

# Celebrating The LeARNer Collective

Empower Educators • Reimagine Learning

*Growing a stronger future for all Arkansas students*



ForwARd





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[forwardarkansas.org](http://forwardarkansas.org)



# Why the LeARner Collective?

At Forward Arkansas, we have a clear goal: ensuring every Arkansas student is prepared for career and life. Achieving this aim is essential for our children's long-term success. It's also vital for our communities and our state's economic future.

But students' needs—and the workforce opportunities we're equipping them for—are rapidly changing. Continuing to structure schools and teach kids the same way, even if we do it better, won't get us where we need to go. To truly prepare every student for the future, we must reimagine learning.

That's our vision for the LeARner Collective. More than a program, it's the start of a larger movement to empower great teachers and school leaders to design and implement innovative solutions to meet the unique needs of their students, families and communities.

## So what does reimaged learning look like?

- **Students** receive rigorous, personalized academic instruction while building durable skills, such as problem-solving and critical thinking, and gaining real world career exposure.
- **Educators** have the time, tools and resources to better meet every student's unique needs and opportunities for continued professional growth and leadership.
- **Schools** operate with clear visions, collaborative cultures and can direct resources to what will deliver the greatest impact for students.
- **Families and communities** partner with their schools to shape a shared vision for their children's success.

Over the past 17 months, the LeARner Collective has provided personalized coaching and support to help school teams in the Arkansas Delta and Northwest Arkansas collaborate, grow their skills, and design and implement new approaches to instruction, the use of time and staff and building school culture to improve student learning.

This publication—our official Celebration of Learning—highlights their stories. **The results speak for themselves.**

