

AT A GLANCE

Successfully Implementing *PLC at Work*[®] in Arkansas

In 2017, Solution Tree Inc. partnered with the Arkansas Division of Elementary and Secondary Education to lay the foundation for expanding *Professional Learning Communities at Work*[®] (*PLC at Work*[®]) in Arkansas. After three years, Cohort 1 schools successfully implemented *PLC at Work*. This led to improved **communication, trust,** and **collective responsibility** among educators and, in turn, improved student engagement and learning.

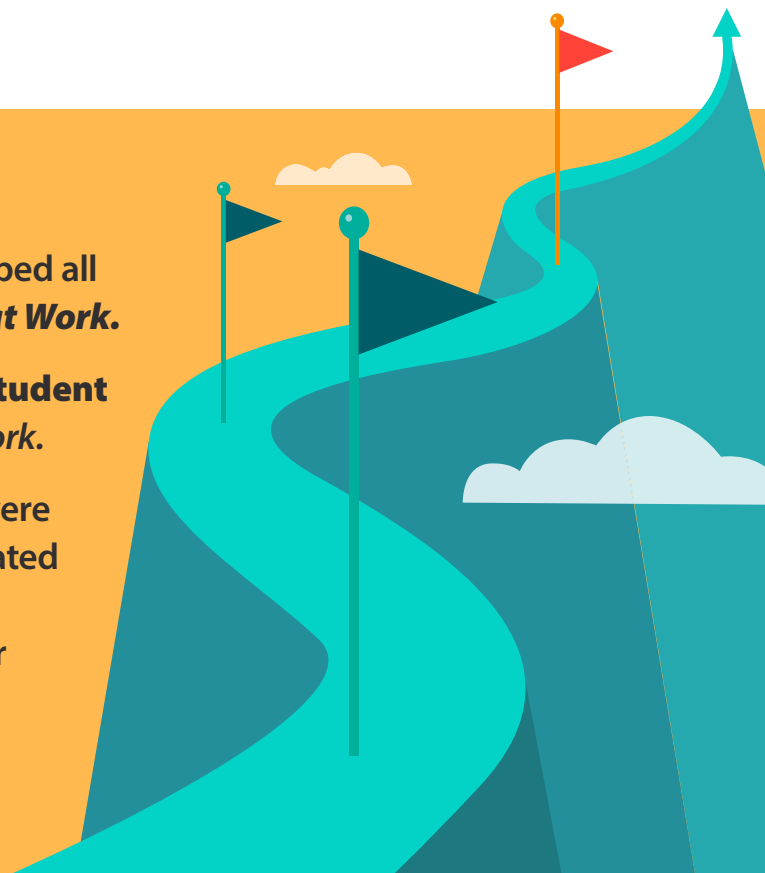
PLC at Work's **positive impact on student achievement test scores**, particularly in math, validated educators' perceptions about improved student learning and engagement.

"The whole staff understand that they're not just 'my kids' anymore—they're 'our kids.' And we're all commonly working to make sure that we meet their needs, both socially and academically."

– School administrator

KEY FINDINGS

- ▶ Solution Tree's customized supports helped all Cohort 1 schools **fully implement *PLC at Work***.
- ▶ Educators attributed improvements in **student engagement and learning** to *PLC at Work*.
- ▶ When the key elements of *PLC at Work* were implemented well, educators demonstrated increases in **effective communication, trust, and collective responsibility** for student learning.



