SEPTEMBER 15 2026

TLS EXECUTIVE REPORT

A REPORT FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

WHAT WE STAND ON:

Welcome to a new year at TLS! Whether you have been with us since day 1, or you are just joining us this year, we are so happy to have you as part of our community. In this report, I will highlight some of the amazing things that make TLS a unique choice for families in North County, some of our accomplishments, some areas we are still growing in, and where our organization is headed in the next few years.

As the first and only charter school in St. Louis County, TLS is paving the path for what educational choice and opportunity can look like for families in the Normandy area. We stand on two key pillars:



1. TLS empowers students with the skills, mindset and experiences to build lives of choice and opportunity.

2. TLS hires, develops and retains the best educators in the St. Louis area.



THE TLS TURNAROUND

We often say that TLS is a turn-around AND start-up school, both of which are tricky to do effectively. In 2024 after being open for only 2 years funders, authorizers and supporters were faced with a difficult decision of whether to keep the doors of the first charter school in St. Louis County open. At that time, TLS was struggling in just about every area for. TLS faced tremendous challenges in student enrollment, financial sustainability, staffing, academic results, and facility planning. The weight of closing the first charter school outside of city limits inspired the schools' board, their sponsor and their funders to seek new leadership. In the Fall of 2024, the current leadership team stepped in and brought a flock of phenomenal teachers from the St. Louis area with them. Throughout the last three years we have grown from approximately 140 students to almost 400 students, we have expanded our staff to include many additional all-star teachers and leaders, and we are on the way to getting our students caught up in academics. In this report, I will discuss how far we have come from 2024 to 2026 and where we are headed over the next few years.

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WATCH US GROW!

ANNUAL GROWTH DATA - IREADY

On the iReady benchmark assessments that we use to measure student growth 3 times throughout the year, TLS has increased the percent of students who are reading on grade level from 30% in the Spring 2023 to 45%, in the Spring of 2026. (Figure 1) We have also increased the percent of students doing math on grade level from 14% in the Spring of 2024 to 31% in the Spring of 2026. (Figure 2)

The iReady benchmark assessment also measures how much annual growth each student makes from the Fall to the Spring. Making 100% annual growth indicates that a student has grown 1 year in their reading or math ability. Making 150% annual growth indicates that a student has made 1.5 years growth over the school year. Because we have so many students who are below grade level, we have a goal of making 150% annual growth each school year. When we started at TLS, students made an average of 65% and 59% annual growth in reading. Over the past two years their annual growth has increased to 102% and 90%. (Fingure 3) In math students were making only 42% and 52% annual growth before the turnaround, and increased that to 94% in 2026. (Figure 4). We are getting closer to our goal of 150%, but still have quite a ways to go.

While this growth is impressive, we still have a long way to go. In the next five years, we will exceed the state average in ELA and Math proficiency and will ensure that our students leave us in 8th grade ready for a rigorous high school and college experience. We are not only paving the way for our students at TLS, but also for all of the students and families in North County. Our success will open the doors for other charters to open in or expand to the North County area and provide all families with choice when it comes to where they choose to send their students to school.



