

## RIO RANCHO SCHOOL DISTRICT, NEW MEXICO

# Path to Student Mastery Begins with Teacher Mindset Shift

The Rio Rancho School District has experienced a lot of changes since it started using *Eureka Math™* in fall 2014, but the biggest one was a shift in teachers' mindsets. "Math teachers want kids to have the right answer, and they want it to be nailed in 55 minutes," says Karen Delay, elementary math instructional coach. "[But] that's not the way that the standards are meant to be taught, and that's not the best way that kids learn."

District leaders needed to help teachers see that student understanding develops more slowly, from week to week. "Students aren't going to have mastery of one particular concept right when you first teach that lesson. [Mastery] will show up in different ways later on," says Nikki Erdelyi, secondary math instructional coach. She says teachers had to learn to have faith in the curriculum.

The district, north of Albuquerque, was one of the country's earliest *Eureka Math* implementers. Charged with finding a math curriculum aligned to the new college- and career-readiness standards in 2013–2014, elementary teachers first discovered EngageNY Math (the precursor to *Eureka Math*) online. It was love at first sight. "It was really their top contender, almost their only contender," recalls Erdelyi.

The elementary teachers, in turn, convinced their middle- and high-school colleagues to take a look. They, too, were impressed, and in 2014 the district adopted *Eureka Math*, Kindergarten through Algebra

### DISTRICT PROFILE

19 schools

18,000 students

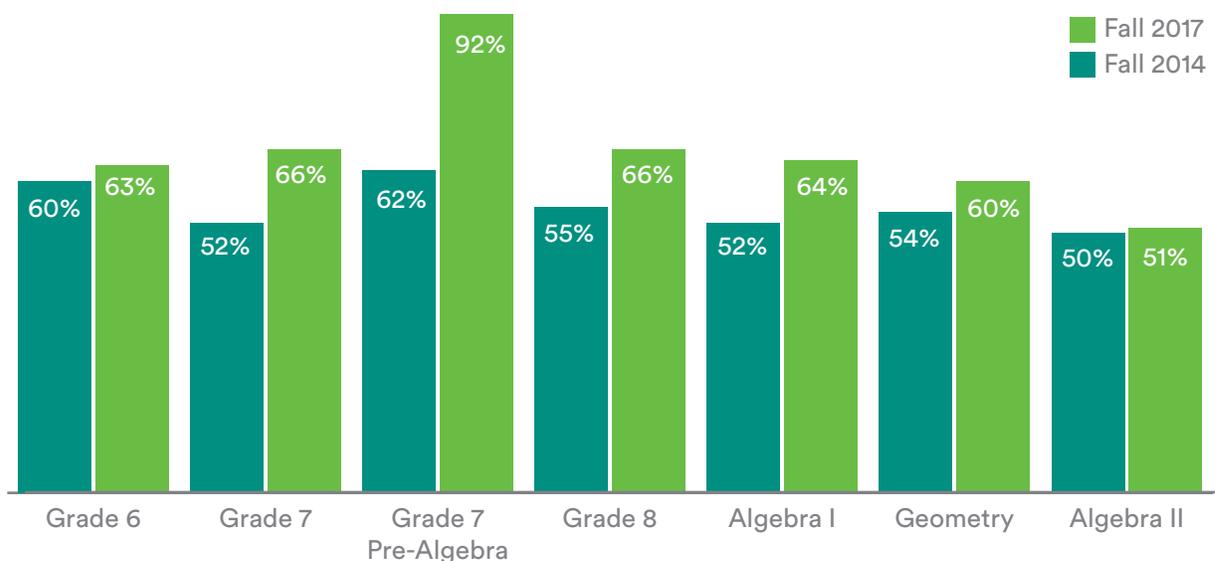
55% Hispanic

34% white

43% low-income

16% special education

RIO RANCHO (NM) PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT  
END-OF-COURSE EXAMS, GRADE-LEVEL AVERAGES (%)  
FALL 2014 TO FALL 2017



II, even as the high school modules were still being written. *“This was the first time in our district’s history [that it adopted] the same publisher across all grade levels,”* Erdelyi adds. That had a huge impact on student learning across the board, she says.

Since the Rio Rancho School District adopted *Eureka Math*, student gains have been impressive, especially in Grade 7, where grade-level average scores increased by 30 percent on end-of-course tests in Pre-Algebra. The number of students in the district who meet or exceed expectations (scores of 4 or 5) on the state’s PARCC exam has increased by about 1,000 students in two years.

### DEEPER CONTENT KNOWLEDGE FOR STUDENTS AND TEACHERS

The results show up in daily classroom work as well as in test score data. Students are engaging in more math-related conversations and demonstrating a deeper level of conceptual understanding. But to achieve those improvements in student knowledge, the district first had to increase teachers’ content knowledge. *“Now, whenever teachers get together to plan, they review the math they need to know to teach upcoming lessons. It’s opened up some really good conversations, with teachers taking a step back and saying, ‘You know what? I don’t know this as deeply as I should.’ It’s opened up some good learning opportunities for us content-wise,”* says Delay. The schools arrange for more formal professional development through a mix of summer workshops and weekly professional learning community meetings.

With *Eureka Math*, teachers are becoming students as well. The Rio Rancho team advises other districts and schools just beginning to use the curriculum to make sure educators take time at the front end to master the material. *“Read the materials. Watch the videos. Understand you have A Story of Units®, A Story of Ratios®, and A Story of Functions®,”* says Erdelyi. *“Trust in the way that Eureka Math has laid out the focus standards. We might not see it for two or three months, but because of all of this other work that we’re going to do, students will achieve mastery,”* adds Delay.