



# RTI AT WORK™ Success Story



MODEL PLC  
SCHOOL

## Catoosa County Public Schools

GEORGIA



Solution Tree

# Catoosa County Public Schools

## GEORGIA

### DISTRICT AT A GLANCE



**11,069 Students**



**46.9% Free and reduced lunch**



**1.9% Limited English proficient**



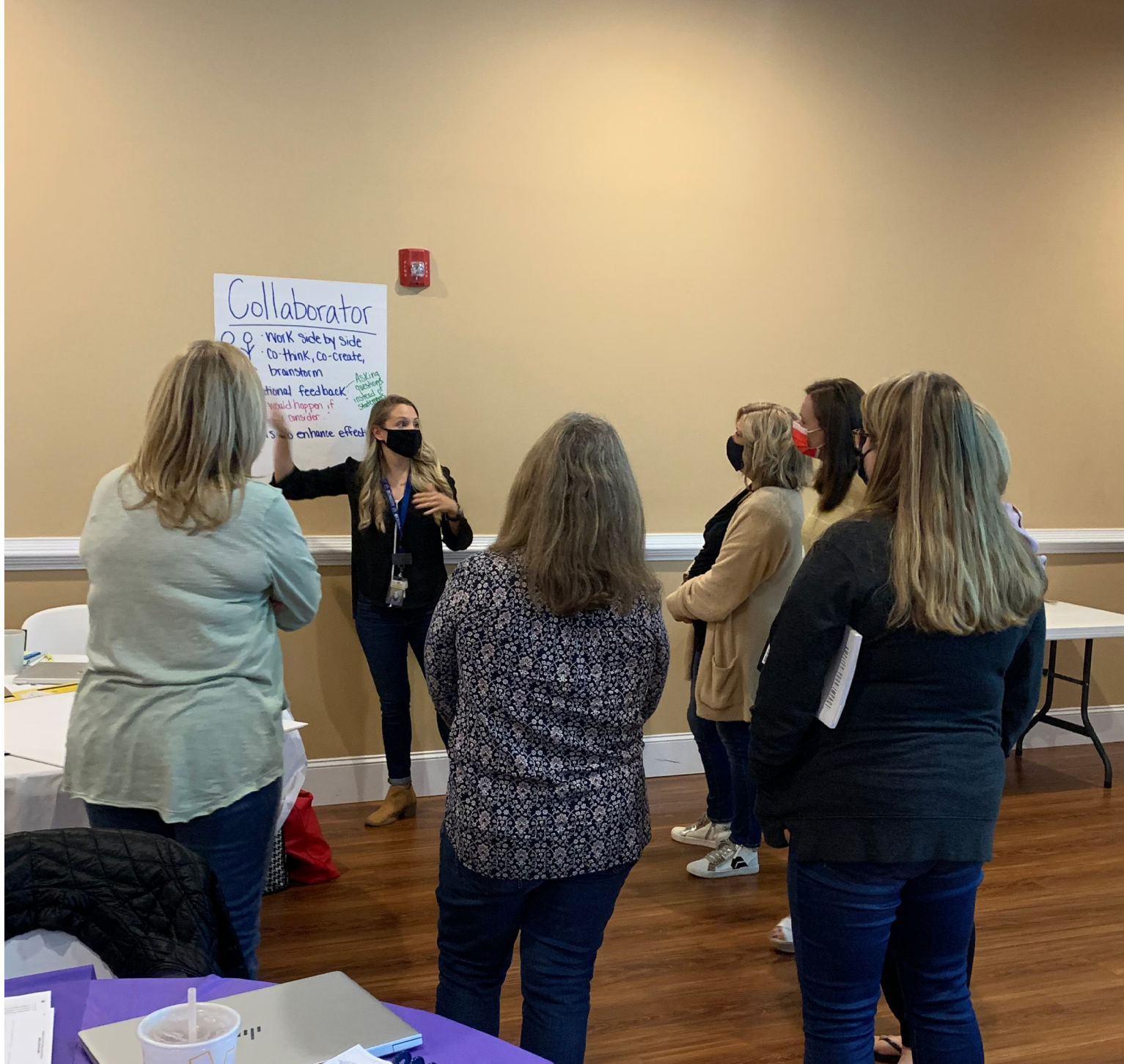
**17.9% Special education**

### ► CHALLENGE

In the summer of 2016, Catoosa County Public Schools applied for and was approved as a charter system. School and district leaders were excited about the flexibility granted by the new status, but they also realized the level of accountability was changing. At the same time, the school district was notified that, due to the high number of students identified for special education services, it was being placed on the “Disproportionate List.”

Collaboration between district leaders began a new journey. During the charter system application process, strong strategic planning had been completed, but general and special education leaders now needed to delve deeper into the data to determine immediate areas of concern. While student achievement in English language arts and mathematics both needed attention, reading achievement, especially at the elementary level, surfaced as the top priority.





“We were the lowest-ranked College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI) school in north Georgia. It was a huge wake-up call.”