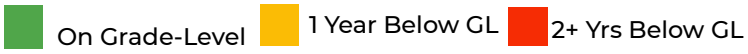


Figure 1

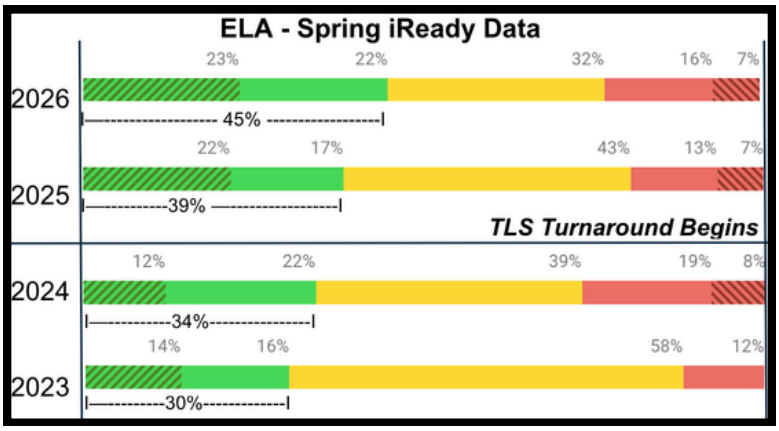


Figure 2

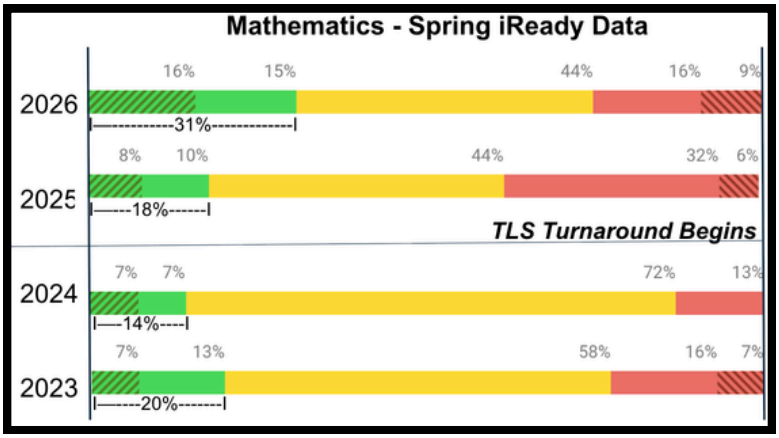


Figure 3

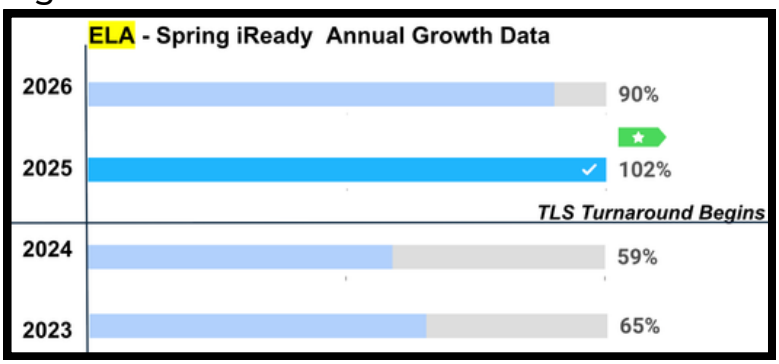
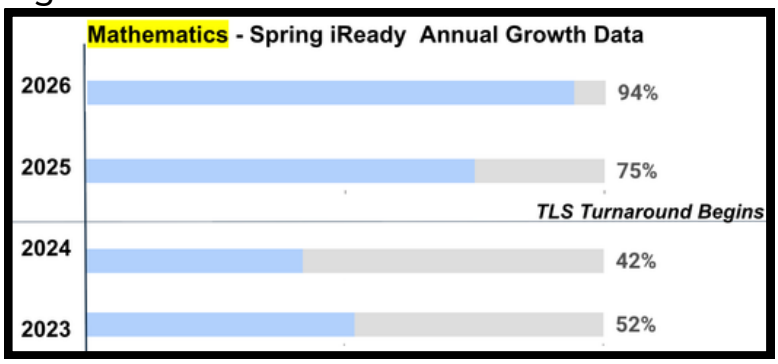


Figure 4



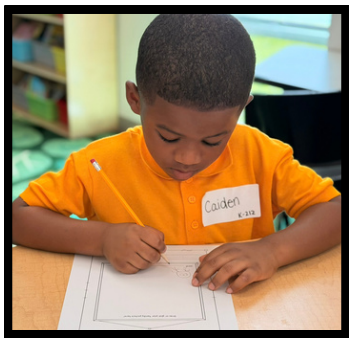
WATCH US GROW!
MAP GROWTH DATA - BEATING THE ODDS

BEATING THE ODDS: 5th EDITION
A Review of Student Growth in Schools that Serve Low-Income Communities, 2024-25

#6 IN READING GROWTH
#27 IN MATH GROWTH

In January of 2026, the Prime Center with St. Louis University released a study that measured student growth year over year in schools that serve primarily low-income communities. (251 schools across the state of Missouri) Growth measures provide a more equitable lens for evaluating school effectiveness because they account for where students start. Schools that helps students make substantial progress—regardless of whether students began at, above, or below grade level—demonstrate effective instruction. The "best" schools are usually thought to be those with the highest scores or proficiency rates on standardized tests. But that's not necessarily the most effective way to evaluate school performance.

In the Prime Center's report they name 30 schools from low-income communities that made the most growth in reading and in math. In our first year of turnaround, TLS made the 6th most growth in reading, and the 27th most growth in math. We are one of only 10 schools in the state that scored in the top 30 in reading and in math.

