MOVING YOUR NUMBERS

Lake Villa School District #41: Achievement Profile

Using Assessment and Accountability to Increase Performance for Students With Disabilities as Part of District-wide Improvement

In collaboration with:
Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO)
National Association of State Directors of Special Education (NASDSE)

Supported by:
U.S. Office of Special Education Programs
About Moving Your Numbers

Moving Your Numbers: Improving Learning for Students with Disabilities as Part of District-wide Reform, examines how school districts with vastly different demographics increase the performance of students with disabilities and other at-risk learners as part of whole-district reform efforts. Case studies of featured districts, as described in the full report, provide evidence that students with disabilities, like all other students, can learn at higher levels when adults focus their collective efforts on improving instructional practice, consistently implement core work across the district, and use assessment and accountability as a lever for ongoing system and student learning and improvement.

Moving Your Numbers identifies six essential practices that must be in place to improve the performance of students with disabilities. Evidence suggests that these six practices, when used in an aligned and coherent manner, are associated with higher student achievement. These practices are use data well, focus your goals, select and implement shared instructional practices (individually and collectively), implement deeply, monitor and provide feedback and support, and inquire and learn.

Moving Your Numbers was initiated and is supported through the National Center on Educational Outcomes (NCEO) under the leadership of Dr. Martha Thurlow, NCEO Director; Rachel Quenemoen, NCEO Senior Research Fellow; and Dr. Laurene Christensen, NCEO Research Associate. Dr. Deborah Telfer, Director, School of Education and Allied Professions Grant Center, University of Dayton, coordinates the development and review of Moving Your Numbers on behalf of NCEO. NCEO was established in 1990 to provide national leadership in designing and building educational assessments and accountability systems that appropriately monitor educational results for all students, including students with disabilities and English Language Learners (ELLs).

Photographs used in this publication have been provided courtesy of the districts featured and the Ohio Department of Education.

Additional case studies of featured districts will be added to the Moving Your Numbers website as they are developed. Go to www.MovingYourNumbers.org for the complete report and additional tools and resources, and to submit success stories.

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Lake Villa School District #41, a suburban district in the far northeastern corner of IL, serves approximately 3,300 students in kindergarten through grade 8. The district encompasses four elementary schools (1 PK-6 and 3 K-6) and one middle school (grades 7-8). At the conclusion of eighth grade, Lake Villa children graduate from the district and enroll in one of three area high schools.

Of Lake Villa’s 3000+ students, about 13% are identified as students with disabilities and receive special education services accordingly. The district serves primarily non-minority mid-income families; however, the Lake Villa community is becoming increasingly diverse in terms of socio-economic and racial composition. About 19 percent of Lake Villa’s students are economically disadvantaged and there is a growing number of children identified as limited English proficient.

In the immediate years leading up to 2006, the Lake Villa School District #41 struggled to find ways to tackle the lack of significant student progress in core academic subjects across the district, while trying to identify a workable strategy for getting the middle school out of Academic Watch status. Then, in July of 2006, a new superintendent, assistant superintendent, and director of special education were hired and began the hard work of changing the ways in which adults worked together to raise the level of instructional practice and student performance across the district.

“In 2006, each building had different goals and there was no overall strategy for making improvements. We were a confederation of schools, not a school district,” said Lake Villa superintendent Dr. John Van Pelt, who moved to Lake Villa from Iowa where he had been associate superintendent of Waterloo Public Schools.

Fullan (May 2011) calls this kind of emphasis on district-wide reform ‘the name of the game,’ asserting, “whole system success requires the commitment that comes from intrinsic motivation and improved technical competencies of groups of educators working together purposefully and relentlessly” (May 2011, p. 8). He offers four elements necessary for whole system reform – intrinsic motivation, instructional improvement, teamwork, and ‘allness’ – suggesting they be used as criteria for evaluating the effectiveness of a driver or set of drivers. Drivers are defined by Fullan as “policy and strategy levers that have the least and best chance of driving successful reform.”