—Robert Mountjoy, principal, West Side Elementary School, Georgia

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### DEMOGRAPHICS



- › **86.5%** Caucasian
- › **3%** African American
- › **4.5%** Hispanic
- › **2.1%** Asian
- › **0%** Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
- › **0.1%** Native American
- › **3.7%** Multiracial
- › **0.1%** Other

### ► IMPLEMENTATION

General and special education leaders embarked on a search for proven, research-based practices. A team of four district-level leaders attended the Response to Intervention (RTI) at Work™ Institute in Dallas where the Professional Learning Communities (PLC) at Work® and RTI at Work™ processes were united. A new vision of effectively operating as a learning organization began to emerge.

“We had a lot of learning to do,” says Dr. Kim Nichols, assistant superintendent of Catoosa County Public Schools.

Changes began immediately. Administrator and academic coach meetings were redesigned to focus on building capacity among school and district leaders. Learning about the PLC at Work® process of improving student achievement became a priority. Due to the problem of over-identifying students for special education services, school and district leaders were also required to quickly learn more about effective RTI practices. Catoosa County Public Schools decided to move away from the traditional RTI model in favor of the RTI at Work™ process.

District and school leaders spent the next year studying and discussing effective PLC and RTI practices through collaborative book studies. A districtwide focus on the four guiding PLC questions became the driving force behind making changes. Emphasis on learning instead of teaching became the new filter.

# Catoosa County Public Schools

## GEORGIA

### AWARDS



› **12 Model PLC Schools**

› **2 Governor's Office of Student Achievement (GOSA) School Awards**

› **Title I Distinguished School: Ringgold Middle School**

› **Recognized by Franklin Covey Education as a Leader in Me Lighthouse School: Westside Elementary School**

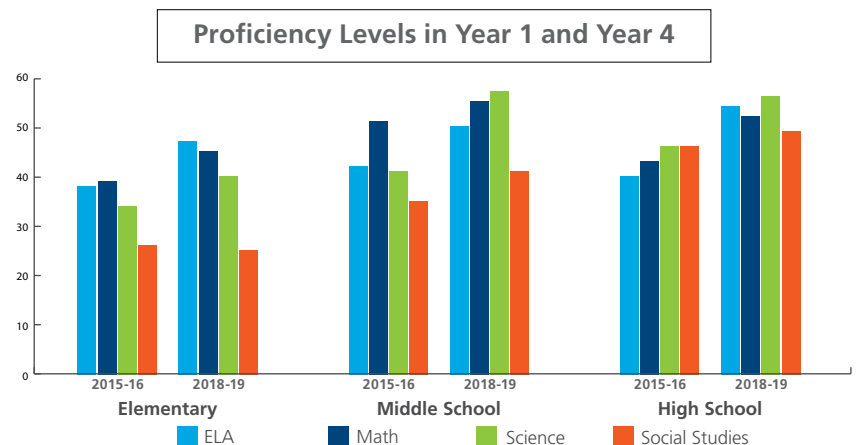
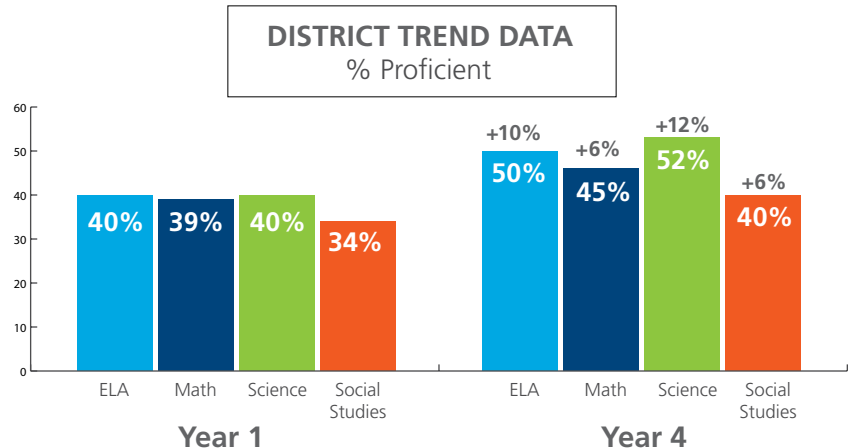
› **Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG) College and Career Academy Award**