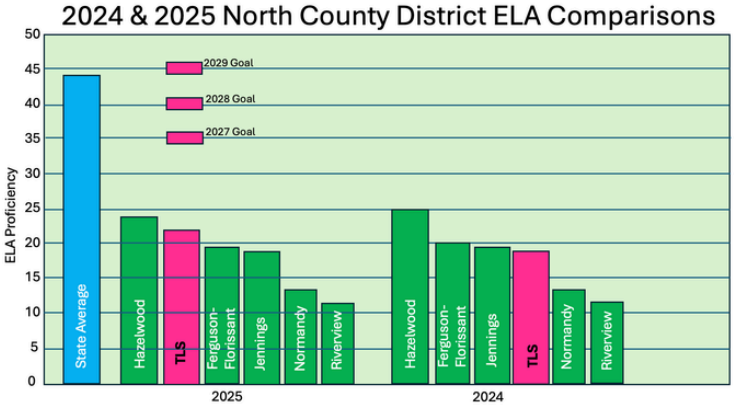


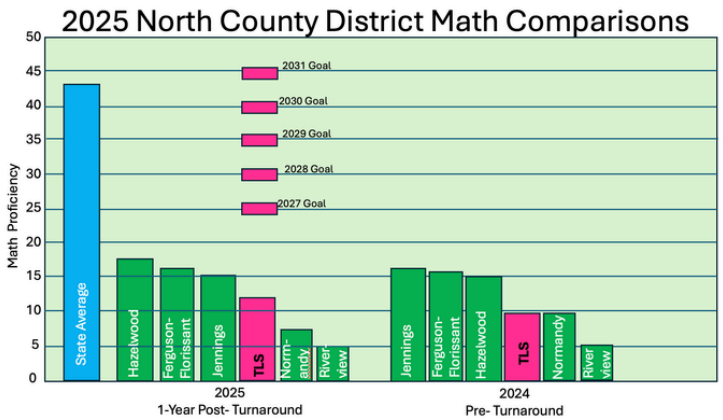




MEETING THE MARK
ON OUR WAY TO BEAT THE STATE!

While growth is important and needed to reach our end goal, we will not be satisfied until our students are performing at the same or better proficiency rates than the state of Missouri. The graphs below show how TLS compares to other districts in North County, and what our proficiency goals are for the next 5 years. This year we have set of goal of achieving 35% proficiency in ELA, and 25% proficiency in math. Each year after that, our goal will increase by 5%, which will put us above the state's proficiency rate within the next 5 years.





Vahle, C., Comp, A,. and Hitt, C. (2026) Beating the odds: 5th Edition. Policy Research in Missouri Education, 8(3). Saint Louis University. www.primecenter.org/growth reports-database/bto-5

OUR SPECIAL SAUCE

FINDING AND POLISHING THE DIAMONDS

At TLS, we truly believe that the most important factor in the quality of a students' education is the quality of the teachers in front of them. One of the most important elements that has led to the successful turnaround of TLS is the quality of our teachers. We take so much pride in finding the best people out there, pouring into their growth and keeping them at The Leadership School. During our first year in turnaround, 100% of our staff that was asked to return the next year did so. From the second year to this year of turnaround, over 90% of the staff that was asked to return are back with us. In a time when there is a national crisis in education, and a massive teacher shortage, this is a huge accomplishment.

We take an innovative approach to designing our teachers' days. We over hire our teaching staff by adding several additional teachers, which allows us to provide our ELA and Math teachers with 2.5 hours of planning, coaching, or professional development each day. This compares to the typical school's 1 hour of planning time. We also departmentalized all of our grade levels so that teachers could become true content experts and do the deep planning that is required to teach excellent lessons. To aid in our teachers' development, we partner with Teach St. Louis, a program in which 11 members of our staff are receiving/have completed additional coaching and take evening/summer classes at Wash-U to earn their master's degrees in two years. This has led to phenomenal growth in our teachers and the learning that is taking place in the classrooms.

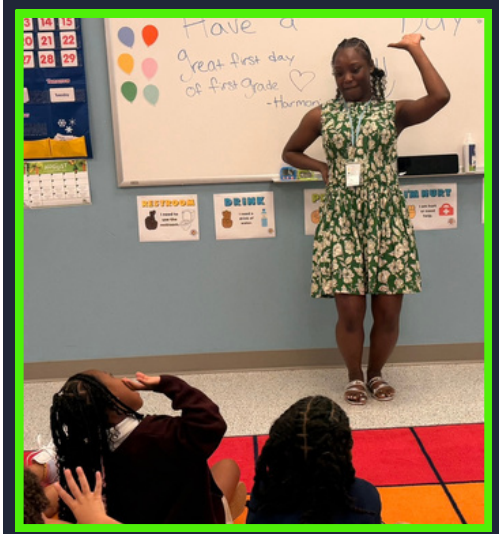












WHAT WE ARE LEARNING

CURRICULUM & INSTRUCTION UPDATES

Part of building a high-quality school is designing exceptional instructional systems and high-quality curricular resources to ensure optimal learning is taking place in each and every one of our classrooms.

