

How McLaughlin Middle School Exited Turnaround Status, Earned its Best School Grade in 7 Years, and Outperformed its District Learning Rates

Author

Lindsey Devers Basileo,
PhD, Director of Research

Kim Harris,
School Leadership Coach

**For more of the consulting team members'* historical work visit
InstructionalEmpowerment.com**

*Instructional Empowerment's team members served McLaughlin Middle School under another company led by CEO and Executive Director of Research, Michael Toth, before Instructional Empowerment was founded. Michael Toth and the Instructional Empowerment team have perfected and applied their own evidence-based school improvement approach. Team members who served McLaughlin Middle include: Year 1 - School Leadership Coach Kimberly Harris and shared Faculty Coaches/Staff Developers Kara Bentley, Libby Garst, Stephanie Terrell, Kaija Robinson, Lindsay Elliot, Jennifer Perez; Year 2 - School Leadership Coaches Kimberly Harris and James Payne and shared Faculty Coaches/Staff Developers: Kara Bentley, Stephanie Terrell, Elizabeth Buzzanca, Mindy Province, Sue O'Rear, Leslie Frick.

SUMMARY

Accelerating Unfinished Learning - During a Pandemic




Building Systemic Growth

McLaughlin became the only middle school in its area to exit state turnaround status by earning its best grade since 2015. School leaders credit the team of external consultants for taking end-to-end, complete systems approaches to instructional leadership and core instruction. Together, there was a combined focus on building highly effective leadership teams that brought out cornerstone improvements in teacher pedagogy and student agency within the rigorous school-wide Tier 1 core instruction as teachers reported improved professional learning communities AND student behavior.



Teacher Perceptions

Fall 2019 to Fall 2020

Teachers reported **improved PLCs**

	2019 Fall Mean	2020 Fall Mean	Count	Change
Develop common standards-based learning targets	2.67	3.11	35	 16%
Create common performance tasks	2.50	2.78	36	 11%
Examine student work	2.33	2.43	35	 4%

Teachers reported **improved student behavior**

	2019 Fall Mean	2020 Fall Mean	Count	Change
Office referrals for negative behavior are declining	2.53	2.78	37	 10%
Student attendance is improving	2.31	2.50	38	 8%

“Our students did a phenomenal job, and it was because of the great partnership we have with the consulting team members. They sent the best and the brightest they have from their company to help mentor and develop us as instructional leaders to really move our school forward.” - **Dr. Debra Wright-Hudson, Principal McLaughlin Middle School, Lake Wales, FL**

“In order for changes in core instruction to occur, I had to be more engaged in the planning process with my teachers. The consultants were always there. They provided resources and they helped me think through the process while allowing me to have the ownership and not prescribing a one-size fits all strategy.” - **Christopher Ford, Assistant Principal of Curriculum and Instruction, McLaughlin Middle School, Lake Wales, FL**









McLaughlin Middle School and the team of consultants partnered to build capacity of leadership and rigorous instruction within the framework of the school turnaround model. As a result, McLaughlin students performed better than its district counterparts in reading and math according to the district’s spring STAR assessment and the subgroup gaps noted below.

- McLaughlin Middle School students in 6th, 7th and 8th grades performed 13% better than its Polk County Public Schools District in its Spring reading rates
- McLaughlin Middle School students in 6th, 7th and 8th grades performed 7% better than its Polk County Public Schools District in its Spring math rates
- McLaughlin Middle School closed subgroup gaps by as much as 277% in READING and 90% in MATH

COVID DISRUPTED SCHOOL YEAR RESULTS

Improving Reading and Math Performance During Winter to Spring 2020-21

McLaughlin Middle School students performed 13% better than the district in **reading** and 7% better in **math**.

Subject	Grade	District	McLaughlin	Rate Diff.
Reading	6	.21	.21	 1%
	7	.16	.12	 -22%
	8	.20	.29	 45%
	WGT. AVG.	.19	.21	 13%
Math	6	.24	.17	 -27%
	7	.35	.44	 27%
	8	.38	.47	 22%
	WGT. AVG.	.32	.34	 7%

SUBGROUP GAP RESULTS

Closing Achievement Gaps

An Applied Research Center examined the change in subgroup gaps using benchmark assessment data from McLaughlin Middle School. It compared assessment results of students who are black to non-black students and of students who are Hispanic to non-Hispanic students. The tables below depict the degree to which students in these two subgroups closed the achievement gap in reading and math.

CLOSING ACHIEVEMENT GAPS: READING

Black: White	Hispanic: Non-Hispanic
7 th - 35%	7 th - 93%
	8 th - 277%

CLOSING ACHIEVEMENT GAPS: MATH

Black: White	Hispanic: Non-Hispanic
7 th - 84%	7 th - 69%
8 th - 90%	

ABOUT THIS METHODOLOGY

School Turnaround Model

The team of external consultants implemented a school turnaround model to provide a continuum of supports that built capacity for sustainable improvement at McLaughlin in two phases: refining supportive conditions for learning and transforming core instruction. The consulting team implemented strategic, customized frameworks that involved all stakeholders to establish a vision, set goals, outline action steps, and ultimately succeed. The methodology aims to improve student achievement and provide an equitable education for all students.

Appendix

LEARNING RATE CALCULATIONS

Hedges G effect sizes were calculated to estimate the average rate of learning for each grade level and assessment.

The rate of learning was calculated by taking the difference in performance divided by the average gain.

The average amount of learning was calculated for the Polk County Public Schools District and McLaughlin Middle School students.

SUBGROUP GAP CALCULATIONS

Subgroup gap benchmarks were calculated by taking the differences between the mean scale score for each subgroup and counterpart divided by the standard deviation for all students.

Subgroup gaps were calculated for McLaughlin Middle School students to assess change over time.

EVIDENCE STANDARDS

School improvement systems meet evidence requirements under the federal ESEA Title VIII Section 8101 (21) for LEA or school activities, strategies, or interventions.

**For more of the consulting team members'* historical work visit
InstructionalEmpowerment.com**

*Instructional Empowerment's team members served McLaughlin Middle School under another company led by CEO and Executive Director of Research, Michael Toth, before Instructional Empowerment was founded. Michael Toth and the Instructional Empowerment team have perfected and applied their own evidence-based school improvement approach. Team members who served McLaughlin Middle include: Year 1 - School Leadership Coach Kimberly Harris and shared Faculty Coaches/ Staff Developers Kara Bentley, Libby Garst, Stephanie Terrell, Kaija Robinson, Lindsay Elliot, Jennifer Perez; Year 2 - School Leadership Coaches Kimberly Harris and James Payne and shared Faculty Coaches/Staff Developers: Kara Bentley, Stephanie Terrell, Elizabeth Buzzanca, Mindy Province, Sue O'Rear, Leslie Frick.