



Priority Schools
in a PLC AT WORK®
SUCCESS STORY

U.S. Grant High School

OKLAHOMA CITY, OKLAHOMA

In less than four years, U.S. Grant went from failing to meet student testing standards to nearly acing the state's A–F report card.



Solution Tree

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DEMOGRAPHICS

- › **123** Teachers
- › **1,640** Students
- › **89%** Free and reduced lunch
- › **30%** English learners
- › **15%** Special education
- › **8%** African American
- › **73%** Hispanic
- › **1%** Asian/Pacific Islander
- › **13%** White

U.S. Grant High School is the largest school in Oklahoma City Public Schools, a multicultural district serving approximately 43,000 students.

KEY ATTRIBUTES OF SUCCESS

- › Structured approach to implementing the PLC at Work® process
- › Daily teacher collaboration during the regular school day
- › Development of authentic common formative and summative assessments
- › Use of data to drive instruction
- › Engaging students in monitoring their own learning
- › Ongoing professional development provided by experts in the field of education

► CHALLENGE

The culture and media surrounding U.S. Grant High School has been historically negative. The school has been called a “dropout factory” and “ground zero of education reform in Oklahoma.” According to the Oklahoma City Police Department, five of the six known gangs in Oklahoma City reside within district boundaries. Staff spent their time focusing on compliance and order instead of student achievement.

Ultimately, the Oklahoma City Public School Board of Education designated U.S. Grant a Turnaround School and allocated additional funding under a School Improvement Grant. The following school year, U.S. Grant did not make Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) and was placed on the state “needs improvement” list for the sixth year in a row.

► IMPLEMENTATION

Under the leadership of former Principal Tamie Sanders, U.S. Grant began its journey to become a Professional Learning Community (PLC) at Work®. The staff focused their efforts on monitoring student learning on a timely basis, creating systems of intervention, and building teacher capacity to work as members of high-performing collaborative teams.

Teacher teams now develop common assessments based on appropriate learning objectives and depth of knowledge. The teams give the assessments to students in a consistent manner and analyze the results for effective instructional strategies, curricular improvement areas, and student strengths/weaknesses. This drives instruction, which is supported by a team approach to enrichment and remediation.

Following are some of the interventions that teams use to provide additional time and support for learning:

1. Differentiated, tiered lessons
2. Flexible grouping among teachers to accommodate varying student learning levels
3. Intercession opportunities to remediate and allow students opportunities for success
4. Plans created and monitored for each senior to meet graduation requirements

Department chairs and team leaders are strategically selected based on collaborative and leadership skills, not seniority. These leaders participate in ongoing training to further develop their facilitation skills. Leaders and administrators regularly participate in the schoolwide leadership team and monitor the protocols of the department collaborative teams. Protocols include:

1. Establish and review SMART goals
2. Focus on the four critical PLC questions in an effective and efficient manner
3. Use frequent common assessments that truly measure and monitor learning
4. Analyze data to the student level
5. Monitor for conflicts and barriers that get in the way of student learning

► RESULTS

In Oklahoma, seniors must pass a minimum of four (of seven) End-of-Instruction (EOI) tests to graduate. At the start of the first year of implementing Priority Schools in a PLC at Work practices, 204 seniors had not met the state testing requirements for graduation. Administrators, counselors, and teachers analyzed the data on each senior to ensure they had the maximum opportunities and resources to meet the state requirements. The school focused on student learning and improving the culture simultaneously. The following May, word began to spread of the positive changes going on at the school, with local news channel News 9 reporting that “Principal Sanders and her staff transformed the culture of Grant.” By the end of the first year of implementation, only

four seniors had not met the state testing requirements, and 35 seniors passed all seven EOI assessments.

The academic growth that occurred within one school year made a huge impact and ignited motivation for continued improvement. The unprecedented success of that year’s seniors raised the bar for all students. The following school year, the number of seniors not meeting state graduation requirements was reduced to 85 compared to 204 for the previous year. In year 3 of implementation, U.S. Grant had 117 seniors who passed all seven EOI tests, with an additional 35 who needed to pass just one more test to have passed all seven.

“Solution Tree helped expand how we utilize PLC time by guiding us to create group intervention plans; become vertically aligned; and use benchmarks, common assessments, and state exam data to identify students in need of intervention. The student achievement gains U.S. Grant has made were possible because we became a team of teachers, instead of individual teachers, with a clearly defined path to reach our goals.”

—Maria Wartchow, Algebra 2 and 3, Trigonometry, and Honors Precalculus teacher



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 journey at SolutionTree.com/Priority-Schools-in-a-PLC-at-Work or call 800.733.6786 ext. 440