Work experts and provided an opportunity for those already immersed in the work to reflect and refine their practices.

Collaboration in the school system begins with the superintendent and has a continuous through-line to the student level. The assistant superintendent oversees all departments regarding teaching, learning, and leadership and has an expectation that collaboration occurs weekly within each department and monthly among various departments.

Time for collaboration at the school level has been in place for several years. Over the last few years, the district has provided support through the use of

“As we continue to prove the power of the PLC at Work process in closing achievement gaps and achieving equity, Lake County provides us with a new, extremely powerful example.”

—Mike Mattos, author and PLC at Work associate

► IMPLEMENTATION *(continued)*

district program specialists and school based literacy coaches to ensure this collaborative time is spent focused on the four questions to ensure teacher and student success.

Understanding that learning occurs at different rates, the focus on intervention and acceleration during the school day became crucial.

Time was built into the school day and became an expectation for all schools. Master schedules were changed and every school provided time for intervention and acceleration in addition to just-in-time support during core instruction.

► RESULTS

After four years, the PLC at Work process is the way of work in Lake County Schools. Systems and structures are in place supporting weekly collaboration across the district. Teacher collaborative teams rely on these systems to provide the highly effective instruction all students deserve.

The results of this hard work and commitment are visible and a testament to educators on every campus that this is the right work. **In just three years of implementation, the Lake County Schools state ranking in graduation rate rose from 50th to 22nd. The district is proud to have raised their graduation rate from 78% to 90%, and they have confidence in the processes they have in place to bring them to 100% of students graduating.**

The PLC process has also made a difference in learning loss experienced due to school shutdown during the pandemic. “We were able to quickly identify essential standards for virtual learning lessons across the district, reducing our learning loss as compared to the state,” says Emily Feltner, Lake County assistant superintendent for teaching, learning, and leadership.

“As we continually strive to improve, we know these practices have become beliefs,” Feltner continues. “This common vision for learning, the focus on results, and the work of collaborative teams have aligned expectations and provided a guaranteed and viable curriculum that ensures equitable experiences and high levels of learning for all students across schools.”

District and State graduation rates from 2018 through 2020





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