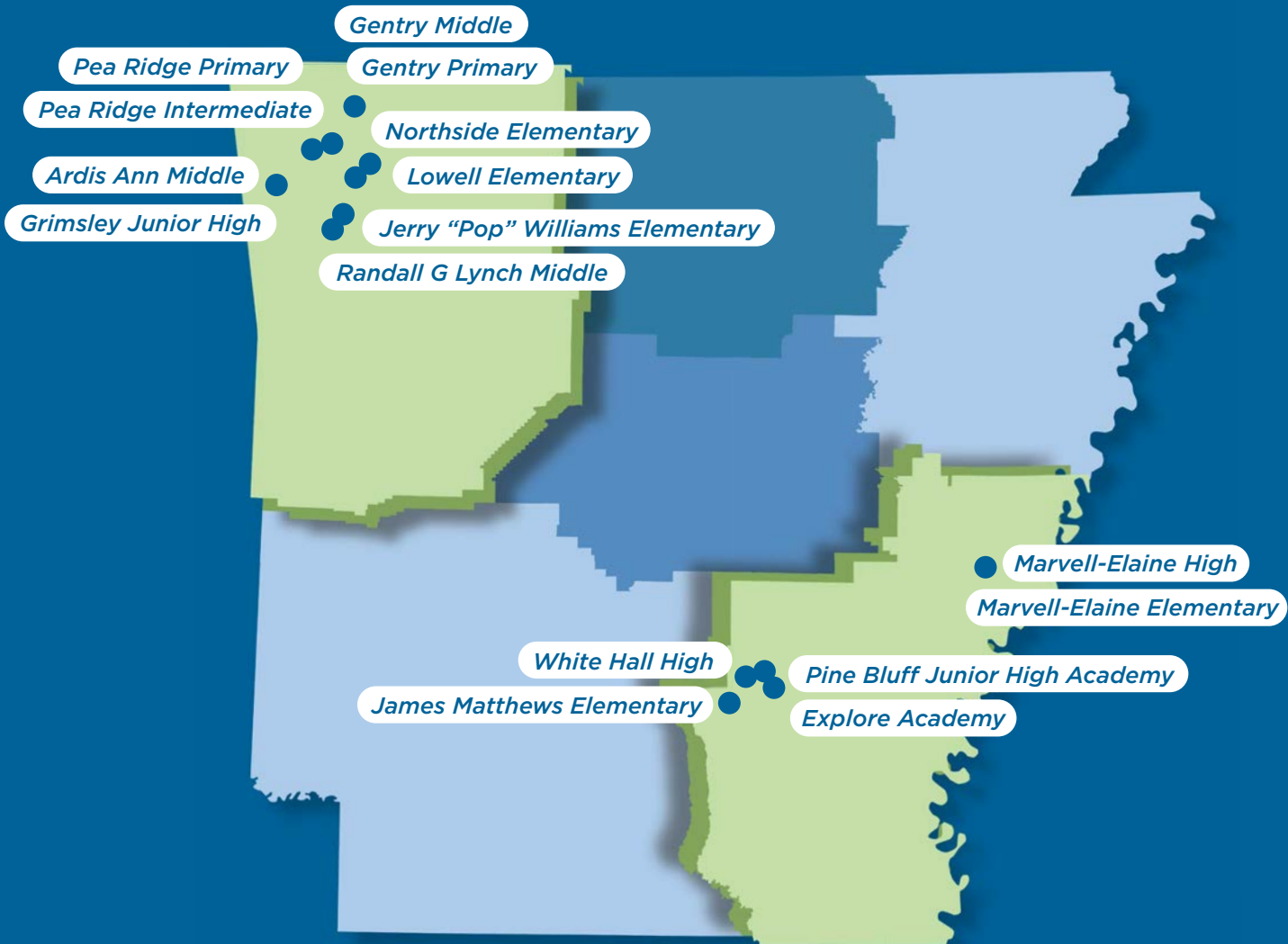
Ben Kutyllo  
CEO  
Forward Arkansas



# What is The LeARner Collective?

A first-of-its-kind initiative for Arkansas educators, The LeARner Collective, empowers great teachers and leaders to design and implement innovative approaches to enhance student learning. Participating teams benefit from regular cross-school collaborations and gatherings, engagement with professional learning experiences, and responsive expert coaching, including on-site school visits.





