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

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**PRIORITY
SCHOOLS**

— *in a* —

**PLC
AT WORK®**

Success Story

Palmer Elementary School RENO, NEVADA

Palmer Elementary School saw drastic increases to third- and sixth-grade math and ELA proficiency and closed the achievement gap among disadvantaged students through the PLC at Work® process.

Palmer Elementary School

RENO, NEVADA

“Students and teachers were encouraged and motivated by their successes, and even the resistant teachers got on board.”

—Raegan Virgil, former principal, Palmer Elementary School, Nevada

► DEMOGRAPHICS

- 503 students
- 16.73% Special education
- 31.21% English language learners
- 70.97% Free or reduced price lunch eligible
- 62.23% Hispanic
- 1.99% African American
- 27.24% Caucasian
- 4.17% Multiracial
- 1.19% Asian
- 1.39% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
- 1.79% Native American

Source: Nevada Department of Education, Nevada Accountability Portal

Palmer Elementary School is located in Sun Valley, Nevada, a community of approximately 20,000 residents near Reno, Nevada.

► CHALLENGE

With student proficiency rates hovering around 28 percent in English and math—and an unsightly two-star school rating—former Palmer Elementary School principal Raegan Virgil¹ knew major changes were necessary to improve student outcomes.

Virgil tried changing the class schedule and rearranging her teacher teams. She brought literacy and math coaches into the building.

And yet, Palmer’s numbers did not move.

“There was a very pervasive feeling of hopelessness, with both staff and students,” said Virgil, who oversaw PLC implementation at the school. “Foremost, I wanted to address our achievement rates and our culture.”

► IMPLEMENTATION

Although it was already late spring, an inconvenient time for educators to roll out new strategies, Virgil and her team committed to Solution Tree’s support. Palmer’s leadership team attended a two-day training session with PLC associate Geri Parscale and scheduled a few on-site visits with Robin Noble, an expert with more than 30 years of experience in education.

“It allowed us to really hit the ground running the next year,” Virgil said.

And in the next year, Palmer’s teachers and students began to flourish.

Palmer’s teams established norms and a clear purpose and identified two power standards to start the process. Noble aided the school by working with PLC teams to create common formative assessments, form strong interventions, make SMART goals, and fine-tune the overall process.

“Most of the teachers bought into the vision and purpose of the work immediately,” Virgil said.

Palmer’s teams adopted the mantra of “Fail Forward,” stressing that difficulty would be part of the process. Instructors were reminded to stay focused on their long-term goals.

“As we began to see some small wins with some of the learning targets, the teachers really started getting motivated,” Virgil said. “By the second semester, they were getting much more efficient and effective with the process.”



► RESULTS

In just one year, Palmer saw stunningly positive instances of growth among once-troubling state testing scores.

The third-grade team increased proficiency from 28 percent on the state ELA test to 48 percent over two years—a figure Virgil says could easily keep growing. The third-grade team also improved math proficiency from 41 percent to 57 percent in that same span.

Furthermore, Palmer’s “CIT” students—children in transition, or those experiencing homelessness—recorded a large reading proficiency score growth, from 17 percent to 35 percent, a gap-closing data movement compared to the general student population’s score of 41 percent.

“It was a huge leap for them,” Virgil said.

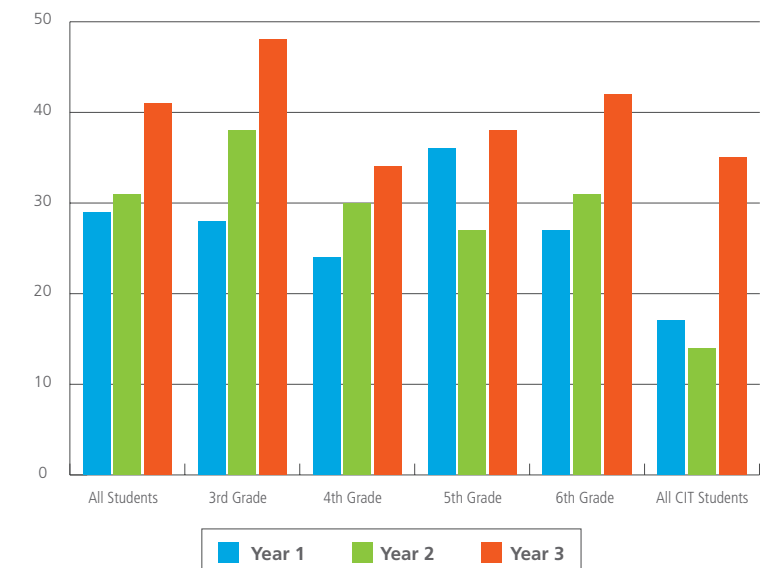
The community of parents and stakeholders was also pleased with the extra interventions students were receiving.

“We heard a lot of positive feedback, especially during conference week when we really had an opportunity to speak with parents one-on-one.”

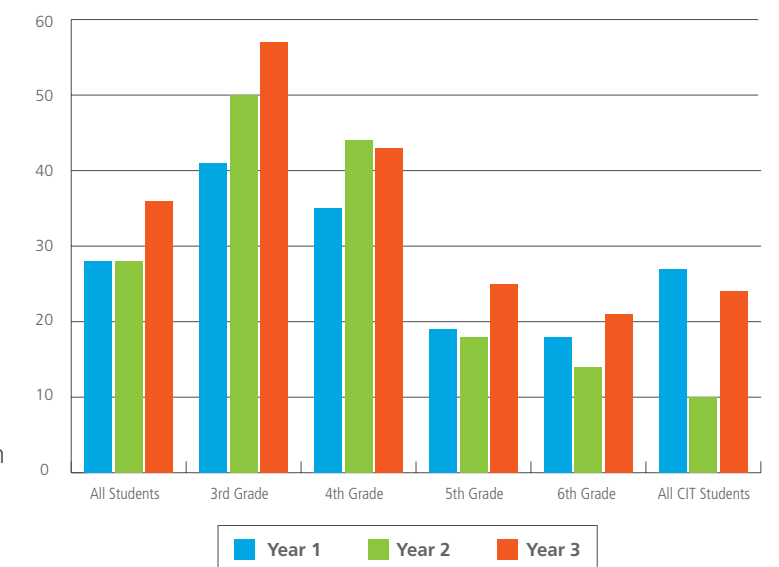
The successes, in turn, continue to stack for Palmer: Teachers are becoming quicker and more effective at assessments and interventions. The number of students requiring interventions has gone down. Teachers are owning the responsibility of ensuring higher levels of learning for every student, and the data is reflecting their collective commitment.

“I think that is the true power of PLCs, the site-based leadership that it creates,” Virgil said. “The teachers own the process, and changes in the principalship or curriculum don’t affect it.”

Overall ELA Percent at or Above Standard



Overall Math Percent at or Above Standard



¹ Virgil is now serving as principal within the school district at F. W. Traner Middle School. Palmer Elementary is continuing its PLC work with associate Robin Noble.