

SEPTEMBER 2016

From Great to Exemplary

CASE STUDY

**DEMONSTRATION
SCHOOL FOR RIGOR**

By Learning Sciences International

Quick View

PYG Scores	2014	2015	2016	
Reading	1.22	1.39	1.49	↑
Math	0.92	1.38	1.43	↑

VAM Scores	2013-14	2015-16	
	0.128	0.364	↑

From Great to Exemplary

Although Calusa Elementary School was widely recognized for high achievement, teachers needed help making instructional shifts required by rigorous new standards. Calusa partnered with LSI to move the school toward an even deeper focus on cognitive complexity and student autonomy.

When asked to describe how classrooms had changed at Calusa one year into the initiative, a first-grade teacher said students were taking much more responsibility for their own learning. “More of them are talking and doing the work,” she said.

The Result: Two Years of Solid Growth for Calusa Elementary

After just one year of the initiative, Calusa showed significant improvement on its combined 2015 VAM scores, putting the school in the 76th percentile for Florida Standards. Its *Percentage of Year’s Growth (PYG)* score rose to the equivalent of an additional four months of learning over other schools in the district. Calusa also landed in the 95th percentile for similar schools in the district, maintaining its long-held “A” rating. And the progress continued after year two.

- Calusa improved its overall rigor score from a mean of 6.93 to 10.19.
- Teachers engaged in rigorous, standards-based instruction rose from 31% to 100%.
- The percentage of classrooms engaged in analysis and autonomous cognitively complex thinking rose from 0% to 25% by the fourth walk.
- Classrooms where students were learning autonomously rose from a score of 1 (not at all) to a 5 (all the time).
- 75% of the teachers scored were using formative assessment; at the beginning of the initiative, 0% were doing so.

Now, other educators in the area can visit Calusa Elementary to observe rigorous teaching and learning. Want to find out how you can partner with Learning Sciences International on this innovative and highly effective initiative? Learn more about Demonstration Schools for Rigor.

“We’ve gone from doing worksheets to having students doing deep thinking, and it’s making them feel so successful now.”
- Calusa Teacher

Challenges

Embracing deep structural changes to the status quo

Improving the school-wide level of pedagogical rigor

Using performance scales to drive instruction

The Approach

Intensive coaching in the *Essentials for Achieving Rigor* instructional model

One-on-one consultation for school leaders

Data collection and analysis to measure implementation success

The School Is Now...

Strengthened by deep support, coaching, and committed staff members

Ready to function as a learning laboratory and demonstration site

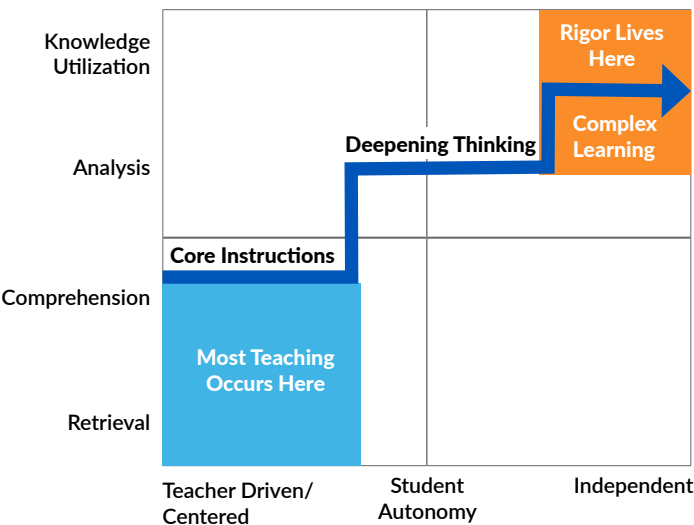
Continuing on a path to deeper student learning and further growth for educators and leaders

From Great to Exemplary

Calusa Elementary School was widely recognized in Palm Beach County, Florida for high achievement. Nevertheless, as the state adopted rigorous standards, Calusa teachers were still struggling to shift their teaching to meet new expectations. Principal Jamie Wyatt, a 15-year veteran, saw that teachers needed support to infuse their instruction with an even deeper focus on cognitive complexity and student autonomy.

When Wyatt was offered the opportunity to turn Calusa Elementary into a Demonstration School for Rigor, she jumped at the chance.