## The Impact



**16**  
Schools



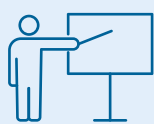
**8**  
Districts



**7,285**  
Students Impacted



**538**  
Teachers Reached



**310**  
Hours of Personalized Coaching



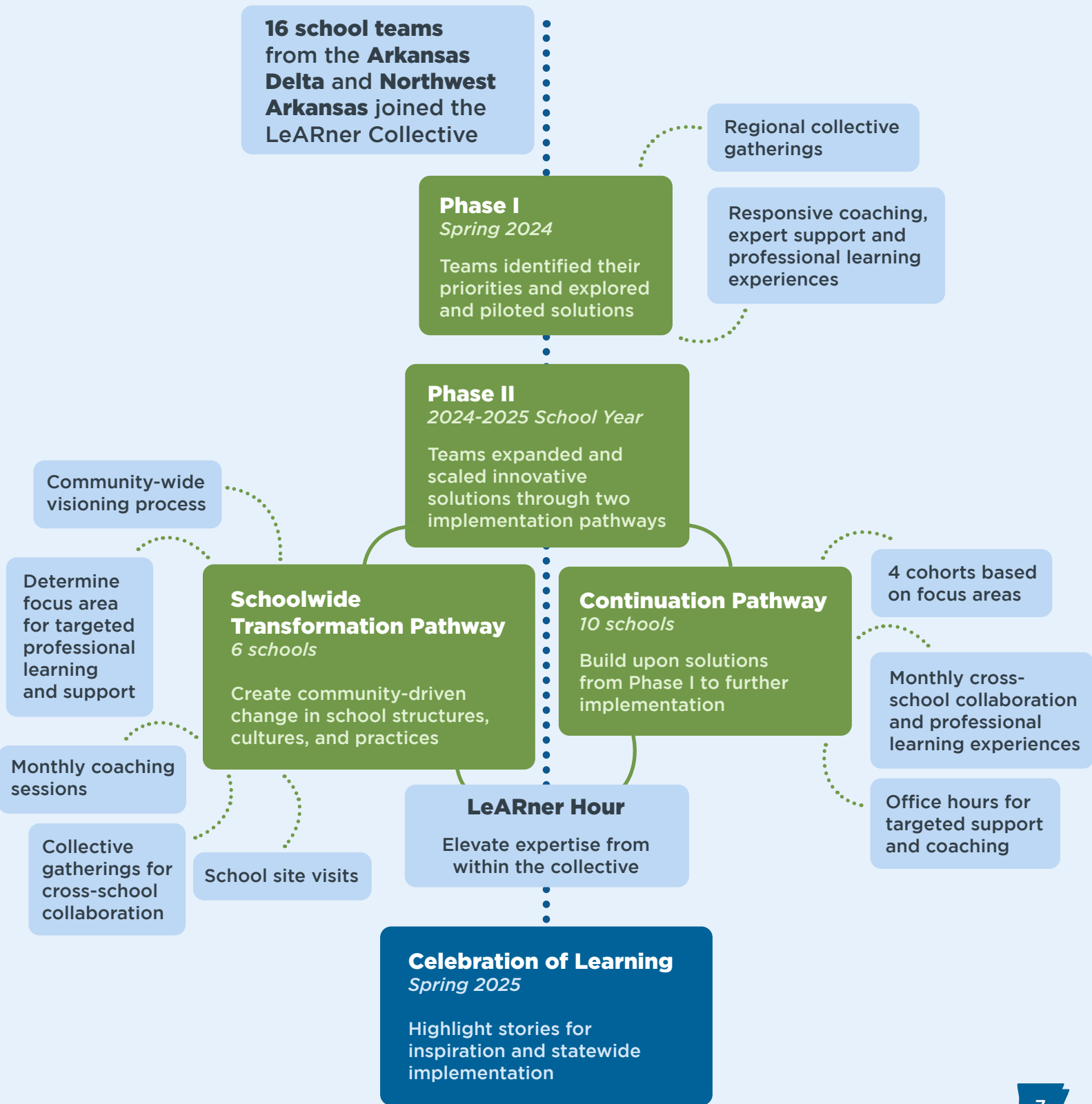
**180**  
Hours of Professional Development



**85**  
Hours of Cross-School Collaboration

# Creating Conditions for Student Success

How can we improve learning for all students? By setting a strong foundation. Ensuring access to high-quality instruction, establishing more positive school environments, providing career-ready growth opportunities... We must put conditions in place for kids and educators to thrive. As part of the LeARner Collective, school teams embarked on a two-phase journey to do just that.





# Grimsley Junior High School (GJHS)

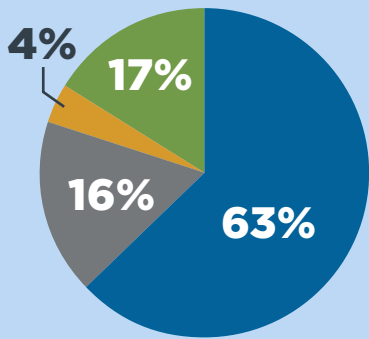
Bentonville School District



**Building durable skills to fuel student engagement and success**

## At-A-Glance

### Student Ethnicity



- White
- Hispanic
- Black
- Other

**846**  
Total Students

**66**  
Total Teachers

**6%**  
Minority Teachers

**12%**  
Student Served  
Special Education

**4%**  
Student Served  
English Language Learners

**24%**  
Student Served  
Free & Reduced Lunch

**The Big Picture** GJHS is engaging teachers in strategic professional development opportunities around high-quality durable skills lessons. Through a new student leadership group, it's giving kids ownership in the process and incorporating their feedback for continuous improvement in instructional delivery.

**Why It Matters** Seven out of 10 skills requested by employers are durable skills. Developing in-demand capabilities, such as effective communication and critical thinking, is crucial for future on-the-job success.

## The Journey

Entered Phase I to strengthen its school culture through staff development and teacher mentorship

The community visioning process in Phase II showed a desire for a focus on durable skills

Streamlined its class offerings to “Advanced for All,” illustrating its belief that all students can learn at rigorous, high levels

Expanded its student incentive programs and identified student leaders to spearhead focus groups and promote continued campus-wide engagement

“

There is higher engagement for all learners and classroom behavior has greatly improved. Teacher efficacy has also increased and in return, student achievement has increased.

