



Pearson Achievement Solutions
School Progress
Atlanta Public Schools
Atlanta, Georgia

Pearson Achievement Solutions has worked with 11 schools in Atlanta Public Schools since the 2000-01 school year. Prior to working with Pearson Achievement Solutions, all 11 schools were not meeting Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) goals. In the 2002-03 school year, after just two years working with Pearson Achievement Solutions, all 11 schools achieved AYP. All 11 schools also met the AYP goals in the 2003-04 school year. Since then, Pearson Achievement Solutions has continued work with eight of those schools. All eight schools have achieved their AYP goals every year through the 2005-06 school year.

The Challenge

In the late 1990s, Atlanta Public Schools (APS) faced many challenges typical of large urban districts. In some schools, students failed to meet district and state achievement goals. In others, many students met the standards but few exceeded them. In addition, some schools had instructional leadership issues or lacked school community engagement. To tackle these issues, APS launched initiatives focusing on such areas as comprehensive school reform, standards, and literacy, and Superintendent Dr. Beverly L. Hall charged every school to seek out and adopt a model for school improvement.

The Solution

In 2000, three elementary schools implemented Pearson Achievement Solutions' *School Progress* professional development program, a data-driven approach to improvement designed to help schools achieve aggressive district goals. Over the past 6 years, 10 elementary schools and one middle school in APS have implemented the program using funding from a variety of sources including:

- Title I, Part A
- Comprehensive School Reform (Title I, Part F)
- Enhancing Education Through Technology (Title II, Part D)
- State grants

At each school, Pearson Achievement Solutions worked with administrators and teachers to conduct a thorough needs analysis, consisting of a review of student achievement data and student work, classroom observations, instructional practice surveys, and interviews. Next, they worked on the creation of a data-driven professional development plan to address the school's unique needs, and the application of research-based strategies to drive results.

In APS, such strategies included:

- Increasing instructional leadership capacity
- Using data to inform decision-making
- Building professional learning communities
- Implementing project-based learning
- Using technology to improve teaching and learning
- Monitoring program effectiveness

"While all 11 schools have worked with Pearson Achievement Solutions for overall school improvement, each school is unique and has different needs," said Dr. Robert C. Tate, an educational coordinator for APS. "Within each school, from year to year, there are different areas of emphasis that the school instructional leadership team identifies. Then the team works with Pearson Achievement Solutions to apply specific strategies to address and improve those areas during the year."

As part of the *School Progress* program, Pearson Achievement Solutions delivers professional development throughout the year in many forms, including teacher coaching and mentoring, lesson modeling, faculty study groups, school-based workshops, and online resources.

Checkpoints are built into the process to ensure consistent progress in achieving school improvement goals.

“One of the real strengths of the program is the ongoing support our schools receive from Pearson Achievement Solutions. Other strengths are the diagnostic tools. They’re very powerful,” said Dr. Alicia Derin, Executive Director for Teaching and Learning for APS.

Pearson Achievement Solutions’ diagnostic tools — Evidence of Quality Teaching, Evidence of Quality Work, and Instructional Practices Surveys — are designed to help instructional leaders communicate a district-wide vision of what high-quality instruction looks like in the classroom, and measure changes in instructional quality over time. Evidence of Quality Teaching (EQT), for example, is a classroom observation tool that can be used for self-evaluation, peer mentoring and coaching, and building-level instructional audits. It yields data on the extent to which certain instructional practices are observed in classrooms.

“The EQT gives teachers a platform for a meaningful, professional dialogue about what learning should look like in the classroom, what we’re seeing or not seeing in the classroom, and how to improve teaching and learning,” said Dr. Derin. Using the diagnostic tools, Pearson Achievement Solutions has helped school leadership and faculty turn data into information to guide decisions.

