

Neenah Creek Elementary School's Professional Learning Community (PLC) Journey

In the fall of 2016, Neenah Creek Elementary received a 1 Star rating and overall score of 49.0 out of 100 on the school report card from the State of Wisconsin.

Three years later, Neenah Creek Elementary earned a 5 Star rating and an overall score of 92.4 out of 100. The school's state test scores are above state average in all priority areas and significantly above state average in student achievement, student growth, and closing gaps.

In only three years, the Neenah Creek staff turned their beloved elementary school into the Number One elementary school in CESA 5 and the second highest performing elementary school in the state for schools of similar size.

After the failing school report card in 2016, the staff knew the direction of the school needed to change and fast. The odds were stacked against them with frequent staff turnover and approximately 50% of students qualifying for free/reduced lunch, but the staff was determined to turn around their school.

During the fall of 2017, Neenah Creek teachers implemented Professional Learning Communities. The classroom teachers from Kindergarten through 5th grade, including current Neenah Creek teachers Mrs. Anderson, Mrs. Lange and Mrs. Gavinski, began to meet together weekly after school to share expertise, discuss student data, and work collaboratively to improve teaching skills and academic performance for all students. The teachers knew they needed to come together as a team in order to improve student academic achievement and overall school performance.



Students from Ms. Topel's 2nd grade classroom

In 2018, a year after implementing Professional Learning

Communities, Neenah Creek Elementary received a 4 Star rating with an overall score of 76.7 out of 100. Neenah Creek added Mrs. Catterson and Ms. Topel to the team. The teachers were invested in the academic success of students in all grade levels, not just their own. The school culture had shifted from “my kids” to “our kids”. Subsequently, the amount of time collaborating in Professional Learning Communities was doubled.

A year later, in 2019, Neenah Creek Elementary celebrated a 5 Star rating on the school report card and added Ms. Gjersest to the team. The Neenah Creek staff attributes the rapid school improvement to the shift into a collaborative school culture and the staff's belief that ALL students at Neenah Creek can learn at high levels.

The hard work of the teaching staff and support staff of Mrs. Popp, Mrs. Schulz and Mrs. Paulsen in the last few years has amplified the strong support of the Briggsville community and student families who believe in this small, rural school and its staff. Walking into Neenah Creek Elementary is like walking into a family. Each staff member knows the name of every student that walks through the door and all staff members have a stake in each child's academic success. The combination of the strong community support and professional learning communities transformed Neenah Creek Elementary from a 1 Star school to a 5 Star school.

Felipe Armijo, Principal