



# PLC AT WORK<sup>®</sup>

Success Story

A Montezuma High School student mentoring an elementary student

## Montezuma Community Schools

**MONTEZUMA, IOWA**

With a student enrollment of only 539, this rural district is the smallest to become a Model PLC at Work<sup>®</sup> district.



Solution Tree

# Montezuma Community Schools

MONTEZUMA, IOWA

## DEMOGRAPHICS

- › 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

*Montezuma Community Schools is located in Montezuma, Iowa, the seat of Poweshiek County, in the southeastern part of the state. A rural district, 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 at Work® district on AllThingsPLC.info.*

## ► CHALLENGE

The leadership at Montezuma Community Schools established collaborative teams as a part of their Iowa Core Curriculum implementation plan. Before the school year was over, **staff 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, as well as a more comprehensive process.

The summer following this discovery, 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 superintendent Dave Versteeg. **“The PLC process gave us a vision of what collaboration is and how to get there.”**

The driving force for implementing the PLC at Work process in Montezuma was the determination to improve formative and summative results. Previously, district-level summative results had been inconsistent over time and weren’t 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 at Work 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 set the expectation 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 teachers from special education, Title I, and talented and gifted mixed into each group. Teams also had the ability to switch their schedules to create groups that made 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 began to follow established meeting norms and develop quarterly SMART goals.



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 was recognized by U.S. News & World Report at the bronze level of Best High Schools in Iowa during their third year of implementing the PLC at Work process.

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 percent of students to reach end-of-year expectations in reading, math, and science every year. The current annual target goal is 75 percent of students meeting end-of-year expectations in reading, math, and science. Once this has been achieved, the percentage goal will be ratcheted up until the long-term goal is reached.

### In the spring of Year 1

- 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

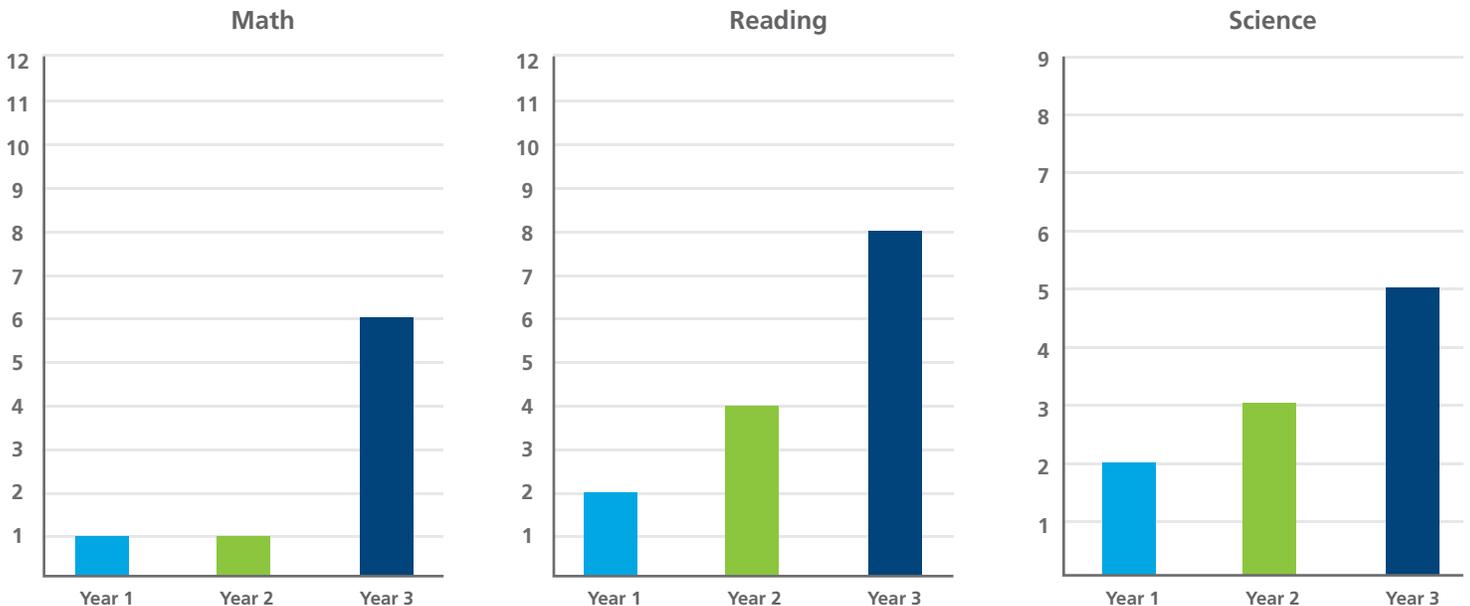
### In the spring of Year 2

- 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 Year 3

- 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

## Number of grades to meet target goal





Montezuma students working on their writing skills

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