In 2025, we transitioned our **math** program to Eureka Math. As you can see from the data provided on page 2, this led to a 13% increase in our students' math proficiency in just one year. From building conceptual understanding to creating 'aha' moments, Eureka supports both students and teachers. Eureka promotes student-led exploration and reinforce procedural fluency to support students and teachers. Eureka Math² makes knowledge stick so students grasp the 'how' and the 'why' behind the numbers.

This year, we have begun the process of shifting our **reading/ELA** curriculum to Red Thread in 3rd - 6th grade. With this curriculum students see themselves as part of the stories they read and the problems they solve. Culturally diverse literature and project-based learning engage students in skill building faster than ever before, while RedThread coaching redefines leader and teacher support through immersive and hands-on techniques that rapidly build capacity.

For the first time ever, all of our 3rd - 6th graders are receiving **science** in a designated science class. Our KG - 2nd graders are exposed to science concepts in their ELA curriculum.

We have adopted the Amplify s science curriculum that blends hands-on investigations, literacy-rich activities, and interactive digital tools to empower students to think, read, write, and argue like real scientists and engineers. In each Amplify Science unit, students inhabit the role of a scientist or engineer to investigate a real-world problem.

In **Social Studies**, our students investigate challenging questions, build knowledge from complex texts and sources, and reach conclusions they can apply beyond the classroom. Teachers guide the process, providing explicit instruction, creating opportunities for application and transfer, and moving students toward independence. TheseInquirED Social Studies units culminate when students take informed action. The inquiry process engages students' drive to discover. The inquiry process is at the root of all deeper learning practices, driving students to question, explore, and create. question, and their ability to create solutions that transform the world around them.











MINDING THE GAP

CONTINUOUS INSTRUCTIONAL IMPROVEMENT

Having a growth mindset is must when it comes to working at The Leadership School. We believe that there are always improvements that can be made to our instruction, our culture and our operations. Some instructional changes we have made this year include adding an additional 30 minutes to each students' ELA and Math classes. These 30 minutes are intended to address the foundational skills needed to be successful in that content area. While many of our students are behind grade level in math and/or reading, the most effective way to catch them up is to ensure they are exposed to grade-level content every day. The additional 30 minutes allows teachers to fill knowledge gaps that the students may have from unfinished learning in prior grades. We are also partnering with Ignite Reading to provide 90 of our students with targeted 1:1 early literacy intervention with a certified literacy instructor.

TRAILBLAZER

LIONS DON'T FOLLOW PATHS; THEY CREATE THEM

SPREADING THE WORD

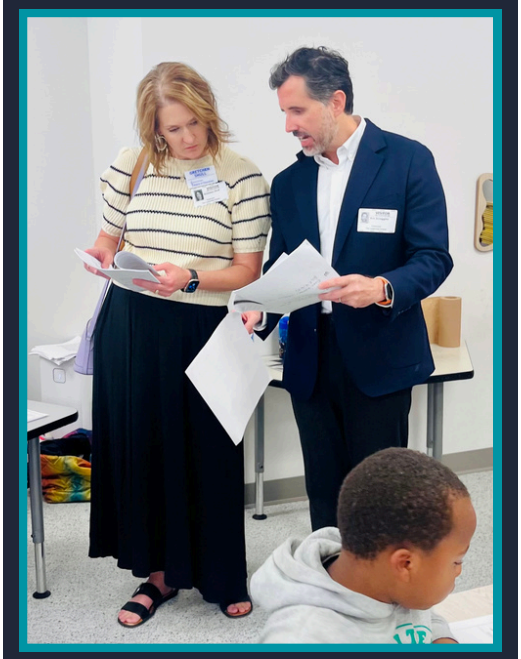
EXPANDING OUR IMPACT

Last Spring, we had the honor of hosting several different groups of influential members of the community into our classrooms showcase the amazing things our students are doing. We hosted tours with members of the Missouri State Board of Education, the president of the NAACP St. Louis chapter, and several state representatives or candidates. The message was the same from each of these guests- Look at what is possible for the students in Normandy. Our students are capable of accomplishing big things, and our teachers are showcasing that each and every day in their classroom. Our aim is to spread that message to the rest of the St. Louis area. The families of North County deserve choice and opportunity when it comes to school options for their children. The Leadership School is trailblazing a path to make that a reality.









