MAYFIELD HEIGHTS, OH
LANDER elementary

A reimagined, rotating specials cycle
Explore the concrete ways Lander Elementary employed “Power Strategies” that address critical student needs now and lay a sustainable foundation for lasting improvement.

Learn more and see examples here.
We’ve been on a journey toward more personalized learning, but teachers needed more time.

FELECIA EVANS, PRINCIPAL
AT LANDER ELEMENTARY:

#1 Empowering, Adaptable Instruction

#2 Time & Attention

#3 The Teaching Job

#4 Relationships & Social-Emotional Support

#5 Family & Community Partnerships

See Snapshot of Lander Elementary
When Lander Elementary went remote, principal Felecia Evans saw that the transition was **amplifying challenges.**

**Students’ Experiences in March 2020**
- “One-size-fits-all” instruction with limited differentiation
- Moved with **homeroom group** to and from classes

**Teachers’ Experiences in March 2020**
- Limited opportunities to facilitate deeper learning or small-group interventions due to **short instructional blocks with multiple transitions**
- **Insufficient time** (45-minutes) to collaboratively review students’ progress and make plans for how to adjust instruction
Principal Evans recognized an opportunity to advance her vision for more personalized learning experiences...

**Changes to Students’ Experiences**
- Long blocks of **uninterrupted time** for deeper learning
- More **individualized support** from teachers and other staff

**Changes to Teachers’ Experiences**
- More **opportunities to target** students’ individual needs during longer instructional blocks
- More **time to prepare** individualized learning experiences during extended grade-level collaborative time
To make these changes reality, Principal Evans restructured time and staff in three key ways...

- Implement a **rotating specials schedule**—students have a full day of specials instruction once every six days.
- On Specials Days, facilitate half-day **Professional Learning Communities (PLCs)** for teachers.
- Create longer instructional blocks to enable various group sizes.
Implement a **rotating specials schedule**—students have a full day of specials instruction once every six days.

**BEFORE:** one specials period each day

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8:30-9:00</td>
<td>Morning Meeting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:00-9:45</td>
<td>Core Instruction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:45-10:30</td>
<td>Specials: Art, Music, or PE</td>
<td>Planning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10:30-11:15</td>
<td>Core Instruction</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:15-11:45</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
<td>Lunch</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:45-12:15</td>
<td>Recess</td>
<td>Planning or Duties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:15-1:00</td>
<td>Core Instruction (long block)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:00-1:45</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:45-2:10</td>
<td>Closing Circle</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**AFTER:** one Specials Day every six days

*Specials Day rotates across K-5, one grade level per day*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Days 1-5 Academic Days</th>
<th>Day 6 Specials Day</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8:30-9:00</td>
<td>Morning Meeting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:00-11:00</td>
<td>Morning Instructional Block</td>
<td>Specials Block 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:00-12:00</td>
<td>Lunch / Recess</td>
<td>Lunch / Recess</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:45-12:15</td>
<td>Afternoon Instructional Block</td>
<td>Specials Block 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:00-1:50</td>
<td></td>
<td>Grade Level PLC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:50-2:10</td>
<td></td>
<td>Closing Circle</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
HOW THEY DID IT:
On Specials Days, facilitate half-day Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) for teachers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8:30-9:00</td>
<td>Morning Meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:00-11:00</td>
<td>Specials Block 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:00-12:00</td>
<td>Lunch / Recess</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:00-1:50</td>
<td>Specials Block 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:50-2:10</td>
<td>Closing Circle</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

During this time...

- Teachers reflect on student learning from the past five days.
- Plan and adapt lessons for the next five days.
- Paraprofessionals and support staff join to align on response to intervention (RTI) strategies.

The extended block gives Principal Evans and other school leaders the flexibility to join.

Note: Because they are teaching one grade-level every day, specials teachers do not benefit from these half-day PLCs.
HOW THEY DID IT:
Create longer instructional blocks to enable various group sizes.