Over the last five years, Van Pelt and his team demonstrated the kind of relentlessness Fullan describes in their focus on identifying and implementing the right work. And, they’ve been highly intentional in ensuring that all personnel have the skills and competencies to do the work. “We couldn’t have done what we’ve done here without the support and involvement of the teaching staff and union. The strong relationship that exists has allowed us to move much faster in putting reforms and improvements in place,” said Alex Barbour, assistant superintendent with responsibility for teaching and learning. Van Pelt concurs, saying “I know of no examples of districts making good progress that don’t have good relationships with teachers and the support of the teachers’ union. If you don’t have that kind of relationship, you must develop it,” said Van Pelt.

Focus Your Goals. Collective ownership for the success of every child is evident in how the district approaches its work on a day-to-day basis, and in its commitment to pursuing common goals through collaborative teams. “Being focused in Lake Villa means using a systemic approach that is grounded in a framework or guiding set of procedures that guides the district,” said Van Pelt. Identification of a limited number of strategic goals began in October 2006 when the district embarked on a yearlong process to develop a Comprehensive Accountability Plan for focusing and implementing essential work across the district. An Accountability Task Force – comprised of teachers, principals, central office personnel, community members, parents, and others – identified a limited number of district goals and a coordinated set of district-wide, central office, and school indicators for:

- Aligning each school’s improvement plan with the overall district plan;
- Ensuring the provision of targeted professional development (PD) to address district needs;
- Monitoring the degree of implementation of key initiatives across the district;
- Evaluating, on a continuous basis, the effectiveness of the district’s strategies in meeting district-wide goals; and
- Communicating progress toward meeting district-wide goals with the board, community, and internal stakeholders.

The plan incorporates an action and monitoring component, which requires each building as well as central office to target a minimum of two indicators related to student achievement and at least one indicator for each of the other district goals (not to exceed seven indicators). Associated activities or action steps are delineated and a time line, roles and responsibilities, measures for the activity, and related resources are spelled out.

Aligning Essential Work

- **District-Wide Indicators** – measure the progress toward the goals of Lake Villa School District #41
- **Building/Central Office Indicators** – provide evidence that strategies are being effectively implemented at the building, and central office levels
- **Reflections and Recommendations** – provide a qualitative narrative of the efforts toward continuous improvement

Building and central office personnel are also required to complete and submit a progress monitoring report each trimester that provides data supporting progress over time, the strategies that have been implemented to address target indicators, and the inferences/conclusions and reflections and recommendations for what’s working and what needs to be modified or dropped.
Also included as a component of the *Comprehensive Accountability Plan* are professional development (PD) and communication components. In Lake Villa, all PD must be directly related to district identified goals. The administrative team described the “use of focused PD as a practice embedded in the philosophy of the district.” “We do not support a ‘menu’ approach to PD,” said Barbour. Van Pelt and Barbour are both certified by The Leadership and Learning Center as data team trainers and have personally trained every staff member in the district in the effective use of data by groups of teachers – referred to as Learning Teams (LTs) in Lake Villa.

**Use Data Well.** The identification of goals and related indicators grew out of an extensive Task Force review of multiple sources of data, including results of the Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) data and district assessments for all children and disaggregated results for subgroups such as children receiving special education services. “Data drive the decision-making process; early on, writing stood out as a major need,” explained Van Pelt. In fact, while only 50% of Lake Villa’s students were proficient in writing in 2007, 78% scored at the proficient or advanced levels by 2010. The team view the use of statewide assessment data as a key strategy for supporting positive change. Accordingly, data are used at all levels of the district – from the use of the district dashboard to the use of district-wide common formative assessment data by learning teams – to monitor the degree of implementation of district initiatives across the district, and to evaluate whether implementation is sufficient to achieve desired results for all children, and for subgroups of children. “We look at gaps in two ways,” Van Pelt explained. “We monitor the gap between groups of children, and we also look at how to significantly increase rigor and cognitive demand for all children to assess our progress against international standards,” he added.

Requirements for the use of data are made clear by district leadership. “We’re careful not to give too much data; the data we want teachers to use must be relevant,” said Barbour. For example, the district has identified writing and reading as its primary focus areas (i.e., areas of greatest need); therefore, Learning Teams across the district are instructed to focus on those areas, rather than on other areas (e.g., mathematics) that are not currently identified as high need areas.