THE TLS VIBE

A CULTURE OF LEARNING AND LEADING

Student leadership is at the heart of learning at TLS. Our tagline is “Empowering Little Learners to Become Little Leaders”, so we take it pretty serious. We believe that the most important things we can equip our students with is the skills, mindset and experiences to live lives of choice and opportunity. One of our four core values is ‘Empowerment’. To be successful, our students must leave 8th grade prepared for a rigorous high school and college journey. We believe that the first step to getting there is empowering our students with the belief that they can and will achieve whatever they put their mind to. We aim for TLS students to see themselves as change agents within the school, their communities, and the world.

This year we are piloting and building what our student leadership program will look like for our students. Once fully developed, all TLS students will participate in a SEL/Wellness class that focuses on building their leadership capacity. Students will also maintain a student leadership portfolio that exhibits their growth in academics as well as leadership.

Our academic and instructional model are also designed to build students’ leadership capacity. Our instructional model puts students at the center and is designed to keep students engaged and give students voice and choice. TLS students are at the center of their own knowledge-building process. They construct understanding of new concepts by making connections to prior knowledge, exploring, experimenting, and making and testing conjectures. The constructivist learning experiences students have at TLS develops the skills needed to be leaders in the 21st century. Teaching students to advocate for themselves and for others is also a key part of The Leadership School’s instructional and cultural model. Students’ voices, feelings, and opinions matter, and they are given the space to express themselves and to feel seen and to be heard.

EMPOWERING LITTLE LEARNERS TO BECOME LITTLE LEADERS











BUILDING OUR FUTURE

FACILITY & EXPANSION UPDATES

You may have noticed things look a bit different at TLS this year. This summer we were hard at work converting our newly purchased warehouse into a school building that now house our 5th and 6th graders. When we say we are 'building' a school, we mean it!

When our team walked into The Leadership School in 2024, one of the most glaring problems was a lack of space to educate our students. The building we did have was too small, and was not optimal for student learning. In the past 3 school years, we have added 2 additional school buildings, and renovated the original school building to create a more ideal learning environment. By this January, we will have grown our space from 8 classrooms and 3 offices in 2024 to 25 classrooms, 2 cafeterias, a gym and several collaborative work spaces. By Fall of 2027 we will have added several outdoor play spaces and a playground. By 2028, we will have added an additional 10 classrooms to put us at 35 classrooms housing our Pre-K - 8th graders. A lot of work from securing funding to designing the layout to obtaining permits and clearance from the city went into making this dream a reality. We love our new space, and cannot wait until we are able to open the rest of the building as it is completed.

The evolution of our physical space represents the potential and possibilities we have in front of us as the first charter school in St. Louis County. Our students deserve all of the bells and whistles of fancy school building, and we are doing everything possible to make that a reality. We appreciate your patience as this work takes time. As our project advances, we will have additional parking and driving space to make dismissal run faster and more efficiently.













THE NUTS AND BOLTS

FINANCE AND OPERATIONS

Every 5 years charter schools in Missouri must apply to renew their charter agreement with the state and their authorizer. This being our 5th year of operation means that we are in the process of rewriting our charter, and applying for renewal. Finances and operations are a big part of the state's decision on whether or not to renew the charter.

When we stepped into lead the school in July of 2024, the school had a 4.5% fund balance, 18 days of cash on hand, and many bills that had gone unpaid because the school did not have the cashflow to pay them. By securing federal CSP grant funding, exceeding our budgeted enrollment goal by 12%, and maintaining a conservative budget, we were able to increase our fund balance to a healthy 15%, and 58 days of cash on hand by the end of that first fiscal year of turnaround. Last year, we continued the upward momentum by exceeding our enrollment goals and carrying a waitlist in 4 of 6 of our grade-levels. We ended the year with a 20% fund balance and 71 days of cash on hand. For the 2026 - 2027 school year, we have drastically increased enrollment by adding 6th grade and expanding our Kindergarten and 1st grade to 3 cohorts rather than 2. This expansion has increased our student enrollment by close to 100 students, which allows for additional funding for the school.

Not only is our student's attendance important for their learning, but it also contributes to the amount of funding the school gets from the state. Our goal is to have and maintain an attendance rate of 90% or above this year. Last school year, we hit 89.1%, so we know that we can make the jump to 90%.

An additional important component in keeping our doors open is ensuring that we submit over 200 reports to the state and our authorizer. Last school year we met our goal of submitting 95% of the reports on-time and error free. This year we are aiming for 100%.









