

# Rapid and Sustainable Improvement in Turnaround Schools

*A Synthesis of Results from Instructional Empowerment Partnerships*



*Students at William D. Moseley Elementary engage in rigorous team-based learning using the Model of Instruction for Deeper Learning.*

## Topics Covered

1. Patterns Across Partnerships
2. Evidence from Turnaround Schools
  - Nine Florida Schools
  - Lakewood Elementary
  - William D. Moseley Elementary School
  - McLaughlin Middle School
  - Kenly Elementary School
  - Cedar Rapids Community School District, IA
  - South Bend Community School Corporation, IN
3. Takeaway
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# Patterns Across Partnerships

Across multiple states and varied school contexts, Instructional Empowerment's turnaround partnerships have produced consistent, measurable results within the first year.

This synthesis draws on case study data from 2019–2026, including publicly reported state data, school-level outcomes, and [Applied Research Center](#) analyses.

Clear patterns emerge:

## Academic Achievement

- Double-digit gains in ELA and math proficiency in multiple schools
- Schools moving from the lowest rankings in their state to top performance tiers
- Districtwide gains in both ELA and math across large systems

## Achievement Gaps

- Substantial gap reductions for:
  - Black students
  - Students from low socioeconomic backgrounds
  - Students with disabilities
- In some cases, gaps fully closed in specific grade levels and subjects

## Student Behavior & Engagement

- Major reductions in discipline referrals (up to 160%)
- Increased student ownership and engagement in learning
- Classrooms shifting from teacher-directed to student-led

## Attendance

- Chronic absenteeism reduced by an average of 9.2 percentage points across nine turnaround schools in a district, far exceeding national trends

## Teacher Retention & Culture

- Schools moving from high turnover to stability within one year
- Teachers reporting increased support, collaboration, and job satisfaction

## How We Partner with Schools and Districts

We partner with schools and districts to rapidly rebuild systems and elevate the capacity of leaders and teachers so that improvement sustains over time.

Our turnaround partnerships focus on:

- Implementing the research-validated [Model of Instruction for Deeper Learning](#)
- Coaching leaders and teachers to strengthen Tier 1 instruction
- Using [metrics-based tools](#) to monitor and guide improvement

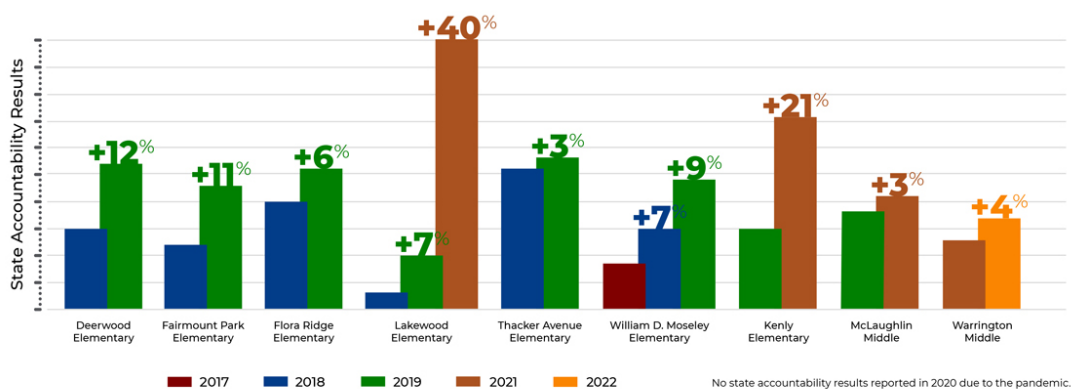
All tools and professional learning are **research-validated** and aligned to evidence-based criteria under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

## Evidence from Turnaround Schools

### Improved State Accountability Scores Across Nine Florida Schools

Our team worked with nine schools that faced state mandates to either close, convert to charter, or partner with an external operator with a proven track record. In all nine schools, our team was able to help improve state accountability scores.

### All Schools Raised Achievement with Our Team Members – Even Through the Pandemic

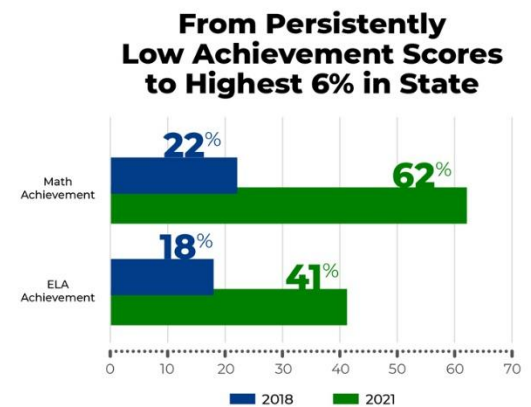


State accountability data from the [Florida School Grades Archives](#) (2019-2021).

