



PLC AT WORK™

EVIDENCE OF EFFECTIVENESS

Montezuma Community Schools MONTEZUMA, IOWA

With a student enrollment of only 539, this rural district is the smallest to become a model PLC.



A Montezuma High School student mentoring an elementary student

DEMOGRAPHICS

Montezuma Community Schools is located in Montezuma, Iowa, the county seat in the southeastern part of the state. A rural district in Poweshiek County, Montezuma is comprised of one elementary school building and one secondary school building. It is the smallest district, and the only district with student enrollment under 1,500, to be recognized as a model PLC on allthingsplc.info.

"I often hear from colleagues who think their school is too small or there aren't enough teachers who teach common classes to use the PLC process," says Superintendent Dave Versteeg. "We hope that small schools will be inspired and enlightened by our PLC story."

- 539 Students
- 33.21% Free and reduced lunch
- 9.83% Special education
- 0.37% African American
- 1.48% Hispanic
- 0.19% Asian
- 0.37% American Indian/Alaska Native
- 0.74% Multiracial

CHALLENGE

The leadership at Montezuma Community Schools established collaborative teams in 2010–11 as a part of their Iowa Core Curriculum implementation plan. Before the year was over, the school community realized the power of collaboration to influence the culture, climate, and practice of teaching and to improve student results. Teachers began to ask for more school-day time to collaborate and a more comprehensive process.

In the summer of 2011, Montezuma leadership sent a group of administrators and staff to a Solution Tree PLC at Work™ Institute. "Teachers who attended stated it was one of the most powerful professional events they had experienced," recalls Versteeg. "The DuFour PLC model

gave us a vision of what collaboration is and how to get there."

The driving force for implementing the PLC at Work™ process for Montezuma was the determination to improve formative and summative student results. Previously, district-level summative results had been inconsistent over time and not keeping up with a growth trend line. Classroom formative results did not align with grade-level standards. "We knew that staff and students were working hard at improving achievement, but the results just weren't there," says Versteeg. "The PLC at Work™ Institute showed us that there were better ways to work at improving our results, and it all starts with how we work together."

IMPLEMENTATION

After the PLC institute, Montezuma had a core group of teachers ready to lead with complete administrative support. Some staff were not initially prepared or convinced that collaborating with others about the four critical questions of a PLC was the best use of their time, but plodded ahead anyway. The administration outlined that teachers were going to collaborate and that they were going to collaborate in a certain way. However, the teachers had quite a bit of autonomy in determining what the collaboration looked like and how it actually worked.

At the elementary level, teams were created by combining classes and grade levels—for example, K–1, 2–3, 4–6—with special education, Title I, and talented and gifted

teachers mixed into each group. Teams also have the ability switch their schedules to create groups that make sense to them. At the secondary level, teams were organized around content, with special education teachers included with math and English groups. Building leaders then developed innovative scheduling that allowed teams time to collaborate.

The administrative team also follows established meeting norms and develops quarterly SMART goals.



Montezuma students working on their writing skills

“Our advice to a school just beginning this journey is get started. Don’t wait, don’t just dabble in the process; jump in, and get started. Use resources from Solution Tree and others to define the right work and what to do, but get started.”

—Superintendent Dave Versteeg

RESULTS

Montezuma Community Schools has been featured by Area Education Agency (AEA) 267 in a series of professional development videos on how to get started as a PLC. In addition, Montezuma High School has been recognized by *U.S. News & World Report* at the bronze level of Best High Schools in Iowa for 2013–14.

Internally, Montezuma Community Schools uses the NWEA MAP end-of-year grade-level expectation for goal setting and overall school improvement results. The long-term district goal is for 100% of students to reach the end-of-year expectations in reading, math, and science every year. The current annual target goal is 75% of students meeting end-of-year

expectations in reading, math, and science every year. Once this has been achieved, the percentage goal will be ratcheted up until the long-term goal is reached.