“In education, we need to diagnose and prescribe on an individual level — just like a physician does,” said Dr. Tate. “A physician doesn’t put 32 people together in one room and then provide one diagnosis for everyone. A physician looks at each person individually. Typically, that is not done in education, but it ought to be. When you become data-driven, you realize you have to do this. Otherwise, you spend half of your time teaching students what they already know and the other half not teaching what they need to know. Pearson Achievement Solutions’ data-driven approach to school improvement dovetails very nicely with the district’s goal to provide effective and innovative teaching that meets the needs of the individual learner.”

Results

With Pearson Achievement Solutions’ proven diagnostic tools, data-driven planning, and research-based professional development, APS has achieved measurable, school-wide improvements in the quality of classroom instruction. All schools have shown improvement in Mathematics and Reading/English Language Arts on Georgia’s Criterion-Referenced Competency Test (CRCT).

Pearson Achievement Solutions Schools
Percentage of Students in Grades 3, 4, and 5 *Meeting or Exceeding Standards*

School	Mathematics			Reading/English Language Arts		
	2004	2005	2006	2004	2005	2006
Grove Park	68%	62.2%	77.1%	70%	74.1%	70.7%
Dunbar	61%	73.4%	71.6%	64%	75.9%	70.6%
Centennial	89%	90.5%	93.7%	94%	95.7%	87%
Beecher Hills	90%	91.5%	85.2%	92%	94.1%	87.2%
CW Hill	79%	75.8%	74.5%	86%	87.2%	70.5%
East Lake	72%	91%	98%	76%	97.5%	91.3%
FL Stanton	67%	71.3%	79.8%	70%	82.5%	77%
Walter White	70%	77.1%	77.9%	78%	83.5%	80.2%
Pearson Schools Average	74.5%	79.1%	82.2%	78.75%	86.3%	79.3%
District Average	65%	68.9%	71.9%	73%	78.7%	76.6%

Note: The Georgia Department of Education changed the Reading/English Language Arts

standards in the 2005-06 school year. These new standards were first tested in the 2005-06 school year and are reflected in the 2006 scores.

“One of the most rewarding outcomes of our work with these schools, and I think that parents, teachers and principals would agree, is that the culture in all of these schools has seen a major transformation,” said Jennifer McGregor, Pearson Achievement Solutions service manager. “When we first started with these schools we often heard sentences starting with words like, ‘Our kids can’t...’ Now, these same kids are taking on course work through their project and concept based units that is very often well above grade level expectations.”

“All our Pearson Achievement Solutions schools met AYP goals, which is really great,” said Dr. Derin. “Pearson Achievement Solutions has helped us a lot, not only in improving student achievement but in thinking about the process of teaching and designing instruction so students learn. During the past four years, I’ve seen an increase in the quality of instruction and in the level of student work, engagement, and enjoyment in learning. We know Pearson Achievement Solutions has made a difference.”

Dr. Tate agrees. “Anybody who adopts a school improvement model has to understand that school improvement is about change and, ultimately, what’s best for students,” he said. “Today we have many more students meeting or exceeding expectations, as compared to before Pearson Achievement Solutions began working with these schools. Pearson Achievement Solutions’ *School Progress* is making a difference. It has improved student achievement and the performance of our schools. Our results show that it is working.”

Atlanta Public Schools Demographic Information:

Schools

- 59 elementary schools
- 16 middle schools
- 10 high schools

Student Population

- 51,000 students
- 70% free/reduced lunch
- 7% special education
- 2% English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)

Student Diversity

- 88% African American
- 7% Caucasian
- 4% Hispanic
- 1% Asian, American Indian and multiracial

District Web Site

- <http://www.atlantak12.ga.us>

For information on how Pearson Achievement Solutions can *Transform the Culture of Teaching* in your school or district, visit: www.PearsonAchievementSolutions.com, or contact:

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Spotlight: Grove Park Elementary School

Part of Atlanta Public Schools, Grove Park Elementary School enrolls 520 students in pre-kindergarten through grade five. Grove Park began its Pearson Achievement Solutions' *School Progress* implementation in 2001-02 and has achieved steady gains each year.