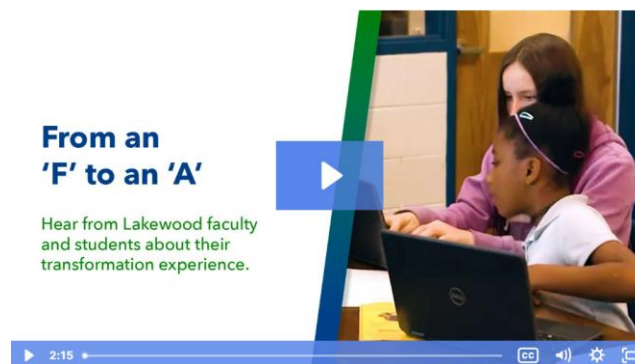
## From Lowest Performing in the State to Top 6%: Lakewood Elementary School (FL)

Once ranked by the state as the lowest-performing traditional public school in Florida, Lakewood Elementary transformed dramatically over three years.

- Ranked in the top 6% of public elementary schools statewide
- Math proficiency nearly tripled; ELA more than doubled
- Achievement gaps narrowed—and in some cases fully closed
- 653 fewer discipline referrals
- Teacher vacancies reduced from 23 to just one



Read the full case study: [Lakewood Elementary: How This Florida School Raised Their State Rating from the Lowest to One of the Highest in the State \(2021\)](#).



Hear directly from students, educators, and leaders about the transformation at Lakewood Elementary.

## From Turnaround Status to Districtwide Impact: William D. Moseley Elementary & Putnam County (FL)

Moseley was ranked by the state as the fifth lowest performing traditional public school in Florida.

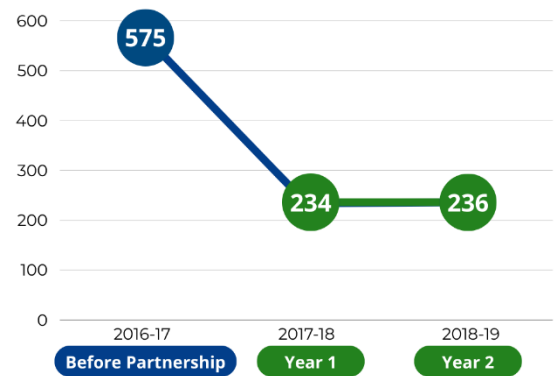
After two years of partnership:

- Moseley exited state turnaround status
- ELA increased by 20 percentage points; Math increased by 13 percentage points
- 339 fewer discipline referrals
- Teacher vacancies reduced from 20 to just six

Moseley became a model for improvement across Putnam County School District:

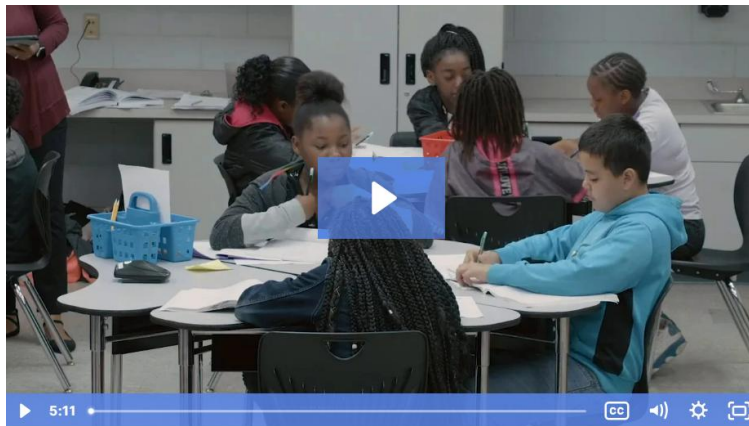
- Every other school in the district exited state accountability status
- Districtwide graduation rates increased from **54.9%** to **96.6%** (Putnam County School District, 2026)

**Discipline Referrals Improved in 1 Year**



**Read the full case study:** [William D. Moseley Elementary School: Becoming a School Where All Students Thrive](#) (2019).