During Morning and Afternoon Instructional Blocks, students participate in a mix of full-group, small-group, and self-driven activities, including through the use of technology platforms.

These longer instructional blocks give homeroom teachers more space for introductory content and differentiated instruction across both in-person students (“roomies”) and remote learners (“zoomies”).

Some teachers create prerecorded mini-lessons to break up long blocks and enable differentiated pacing.

These longer instructional blocks also allow teachers to get more creative with their practice—some have started incorporating more activities such as movement and art into their instruction.

### Academic Days 1-5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8:30-9:00</td>
<td>Morning Meeting (Whole Class)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:00-11:00</td>
<td>Morning Instructional Block</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11:00-12:00</td>
<td>Lunch / Recess</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>● Optional “Lunch Bunch” and Other Small Groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12:00-1:50</td>
<td>Afternoon Instructional Block</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1:50-2:10</td>
<td>Closing Circle (Whole Class)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
WHAT SUPPORTED CHANGE AT LANDER?

**TEACHER BUY-IN**
The schedule — which required big shifts to how teachers’ used their time — was developed in consultation with teachers and with support of the teachers union.

**CONTENT EXPERTISE**
Before, grade level teachers collaborated with support from content, pedagogical, and behavioral experts. They were held accountable for structuring the time and taking notes. When they shifted to a four-hour collaborative block, they were able to leverage these existing norms.

**ROLE & SCHEDULE FLEXIBILITY**
Lander had significant flexibility to design teachers’ roles and schedules, including differentiating the roles of core and specials teachers, and implementing the schedule after the start of the year to enable sufficient planning.
By shifting our schedule, pedagogies, and personnel, we’ve been able to increase small-group instruction by 50 percent since before COVID.

- FELECIA EVANS, PRINCIPAL

- Teachers express a higher degree of visibility into their students’ wellbeing, growth, and needs.

- Teachers say they are better able to appropriately respond to students’ needs with differentiated and personalized instruction.

- Teachers find PLCs to be a source of collaboration and support. Paraprofessionals and support staff joining these meetings to align on RTI strategies has increased the sharing of best practices among staff.
As part of their next steps, Lander Elementary could focus on building toward...

- **Extending Learning Time**
  Going beyond the current six-hour day to include more time for targeted interventions and enrichment, via technology and/or community partners.

- **Maintaining Long Collaboration Blocks for Teachers**
  Continuing (or modifying) Specials Day, or releasing teachers from in-person duties and stacking planning time with other non-instructional periods.

- **Creating a Continuum of Teaching Roles**
  Building on the existing team-based model could be a starting point to differentiate roles based on experience, strengths, and effectiveness – including:
  - Teacher-leadership opportunities for the strongest teachers, who facilitate PLCs, drive lesson development, and observe and provide growth-oriented feedback to other teachers.
  - Differentiated responsibilities that free up time for other teachers to focus more on small group and 1:1 instruction.
  - “Shelter and development” for the newest or least effective teachers.

- **Expanding Specials Offerings**
  Extending the base of available specials instruction could be done by developing partnerships with a network of community organizations.
SCHOOL SNAPSHOT

ENROLLMENT

~500 STUDENTS

Grades K-5

FUN FACT

The school's mascot is the Lander Leopards!

With a fully-remote option in place, students are nicknamed as “zoomies” (remote) and “roomies” (in-person).
SCHOOL SNAPSHOT

- White: 49%
- Black: 30%
- Latinx: 6%
- All Other: 15%

- Students from Low-Income Backgrounds: 32%
- English Language Learners: 7%
- Students with Disabilities: 13%
THE LIBRARY

ARTIFACTS

- Lander’s Welcome Back Newsletter
- Lander Elementary on Twitter

RELATED

- Igniting the Learning Engine  Education Resource Strategies
- Designing Schools That Work  Education Resource Strategies
- How 45-minute class periods stall learning: A different kind of timetable can help students thrive  Lee Fleming
- The Case for Improving and Expanding Time in School: A Review of Key Research and Practice  David Farbman, National Center on Time & Learning