Data are also used to gauge the progress of groups of students and individual students, and to identify additional interventions that some children may need to attain grade-level benchmarks. Mary Conkling, Lake Villa Director of Special Education, credits the district’s insistence on aligning and focusing the work with improving results for all children. “You have to start with the core, no matter what.

### Grade 7 – Students with Disabilities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Levels*</th>
<th>Reading</th>
<th>Mathematics</th>
<th>Science</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
<td>1 2 3 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IEP</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District</td>
<td>0.0 43.8</td>
<td>2.1 31.3</td>
<td>8.2 22.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>8.4 41.5</td>
<td>19.4 26.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-IEP</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>District</td>
<td>0.0 11.6</td>
<td>0.3 6.5</td>
<td>2.8 7.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>0.1</td>
<td>0.6 10.0</td>
<td>3.4 10.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*1=warning; 2=below; 3=meets; 4=exceeds

Source: Lake Villa School District #41 2010 District Report Card, Illinois State Board of Education
We intentionally integrated response to intervention (RtI) practices as part of the overall improvement effort, believing that the use of appropriate interventions meant the intervention had to be integrated as part of the instructional process, had to be evidenced-based, and had to be responsive to the needs of the individual child. We would not run an RtI process that was parallel to our improvement efforts, nor did we want to reinforce the use of interventions based on the preference of individual teachers,” said Conkling.

The district’s focus on core academic areas of need is paying off. District math and reading scores increased significantly over a five-year period, from 2004-2009. From 2006-2008, students in third through eighth grade met or exceeded the ISAT state average across all tested subjects. In 2007 and 2008, Lake Villa students exceeded the state average in reading at every grade level, and in 2008, they exceeded the state average in math and science at every grade level tested. And in writing – the district’s initial area of focus – the district-wide average on the writing portion of the ISAT increased from 50% proficient (in 2006-07) to 72% proficient (2008-09), a 22-point gain in two years (Leadership and Learning Center, 2009).

State assessment data for students receiving special education services (IEP subgroup) also show steady progress over the past several years. For example, the performance of 7th graders in reading show an increase in the percentage of students with disabilities that meets or exceeds standards, and an associated decrease in the percentage of students scoring below or flagged with an academic warning. The performance of students with disabilities at grade 7 across reading, math, and science also shows more Lake Villa students with disabilities that meet/exceed state standards as compared to the state average.

**Structures that Promote Internal Accountability**

Lake Villa’s commitment to greater accountability for achievement results led to the formation of aligned team structures across four levels: district management, district leadership, building leadership, and teacher team (i.e., learning team). “We need to be able to connect results to specific action steps. We wouldn’t be able to do that if schools worked in isolation,” explained Barbour.

**Inquire and Learn.** Lake Villa’s commitment to being a learning organization through a well-established culture of inquiry is evident at each level across the system. At the district level, a Central Office Administrative Team (COAT) meets regularly and is comprised of the superintendent, assistant superintendent, director of special education, and business manager. In addition to COAT, an Administrative Team that

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2 The ISAT is administered in grades 3 through 8 in reading and math, in grades 4 and 7 in science, and in grades 3, 5, 6, and 8 in writing.
includes COAT members plus all five principals and two assistant principals at the middle school, meet face-to-face twice a month and hold phone conferences on alternate weeks.

The administrative team spends the first part of every meeting reviewing assessment, instruction, and PD data related to district-identified needs, and the second part of the meeting discussing managerial/operational issues. The Administrative Team also completes a walk-through once a month as part of its team meeting and then uses remaining meeting time to discuss what the group collectively believes constitutes good instruction. A walk-through is defined as a short, focused, informal administrative observation, which may result in reflective conversation.

At the school level, building leadership teams (BLTs) are in place and functioning at a high level. At the elementary level, BLTs are comprised of the principal and team leader (a designated teacher) for each grade; at the middle school, the principal, assistant principals, and all teacher leaders for each subject area comprise BLT membership. BLTs meet at least monthly – before or after school – to discuss progress toward reaching goals, achievement gaps, progress monitoring and assessment data and results, intervention needs, and resources, and to identify successes and challenges. BLTs must provide Superintendent Van Pelt with a meeting schedule and any changes to meeting dates. Van Pelt regularly attends BLT meetings and attends unannounced two to three times per year. “The superintendent cannot be a spectator; he/she must make clear that the work is the priority of the district. If the superintendent is not part of the process and guiding the board, it’s not going to work,” stated Van Pelt.

