

# Demonstration Schools for Rigor are Model Learning Communities in Action

Learning Sciences International supports demonstration schools across the country to collaborate around rigorous instruction.

## **“The joy of teaching is back.”**

Just before the 2014-2015 school year, elementary school principal Amy Dujon got a call from the Palm Beach County school district office that would challenge her thinking about instruction at Acreage Pines Elementary. The district wanted Dujon to make Acreage Pines one of six Demonstration Schools for Rigor.

Learning Sciences International had created the Demonstration Schools for Rigor to support selected schools across the U.S. with a three-pronged initiative for standards-based school transformation: 1) an evidence-based model of instruction, the Essentials for Achieving Rigor, specifically designed to ensure rigorous pedagogy and learning aligned to state standards in every classroom; 2) intensive professional development and coaching in the model for teachers and administrators; and 3) the groundwork for a school-wide cultural shift that would embrace and sustain continuous improvement for years to come.

Acreage Pines had been one of Palm Beach County's top-rated schools for 14 years. Dujon knew she already had great teachers at Acreage Pines, but becoming a Demonstration School for Rigor required an enormous cultural shift. Not only would teachers be trying out new classroom strategies and participating in collaborative unit planning and instructional rounds, but the school's practices and processes would become completely transparent. By the end of the year, administrators and teachers from far-flung districts would be clamoring to come take a look at what Acreage Pines was achieving.

## **Showcases for Effective Learning**

Learning Sciences developed Demonstration Schools for Rigor in response to a National Teacher Practice Profile based on more than 2 million data points. Our data from classroom observations showed that less than six percent of observed lessons were focused on developing the higher-order thinking skills students needed to master new standards.



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Demonstration Schools for Rigor provide a program of deep support and coaching to create model schools across the U.S. that function as learning laboratories and demonstration sites, places where other educators can visit to see rigorous teaching and learning in action. With their focused alignment of leadership development, teacher leader coaching, teacher training, and technology supports for classroom formative assessment, instructional planning, and collaboration, the Demonstration Schools have become the model for innovations in 21st-century school improvement.

Looking back today on a whirlwind year of change, Dujon admits, “I’m not going to say this process at the beginning was not painful. But we pushed and pushed, and even teachers who initially said, ‘I don’t have time’ are now telling me, ‘I have so much more time in my classrooms. I can do personalized instruction. Because the kids are working harder than I am.”

“This is the first year I’ve ever felt developed as an instructional leader,” Dujon continues. “I’ve learned so much. Now I feel confident going into classrooms to observe, confident when I’m coaching my teachers. I feel completely comfortable sitting down with a parent and explaining what their child is learning, and why.”

When educators from three Florida counties came to observe her Demonstration Schools for Rigor at the end of the school year, Dujon was proud to show off the student-centered, standards-aligned lessons taking place, and the visible enthusiasm of teachers and students. “The joy of teaching is back,” she says. “This year, as a demonstration school, we have a road map. All we have to do is follow it.”

The logo for Learning Sciences International features the company name in a blue, sans-serif font. Above the word 'Learning' is a stylized graphic of three lines radiating upwards from a central point. Below the company name is a horizontal line, and underneath that line, the words 'LEARNING AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT' are written in a smaller, all-caps, blue, sans-serif font.

**To find out more about becoming or visiting a Demonstration School for Rigor, visit [Learningsciences.com/demo-schools](http://Learningsciences.com/demo-schools) or call 877.411.7114.**