



About Special Education District of Lake County, Gages Lake School

Located north of Chicago in Gages Lake, Illinois, the Special Education District of Lake County (SEDOL) is a cooperative educational system that supports 31 local school districts. SEDOL serves students of these districts who may be facing physical, emotional, and other learning challenges. Their mission is to provide "Exceptional Services for Exceptional Students by Exceptional Staff."

Within SEDOL, is Gages Lake School. Gages Lake School is a public therapeutic day school that supports K-12 students with emotional and intellectual disabilities, who need extra support than what their public schools can provide.

Looking for Solutions

Prior to Ukeru, Gages Lake School was seeing high rates of restraints, leading to staff and student injuries. SEDOL as a whole sought an alternative to restraint that would increase staff and student safety. Ukeru was appealing to them as a partner because of its heavy emphasis on trauma-informed care and the way they break the material down for staff to easily understand.



Ukeru is a mindset- it helped us turn our beliefs into science. We talk about the brain and use strategies to calm and regulate to provide safe environments for all. It's not about the mats for us, in fact, we rarely pick them up. It's about remembering that the dysregulation is not a choice and we have an opportunity to co-regulate with students and be trusting adults and be a part of their journey.

Meagan Dwyer
Principal of Gages Lake School



As one of the Ukeru trainers at our school, I constantly hear staff members mention that they feel safer and place the child's needs first. Ukeru teaches our staff to understand and treat the underlying trauma. Our students are learning strategies for self-regulation. Ukeru has created an effective and safe initiative when dealing with dysregulated children.

Daniel Russert
*SEDOL Teacher, Ranger and District Ukeru Trainer
Gages Lake School*

Working with Ukeru

SEDOL began working with Ukeru in March of 2023. Shortly after a group became trainers, they quickly implemented Ukeru over the course of 3 months. Buy-in was fairly easy for them because their cooperative was already working toward implementing trauma-informed practices. Additionally, they were strategic with how they implemented Ukeru. They informed their staff that Ukeru would be another tool in their toolbox that they can use in tandem with their existing tools. The addition of Ukeru has been a gamechanger for their organization and has expedited their results.

79%

Restraint
reduction



Increased
understanding of
trauma



Increased staff
and student
safety

Results

The results have been tremendous within a short period of time for Gages Lake School. In their first year of using Ukeru, they have drastically reduced the use of restraint by 79%. Simultaneously, they have increased safety for both staff and students. Staff feel more equipped to manage crisis situations and have shifted their mindset and approach to one that is calm and comforting toward dysregulated students.

“Statistics show an 80% restraint reduction in the first-year rollout of Ukeru at Gages Lake School. However, statistics only tell part of the story. Ukeru helps staff understand trauma and approach challenging situations calmly,” Daniel Russert, SEDOL Teacher, Ranger and District Ukeru Trainer of Gages Lake School proudly shared. Russert continued by sharing that staff feel safer and because staff feel safe they are able to help and do great things for their students.



Ukeru changed the culture of our building. As a school that works in special education, there are situations that we are put in where we have to sometimes go hands-on. When we were introduced to Ukeru, this drastically changed. We were able to keep students and staff safe while minimizing needing to go hands-on. At the end of the day, this not only increased relationships between students and staff, but decreased trauma. I would highly recommend this to any setting, including schools and hospitals.

Justin Baker, LSW
School Social Worker