Van Pelt believes that superintendents must reinforce key leadership practices necessary to achieving district-wide goals. “How principals are evaluated is key; principals are, and are expected to be, part of a larger conversation about instruction and achievement beyond what happens in their individual school,” he said. Accordingly, Van Pelt evaluates every principal in the district, and every principal has been trained in the use of the data team process and receives frequent and ongoing support and feedback from Van Pelt and Barbour on their progress toward meeting district-wide goals. Despite the dramatic shift in the role of the principal in Lake Villa – from a more traditional managerial role prior to 2006 to directly leading and monitoring instructional improvement – there has been no turnover in principal leadership over the past five years, a fact that Barbour believes has contributed to the district’s capacity for making district-wide improvement.

“We need to be able to connect results to specific action steps. We wouldn’t be able to do that if schools worked in isolation.”

Alex Barbour, Assistant Superintendent
Principals Sandy Keim and Scott Klene regularly assess the benefits and effectiveness of LTs (described below) with building staff and the feedback they receive suggests that the use of LTs is perceived by many staff to improve learning for students and staff alike.

At the teacher level, all teachers are involved as members of learning teams (LTs). At the elementary level, LTs meet by grade level. At the middle school, LTs meet by subject and grade level. Specialty area teachers (e.g., music, art, technology) have district-wide LTs, while physical education teachers have LTs at both the elementary and middle school level. Special education teachers and related services staff (referred to as special education resource personnel), ELL teachers, and reading resource teachers are involved as members of learning teams (LTs) in their respective schools. Each team is required to have a teacher association representative as a member.

More than 40 learning teams are functioning across the district, all using a consistent and common data team approach to develop long- and short-range goals for improving student achievement based on data analysis. Each LT meets weekly for 60 to 100 minutes and reports results each trimester. Each LT’s agenda and meeting notes are submitted to the principal weekly. The LT process involves the following steps:

- Collect and chart data;
- Analyze strengths and obstacles;
- Establish, review, and revise SMART goals;
- Select specific instructional strategies (what teachers will do for students) to support improvement;
- Develop common classroom formative assessments;
- Determine results indicators (what students will do so team members know when progress has been made); and
- Implement consistent interventions when students are not making satisfactory progress.

After each member of an LT administers the same assessment (typically every six to 12 weeks), the team disaggregates the data to determine which children are proficient, which are close to being proficient, and which need additional support to be proficient. The team then analyzes the data to identify possible reasons why some children are not proficient and the areas in which they’re struggling. Strategies are identified for addressing each of these areas and the nature and intensity of supports to be provided are determined. The team puts action steps into place and clearly identifies expected levels of performance, which are then used on a weekly basis to gauge students’ response to instruction and intervention, and any needed changes in instructional content and/or delivery.

5 SMART goals are goals that are Specific, Measurable, Attainable, Relevant, and Timely (see Doran, Miller, & Cunningham, 1981).
Special education resource personnel, who include special education teachers and related services personnel such as speech language pathologists and school psychologists, rotate through the LTs. Additionally, at the middle school level, the special education resource personnel lead the LT meeting once per month, and are involved as members of both the color teams (i.e., heterogeneous groups of students organized into middle school teams or “houses”) and content area (e.g., reading, math) teams. “One of the greatest benefits of the LT process is the team development of strategies and interventions when students are not meeting expectations. We use a tiered intervention model, but ensure that the ongoing review of assessment results and development of interventions are incorporated into the LT process,” said Conkling.

Teachers, who are selected by colleagues or appointed by principals, assume the team leader function, facilitating and guiding the work of the LTs for at least a one-year term. One spin-off of using a shared leadership model is that teachers in Lake Villa have more ownership and accountability for student learning and achievement. LT team leaders are assuming new leadership roles throughout the district, thereby increasing the capacity of the staff to meet learning challenges. “Staff efficacy is clearly increasing,” observed Van Pelt.

