



Quitman school students

# PLC AT WORK<sup>®</sup>

Success Story

## Quitman School District

QUITMAN, ARKANSAS

Quitman School District achieved 100 percent growth on K–2 assessments in math and English/language arts in two years, and the 12th-greatest overall growth on the ACT Aspire among all high schools in Arkansas.



Quitman School District is in the first cohort (2017) of the Arkansas Department of Education's PLC at Work project.



Solution Tree

### DEMOGRAPHICS

- › **727** students
- › **15%** special education
- › **0.45%** English language learners
- › **1.65%** Hispanic
- › **0.55%** African American
- › **96.42%** Caucasian
- › **1.1%** Multiracial
- › **0.14%** Asian
- › **0.0%** Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander
- › **0.14%** Native American
- › **65%** free/reduced lunch

*The Quitman School District is located in Quitman, Arkansas, a rural community of approximately 762 residents.*



### ► CHALLENGE

Before the Quitman School District started its PLC at Work<sup>®</sup> journey, teachers worked independently, and leadership tended to make decisions in isolation.

Quitman's elementary school and high school operated separately. Input from specific groups, such as special education instructors, was often left out of critical conversations—and some teachers didn't care for feedback on their instruction at all.

"It was very deeply ingrained in the culture here," Quitman co-principal Michael Stacks said. "Even being here for eight to ten years, like I have been, I didn't recognize it."

"We figured out that if we really wanted to create this culture of 'our kids,' and 'we're going to do the best for all our kids,' then we're going to have to be transparent in that," Quitman co-principal Julie Wallace said.

### ► IMPLEMENTATION

Wallace and Stacks worked with Solution Tree associate Regina Stephens Owens to strategically establish a guiding coalition for Quitman's professional learning community. This ensured that all educator voices were brought together and heard, unifying the district's mission, vision, values, and goals.

Comprising representatives from every grade—as well as some long-time staff members hand-selected for their distinct influence and insight—this guiding coalition was formed to play a key role in all district functions: hiring, master scheduling, financial decisions, and even intervention time.

Wallace and Stacks, who used to serve as the district's elementary and high school principals respectively, also decided to share a K–12 co-principal position as one of many commitments to a larger, collaborative culture.

"I was very defensive of my school and processes, and systems we had in place and the work that had been done here," Stacks said. "But we established a relationship built on trust, where we could really work together and make the changes our district needed."

“It’s hard work, but it will change your school. And it will impact your kids and change them and your staff forever.”

—Michael Stacks, co-principal, Quitman School District

## ► RESULTS

As a result of Quitman forming a guiding coalition, the district now operates under a more streamlined and inclusive, collaborative environment. For example, intervention times now allow students—or instructors from other grade levels or subjects—to visit other classrooms and ensure each learner receives strong, personalized feedback.

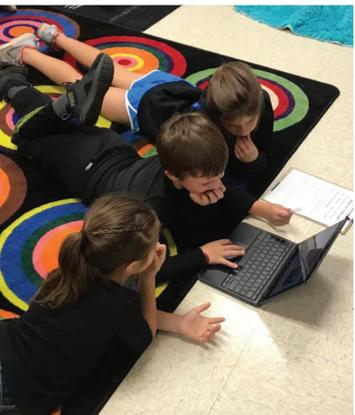
“If I’m a teacher, I may have students from class A, B, and C in my room because I am best prepared to teach a particular strategy or concept to these kids,” Wallace said.

Quitman has also seen a 16 percent growth in enrollment, and staff turnover is down. Some positions, such as Kindergarten teacher, now see 50 or more quality applications.

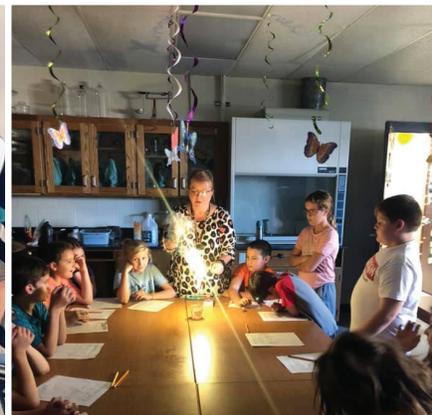
Overall student achievement has also increased. The district saw 100 percent growth on K–2 assessment in math and English/language arts in two years, and Quitman High School had the 12th-greatest overall growth on ACT Aspire among all high schools in Arkansas.

“We work in a country, but especially in a state, where special education teachers are burnt out, and they’re tired, and they’re frustrated... We have teachers that are like ‘let’s go, I’m ready.’ They’re excited.”

—Julie Wallace, co-principal, Quitman School District



The team with Anthony Muhammad





Big Sandy Elementary School,  
Tuscaloosa, Alabama

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