

Success with *Eureka Math* Ripples through Rural West Virginia School District

James Suroski, 3rd Grade Teacher in Mercer County, West Virginia



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James Suroski decided he wanted to be a teacher when he was in second grade.

“I was a calm, quiet kid. One day, my teacher asked me to sit next to a kid who was a little rambunctious and struggled. Later, she said I had done a great job of helping him, that I was special. Right then, I thought I should be a teacher, and the idea stuck,” he said.

Now in his fifth year of teaching, Suroski is the 2018 Teacher of the Year in Mercer County, West Virginia, for his work as a Grade 3 teacher at Straley Elementary School. Suroski is also an enthusiastic *Eureka Math* advocate, having discovered the EngageNY/*Eureka Math* curriculum online in 2014.

Under *Eureka Math*, Suroski said, his students “blossomed” in three key ways, starting with their math fluency.

“When we started, our third grade students didn’t have to be fluent with facts. After implementing *Eureka Math*, average students just blossomed. It made the rest of the year go swimmingly. Now, fourth and fifth grade teachers are saying that students are coming to them so much more fluent in math, making their instruction much easier.”

Second, Suroski’s students became better problem solvers. Before he introduced *Eureka Math*, Suroski said, his students could only solve basic one- or two-step word problems. Now they can solve much more complex real-world problems.

And finally, student attitudes about math changed.

“My students have so much more confidence. They love the Sprints, which give them a chance to compete against themselves. And skip-counting has almost turned into a game of Simon Says that the students really enjoy,” he said.

Suroski’s enthusiasm and progress in the classroom have convinced other schools in his rural district to try *Eureka Math*.

“I’m very much a salesman. I showed my colleagues how rigor was built in and that the fluency practice was there. That really sold them. Plus, they saw the difference in test scores at our school.”

SCHOOL PROFILE

180 students

100% low income

12% special education

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Eureka Math recently became a state-approved curriculum in West Virginia. But it was not approved back when Suroski first started talking it up in the district, so teachers had to be careful to use *Eureka Math* only as a supplemental text. Nevertheless, usage was widespread in the district.

“In truth, I used it 100 percent of the time, and most other teachers who used it for over two years were using it 99 percent of the time,” Suroski said.

Suroski said he hopes his district formally selects *Eureka Math* as its primary curriculum when the issue goes up for a vote later this year. He’s on the district’s Math Textbook Committee.

“I’ve done so much research. I don’t know how they’ll choose anything other than *Eureka Math*,” he said.

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