**Read the report featuring Putnam County:** [The Turnaround Trap: Why Quick Fixes Fail Students](#) (2025)



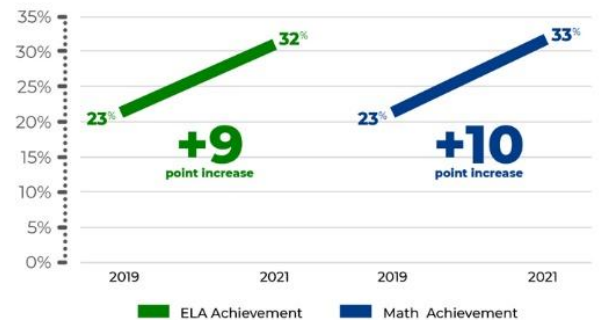
*Hear directly from students, educators, and leaders about the transformation at William D. Moseley Elementary.*

## **Best Results in 7 Years and Outperformed the District: McLaughlin Middle School (FL)**

After one year of partnership, McLaughlin Middle School in Polk County Public Schools, Florida, became the only middle school in its area to exit state accountability status in 2019, achieving:

- Best academic performance in 7 years
- Outperformed district averages in reading and math
- Gains during COVID while many other schools declined
- Achievement gaps narrowed significantly for Black and Hispanic students.

## Middle School Earned Its Best Results in 7 Years



Read the full research report: [How McLaughlin Middle School Exited Comprehensive Support Status, Received Its Best Results in 7 Years, and Outperformed Its District Learning Rates](#) (2019)



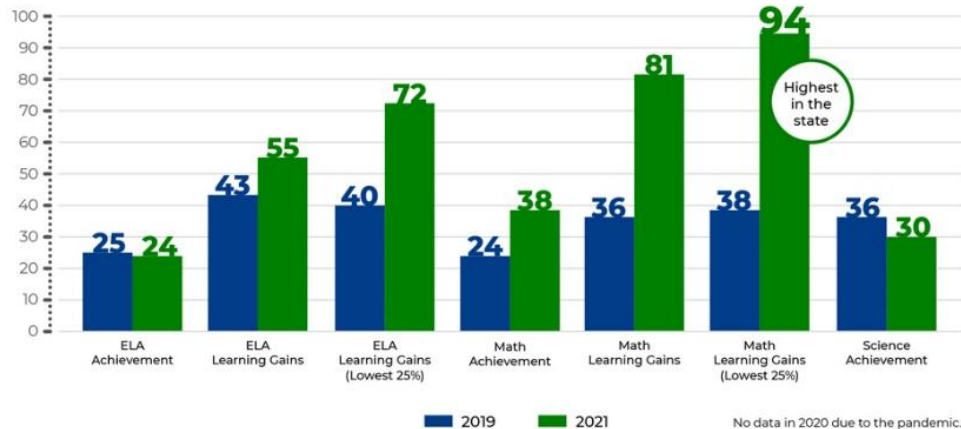
Hear directly from McLaughlin's principal, Dr. Debra Wright-Hudson, about her experience partnering to turn this middle school around.

## State-Leading Growth: Kenly Elementary School (FL)

Kenly Elementary School in Hillsborough County Public Schools, Florida, had experienced accountability results that plateaued in the lower levels for five years. After partnering with our team, they saw:

- Highest math learning gains in the state (94%) for students in the lowest quartile
- Increases in math achievement and gains in ELA

## Math Gains More Than Doubled



State accountability data from the [Florida School Grades Archives](#) (2019-2021).

