

# Sharply focus on instructional leadership to impact student achievement

## Evaluating Instructional Leadership: Recognized Practices for Success



**The Story of Volusia  
County Schools, FL**  
A Case Study

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# About Evaluating Instructional Leadership

The Evaluating Instructional Leadership Seminars are structured for long-term and ongoing success in districts across the nation. In these seminars, Julie Smith and Ray Smith outline eight Recognized Practices (RPs) for Success in leadership coaching and evaluation.

The Volusia County Schools adopted the state Principal Evaluation System (Florida School Leaders Assessment) to focus their leaders on actions that impact student learning. Dr. Julie Smith was hired to assist in the implementation of Volusia's new state-aligned model. Below is a summary of the instructional leadership seminars that were provided in Volusia between the 2012–13 school year to date.

## **Coaching Instructional Leadership**

Support school leaders in assessing and improving their instructional leadership practices.

## **Feedback for Teacher & Leader Learning**

Apply Visible Learning research on formative evaluation and feedback to teacher observations and classroom walkthroughs.

## **Engaging in Learning/Linking Walks**

Implement the Linking Walk process to deepen collective understanding of instructional practices related to school improvement efforts.

## **What's Changed About Change Leadership?**

Become familiar with change leader concepts and research, and create a change plan for your own school or district.

## **Linking Practice to Impact/Deliberate Practice**

Develop and implement a personal leadership growth plan that will significantly impact adult and student performance.

## **High-Impact Leadership Practices**

Engage in learning activities designed to help leaders understand how to effectively implement high-impact instructional leadership practices.

# Volusia County Schools, FL

Teacher Population:

**4,475**

Student Population

**61,829**

Free/Reduced Lunch:

**61%**

SWD/ESE Population:

**16%**

English Learner Population:

**5.3%**

Number of Schools:

**70**

## The Context

Volusia County Schools (VCS) is located on Florida's east coast, bordered on the west by the historic St. Johns River and by the Atlantic Ocean to the east. Its most notable city is Daytona Beach. VCS is the 13th largest school district in Florida. Prior to beginning the work with Dr. Julie Smith and Corwin, the principals and assistant principals received professional learning primarily on school operations and legislation rather than instructional leadership. With the advent of a new evaluation system, VCS recognized a significant need to engage school leaders with focused and intense professional learning aligned with the expectations of 21st century instructional leaders.



## Early Work 2012–2013

Initially the work centered on ensuring all school administrators were informed practitioners according to the district's new evaluation system. The Florida School Leader Assessment dimensions are comprised of ten proficiency areas. Through a series of professional learning sessions, administrators were exposed to the expectations of the system and then the newly designed Deliberate Practice Plan (DPP). The DPP required leaders to identify goals aligned to the school improvement process and the improvement of their individual professional practice.

“In 2012, we began work to develop instructional leaders at our schools that would have the expertise in the critical areas of leadership to effectively lead their schools to meet the increasing requirements in faculty development and student achievement. Through our work with Dr. Julie Smith, our district designed a multi-year series of sessions targeting the focus areas for leaders as defined by needs assessments. Following support in the new teacher evaluation system, we launched the Impact Leadership Series and Feedback for Learning. Now in our fourth year, we continue to engage in progressive learning to improve the performance of instructional leaders and can document significant improvement in faculty performance and student achievement.”

—Karen L. Beattie, Principal  
Chrisholm Elementary School

# Volusia County Schools, FL



## Transition to Impact Leadership 2013–2015

It was during the early work that it became apparent to district leaders that school administrators needed more extensive learning in key areas of leadership. Working with Dr. Julie Smith, VCS contracted for Impact Leadership and Feedback for Learning sessions for all school administrators. Having worked with VCS leaders for over a year, Dr. Smith took existing leadership content and customized the professional learning sessions to ensure the specific needs of VCS were met. Impact Leadership is a two-day session on the topics of time management and

the decision-making process. A needs assessment of administrators had revealed the chief concern with meeting the expectations of the new evaluation system was lack of time, and the content of Impact Leadership directly addressed these needs.