*Skyler Brown, Principal*

”

**TOP 5%** Performing School



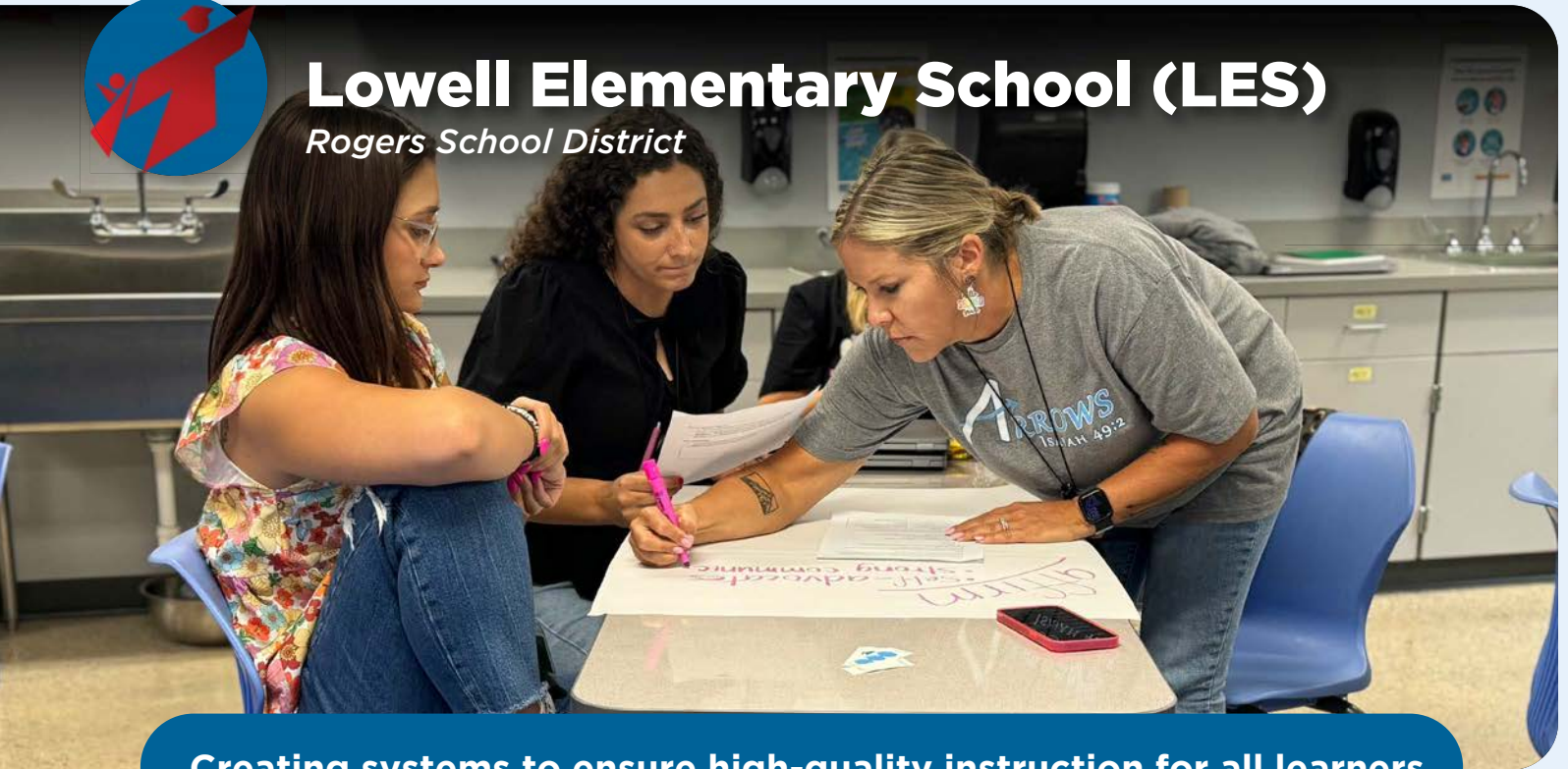
## The Impact

- Teachers deliver **custom-designed, durable skill-focused lessons** with guidance from their colleagues and students.
- Staff receive **regular coaching on engagement strategies** to further empower students in their rigorous “Advanced for All” learning journeys.
- GJHS’s positive feedback loop, with its **student leadership group and faculty recognition of kids**, encourages students to demonstrate their new capabilities.
- **Teachers feel encouraged and supported** in sharing best practices and resources to engage students in their learning.
- The Office for Education Policy at the University of Arkansas recently recognized GJHS as a **top 5% performing school and a top 6% - 10% performing school in growth**.