“The superintendent cannot be a spectator; he/she must make clear that the work is the priority of the district. If the superintendent is not part of the process and guiding the board, it’s not going to work.”

John Van Pelt, Superintendent

Using Structures to Foster Engagement and Sustain Focus. “As we moved along and teachers felt comfortable in voicing concerns, that strengthened the relationship and increased buy-in and support for the improvements we were making,” said Conkling. For example, as LTs were put in place, teachers expressed concern about not having enough time to work together. The district listened and responded. Now, release time is built into the schedule and LTs meet for one hour every Friday afternoon – the last hour of the school day.

The community and school board were heavily involved in making the decision to provide four hours of release time per month to support LT work as part of overall district improvement. “Providing four hours of common work time every month meant four hours less of instructional time per month, which seemed counterintuitive to some members of the community. We knew that, politically, we had to show results in improved achievement to justify this kind of investment or we wouldn’t be doing it for long,” explained Van Pelt.

Active and systemic community engagement – beginning with the development of the district’s Comprehensive Accountability Plan – has been important in helping the district sustain a focus on the right work. At the end of Van Pelt’s third year as Lake Villa superintendent, five of the seven school board members who had hired him were gone. “Having and using a structured framework – and by that I mean the accountability plan – gave the district a solid foundation and strategy for bringing people together around the district’s core work and direction. This allowed us to stay on course despite changes in board leadership,” said Van Pelt.
Select and Implement Shared Instructional Practices. But having the plan, while essential, is not sufficient to improve instruction and student achievement. The Administrative Team attends Friday LT sessions on a regular, and sometimes unannounced, basis. The superintendent sets the direction for the work and his visible presence is a strong reminder that the work of LTs is the core work of the district. “The Comprehensive Accountability Plan is put into practice through the work of the Learning Teams. We believe that any plan has limited usefulness until it impacts teaching and learning at the classroom and student level,” said Van Pelt.

Practices that Achieve Results
While Lake Villa has made substantial progress over the past five years, the district team is quick to point out that their work is far from done. “A few teams think they do this work for the district; it’s something they think they have to do, rather than something they need to do to drive instruction,” said Barbour.

Despite pushback, which is minimal, the Administrative Team holds firm on the use of common strategies across the district. “When teachers adopt strategies or interventions on their own, we can’t evaluate whether our core content is effective. We have to have consistency in the implementation of specific targeted strategies and interventions to be able to monitor their degree of implementation and evaluate whether their use is having the desired effect on student performance,” explained Van Pelt. Conkling agreed, adding “we piloted materials to ensure their appropriateness for kids and their usability by parents.”

Monitor and Provide Feedback and Support. The formation of LTs is believed to be the most significant and essential initiative undertaken by the district since 2006, providing teacher teams with clearly defined focus and process for improving teaching and learning. Providing feedback to each other on instructional strategies, and using and collaboratively scoring common classroom formative assessments such as writing prompts and rubrics coupled with standardized assessments, are key practices embedded in the LT process.

### Comprehensive Accountability Plan
**Appendix B.4 – Professional Development Plan (EXCERPT)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Responsibility</th>
<th>Resources</th>
<th>Timeline</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td>Learning Team Internal Staff Development – Learning team peer observations, collaboration, and reflective discussions with Literacy Coaches on the topics of: assessment, modeling instruction, guided reading, literature circles, genre mini-lessons, immersion, and interventions</td>
<td>• Alex Barbour, assistant superintendent&lt;br&gt;• Eileen Huston, Mary Lutgen, and Becky Stellwag, literacy coaches&lt;br&gt;• Sandra Keim, principal&lt;br&gt;• Kathleen Blasius, lead teacher&lt;br&gt;• Team leaders, facilitators</td>
<td>Lake Villa School District 41 Reading Curriculum&lt;br&gt;Rebecca Sitton Word Study Program&lt;br&gt;Fountas and Pinnell Benchmark Assessment</td>
<td>September 2010—May 2011 (monthly)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The adoption of a district-wide reading curriculum, which included development of a curriculum framework and student outcomes aligned with the Illinois state and college readiness standards, as well as development of aligned district-wide common formative assessments, was another major undertaking designed to ensure quality and consistency in instructional practice across the district.