In 2004, the Georgia Department of Education named Grove Park Elementary a "Georgia School of Excellence." The school was recognized for recording continuous gains in student achievement in reading, language arts and math over a three-year period. In addition, in 2003-04 and 2004-05, Grove Park was named a "Pearson Achievement Solutions National Demonstration School" in recognition of its exceptional achievement in test scores, teaching and learning, assessment practices, school organization, school community, and sensible use of technology.

"Of the school improvement models we evaluated, we selected Pearson Achievement Solutions because it fit perfectly with what we were trying to do, particularly in the areas of standards-based curriculum alignment, project-based learning, and faculty collaboration," said Dr. Paula Snowden, principal of Grove Park Elementary. "Since then, we've achieved wonderful results."

At the outset, Pearson Achievement Solutions worked with the school's leadership and teachers to conduct an analysis of data from multiple sources, create an action plan, and apply targeted, research-based instructional strategies to address identified needs.

"Pearson Achievement Solutions came in and helped us look at the data — piece by piece by piece — and then formulated instructional strategies to address our needs," said Tommy Usher, Grove Park Elementary's Pearson Achievement Solutions school facilitator. "The first year we focused on strategies for project-based learning and differentiation of instruction. At the end of the year, we conducted a progress review with Pearson Achievement Solutions to assess our strategies and to determine the effectiveness of our implementation. Then, we targeted another area and moved on to that."

During the year, teachers use Pearson Achievement Solutions' diagnostic tools, such as the Evidence of Quality Teaching (EQT) and Evidence of Quality Work (EQW) tools, to drive improvement in instructional quality school-wide.

"We do 'EQT walks' in our school using the buddy system. Each teacher will take the EQT and observe the instructional practices of a neighbor's classroom in another grade level. For example, a kindergarten teacher may go into a fourth-grade classroom to see what teachers are doing in the upper grade levels. The kindergarten teacher will then bring that data back to discuss with all the other teachers at the kindergarten level," said Usher.

"Since we started using the EQT and EQW tools, one of the biggest differences we've seen is that there's now a more coherent approach to teaching and increasing student achievement," said Dr. Snowden. "Having those descriptions of instructional practices that should be taking place in the classroom has put all our teachers on a common plane. We now all have the same vision."

In addition to improving classroom instruction, Pearson Achievement Solutions has helped Grove Park Elementary increase collaboration school-wide. The school created an instructional leadership team composed of one teacher from each grade level, the Pearson Achievement Solutions school facilitator, assistant principal, custodian, cafeteria manager, and a paraprofessional. The team meets monthly to discuss student achievement, which areas are working well, and which areas need improvement. Then each team member shares that information with his or her colleagues during their respective collaborative planning periods.

“Pearson Achievement Solutions has helped us use data to guide decisions and deliver the professional development we need to improve student achievement,” said Dr. Snowden. “In 2003-04, we were named a ‘Georgia School of Excellence’ thanks to our student achievement gains over last three years. When we started looking at the data to see how and when our achievement increased, we realized it was when we started working with Pearson Achievement Solutions.”

Grove Park Elementary has achieved steady gains on the CRCT since it began working with Pearson Achievement Solutions in fall 2001.

Grove Park Elementary School
Average percentage of students in grades 3, 4, and 5 meeting or exceeding standards

Math			Reading/English Language Arts		
2004	2005	2006	2004	2005	2006
68%	62.2%	77.1%	70%	74.1%	70.7%

Note: The Georgia Department of Education changed the Reading/English Language Arts standards in the 2005-06 school year. These new standards were first tested in the 2005-06 school year and are reflected in the 2006 scores.

“In addition to improved test scores, students are more excited about being in class,” said Dr. Snowden. “Attendance is up because students want to get to school and participate in classroom activities related to the projects we’ve created. Parental involvement has increased because parents want to see what their children are working on. Teachers are more excited about what they’re teaching in the classroom because they have freedom to build projects and teach concepts beyond the basic skills. We’re performing much better than in past years and we’re still improving today. We enjoy Pearson Achievement Solutions’ *School Progress* program. It works well for us.”

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