

# Students Can “Build Knowledge Like Never Before”

David Pittman, Instructional Coach, Willow Creek Elementary School, Illinois



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David Pittman first discovered Eureka Math in 2015 as EngageNY Math. Based on the success he and colleagues have had with their students, his entire school district is implementing Eureka Math in fall 2017. He recently shared his observations.

## HOW DID YOU GET STARTED WITH EUREKA MATH?

In my previous district, I dabbled with lessons from EngageNY. Then I saw that it had migrated to Great Minds. I found the website and it was a lot easier to see the whole grade and the whole curriculum, which was very helpful.

Like many districts in 2014 we needed to meet the new Common Core standards but were unable to find a traditional curriculum that was very aligned. The more I dabbled in EngageNY and Great Minds resources, the more I saw how well thought out the curriculum was and how it built on previous lessons and grade levels. I saw how students could build knowledge like never before.

Although our schools already had a curriculum, the district supports teachers to do what’s right for our students and gives us flexibility on resources. So, in January 2017, I took the plunge, beginning *Eureka Math* in 4th grade with a unit on fractions.

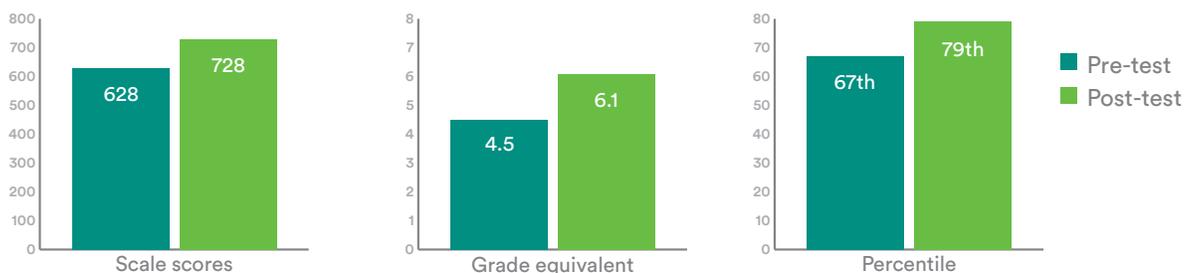
**Woodridge School District 68, IL**  
**DISTRICT PROFILE**  
6 elementary schools  
1 middle school  
3,005 students  
41% low income  
18% English learners

## HOW DID IT GO?

The students took off almost immediately. The class had a wide range of students. Some students with IEPs were doing math at the 1st-grade level and others were testing at the 8th-grade level. After I introduced *Eureka Math*, I saw significant growth among my lower-performing students. They got math that they’d never seen before. They could visualize it. My higher-performing students found multiple ways to solve problems. It was a great year. It really stretched me as a teacher.

Gains on the benchmark STAR test were impressive. From the pre-test in the fall to post-test in the spring, Pittman’s students gained 100 scale score points, improved 1.6 grade levels (doing 4th grade math at the level of 6th graders), and rose 12 percentiles.

Gains on STAR Benchmark Tests



Even for students who didn't make progress on the benchmark tests, I noticed that they had more confidence in math. They saw there isn't just one way to solve problems and that math is not just a bunch of numbers. Through *Eureka Math*, they could see physical representations of math out in the real world.

### WHEN DID OTHERS START USING THE CURRICULUM?

Soon after I started sharing examples of student work, another 4th-grade teacher wanted to use it, too. So we supported each other in our own professional learning community (PLC). Others started to use the curriculum as well. As they encountered success, they really started to speak out. The district listened to the collective whole and adopted *Eureka Math* as our main curricular resource this year.

### HOW ARE YOU AND OTHER TEACHERS PREPARING FOR FULL IMPLEMENTATION THIS FALL?

In the school buildings, instructional coaches are using PLCs to help teachers understand, plan, and customize the lessons to their classrooms.

A few of us went to the Great Minds Institute training this summer. I went to the "Launch *Eureka Math*" and "Focus on Fluency" sessions. I focused on K-2, which really helped me understand *Eureka Math* at the foundational level and made me better appreciate how the curriculum built in Common Core progressions.

The training also made it clear that *Eureka Math* is designed to help teachers build on their own practice. It is not a script to follow. The Teacher's Edition is like a home base created to help teachers find their own way. That eased the minds of teachers who were worried that their role in the classroom might be diminished.

### ANY FINAL THOUGHTS OR ADVICE TO OTHER SCHOOLS AND DISTRICTS CONSIDERING EUREKA?

No resource is perfect, but Eureka has proven to be a reliable, valid resource that will increase not only math proficiency but, more important, a student's confidence in math. Furthermore, if teachers continue to bring their own expertise to Eureka and blend in their knowledge of students, personal pedagogical style, and passion for teaching, their students will succeed.