## Districtwide Implementation with Targeted Turnaround Support: Cedar Rapids Community School District (IA)

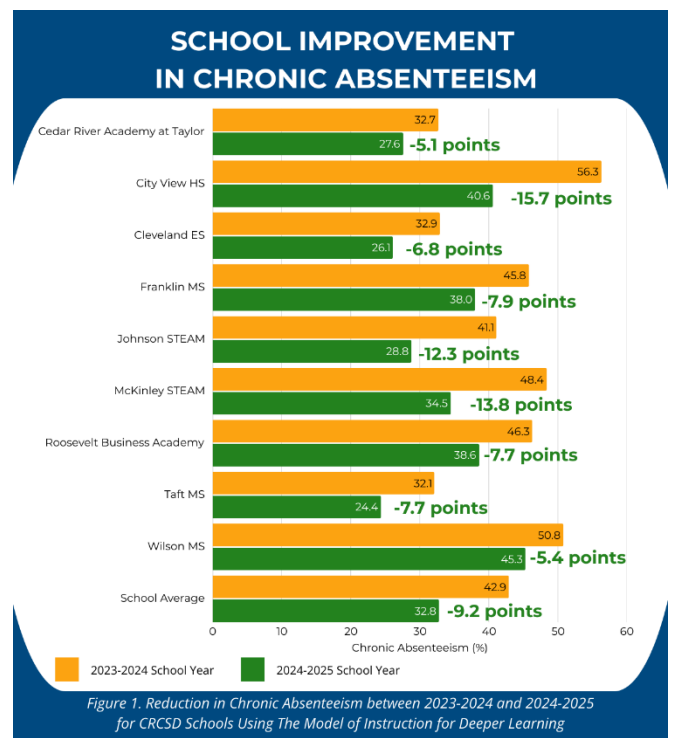
This partnership combined districtwide work on Tier 1 instruction across all 31 schools in the district with more intensive support for turnaround schools identified for Comprehensive or Targeted support.

### Turnaround Schools (Data from 9 Elementary, Middle, and High Schools)

- Chronic absenteeism reduced by **9.2 percentage points on average**
- Significant reductions in discipline referrals across multiple schools
- Double-digit achievement gains in highest-growth schools

### Districtwide Results

- Math proficiency increased by **5.3 percentage points**
- ELA proficiency increased by **2.5 percentage points**



- Students in model-implementing classrooms performed **18% above the district average** and exceeded national norms in math

***“When instructional barriers come down and engagement goes up, achievement follows. That is exactly what we are seeing across CRCSD.”***

***– Dr. Tawana Lannin, Superintendent***

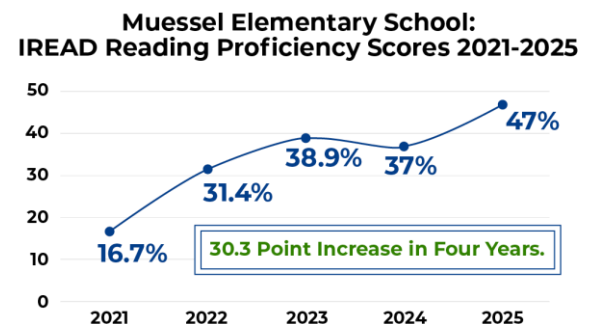
Read the full case study: [How Cedar Rapids Community School District Transformed Student Achievement in One Year](#) (2026)

## School Improvement Through Instructional Visibility: South Bend Community School Corporation (IN)

In South Bend, schools strengthened instructional practice using our [research-validated classroom walkthrough tool](#) to identify gaps and guide turnaround efforts.

Two previously underperforming schools—both in the bottom 5% of Title I schools—saw substantial gains:

- Reading proficiency increased by **30.3 percentage points** in Muessel Elementary School
- Reading proficiency increased by **13.2 percentage points** in Madison STEAM Academy



***“I’m a big believer in what Instructional Empowerment is doing and the supports that are being offered...The principals are getting into the classrooms more. Getting in the classroom makes a huge difference.”***

**– Howard Edwards, Director of Student Learning, South Bend Community School Corporation, IN**

Read the full case study: [How Schools Are Increasing Student Achievement with RigorWalk, a Research-Validated Classroom Walkthrough Tool](#) (2025)

## A Clear Takeaway for Education Leaders

These results are not driven by short-term fixes. Across states, school types, and starting points, a consistent pattern emerges:

**When schools implement a research-validated instructional model, build educator and leader capacity, and use real-time data to guide practice, schools experience rapid and sustainable improvement.**

## Connect with a Turnaround Leader Who Helped Accomplish These Results

If you're exploring how to improve outcomes in your lowest-performing schools, you can speak directly with a leader who has done this work.

**Stephanie Terrell, Ed.S.**, Executive Director of School Transformation, brings more than 30 years of experience as a principal, instructional leader, and teacher. She has supported turnaround efforts nationwide and has worked directly in partner schools such as Lakewood Elementary, McLaughlin Middle School, and Muessel Elementary.



**Connect with Stephanie to Learn More and Apply These Approaches:**

<https://instructionalempowerment.com/partner-with-us/>

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## References

Putnam County School District (2026). PCSD reaches 5th in the state with a 96.6% graduation rate! <https://www.putnamschools.org/o/jal/article/2647696>

[Model of Instruction for Deeper Learning®](#) and [RigorWalk®](#) are registered trademarks of Instructional Empowerment and are research-validated.