

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

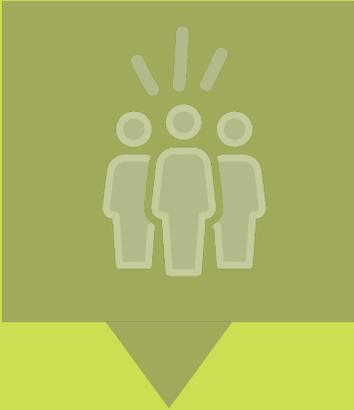
AT LANDER ELEMENTARY:



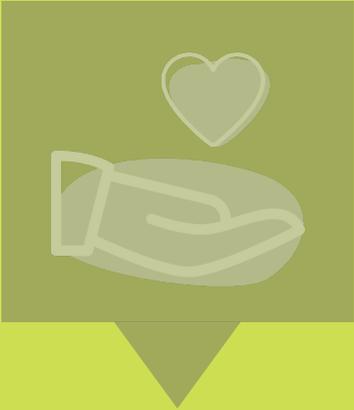
**#1
Empowering,
Adaptable
Instruction**



**#2
Time &
Attention**



**#3
The
Teaching
Job**



**#4
Relationships
& Social-
Emotional
Support**



**#5
Family &
Community
Partnerships**



[See Snapshot of Lander Elementary](#)

THEIR NEED

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

WHAT THEY DID

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

HOW THEY DID IT

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**.

1

HOW THEY DID IT:

Implement a **rotating specials schedule** – students have a full day of specials instruction once every six days.

BEFORE: one specials period each day

	Students	Teachers
8:30-9:00	Morning Meeting	
9:00-9:45	Core Instruction	
9:45-10:30	Specials: Art, Music, or PE	Planning
10:30-11:15	Core Instruction	
11:15-11:45	Lunch	Lunch
11:45-12:15	Recess	Planning or Duties
12:15-1:00	Core Instruction (long block)	
1:00-1:45		
1:45-2:10	Closing Circle	

 Students in Specials
 Grade Level Teachers Planning

AFTER: one Specials Day every six days

*Specials Day rotates across K-5, one grade level per day			
	Days 1-5 Academic Days	Day 6 Specials Day	
8:30-9:00	Morning Meeting		
9:00-11:00	Morning Instructional Block	Specials Block 1	Grade Level PLC
11:00-12:00	Lunch / Recess	Lunch / Recess	
12:00-1:50	Afternoon Instructional Block	Specials Block 2	
1:50-2:10	Closing Circle		

2

HOW THEY DID IT:

On Specials Days, facilitate half-day **Professional Learning Communities** (PLCs) for teachers.

Specials Day	
8:30-9:00	Morning Meeting
9:00-11:00	Specials Block 1
11:00-12:00	Lunch / Recess
12:00-1:50	Specials Block 2
1:50-2:10	Closing Circle

Note: A vertical orange bar labeled "Grade Level PLC" spans the 9:00-11:00 and 11:00-12:00 time slots.

On Specials Day, core teachers participate in half-day PLCs.

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.

3

HOW THEY DID IT:

Create longer instructional blocks to enable **various group sizes**.

Academic Days 1-5	
8:30-9:00	Morning Meeting (Whole Class)
9:00-11:00	Morning Instructional Block
11:00-12:00	Lunch / Recess <ul style="list-style-type: none">Optional "Lunch Bunch" and Other Small Groups
12:00-1:50	Afternoon Instructional Block
1:50-2:10	Closing Circle (Whole Class)

- 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.

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.

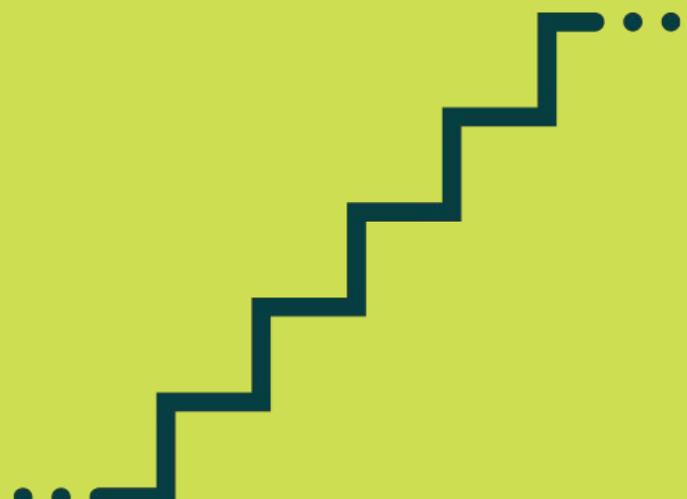
IMPACT

- 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**.