In the spring of 2012

1 of 12 grades met the target goal in math

2 of 12 grades met the target goal in reading

2 of 9 grades met the target goal in science

In the spring of 2013

1 of 12 grades met the target goal in math

4 of 12 grades met the target goal in reading

3 of 9 grades met the target goal in science

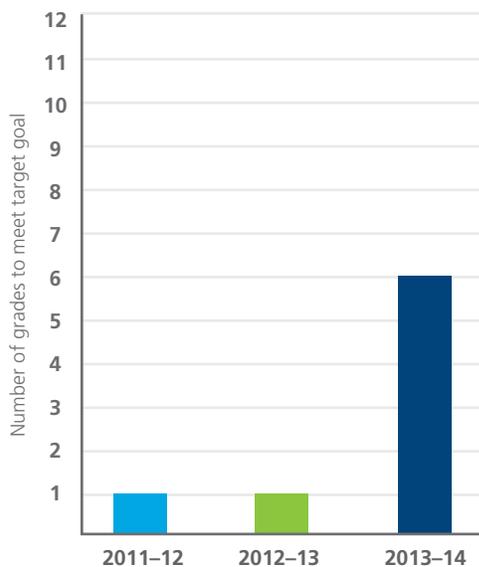
In the spring of 2014

6 of 12 grades met the target goal in math

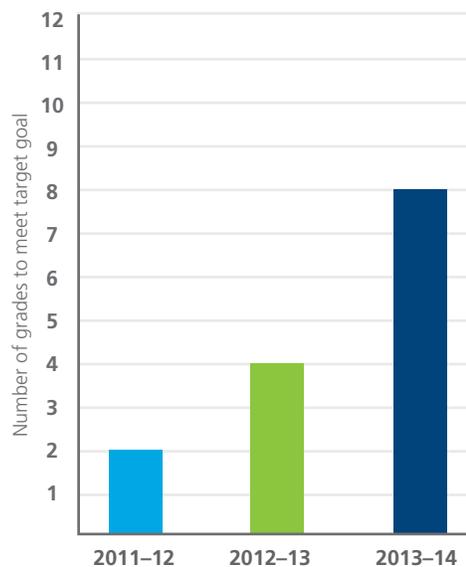
8 of 12 grades met the target goal in reading

5 of 9 grades met the target goal in science

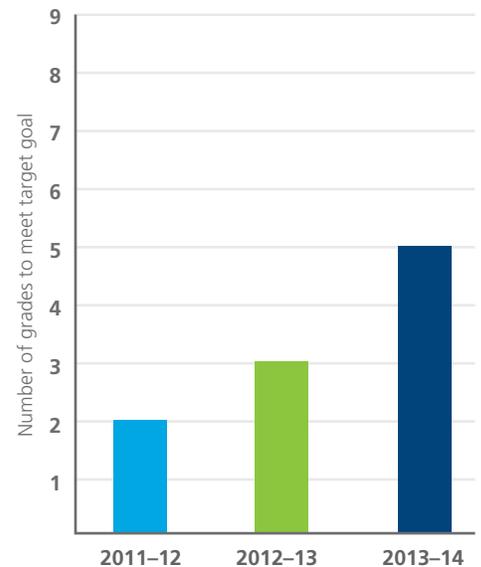
Math



Reading



Science



Reach new heights of student learning

You're dedicated to helping your students succeed. At Solution Tree, our experts are committed to equipping you with solutions that directly impact student achievement. We invite you to explore the best of content-rich, research-based professional development and discover just how rewarding the journey can be.

Here are just a few ways we can work together:

Customized Workshops

Bring an expert to your school! Plan a dynamic one-day session or a series of trainings. Just tell us your goals, and we'll customize an experience for you and your team.

Standard Workshops

Ever attended one of our workshops and wished you could bring it back to the rest of your team? Now you can! Let our experts come to you.

Keynotes

Bring a keynote speaker into your school, and inspire your team to take the next steps on your professional learning journey! Keynotes typically include a slide presentation and a general question-and-answer segment.

Interactive Web and Video Conferencing

Get top-notch PD from the comfort of your office or classroom! Discover personalized, research-based support from our experts on more than 100 topics, including Common Core, RTI, and 21st century skills.

Long-Term Sustainable Plans

Let us put you on the path to long-term success. We'll partner with you to develop a comprehensive and sustainable professional development plan based on your most critical challenges.

Hybrid Events

Experience a PLC at Work™ Institute from the comfort of your own school! Live streaming video will deliver dynamic and engaging keynotes, breakouts, and panel discussions to your entire team.

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