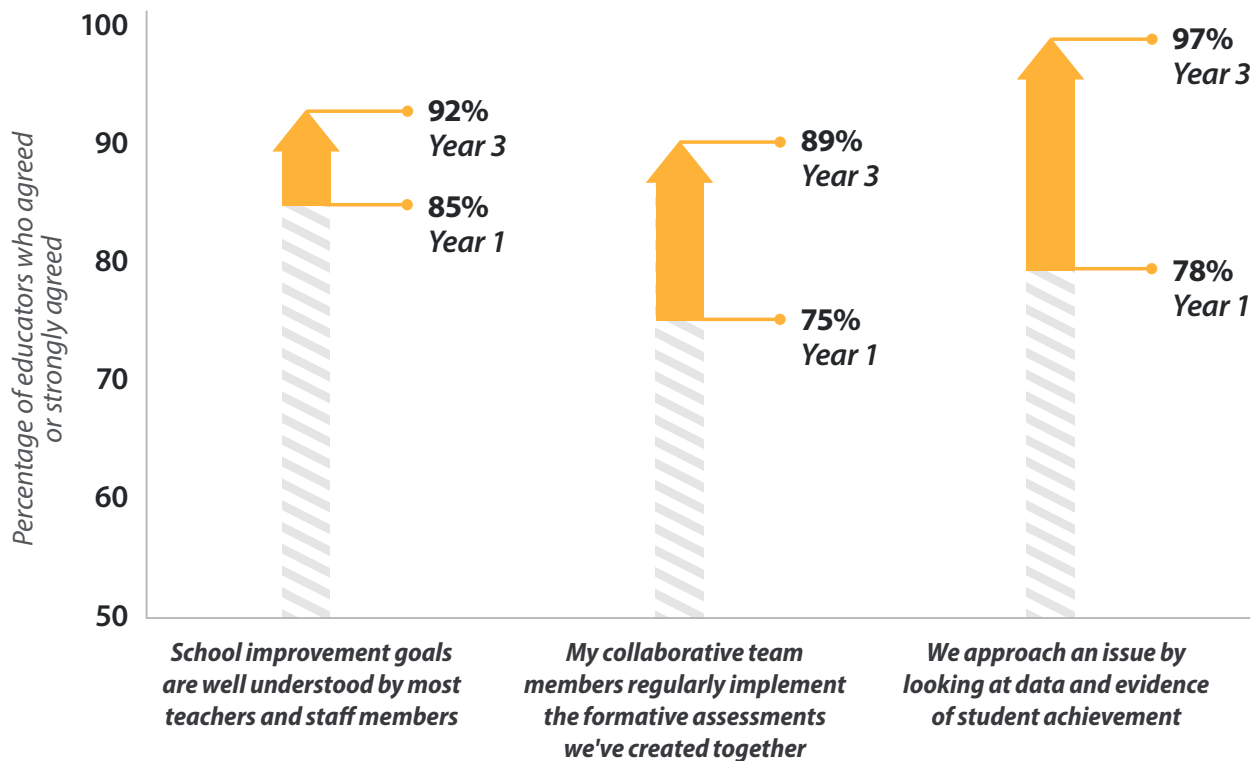
Solution Tree's customized supports helped all Cohort 1 schools fully implement *PLC at Work*

Schools received **in-depth and tailored services** from Solution Tree associates between 2017–18 and 2019–20. Educators had positive comments in response to associates' **responsive communication** and useful supports that **met their unique context and needs**.

All schools established the core components of *PLC at Work*. They met the following critical benchmarks:

- Educators understood and **supported school improvement goals**
- Educators established a **culture of collaboration** and provided adequate time to collaborate
- Collaborative teams met weekly to identify **essential standards**, design and use **common formative assessments**, and conduct **collaborative cycle of inquiry activities** to improve instruction and learning
- School administrators created **opportunities for teacher leadership**

Participating in PLC at Work improved educators' use of data



"If we wouldn't have had those coaches there, I know we wouldn't have been nearly as successful."

– Guiding coalition member

"The first mindset difference that all of us had to have [is that it] wasn't about a bunch of adults [and] what classes they wanted to teach and [how they wanted] to organize the curriculum. I really felt that start to change, where it's all about students learning."