“
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

BUILD TOWARD



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.

APPENDIX

SCHOOL SNAPSHOT

ENROLLMENT

~500 STUDENTS

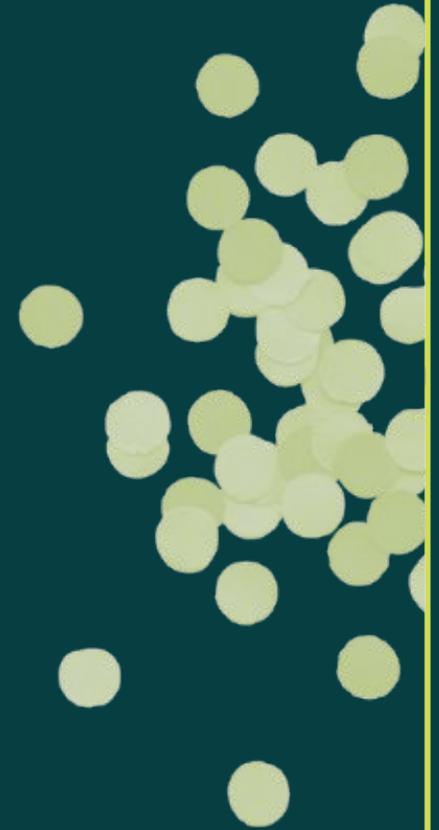
Grades K-5



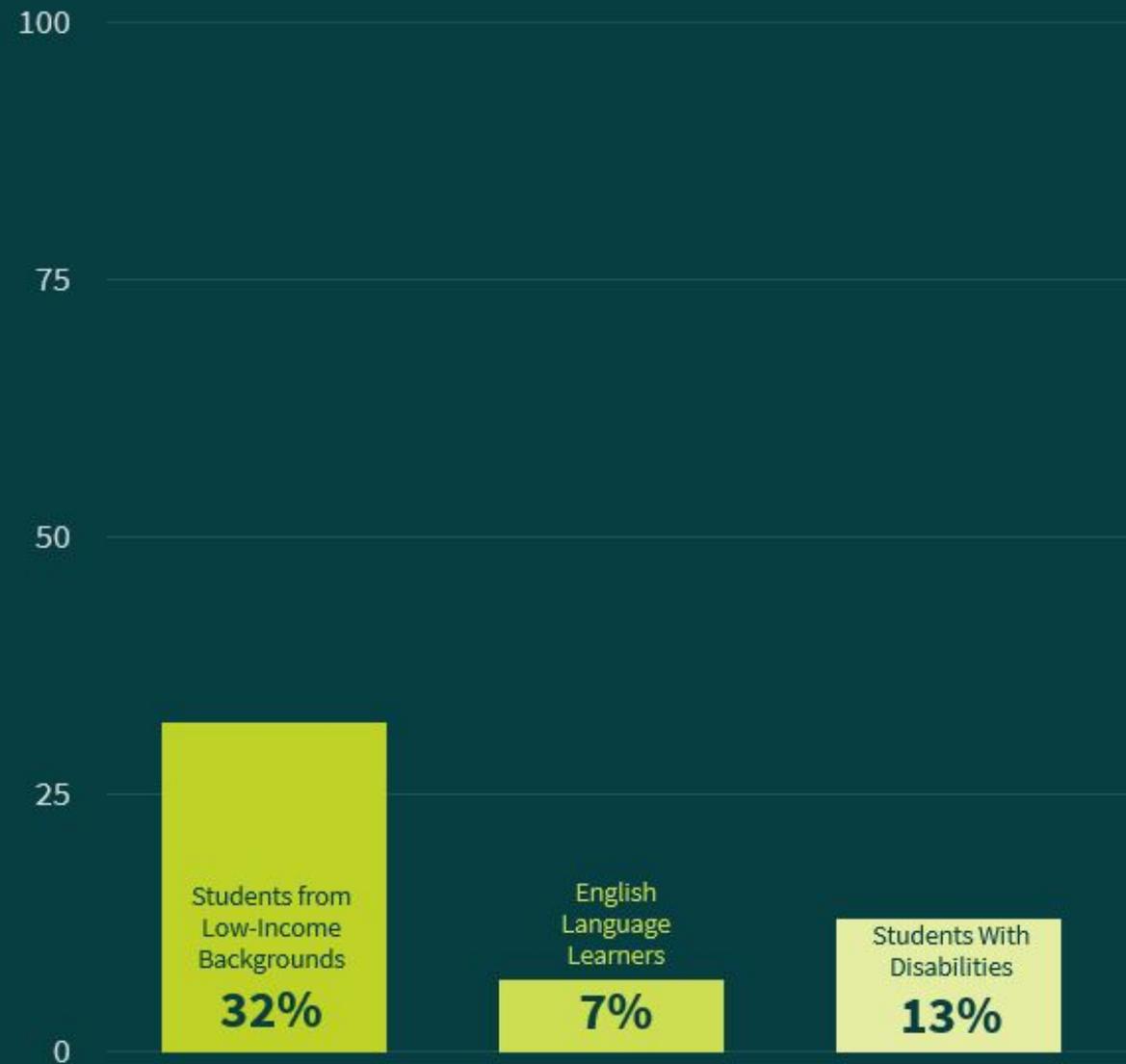
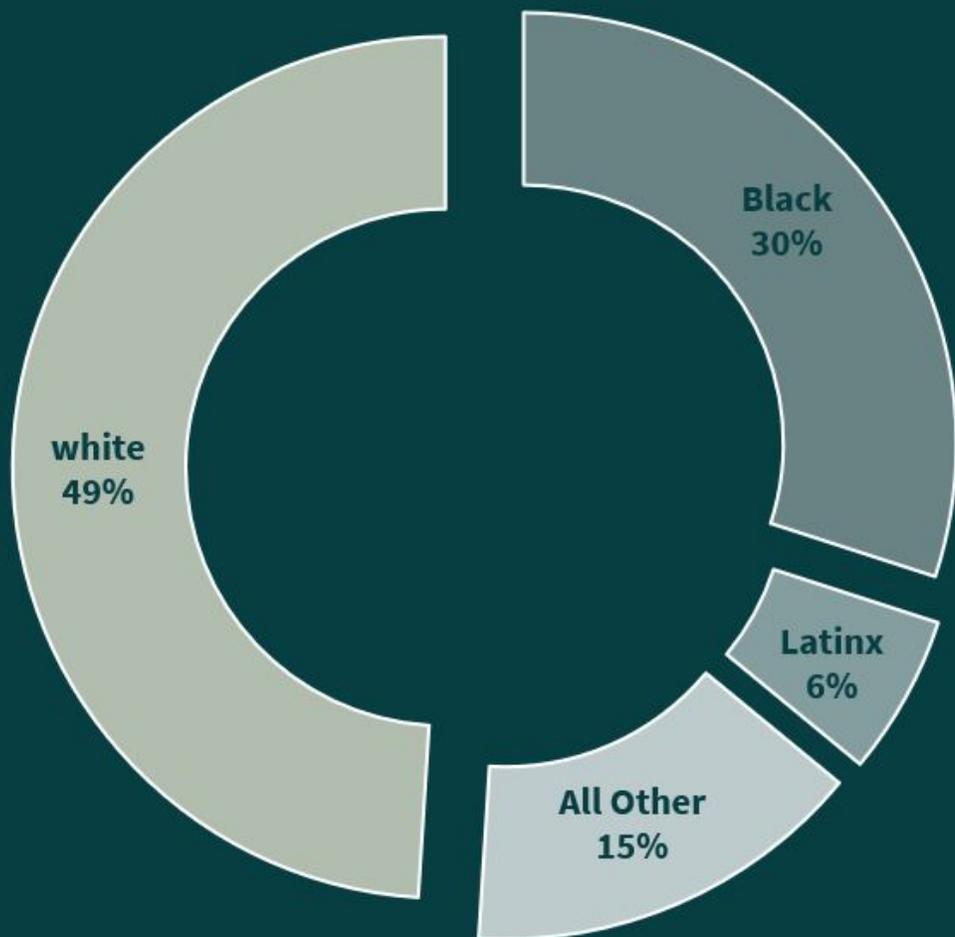
FUN FACT

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





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*
- [COVID-19 School Response Toolkit: Learning Acceleration Guide](#) *The New Teacher Project*
- [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 Farberman, National Center on Time & Learning*