The redesign of curriculum to ensure alignment to standards and consistency in implementation is being supported by the district’s adoption of Charlotte Danielson’s Framework for Teaching. “It’s a game-changer in terms of increased expectations for staff. It’s given us a common language for talking about instruction and defining what we believe high quality instructional practice really looks like,” said Van Pelt.

**Targeted PD and Intentional Resource Use.** District resources are intentionally used to support focused PD, purchase instructional materials directly related to curriculum implementation, and technology to support the work. Rather than target small numbers of people for PD, or allow individuals to identify and pursue PD separate from the district’s plan, all staff are required to complete data team training, which is delivered by the superintendent and assistant superintendent annually to new staff. The superintendent also facilitated training in classroom walk-through and observation with all administrators in 2006. Since then, new administrators have been trained and all are required to conduct walk-through observations for the purpose of monitoring the progress of district initiatives.

Providing the training in-house has helped Barbour and Van Pelt develop a high level of professional expertise, built the capacity of the staff as a whole, and saved money. “We want a curriculum-driven district and use a system approach in the intentional use of resources, rather than allowing each building to decide how it spends a certain amount of resources,” said Van Pelt. District leadership has avoided buying off-the-shelf products, believing that any product or tool they use must ensure that the specific practices the district wants to implement are the ones that are monitored.

As a case in point, administrators use commercial walk-through software, but adapt it to collect observation data against key identified district practices. Use of a common electronic tool to conduct observations has helped the Administrative Team develop a common, collective approach to monitoring implementation and identifying PD needs. “We’re careful not to characterize walk-through observations as teacher evaluation,” explained Van Pelt. “We do, however, use the data to identify relative strengths and challenges,” he said.

**Balancing Fidelity of Implementation with Flexibility to Meet Student Needs.** Buildings have the latitude to identify indicators and activities to determine the needs of the students they serve, but all schools have the same district-wide goals that

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Goal #2: Increase the percent of special education resource students scoring proficient or higher in the area of reading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Goal Not Yet Met: 32% 24/76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of Special Education Students Proficient on Benchmark Assessments in Reading (Target: 40%; 31/78; based on pre-assessment data) Reported Three Times Per Year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Activity #1: Ensure professional development on reading interventions has been completed for all pertinent staff and continued with in-house support from literacy coaches</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Activity #2: Ensure Tier two and three interventions are implemented appropriately</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Activity #3: Progress monitor students within the special education subgroup; provide instruction based on students’ needs and modify instructional approaches if needed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Activity #4: Further utilize literacy coaches as a resource to provide special education and resource teachers with training specific to their field</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Activity #5: Collaborate and utilize staff members that are having greatest impact on student achievement as a resource</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Activity #6: Focus on moving our students from the not meeting to meeting state standards by identifying the students in the not meeting category and providing instruction based on the students’ individual needs to move such students to the meeting category</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to our district-wide Fountas and Pinnell fall 2009 assessment data, 22% of our students were reading at benchmark at the beginning of the school year. By the end of the school year there was an increase from about 20% of students reading at the benchmark level in the fall to 40% of students reading at the benchmark level in the spring of 2010. It is our goal to again have a similar trend for the 2010-2011 school year.
guide their work. Staffing assignments are one way the district addresses building-identified needs. For example, the best way to structure services and supports for ELL students and students at risk of being identified as learning disabled was taken into account in allocating and assigning personnel. The Administrative Team ensured that resources were provided to address needs and assigned literacy coaches to the buildings with the greatest needs. The special education resource teachers – viewed as equal members of LTs charged with working to ensure that every child reaches/exceeds grade-level expectations – use the services of the literacy coaches as much as their general education counterparts do.

Each building reports to the board twice a year and uses a mid-year reflection/recommendation template (i.e., part of the Comprehensive Accountability Plan) to list building activities and report progress against each district goal. An excerpt from the Thompson Elementary School reports that the percentage of students receiving special education services who were proficient on benchmark assessments in reading doubled -- from 20 to 40 percent over the course of a school year. Another section of the document reports that 62.5 percent of students receiving special education services were proficient on ISAT Reading (Lake Villa District Report Card, 2010).