– Collaborative team member

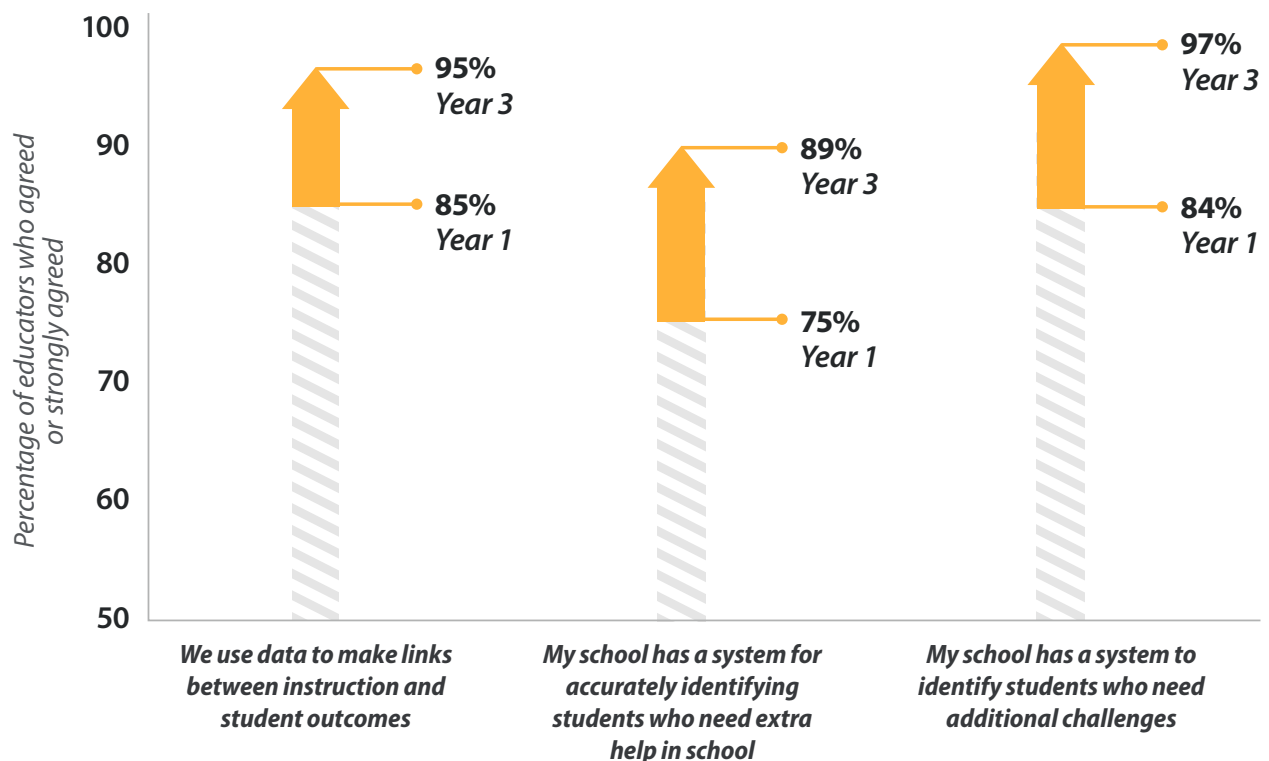
Educators attributed improvements in student engagement and learning to PLC at Work

Educators used different and often multiple ways to encourage student ownership of learning and achievement, and many said these efforts paid off.

Educators believed *PLC at Work* fostered several positive changes, such as:

- Students **knew what their assessment scores told them** about their progress
- Students **asked to participate in interventions** or redo work to improve proficiency
- **Attendance** improved
- **Behavioral** referrals decreased
- **Special education referrals** decreased

Participating in PLC at Work improved learning opportunities for all students



"We have students actually asking to come to [intervention time]. When you've got students asking to come and asking for help, I think the students are more engaged and more 'bought in.'"

– School administrator

"We have [had] a [larger] decrease in office referrals for these last two years than we've ever had before—like, a drastic decrease. Kids are in class more than they ever have been, and so they're really able to learn more because they're actually in class."