Simultaneously during the work of Dr. Smith, the district professional learning staff was developing a program to support new principals. Through an examination of the feedback received from school administrators, district staff and Dr. Smith designed the VCS Coaching Series for new principals and principal interns. The content was to include the Impact Leadership two days, Feedback for Learning, Learning/Linking Walks and individual coaching support for Deliberate Practice Plans. The first cohort contained 25 participants. Due to significant positive feedback on the Learning/Linking Walks process, the district expanded the opportunity to all principals and assistant principals.

As a result of the increasingly proactive and engaging professional relationship of Dr. Julie Smith with VCS, the district benefited from learning of leading educational researchers. Dr. Smith introduced VCS to the work of Dr. John Hattie and facilitated the Visible Learning Foundation day for school administrators and district instructional staff. Additionally, VCS was introduced to the work of Dr. Russ Quaglia on Student Voice.

“Participating in Learning Walks with Dr. Julie Smith was one of the best professional learning events I’ve experienced. This job-embedded PD is focused, relevant and provides a powerful collaboration platform for professionals from all levels of experience and expertise to learn together. I truly believe the Learning Walks process has the power to impact instructional practice and transform school culture.”

—Meg Roa, Specialist  
Professional Learning and School Improvement  
Volusia School District, FL

# Volusia County Schools, FL

## Current Practice 2015–2016

A change in district leadership did not impede the professional learning opportunities for school administrators. In fact, the opportunities were expanded to district instructional staff and school-based academic coaches. Dr. Smith was hired to work with both elementary and secondary school and district based academic coaches and liaisons in the area of Learning Walks, Feedback Practices, and Effect Size practices.

In order to ensure those new to school administration would be informed practitioners, VCS contracted Dr. Smith to provide sessions representative of those provided in previous years. Support to principals took place in a variety of modalities, face-to-face, webinars, online coaching, and support via phone and email. The on-site coached principals designed and implemented School Improvement Plans with supporting Deliberate Practice Plans focusing on increasing faculty performance and student achievement while directly improving their expertise as defined by the Florida School Leader Assessment. A significant increase in performance of faculties, students, and principals, has been measured.

“The impact leadership training and leadership coaching sessions with Julie Smith have been very powerful. She has helped me determine my own impact as I work with school leaders to set goals and support their vision.”

—Lyndi Goepfert, Specialist  
Professional Learning and School Improvement  
Volusia County Schools, FL

## At a Glance: The Volusia Journey

| Date      | Workshop  | Sessions | Length | Participants                              |
|-----------|---|----------|--------|---|
| 2012-2013 | Implementation of Administrator Evaluation System, Florida School Leaders Assessment  | 6        | 1 day  | Principals and Assistant Principals       |
| 2013      | Administrator Deliberate Practice Plan  | 9        | 1 day  | Principals and Assistant Principals       |
| 2013-2014 | Impact Leadership two day session <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time Management</li> <li>• Decision Making Process</li> </ul>  | 4        | 2 days | Principals and Assistant Principals       |
|           | Feedback for Learning   | 5        | 1 day  |   |
| 2014-2015 | Visible Learning Foundation Day   | 5        | 1 day  | Principals and Assistant Principals       |
|           | Feedback for Learning—Review  | 3        | ½ day  |   |
|           | Feedback for Learning—Diving Deeper   | 3        | ½ day  |   |
|           | Learning Walks  | 30*      | ½ day  |   |
| 2014-2015 | Coaching Series <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impact Leadership               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time Management</li> <li>• Decision Making Process</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Learning Walks</li> <li>• Individual Coaching on Deliberate Practice Plan</li> <li>• Managing Change</li> </ul> | 1        | 2 days | New Principals and Principal Intern Class |
|           |   | *        | ½ day  |   |
|           |   | 10       | ½ day  |   |
|           |   | 1        | 1 day  |   |
|           |   |          |        |   |
| 2015-2016 | Coaching Series <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Individual Coaching on Deliberate Practice and School Improvement plans</li> </ul>   | 40       | 2 days | Principals                                |
| 2015-2016 | Learning/Linking Walks  | 2        | 1 day  | Principals and Academic Coaches           |
|           | Feedback for Learning / Effect size and scatter plot training   | 1        | 1 day  |   |

