

LSI Contact: Michelle Fitzgerald, Director, School Turnaround
mfitzgerald@learningsciences.com or (813) 738-1382

Lakewood Elementary School Partners with LSI, Goes from “F” to “A” Florida Gov. DeSantis Visits, Calls it a Rare Success Story

Dubbed a “Failure Factory”¹ as the Lowest Performing Traditional Public School in Florida, Lakewood Outperforms District Learning Rates During COVID, Earns Best Grade Ever

West Palm Beach, FL – Aug 11, 2021 – Learning Sciences International (LSI), a national provider of K12 school turnaround systems with a history of success, is excited to announce that after a 3-year partnership with Lakewood (FL) Elementary, the school has made one of the largest improvement gains since Florida began issuing school grades in 1999. By receiving its first “A” in the Florida Department of Education’s state-wide grading system, the former lowest performing traditional public school in Florida goes from “worst to first” and exits turnaround status, while concurrently exhibiting that learning gains are possible in the face of a disruptive, global pandemic.

<p>QUICK FACTS: Lakewood Elementary Goes From “F” to “A” WHO: Lakewood Elementary School and LSI WHAT: Partnership Results in Historic School Improvement – during COVID WHEN: 2020-2021 School Year WHERE: St. Petersburg, FL WHY: To exit the Florida Department of Education’s turnaround school status by improving from an “F” to an “A” for the first time ever.</p>

In 2017, 2,792 other traditional Florida public schools ranked higher than Lakewood. After LSI implemented its “Schools for Rigor and Equity” model beginning in 2018, access and equity to a rigorous education for all students began and continued through COVID-19 when many other schools suffered learning losses. Lakewood had never been better than a “C” since 2012. While nearly two dozen Florida schools have made the 1-year F to A proficiency gain during the past 21 years, none have accomplished that large of an increase during a pandemic while starting with such a low baseline.

Lakewood Elementary MATH Proficiency Improvements 2018 to 2021 (FSA):

	3 rd Grade	4 th Grade	5 th Grade
2018 (Lakewood “F” School)	25%	20%	18%
2021 (Lakewood “A” School)	46%	63%	68%

Lakewood Elementary READING Proficiency Improvements 2018 to 2021 (FSA):

	3 rd Grade	4 th Grade	5 th Grade
2018 (Lakewood “F” School)	23%	16%	9%
2021 (Lakewood “A” School)	35%	35%	47%

No other schools that worked with External Operators during this time frame have accomplished this large of an increase in proficiency gains.

“The majority of the students were more than two years behind grade level when we arrived,” said LSI’s James R. Mills, who served as Lakewood’s leadership coach during the first year of the partnership. “When we did our initial testing, we had approximately 87 percent of our students reading at a kindergarten level in third grade. I’ve worked with many schools over the years, and I just had never seen anything that dire in terms of literacy development.”

LSI implemented strategic, customized frameworks that involved all stakeholders from Lakewood Elementary, Pinellas County Schools and the local community to establish a vision, set goals, outline action steps, and ultimately succeed. The “A” grade means Lakewood no longer needs to operate under the purview of the FLDOE.

While many other schools in the Pinellas County Schools district posted learning losses during COVID, Lakewood performed 100% better than its district in math and 142% better in reading. The school also increased its learning rate in math by 48%, while similarly situated low-performing schools in the district decreased their rates by 9%. Lakewood improved its learning rate in reading by 7 %, while others decreased theirs by 16-22%. Lakewood also closed subgroup gaps by as much as 363% in math and 189% in reading.²

“Working alongside the Lakewood faculty and staff as an extension of their arms, we were able to build capacity of leadership together,” said Michelle Fitzgerald, Ed.D. Director, School Turnaround at LSI. “From there, the teachers ensured equity and rigor existed in their core instruction and student-led academic teams helped achievement flourish - and that is exciting to see. The best part is the foundation for renewed hope and continued progress is established.”

During a visit to Lakewood Elementary School today, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis said, “This type of turnaround is very rare but it’s a testament to the hard work of everybody involved.”

[READ THE LAKEWOOD CASE STUDY](#)

ABOUT LEARNING SCIENCES INTERNATIONAL

Since its founding in 2002, LSI has endeavored to position itself as the foremost research-based education partner to improve Core Instruction and Elevate Equity inside schools, districts and classrooms. LSI has helped thousands of K-12 educators to empower their students by developing every student’s capacity to take on greater responsibilities for their own learning and function at the highest levels possible. We do this through the guiding principles of [LSI's Applied Research Center](#) with approaches that are always measurable, replicable and reliable. Every activity, strategy and intervention has attained or is in the process of attaining criteria for [evidence-based](#) practices under the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) at Levels II or III and What Works Clearinghouse protocols. This is why our school and district partners regularly achieve sustainable and [long-lasting results](#).

[LSI's Work: Research & Resources](#)
[LSI's Distinguished Research Partners](#)

ABOUT LAKEWOOD ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

Located in St. Petersburg, Florida, Lakewood Elementary School is a Title I public school in a large city setting. The student population is 379 made up of 49% female students and 51% male students. The school enrolls 89% minority K-5 students, 82% economically disadvantaged students and 15% homeless or in foster care while 100% are enrolled in free/reduced lunch programs. In 2020, approximately 5,000 crimes occurred within a 3-mile radius of the campus.

Prior to starting work with LSI for the 2018-19 school year, Lakewood had been the lowest-performing traditional public school in Florida with a low “F” including 18 percent reading proficiency, 22 percent math proficiency, and 12 percent science proficiency. It was outranked by 2,792 other traditional public schools.

The school has battled a history of “D” and “F” grades since 2013. Lakewood had never received an “A” prior to its 2020-21 partnership with Learning Sciences and it last attained a “C” in 2012.

Like Lakewood on Facebook: [\(20+\) Lakewood Elementary | Facebook](#)

Visit Lakewood's web page: [Lakewood Elementary \(es\) / Homepage \(pcsb.org\)](#)

¹[How the Pinellas County School Board neglected five schools until they became the worst in Florida | Failure Factories | Tampa Bay Times](#)

²[Read the Lakewood Case Study](#)