

# Innovation in Action: Palm Beach County's Journey to a Results-Driven Special Education System



## Case Study

### The Client

School District of Palm Beach County

### The Project

The Special Education Results-Driven Transformation Model

The School District of Palm Beach County (SDPBC), located in West Palm Beach, Florida, is one of the largest and most diverse school districts in the United States, serving over 183,000 students<sup>i</sup> with a range of linguistic, cultural, and socioeconomic backgrounds, including over 32,000 students with disabilities.<sup>ii</sup>

This complexity requires robust systems that not only meet compliance standards but also drive meaningful student outcomes. Before 2020, the district relied on a form-based IEP development process that prioritized procedural completion over individualized, student-focused planning.

## The Need

The challenge became increasingly apparent as state-required corrective actions, due process cases, and parental complaints accumulated. Procedural compliance issues impacted instructional quality and, in turn, student outcomes. Graduation rates for students with disabilities lagged behind those of their non-disabled peers and state targets, drop-out rates remained high, and growth in reading and math was limited. The urgency to address both compliance and achievement while centering the student in the educational planning process became a driving force for change.

## The Solution

The Special Education Results-Driven Transformation Model includes four phases: (1) the paperwork phase, (2) the efficiency phase, (3) the compliance phase, and (4) the effectiveness phase, aligning compliance with improved student outcomes. A focus on ongoing continuous refinement and improvement throughout each phase of the model ensures district special education systems adapt over time, embedding sustainability into daily operations so results are lasting, not temporary.

The model emerged from a need to align compliance requirements with meaningful, student-centered practices, ensuring that each aspect of the special education process supports student achievement and post-school success. It recognizes that sustained improvements are only possible when compliance, instructional quality, and organizational culture are well-aligned. For SDPBC, this aspect of the model has meant embedding continuous improvement into daily operations, ensuring that results are not a one-time achievement but a lasting reality for students served by the district's special education program.

## The Outcome

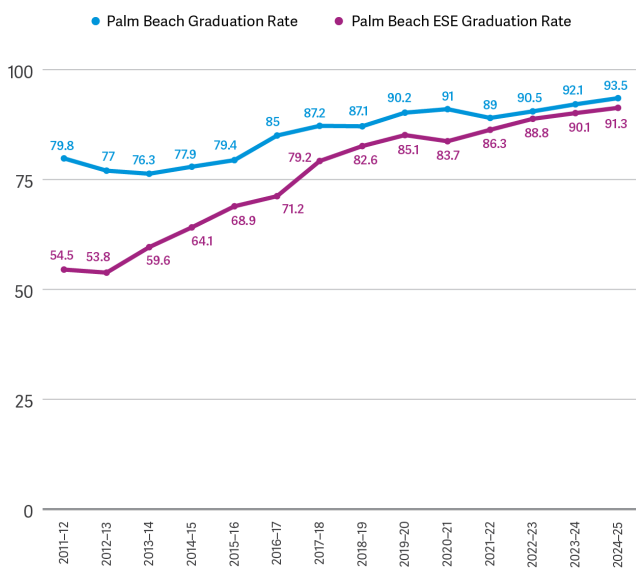
EDPlan replaced the outdated form-based IEP development process with a student-centered, compliance-embedded platform aligned to the transformation model. The district has experienced fewer state complaints, due process filings, and a strong shift toward post-school outcomes—raising graduation rates, lowering drop-out rates, and showing improved academic results.

SDPBC implemented EDPlan as both a technological and strategic solution, fully aligned with the Results-Driven Transformation Model's focus on centering the student

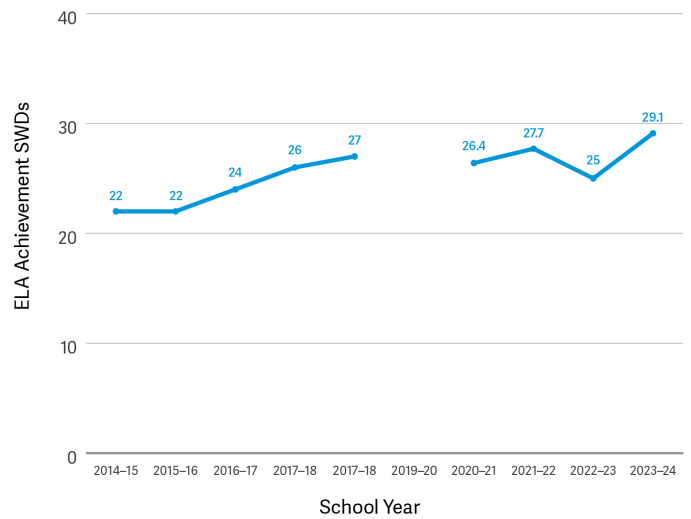
in the IEP process through the integration of "Path to my Future," a process that brought student voice directly into the IEP process. This digital platform replaced the outdated form-based system, creating a dynamic environment for collaborative, individualized, and data-driven IEP development. By embedding compliance requirements seamlessly into the process, including the requirement for all students age 14 and older to complete the "Path to my Future" interview, EDPlan reduced procedural errors without detracting from instructional planning.

These changes produced clear results for the district. EDPlan supported more student-focused planning and stronger post-school outcomes. Its embedded tools helped teams set stronger, more measurable goals, efficiently monitor student progress, and align services to individual needs. As a result, graduation rates for students with disabilities increased, and dropout rates fell, with the district nearly closing the gap in graduation rates between students with disabilities and students without disabilities. Additionally, students with disabilities continue to show academic growth in literacy and math year over year as educators are able to focus on providing high-quality instruction. SDPBC looks to the future, EDPlan remains central to its strategy, serving not just as a compliance safeguard but as a catalyst for innovative practices that ensure each student with a disability graduates prepared for postsecondary success.

Palm Beach Graduation Rate and Palm Beach ESE Graduation Rate



ELA Achievement SWDs



i <https://resources.finalsite.net/images/v1739366674/palmbeachschoolsorg/kpzgnlymldfuxxhewmwn/FebEnrollmentSummaryandReportSY24-25.pdf>

ii <https://www.fldoe.org/accountability/data-sys/edu-info-accountability-services/pk-12-public-school-data-pubs-reports/students.stml>

**To learn more about EDPlan, contact us today!**

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