# Volusia County Schools, FL

## Spotlight on Spruce Creek Elementary

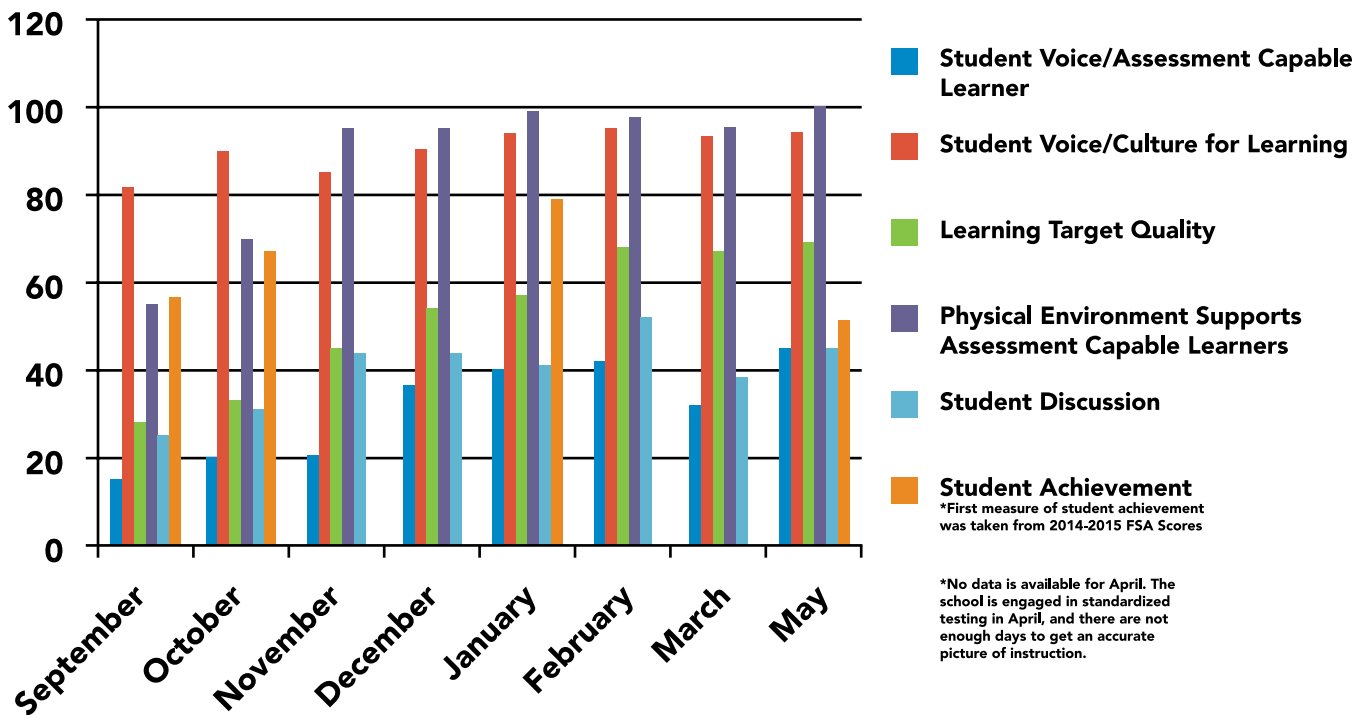
Rachel Hazel, Principal at Spruce Creek Elementary School, tracks student growth as part of her Deliberate Practice monitoring. In the chart below, Rachel identifies steady growth in the areas of student voice, teacher behaviors, and student achievement as measured by district assessments. The student voice is in two categories: assessment capable learners and culture for learning. Rachel commented "To me, [student voice] is the most powerful data. We can teach all day, but if our students can't articulate what they are learning—it's all in vain."