# Lowell Elementary School (LES)

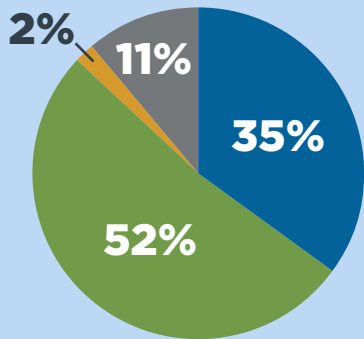
Rogers School District



**Creating systems to ensure high-quality instruction for all learners**

## At-A-Glance

### Student Ethnicity



- White
- Hispanic
- Black
- Other

**432**  
Total Students

**35**  
Total Teachers

**3%**  
Minority Teachers

**16%**  
Student Served  
Special Education

**36%**  
Student Served  
English Language Learners

**63%**  
Student Served  
Free & Reduced Lunch

**The Big Picture** LES is bolstering its already strong culture by unifying and enabling its staff to build an effective schoolwide system. This coordinated approach is helping LES ensure excellent learning experiences for both students and teachers.

**Why It Matters** Research confirms that robust schoolwide systems, high-quality instruction and differentiated supports are essential to effectively supporting all learners in the classroom, including multilingual students.

## The Journey

Designed a toolkit in Phase I for building-wide routines, procedures and school climate

Engaged in a schoolwide response-to-intervention approach, developed a user-friendly, dynamic resource hub and encouraged leadership by inviting teachers to co-create new systems to support high-quality instruction

Honed in on Universal Design for Learning and Tier I support as initial focus areas in Phase II

**TOP 5%** in Growth Scores



“

Before the LeARner Collective, we had so many new people in our building. New ideas, new administration, no building-wide system to use as a “go to.” Now we have had meaningful and purposeful conversations with all staff to pave a common path for all to use schoolwide.

*Barbara Jackson, Teacher*

”

## The Impact

- Students and staff have **consistent schoolwide routines, expectations and procedures** about doing things the “Lowell Way,” furthering the school’s already **positive culture and reducing behavior referrals by nearly half**.
- Faculty can access and share best practices and resources through a **teacher-created, dynamic resource database**, allowing them to focus on high-quality instruction.
- The Office for Education Policy at the University of Arkansas spotlighted LES for achieving among the **top 5% in growth scores** on the ATLAS assessment. Over the last two years, **literacy achievement rose** by 4% for its economically disadvantaged student population and 7% for its Latino population.

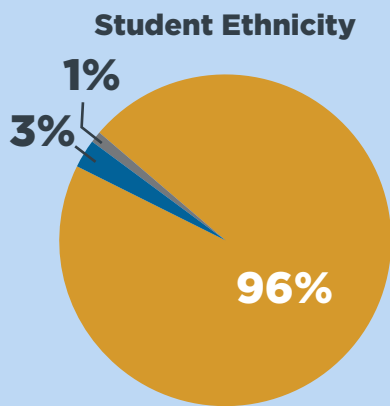


# Marvell-Elaine School District (MESD)



**Fostering academic excellence through community engagement and collaboration**

## At-A-Glance



- White
- Hispanic
- Black
- Other

**203**  
Total Students

**34**  
Total Teachers

**88%**  
Minority Teachers

**12%**  
Student Served  
*Special Education*

**0%**  
Student Served  
*English Language Learners*

**97%**  
Student Served  
*Free & Reduced Lunch*

**The Big Picture** Grounded in the belief that every child deserves opportunities to thrive, MESD is partnering with families and community partners to help implement intentional strategies, particularly around literacy, to foster student achievement.

