

Tillamook, Oregon: “It’s hard, but it’s the right way to go.”

Tillamook School District (Oregon) has had great success with Eureka Math™. Second-grade teachers began implementing the curriculum in 2014, and since then Eureka Math has been adopted K–12. We discussed implementation with a team of district leaders: Randy Schild (superintendent), Karen Thenell (principal, South Prairie Elementary (2–3)), Rachel Williamson (director of K–6 Curriculum/Title Programs and a parent), and Katie Moore (District Math Coordinator).

HOW DID YOU GET STARTED WITH EUREKA MATH?



Randy Schild

RANDY: About five years ago, we went through an adoption process in the younger grades. We looked at several math curricula, and several teachers liked how *Eureka Math* was so different and so in-depth.



Karen Thenell

KAREN: My second-grade teachers are go-getters, always ready for a new challenge. They dove in a year ahead of others and made a commitment to each other. By the end of the year, they were all very impressed. They kept saying, “Kids have so many more attack strategies.” These teachers are very highly regarded, so when others saw their success, they were a lot more interested in trying *Eureka Math*.

DISTRICT PROFILE

6 schools

2,250 students

Low-income: 65%

Special education: 14%

HOW DID IMPLEMENTATION GO?

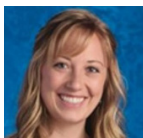
RANDY: Ramping up was hard, as it always is with a new curriculum. Teachers felt buried. The pace and length of *Eureka Math* was built on a longer school year than Oregon offers, but we saw the need to spend more time on math. Once teachers taught the curriculum for a year, almost all of them could see how the lessons all work together. Most are well over the hump now.

KAREN: We informally reached out to other districts in the northwest that had implemented *Eureka Math* already, and they helped us prioritize lessons. There was a lot of trial and error as teachers began to understand the story of *Eureka Math*, how and why things fit in. We used professional learning communities, looked at assessment data, and did a lot of scaffolding. It was like learning a second language.



Rachel Williamson

RACHEL: We had to shift our thinking on professional development to provide consistent and ongoing supports to teams in implementing the curriculum. We leveraged our limited professional development funds to create Katie’s position.



Katie Moore

KATIE: My position as K–6 math coordinator was created in 2016–17, which helped provide additional support to teachers through their collaborative meetings. Through weekly PLCs, we were able to help teachers learn different strategies for students. And Great Minds/*Eureka Math* K–5 Preparation and Customization session at the end of last year. It cleared up common misconceptions such as teachers thinking it was an expectation that they use the curriculum as a script.

WHAT'S DIFFERENT IN YOUR CLASSROOMS AND IN THE DISTRICT?

RANDY: I'm so impressed with how much better kids understand numbers from various perspectives. A second-grade teacher showed me a paper from a student who had traditionally struggled. "Look how he answered this question in three different ways! If I had just taught the algorithm, it would have been a struggle." She was so excited, she skipped down the hall. That's all the proof I need.

KATIE: What sets this apart from other districts is the level of administrative support—creating my position, setting aside time for collaborative meetings, and the awareness that school administrators need to also be instructional leaders.

The impact on student learning has not been fully reflected in test scores yet. This year we're really focused on changing the mindsets of teachers so that they're focused less on the test scores and more on the instruction. If they do that, scores will go up.

RANDY: Change is always birthed out of need. A lot of math was being taught, but not a lot of math was being learned by each student. Every teacher had his or her own idea about how to teach math. We had to set clear expectations and not make decisions based on what will be easiest for teachers or students. The key is that now our math students will be better. Today, almost all teachers say, "It's hard, but it's the right way to go."

A-HA MOMENTS?

KAREN: One teacher was particularly resistant. But after the June PD, she came into my office and told me she felt she finally got it. It made me happy:

RANDY: The final confirmation that we are doing the right thing was when the best math mind in the district, a high school math teacher, came back from a Eureka training session and said, "This is it. This will make a big difference for our kids. We have to jump in."

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— Superintendent Randy Schild

RACHEL: My a-ha moment came as a parent, watching my daughter in first grade. Her base-level number sense provided such a strong foundation for success, evidenced by her ability to mentally manipulate large numbers for various purposes. Being a former 4–6 grade intervention specialist, having seen so many students struggle with basic number sense, the level of understanding that my daughter demonstrated gave me hope and helped me realize that this curriculum really is different, in a good way.

KATIE: Changing students' minds. And adult minds, too. It's very rewarding. Inspiring teachers to reflect on their current practices and building their confidence to try new things.