

# SUCCESS STORY

## Pinellas County School District



### Pinellas County School District (PCS)

**LOCATION:** Pinellas County, FL

**NUMBER OF SCHOOLS WITH**

**FLEX + PRO:** 120 schools

**NUMBER OF STUDENTS IN THE**

**DISTRICT:** 98,000

**GRADES PARTICIPATING:**

K-12th grade

#### ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

The PCS student population is

- 53% White
- 19% Black
- 18.3% Hispanic/Latino.
- PCS's 91.5% graduation rate ranks top among Florida's largest school districts.
- PCS has nearly 80 magnet programs. PCS has received awards and national recognition from entities like The Brookings Institute, Ford Next Generation Learning, The NAMM Foundation, Magnet Schools of America, etc.
- PCS is the 26th largest school district in the United States.

**Faced With An Influx of New Art Teachers, Pinellas Leans on PRO + FLEX to Support Onboarding and Provide Timesaving PD and Resources for the Entire Visual Arts Team.**

Pinellas County School District Visual Arts Specialist Jonathan Ogle and Visual Arts Coordinator Julie Levesque support 160 art teachers and their programs across one of Florida's largest and best-performing school districts. Jonathan and Julie needed:

- Professional development resources that were flexible and didn't rely on scheduled in-person training sessions.
- Onboarding support for a wave of new art teachers, including those who were former artists without teaching experience and those who had new education degrees but little experience in art classrooms.

They decided to try The Art of Education University, starting with PRO Learning in 2020 and FLEX Curriculum the following year. New art teachers find FLEX and PRO accessible and easy to implement; the quality and flexibility of the content give them a boost of confidence in the classroom. More seasoned art teachers are discovering FLEX and PRO can save them time and still be highly engaging. Across the board, the overall quality and design of The Art of Education University materials are making an impression and helping teachers connect with students!

#### CHALLENGES

As art teachers retired or left teaching during the pandemic, new art teachers were coming in with varying degrees of experience with art or instruction time in the classroom:

- New teachers with art education degrees but little or no time in the classroom.
- Trained artists with little or no experience as teachers.
- Experienced teachers with limited experience teaching art.

These instructors needed help with skills like classroom management, curriculum planning, and building a rapport with students.



JONATHAN OGLE



JULIE LEVESQUE



**The great thing about PRO videos is that they're very visually engaging. They have music that keeps you upbeat and pulls you in, plus relevant content. You just tie that into whatever lesson you're doing, and it's just the perfect amount of time."**

- JULIE LEVESQUE

## SOLUTION

PRO is especially helpful for new art teachers in the district. “We get many of our new teachers that have an art education degree. The rest are artists transitioning to teaching or seasoned teachers with a limited art background. Many lack teaching experience and others who have taught aren’t seasoned at teaching visual arts. They don’t know what they don’t know. And so we can put FLEX and PRO in front of them and say, ‘Here is a great tool.’ Some of the most helpful PRO Packs that I send out are *Managing the Elementary Art Room*, *Art Room Hacks*, *Material Management*, *Helping the Reluctant Learner*... Those things that people who have never taught before struggle with.” - Julie Levesque, K-12 Visual Arts Coordinator, PCS.

When the pandemic hit, Julie and Jonathan recouped extra funding due to unused field trip and conference funds. They decided to invest it in FLEX. “The big difference with the FLEX Curriculum is the quality of the lessons. Here in PCS, it’s very studio based. It’s all about projects and hands-on learning. It’s doing, creating, making—it’s a very artistic mindset type of learning. These FLEX lessons really lend themselves to what we’re trying to do, and we feel that it really helps our new art teachers.”

## RESULT

FLEX and PRO have been essential for PCS to onboard new teachers. The biggest difference since implementing FLEX Curriculum is the quality of the lessons. “FLEX helps those new art teachers who are transitioning to teaching to implement curriculum into practice.” New teachers are finding a lot of benefits in the resources and handouts. “It’s not just the lessons themselves, but also the resources tied to them. I was meeting with a relatively new third-year teacher, and she was really raving about the handouts and the resources that she can share with their students. This is so helpful to her as a teacher—she doesn’t have to start from square one and develop her own. She’s got these.”

### JONATHAN AND JULIE’S TIPS AND TRICKS:

- **Plan an exciting unveiling of FLEX and PRO.** Make it a big deal and incentivize teachers to participate (BONUS TIP: You can reach out to the AOEU team for assistance). Repeat a version of this each year to kick off planning and refresh teachers on the FLEX and PRO resources. Also, be strategic with the timing of the kickoff; Jonathan and Julie are moving theirs to the summer so teachers have more time to really explore the materials and plan for the year ahead before the school year hits.
- **Set up a system to truly embed FLEX and PRO into your teachers’ training.** Walk educators through the product and highlight FLEX Collections and PRO Packs that address their current needs.
- **Send out weekly, curated emails reminding teachers about FLEX resources and/or highlighting a PRO Pack that resonates.** Teachers are very busy, so it often takes repeat messaging to get teachers exploring and adopting these time-saving resources. It’s also important to cull the resources. “Instead of giving teachers the whole grocery store, help them go down one aisle and see what they need,” says Julie.