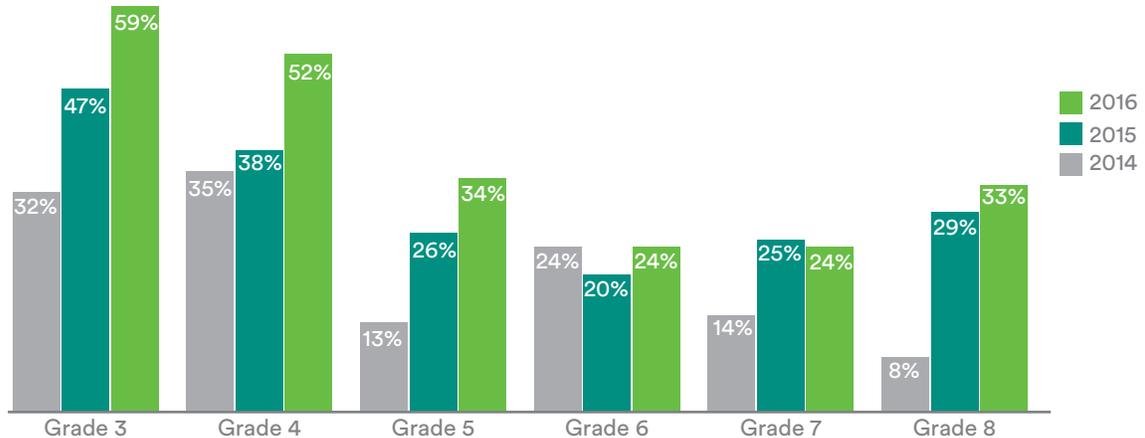


Vermilion Parish (LA) Continues to Make Strong Progress

Vermilion Parish Schools (LA) first adopted Eureka Math in the 2013-14 school year and the district continues to make impressive progress. The district enrolls around 9,500 students in 20 schools. All of the K-4 grades adopted Eureka Math in that first year. In grades 5-8, the district has added a grade per year, with 8th grade fully implementing this school year.

Percentage of Vermilion Students Scoring Mastery or Above on State Tests, 2014–2016



SOURCE: LOUISIANA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

We talked to several senior leaders about their progress: Jerome Puyau (Superintendent), Ellen Arceneaux (Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum), Jeannie Cormier (middle school supervisor), Torrie Guzzetta (Math Curriculum Facilitator), Ann Hardy (Supervisor of Elementary Instruction), and Teresa Hardy (all purpose support).

WHAT'S NEW THIS YEAR?

Ann: Teachers are refining their craft. They're more analytical about what they can do in structuring their lessons, which allows them to add a personal twist and more engagement strategies. And because of this, students are benefiting.

Jerome: We're also working closely with school leaders (principals, peer teachers, lead teachers) to understand what great teaching looks like.

Ann: During walk-throughs, leaders observe the classroom while lead instructors explain what is happening.

Jerome: One of the reasons we've been so successful is that we phased in the curriculum one grade at a time in grades 5–8. That allowed students and teachers to be successful, and for us to work with parents and the community.

“Teachers are refining their craft. They're more analytical about what they can do in structuring their lessons, which allows them to add a personal twist and more engagement strategies.”

— Ann Hardy, Supervisor of Elementary Instruction

HOW ARE PARENTS RESPONDING THIS YEAR?

Teresa: In the first year, parents were really struggling. To help them, we worked with Lafayette to develop a parent newsletter for each topic. The newsletters include samples showing how to complete problems in the books that went home with the students. Additionally, videos are on the website for parents to access. As a result, there's been much less pushback since the first year. All of these resources are available on the web site at

Ann: The biggest thing is that our students have been successful. Parents are learning from the students, so we're not really hearing any concerns now.

HOW IS THE 8TH GRADE PHASE-IN GOING THIS YEAR?

Jeannie: It really helps that students have had four years of *Eureka Math* because they now know the terminology and the strategies. Our challenge is that the teachers need the training as they have just started to talk the language. We've been providing a lot of professional development, both during the summer and throughout the school year. Teachers and coaches from neighboring Lafayette Parish are also helping us.

Jerome: In the first year we experienced a lot of pushback from our 6th grade teachers, but now we're hearing that they're more comfortable and excited, and they're seeing the results. In some schools, they're actually leading the discussions with the 8th grade teachers.

WHAT KIND OF SUPPORT ARE OTHER TEACHERS GETTING?

Ann: We have district-wide professional development that elementary principals find very useful.

Torrie: The pacing guides and lesson planners are online which have allowed teachers to learn how to use data in effectively identifying student needs. We use the *Eureka Math* exit tickets, have benchmark tests for modules, and have developed our own topic tests that we're refining this year

DO YOU HAVE ANY PARTICULAR CHALLENGES?

Torrie: The biggest issue is finding ways to provide PD to all new personnel. [Vermilion now averages under 30 new teachers a year after a huge one-time bump to 150 in 2013 when the Common Core standards were introduced.] During the summer we can get everyone ready for Module 1, but how do we prepare them for the rest of the modules? One school has added a weekly math meeting where experienced teachers share their advice. It would be great if all schools were doing that.

“One of the reasons we've been so successful is that we phased in the curriculum one grade at a time in grades 5–8. That allowed students and teachers to be successful, and for us to work with parents and the community.”

— Jerome Puyau, Superintendent

WHAT ADVICE DO YOU HAVE FOR OTHER DISTRICTS?

Ellen: It takes time. PD must be ongoing and requires effective communication between teachers and district staff so that issues such as pacing are addressed.

Jerome: Make sure everyone understands the student data and how to use it. Leaders need to hold the line and expect classrooms to implement with rigor.

Torrie: Collaboration with other districts is key. Four years ago, my best friend (Pat Gilbert) was one of the math coaches in Lafayette so we partnered on newsletters and assessments. We share everything.

Jerome: We keep track of our web downloads and our clicker maxed out. We regularly get thank-you's from across the US. I think we've heard from more NY teachers than Louisiana teachers, thanking us for our resources.

“It takes time. PD must be ongoing and requires effective communication between teachers and district staff so that issues such as pacing are addressed.”

— Ellen Arceneaux, Assistant Superintendent of Curriculum