### ► RESULTS

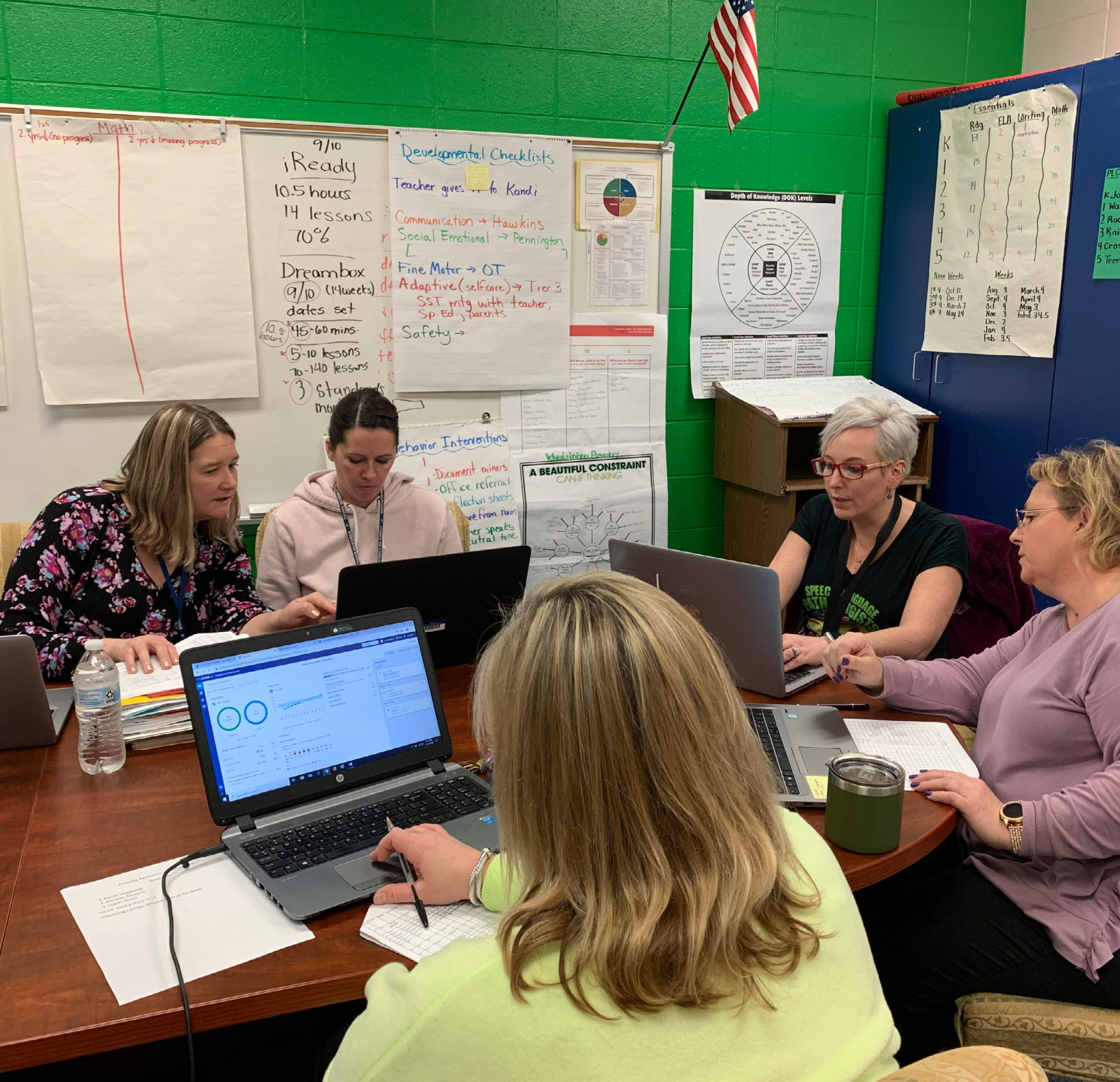
Catoosa County Public Schools was named a Model PLC District in 2020 and 12 of its 16 schools have been named Model PLC Schools. The district has also received numerous awards, and its schools have been recognized for their significant gains in student achievement.

According to Dr. Nichols, the district's shift from a focus on teaching to a focus on learning—for students and staff—has been critical to its success.

"From a district perspective, you have to be that lead learner," advises Dr. Nichols. "You have to start with yourself. If you want to have an impact and see things in your district operate differently, then you have to be the lead learner. You have to put the time in to learn, and you cannot let up. You never get to stop learning."







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—Kim Nichols, assistant superintendent, Catoosa County Public Schools, Georgia



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### ► STORIES FROM THE FIELD

Our school has been a professional learning community for five years. We are the highest economically disadvantaged school in Catoosa County. We also have the largest numbers of English learners in Catoosa County. My first year as principal—as soon as I was introduced as principal—a news article came out that we were the lowest-ranked College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI) school in north Georgia. It was a huge wake-up call.

Our staff here is wonderful. **In a school with a high percentage of economically disadvantaged students, you have to have a huge heart.** And our teachers have that, but we didn't have a common language. We weren't working together.

It's been years of work to look inward: *How do we change our culture? What's needed in order to work collaboratively? How do we define learning targets? How do we ensure high levels of learning?* I am very proud of our work and what we've accomplished as a Model PLC School, but I am also very much looking forward to where we go from here.



**Robert Mountjoy**

Principal

West Side Elementary School

### THE TOOLS WE USED



#### Book studies

"Start with *Learning by Doing*. It's a great place to start."

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#### Global PD

"It's a very affordable way to deliver professional learning. I used it in every element of moving the school forward."

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#### On-site PD

"We brought (RTI at Work™ associate) Jamie Virga in to provide two days of professional development."

 [Learn more](#)



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At Solution Tree, we share your vision to transform education to ensure learning for all, and we can help you make this vision a reality.

**OUR PROMISE:** No other professional learning company provides our unique blend of research-based, results-driven services that improve learning outcomes for students.

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