District review of the progress being made by subgroups of children has led to greater collaboration and dialogue among teachers. When the district noticed that state assessment results for fifth grade writing for students with limited English proficiency (LEP)
were much higher in one of its buildings than all others, the Administrative Team pulled all fifth grade LTs together to talk about instructional delivery and promote sharing among teams. “Our biggest challenge is how to provide more time to students who need it within an already busy schedule,” said Barbour.

Beginning in 2011-12, Lake Villa will designate a specified time in the daily schedule to address the need for intervention for students with disabilities and/or other learners who may be struggling. A 50-minute daily time block will be incorporated into the K-3 schedule for intervention and enhancement/extension. During this designated time, all teachers will provide intervention to students who need it to successfully master the core curriculum, and extension activities to children who are already proficient. In grades 4 through 6, the same process will be used during a 40-minute daily time allotment. “We’re committed to minimizing interruptions and maximizing the amount of direct instructional time for all children. The intervention time won’t be a cure-all, but it will provide another strategy for responding to the instructional needs of children who require additional time and services,” agreed Conkling.

**A FOUNDATION FOR SUSTAINABLE IMPROVEMENT: WHAT MATTERS MOST**

The Lake Villa administrative team believes that the district has addressed the biggest challenge it faced in 2006 – that of schools working in isolation. However, when asked to rate the degree to which the improvements put in place beginning in 2006 have been effective in achieving desired results, he and his team are quick to point out that they’re not done. “We can’t say our actions are achieving desired results in every respect until every child is achieving at high levels. And they’re not, not yet anyway,” said Van Pelt.

The next big pieces of work for the Lake Villa School District #41 involve finalizing development of a standards-based report card, and instituting a new teacher evaluation process – including a principal and related services staff evaluation component – based on Danielson’s *Framework*.

“The more evident it becomes that our work results in improved performance, the easier it is for more people to embrace the direction we’ve taken and stay focused on the work,” said Van Pelt.

**Advice from Lake Villa**

1. Move from a focus on individual buildings to a focus on district-wide implementation to sustain the work.
2. Use data at all levels.
3. Establish a foundation to guide the work.
4. Share leadership and support the development of essential leadership practices across the district.
5. Use external facilitation to provide an outside voice, especially at the beginning of a change process.
6. Focus PD on a few initiatives aligned with district-wide goals and train everyone.
7. Ensure interventions are embedded as part of the instructional process.
8. Intentionally target resources to meet district needs.

For additional information about the Lake Villa School District #41 story, contact Dr. John Van Pelt, Superintendent of Schools, 131 McKinley Avenue, Lake Villa, IL 60046 at 847.356.2385 or via email at jvanpelt@district41.org.
Available MOVING YOUR NUMBERS Publications:

• Administrator Preparation Guide: Using Assessment and Accountability to Increase Performance for Students with Disabilities as Part of District-wide Improvement.

• District Self-Assessment Guide for Moving Our Numbers: Using Assessment and Accountability to Increase Performance for Students with Disabilities as Part of District-Wide Improvement.

• Moving Your Numbers: A Synthesis of Lessons Learned from Districts Using Assessment and Accountability to Increase Performance for Students with Disabilities as Part of District-Wide Improvement.

• Moving Your Numbers: Five Districts Share How They Used Assessment and Accountability to Increase Performance for Students with Disabilities as Part of District-Wide Improvement.

• Moving Your Numbers: The Critical Role of Regional Providers in Facilitating School District Capacity to Improve Achievement for Students with Disabilities.

• Moving Your Numbers: The Critical Role of SEAs in Facilitating School District Capacity to Improve Achievement for Students with Disabilities.

• Parent/Family Companion Guide: Using Assessment and Accountability to Increase Performance for Students with Disabilities as Part of District-Wide Improvement.

• Teacher Preparation Guide: Using Assessment and Accountability to Increase Performance for Students with Disabilities as Part of District-Wide Improvement.

For More Information on Moving Your Numbers, Contact NCEO or Visit: movingyournumbers.org

National Center on Educational Outcomes
University of Minnesota
207 Pattee Hall • 150 Pillsbury Dr. SE
Minneapolis, MN 55455
Phone: 612.626.1530 • Fax: 612.624.0879
nceo@umn.edu