**Why It Matters** Data consistently shows that increased community and parent engagement, along with greater student agency, leads to stronger academic outcomes, social development and helps create opportunities for students to succeed in school and life.

## The Journey

Joined with a focus on school-based literacy initiatives, such as a free, family-friendly literacy night and an emphasis on literacy across all high school subject areas

Recognized parent and community engagement was crucial to fueling and sustaining academic progress

Amplified outreach efforts to enhance the student experience and well-being, including through community readers, The Stable (a student-run podcast), literacy initiatives, academic incentives and extracurricular activities

High ELA  
Growth at **84.4**



“

It is one of the easiest experiences and the most comfortable I've been with an outside entity. It doesn't ever feel like an 'I got you' and you're forced to do anything. It feels like we are here to help, uplift, and be flexible to your needs. It's been a wonderful experience knowing that I have a thought partner and someone to support our goals.

*Marques Collins, Principal*

”

## The Impact

- Literacy Night evolved into Mustang Madness, a districtwide math and literacy event that **united teachers, students, families and the community** around academic success.
- **Teachers are excited and empowered** to integrate engagement techniques, particularly around literacy, and lead on-campus clubs and activities.
- Marvell-Elaine High School earned statewide and regional recognition from the Office for Education Policy at the University of Arkansas for its **exceptional academic growth** on the ATLAS exams, beating the odds with its high ELA growth at 84.4.
- More students participate in leadership and extracurricular opportunities. **Students report feeling safe, engaged and motivated** in their learning environments.



# Pea Ridge Intermediate School (PRIS)

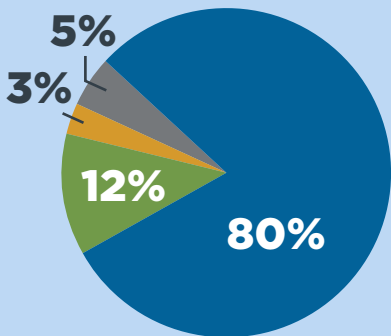
Pea Ridge School District



**Fostering staff-family collaboration for greater student engagement**

## At-A-Glance

### Student Ethnicity



- White
- Hispanic
- Black
- Other

**399**  
Total Students

**27**  
Total Teachers

**11%**  
Minority Teachers

**15%**  
Student Served  
Special Education

**5%**  
Student Served  
English Language Learners

**35%**  
Student Served  
Free & Reduced Lunch

**The Big Picture** PRIS is forging stronger partnerships with families around academics with innovative outreach initiatives, such as its Community Committee, after-school academic events and student-led conferences.

**Why It Matters** Data shows that strong communication between teachers and families is directly connected to student academic engagement. Building educator buy-in also supports teacher retention—a factor that contributes to positive learning environments.

## The Journey

Improved its intervention and enrichment system, or “What I Need” cycles for students

Shifted its focus in Phase II to meet the family and community desire for greater collaboration on academics

Launched a school- and community-wide engagement process, including focus groups and stakeholder surveys

Began scheduling strategic staff collaboration time, Community Committee meetings and finding avenues to give kids a voice and ownership in the process, including student-led conferences

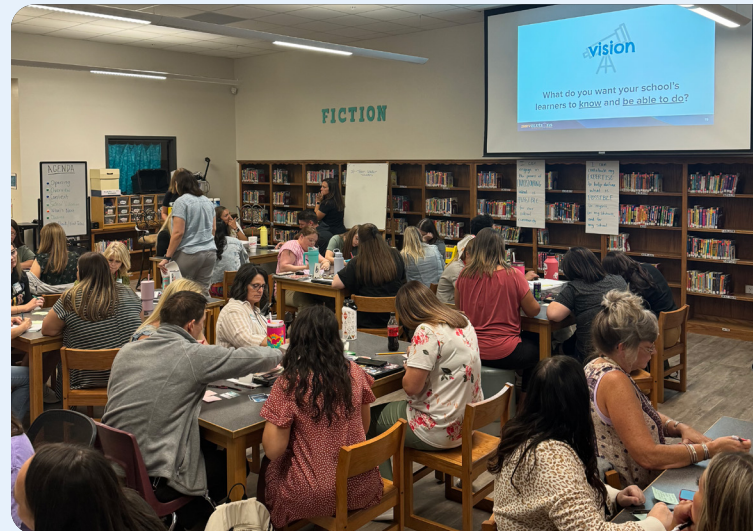
“

It's the most enriching opportunity for learning. It's not a professional development where you hear it, take notes, and apply it. It's working together, sitting at the table, problem-solving, and action-based.