“Leadership Coaching has given me the confidence to take risks and know that I can evaluate my impact. Success is no longer a guessing game. I feel that I have been given the tools to know whether or not the direction I am leading my school is effective or not.”

—Rachel Hazel, Principal  
Spruce Creek Elementary

Deliberate Practice Monitoring  
Spruce Creek Elementary, 2015–2016



# Volusia County Schools, FL

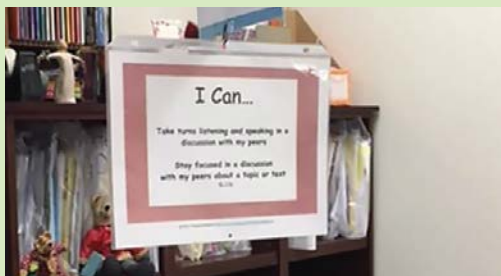
## Spotlight on Spruce Creek Elementary (cont.)

“ The Learning Walk experience is a powerful tool for providing feedback to our teachers. The discussions that were prompted from the data changed instruction and ultimately enhanced the educational experience for our students. ”

—Rachel Hazel, Principal  
Spruce Creek Elementary School



## The Changes We Saw



## Next Steps

Volusia County Schools is steadily showing improvement in faculty, student and administrative performance. The partnership developed with Dr. Julie Smith, the outstanding professional learning experiences she provided the leadership, along with her ongoing support has created a foundation for continued growth.

“ I am proud to say that Volusia County Schools have some of the best school leaders in our society today and they have proven over and over why they represent the very best. This is due mainly to our ability to constantly aim for continuous growth, which will ultimately benefit our faculty, staff, and most importantly, our students. Julie Smith’s facilitative leadership is our VCS compass which instills a specific, direct, professional approach from a leadership perspective on how we should facilitate that process. ”

—Jerry Picott, Alternative Education Principal  
Riverview Learning Center

# Evaluating Instructional Leadership Seminars

## Recognized Practice 1 – Coaching Instructional Leadership

Support school leaders in assessing and improving their instructional leadership practices.

## Recognized Practice 2 – Feedback for Teacher & Leader Learning

Apply Visible Learning research on formative evaluation and feedback to teacher observations and classroom walkthroughs.

## Recognized Practice 3 – Engaging in Linking Walks

Implement the Linking Walk process to deepen collective understanding of instructional practices related to school improvement efforts.

## Recognized Practice 4 – What's Changed About Change Leadership?

Become familiar with change leader concepts and research, and create a change plan for your own school or district.

## Recognized Practice 5 – Linking Practice to Impact/Deliberate Practice

Develop and implement a personal leadership growth plan that will significantly impact adult and student performance.

## Recognized Practice 6 – Activating Linking Talks With and Among Teachers

Facilitate dialogue between teachers about their impact on student learning and how it can be evaluated to improve student achievement.

## Recognized Practice 7 – High-Impact Leadership Practices

Engage in learning activities designed to help leaders understand how to effectively implement high-impact instructional leadership practices.

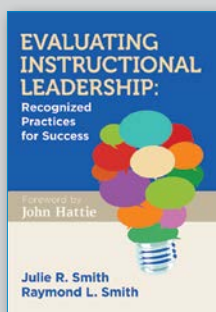
## Recognized Practice 8 – Developing an Instructional Leadership Evaluation Framework

Adapt your current principal evaluation model to incorporate the practices defined in the Evaluating Instructional Leadership Framework

## Invite the Smiths to your district:

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### Also by Julie & Ray Smith...



### Evaluating Instructional Leadership

Recognized Practices for Success

Julie R. Smith, Raymond L. Smith

This book offers a straightforward, comprehensive blueprint for a leadership evaluation system that consistently rewards excellence and remedies deficits in the principal's office.

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