

Staying the Course Pays Dividends for State’s Largest School District

Since adopting *Eureka Math*[®], Tennessee’s largest school district has seen steady gains in student achievement based on the statewide assessment. Shelby County, which covers the metro Memphis area, adopted the curriculum in 18 pilot schools in School Year 2016–17 and then districtwide in SY 2017–2018. Achievement in math has improved at every grade level—notably in Grades 4 and 8, which have seen double-digit gains.

Gains in percentage of students scoring proficient or above on TNReady assessment, SY 2017 – 19



DISTRICT PROFILE

Schools: 204

Students: 108,900

Includes Prekindergarten and public charter schools the district serves

Adopted *Eureka Math* in 18 schools in School Year 2016–2017

Adopted *Eureka Math* for Grades K–Algebra I students in SY 2017–2018

Christine Bingham, math advisor, curriculum and instruction for Shelby County Schools, attributes part of the progress to the district’s commitment to “stay the course” with *Eureka Math*. Indeed, a Stay the Course document is one of the pillars of the district’s approach to professional development. It includes advice for pacing within a lesson and for pacing topics and lessons over the school year.

“If students are struggling, there’s always a temptation to revert to shortcuts such as test prep,” says Bingham. But, she notes, “the research is clear. Any progress with a new curriculum takes three to five years of implementation.”

Bingham believes the middle school scores improved partly because students got a better grasp of the big ideas of math—and got it earlier. “Teachers say students are coming to them better prepared, with better conceptual understanding,” she says.

EXTENSIVE SUPPORT FOR TEACHERS

The math is also easier for the teachers to teach, thanks to a steady diet of professional development. They get:

- Training from Great Minds®, the company that produces the curriculum;
- Access to the Eureka Digital Suite of on-demand instructional videos; and
- Regular coaching and support from the district’s instructional leadership teams (principals, assistant principals, coaches, and a teacher who serves as the content lead in each school).

The leadership teams themselves benefit from a daylong district training session every month.

The district also provides a walk-through tool that its leaders use to observe classroom instruction and several collaborative planning tools that teachers use every week to prepare their lessons and pace their instruction. An instructional planning framework helps teachers maintain the same priorities, such as: “Students engage in the most important content”; “Students build on what they already know”; “Students learn the ‘hows and whys’ of math and apply it to the world around them”; and “Students do the thinking.”

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— Christine Bingham,
math advisor, curriculum
and instruction, Shelby
County Schools

FOCUSING ON STANDARDS AND STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

One of the district’s priorities has been to help teachers thoroughly understand the state’s content standards at each grade level and show teachers how *Eureka Math* aligns with those standards. “For each standard, we really want the teachers to see what students should know and be able to show,” says Bingham.

Another top priority this school year is to encourage more student discussions and engagement. “We see the work and know that student understanding is growing. But we want to hear more conversations about math in classrooms,” Bingham says. “During our walk-throughs, we’re spending much more time seeing the extent to which teachers are letting go and letting their students do more of the heavy lifting” of thinking and helping each other learn.