*Maddy Mullin, Teacher*

”

**40+** Community Committee Members



## The Impact

- **40+ Community Committee members** actively recruit other parents and families to participate in meetings and share their feedback.
- **Parents are co-designers of school initiatives**, helping staff decide how to leverage data to address areas of improvement through new initiatives.
- Student-led conferences, where children speak on their learning journeys, create **a sense of ownership for kids** and allow them to advocate for what they need.
- Administration leans into teachers' expertise, including increasing the number of paid leaders on staff, **bolstering educator morale and year-over-year retention rates**.
- PRIS is inviting other schools to join its **community-building initiatives**, such as Academic Night, setting the stage for **wider replication**.



# White Hall High School (WHHS)

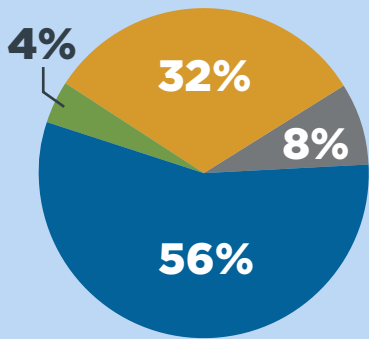
White Hall School District



**Empowering teachers to strengthen culture and enhance learning**

## At-A-Glance

### Student Ethnicity



- White
- Hispanic
- Black
- Other

**954**  
Total Students

**64**  
Total Teachers

**9%**  
Minority Teachers

**9%**  
Student Served  
Special Education

**4%**  
Student Served  
English Language Learners

**58%**  
Student Served  
Free & Reduced Lunch

**The Big Picture** With an ever-growing student body, WHHS recognized the need to transform its culture. Through innovative engagement strategies, the WHHS team has focused on giving everyone—staff, students and families—a voice and vested interest in the school’s future direction.

**Why It Matters** Research shows communication and collaboration between teachers, students and families is critical for academic achievement and durable skill-building. Building a positive culture also increases teacher morale and retention, further improving the learning environment. WHHS’ holistic approach, with its dual focus on learning growth and personal development, ensures students graduate prepared for success.

## The Journey

Implemented innovative initiatives, such as Pizza with the Principal, student-led conferences and Response-to-Intervention Life Skills Day, enhancing the student learning experience

Created teacher-led committees and a peer-to-peer observation system to prioritize continuous improvement and teacher growth

Community visioning process highlighted the priorities of empowering students, fostering healthy relationships and teaching sustainable life skills

Beautifying the campus and proudly displaying the school's core values, mission and vision to reignite "Bulldog Pride"

Plans to engage families in a "Portrait of a WHHS Graduate" in the fall to further shape the school's vision for students

“

Before the LeARner Collective, we were desperate for change. The collective helped us narrow down a focus area and plan small steps towards a huge goal.

*Charity Hart,  
Teacher and Student Services*

”

**95%** Teacher Retention Rate



## The Impact

- **Student-led conferences and regular feedback sessions** empower kids to reflect on their learning, set goals and address emerging issues on campus, such as testing anxiety.
- Teachers take on **greater leadership and decision-making roles** within the school, boosting morale and helping WHHS achieve a **95% teacher retention rate**.
- **Peer-to-peer observations** among staff enhance collaboration, build trust and sharpen instructional practices, solidifying WHHS's **positive culture**.
- The alignment around core values and student-created visuals reinforcing them on campus, including a "Bulldog Wall" group mural project, contributes to a **strong sense of belonging**.