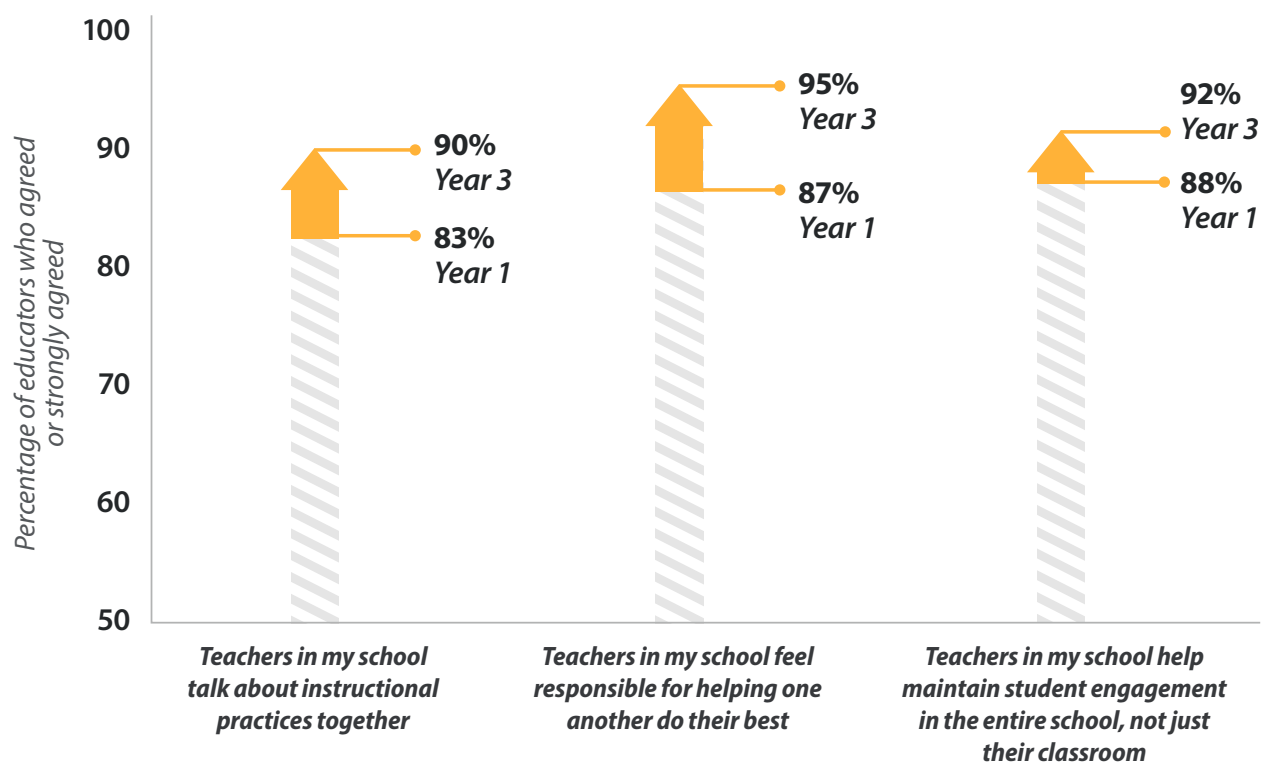
– School administrator

When the key elements of *PLC at Work* were implemented well, educators demonstrated increases in effective communication, trust, and collective responsibility for student learning

The key elements of *PLC at Work* include protected **time for collaboration**, understanding and support for **school-wide goals**, **distributed leadership**, and **collaborative use of student data** to improve instruction and learning.

Schools that reported the most growth in implementation of the key elements of *PLC at Work* also achieved the greatest improvements in **effective communication** and **trust** among educators and **collective responsibility for student learning**.

Participating in PLC at Work improved school culture



"It's just been amazing to see the quality assessments that [teachers are] building themselves now, and student tracking of data and reflection has grown. And they're celebrating. Even the kids are doing their own celebrations at times too. The teachers are modeling it, and celebration is what fuels this work. It definitely is."

– School administrator

Read the report: Torres, K., Rooney, K., Holmgren, M., Young, S. Y., Taylor, S., & Hanson, H. (2020). *PLC at Work® in Arkansas: Driving achievement results through school transformation and innovation*. Portland, OR: Education Northwest. <https://educationnorthwest.org/news/independent-evaluation-validates-success-arkansas-plc-work-project>