“In the beginning,” Wyatt recalls, “we identified that the shift to rigor would require not only increased complexity of tasks and student thinking, but also increased student autonomy.” As we began to go through the initial training with learning goals and scales, our understanding of what we were doing in our school began to shift.”



CALUSA ELEMENTARY SCHOOL DEMOGRAPHICS

Student Population:	877
Number of Teachers:	71
Percent Eligible for Free and Reduced Lunch:	27%
Florida School Grade:	A

	This school	State average
White	63%	40%
Hispanic	22%	31%
Black	8%	23%
Other	7%	6%

Source: Florida Department of Education, 2014-2015*

Teachers needed support to infuse their instruction with an even deeper focus on cognitive complexity and student autonomy.

Getting Prepared

Calusa Elementary School would join five other Palm Beach County schools in a breakthrough initiative to transform the entire district. The goal was to significantly improve the level of pedagogical rigor schoolwide.

To succeed, every educator and staff member would have to let go of routinized procedures and embrace a growth mindset.

Because the Demonstration Schools initiative involved deep structural changes to the status quo, it required courage, collaboration, perseverance, and honest reflection. “I did have to think long and hard about how to make the case for such an intensive program to my teachers,” Wyatt says. “We were already a high-performing school.”

The Initiative

With deep support, coaching, and commitment from all staff members, Calusa Elementary began to prepare to function as a learning laboratory and demonstration site, where other educators would eventually visit to observe rigorous teaching and learning. The Demonstration Schools initiative included:

- Intensive coaching in the Essentials for Achieving Rigor instructional model
- One-on-one consultation for school leaders with LSI expert faculty
- Data collection and analysis to track the success of the implementation

“I did have to think long and hard about how to make the case for such an intensive program to my teachers,” Wyatt says. “We were already a high-performing school.”



Calusa students would learn to collaborate and use success criteria to track their own progress to learning targets.

Teachers deepened their understanding of how to use performance scales to drive instruction and achieve student buy-in. When asked to describe how classrooms had changed at Calusa one year into the initiative, a first-grade teacher said students were taking much more responsibility for their own learning. “More of them are talking and doing the work,” she said.

“This year, I hold students much more responsible for their own learning, delving into the work themselves, sharing out, participating in partnerships or groups.”

“Last year, it would have been all me,” noted another teacher. “Me talking, me modeling, and me kind of feeding the answers to them. This year, I hold students much more responsible for their own learning, delving into the work themselves, sharing out, participating in partnerships or groups.”

Now in their third year of the program, teachers agree that the way they plan standards-driven lessons and units to reach rigor has changed dramatically. One teacher recognizes the big leap her students have made. “We’ve gone from doing worksheets to having students doing deep thinking, and it’s making them feel so successful now. For me, that has been a complete turnaround from what was going on before.”

Results

Wyatt and her team got great news when they received state assessment results for 2015. Calusa Elementary showed significant growth from the previous year on its combined VAM scores, putting the school in the 76th percentile for Florida Standards Assessment scores. Additionally, its *Percentage of Year’s Growth (PYG)* score, calculated by Palm Beach County, had risen to the equivalent of an additional four months of learning over other schools in the district. All this after just one year of the initiative.

Not only did Calusa land in the 95th percentile for Palm Beach County schools of a similar size and demographics, it also maintained its long-held “A” rating.

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Reading	1.22	1.39	1.49	↑
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	0.128	0.364	↑

Year 2 Continues the Upward Trend

Calusa’s VAM and PYG scores jumped even higher during the second year of the initiative (2016):

- Calusa improved its overall rigor score from a mean of 6.93 to 10.19.
- Teachers engaged in rigorous, standards-based instruction rose from 31% to 100%.
- The percentage of classrooms engaged in analysis and cognitively complex thinking with autonomy rose from 0% on walk the first walk to 25% by the fourth walk.

- Classrooms where students were learning autonomously rose from a score of 1 (not at all) to a 5 (all the time).
- 75% of the teachers scored were using formative assessment; at the beginning of the initiative, they had been using formative assessment 0% of the time.

With a focused alignment of leadership development; teacher-leader coaching; teacher training in the Essentials for Achieving Rigor model; and technology supports for classroom formative assessment, instructional planning, collaboration, and reflection, Demonstration Schools for Rigor have become the model for innovations in 21st century school improvement.

**To learn more about Demonstration Schools
for Rigor, call us at 877.411.7114 or
visit us online at LearningSciences.com**