# Continuation Pathway

## What To Know

In Phase I, we saw three trends emerge as school teams changed their structures, practices and culture with our support:

- 1** A shift to real collaboration and professional growth, as educators piloted new solutions like mentoring programs for novice teachers and collaborative planning sessions between academic and behavioral teams.
- 2** More supportive school cultures because educators felt heard.
- 3** An increase in student-centered instruction and deployment of positive behavior systems, as teams became more proactive and intentional in addressing children's needs.



# The Impact

In the continuation pathway, we grouped school teams by focus area. We host monthly virtual sessions to help educators expand capacity, foster cross-school collaboration and support collective knowledge and skill-building.

Participating school teams reported greater instructional coherence and consistency, an increased use of higher-quality materials for supplemental learning, and more instructional differentiation across student groups.

Teams reported better student behavior and increased engagement as the schools' structures became more consistent, allowing students to better anticipate and understand classroom expectations.



Diving into data and meeting students where they are has become the expectation for all teachers. As a result we are seeing student growth in math and ELA.

*Teacher, Gentry Middle*



# The Four Focus Areas

1

## Systems to Support Targeted Instruction

*Randall G. Lynch Middle School*

Effective instruction drives student comprehension and growth. Randall G. Lynch Middle School “down shifted” in the middle of the 2024-2025 academic year to re-evaluate and, where needed, regear practices, to deliver more targeted instruction to meet all learners’ needs. This included updating its professional learning community model, peer-learning walks (i.e., classroom observations) and high-quality instructional materials and strengthening its data systems. The efforts are helping students, who are reaping academic gains from consistent, high-quality supplemental support.

“

Students that I serve, specifically SPED students, have really benefitted from the upfront differentiation. We have seen less challenging and defiant behaviors that stem from a lack of understanding and boredom, now that their needs are being met during initial instruction.

*Teacher, Randall G. Lynch Middle*

”

2

## Building Durable Skills for Student Success

*Explore Academy, Pine Bluff Junior High Academy*

Today’s students need durable skills to thrive in the classroom and in their future workplaces. School teams integrated instruction aimed at equipping students with these in-demand capabilities alongside their standard curriculum. They even developed student leadership teams to co-construct and deliver the lessons to their peers. Benefiting students expressed greater comfort with their teachers, and several staff members reported decreases in discipline referrals and incidents.

“

Students are more open and willing to share, they’ve become more reflective, and seem to be more goal driven.

*Mary Bush,  
Teacher, Explore Academy*

”

3

### Schoolwide Positive Behavior Systems

*Gentry Primary School, James Matthews Elementary, Jerry "Pop" William Elementary School, Pea Ridge Primary School*

Student behavior is often cited as educators' top workplace stressor. The evaluation process revealed students and teachers were often more reactionary to these incidents, particularly without clear and consistent expectations on both sides. To address this area for improvement, they began implementing Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), which lead to decreases in student outbursts and better classroom engagement.

“

When you build positive relationships with students, the learning will come!

*Angie Day,  
Assistant Principal, Pea Ridge Primary*

”

4

### Teachers as Leaders: Elevating Teacher's Expertise

*Gentry Middle School, Ardis Ann Middle School, Northside Elementary School*

Schools expressed a desire for greater support for novice teachers and enhanced teacher leadership. In response to these requests, school teams customized proven templates to increase peer learning opportunities on their campuses, including co-teaching, novice teaching mentorship, and job-embedded professional development. Teachers feel empowered and engaged, and participating schools have reported higher-quality instruction as a result.

“

Providing teacher-led professional development (PD) had immediate impacts across the building - one day PD, next day saw the instructional practices implemented.

*Kara Davis,  
Assistant Principal, Northside Elementary*

”



**Thank you, 2Revolutions, for your partnership, expert coaching and collaboration to help design, facilitate and support The LeARNer Collective!**





**LeARNer  
Collective**

**Connect with us.**

*Follow us on social media or schedule a site visit  
with a participating school.*

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*Sign up for our newsletter at [forwardarkansas.org](http://forwardarkansas.org).*

**Invest in our mission.**

*Talk to our team about how you can help  
advance our work.*





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