

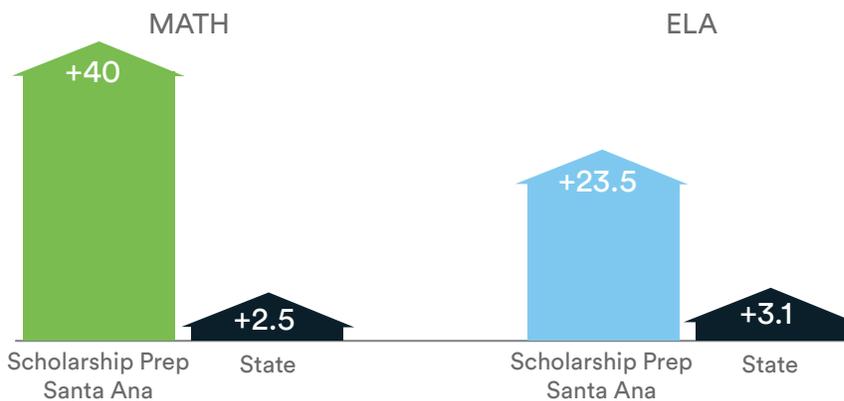
SCHOLARSHIP PREP PUBLIC SCHOOLS, CALIFORNIA

Eureka Math and Wit & Wisdom Help California Charter School Network Continue Strong Gains in Math and ELA

The Scholarship Prep Public Schools network in southern California continues to make strong gains in student achievement in math and English language arts, outpacing the state and neighboring school districts.

The Santa Ana campus posted 40-point gains in math and 24-point gains in ELA in the percentage of students proficient or above on the state’s Smarter Balanced test between School Years 2016–2017 and 2018–2019. Scholarship Prep’s Oceanside campus posted 9- and 4-point gains, respectively, on the test between School Years 2017-2018 and 2018-2019. The average state gains on both tests during the same period were much lower—ranging from 1 point to 3 points.

Percentage point increase in students scoring level 3 or 4 on California Smarter Balanced test, SY 2016-17 to SY 2018-19



Percentage point increase in students scoring level 3 or 4 on California Smarter Balanced test, SY 2017-18 to SY 2018-19



SCHOOLS PROFILE

SANTA ANA

- 438 students
- 86% low-income
- 40% English Learners
- 96% Hispanic/Latino

Adopted *Eureka Math* in School Year 2016-2017

Adopted *Wit & Wisdom* in School Year 2016-2017

OCEANSIDE

- 318 students
- 55% low-income
- 18% English Learners
- 61% Hispanic/Latino

Adopted *Eureka Math* in School Year 2017-2018

Adopted *Wit & Wisdom* in School Year 2016-2017

TOTAL

- 756 students
- 73% low-income
- 30% English Learners
- 81% Hispanic/Latino

Note: this article updates a previous article from March 2019.

On the 2017–2018 test, of all the schools in the state, Scholarship Prep–Santa Ana boasted the highest year-to-year percentage growth in students’ meeting or exceeding the Common Core State Standards on the statewide math assessment. On the ELA test, the school ranked 45th of 10,634 schools—or in the top 1 percent—on the same metric, based on the school’s analysis of statewide data from the nonprofit EdSource.

What’s behind this growth? School leaders partially credit their decision to adopt two innovative curricula from Great Minds®: *Eureka Math*® and the ELA program *Wit & Wisdom*®.

Scholarship Prep is part of a network of charter schools that added a third campus in Fall 2019. All are committed to providing “a university-inspired pathway of success while closing the achievement gap for all students, including foster youth and those underserved.” The network’s cofounders are Jason Watts and Gloria Romero, the former Democratic majority leader of the California State Senate and a longtime advocate for educational excellence and innovation.

Indeed, it was the promise of innovation that helped Chief Academic Officer Andrew Crowe persuade his colleagues to adopt both *Eureka Math* and *Wit & Wisdom* in the 2016–2017 school year. From his previous work in other charter school organizations, Crowe was familiar with the predecessors of both curricula: EngageNY Math and the Wheatley Portfolio, respectively.

Initially, though, not all of Crowe’s teacher colleagues were won over by the unique approaches of these curricula. “For some, it was a culture shock not to have a traditional math textbook,” he says.

But when Crowe showed them *Eureka Math*’s in-depth modules and units and reminded them that charter schools are supposed to innovate and disrupt traditional approaches, they bought in.

The positive ratings for both curricula from the independent nonprofit [EdReports.org](https://www.edreports.org) were also an important selling point.

EUREKA MATH AND WIT & WISDOM: KEY BENEFITS

Crowe says *Eureka Math* gives teachers methodologies for grouping material, organizing lessons, and creating small group sessions. The Mid-Module Assessments also help teachers identify specific student needs and adjust instruction before the End-of-Module Assessments.

The strengths of *Wit & Wisdom*, Crowe says, include the front-loaded vocabulary, writing rubrics, and engaging books that inspire students to find textual evidence to support their answers. The curriculum also helps improve teachers’ abilities to incorporate multiple texts (primary and secondary, fiction and nonfiction) into one lesson or assessment.

Crowe says *Wit & Wisdom* has been particularly beneficial to the foster youth at Scholarship Prep as well as to English learners who are new to the United States. The students respond to the culturally relevant and real-world material in the curriculum, especially books focused on resilience, courage in crisis, and teens as change agents. (Scholarship Prep’s charter includes a special mission to serve youth in foster care who are typically underserved, a phenomenon documented in an article in *The 74*.)

OVERCOMING GROWING PAINS

The rigor of *Wit & Wisdom* required some adjustment for teachers at first.

“*Eureka Math* has helped students see math as connected from year to year.”

— Andrew Crowe,
Chief Academic Officer,
Scholarship Prep Public Schools

Instead of working from a single textbook, teachers have to learn to use a more diverse reading list with a mix of fiction and nonfiction. But, Crowe adds, teachers love the richness of the new materials.

Another challenge is finding the time to cover all the material. As a result, Crowe says, he and the faculty have customized the modules to focus on the most important content. The curriculum is designed to allow teachers that flexibility.

The schools offer a range of professional development, including two-week sessions in the summer and monthly sessions and cross-grade professional learning communities throughout the school year.

During the 2019-2020 school year, in order to further deepen content expertise, the schools started having teachers in Grades 3 and 4 focus on a particular content area during their planning periods. Also new in 2019-2020: Revised teacher evaluations place a premium on student engagement.

Crowe is particularly proud of the school's partnership with the Orange County Department of Education, which trains faculty from both Scholarship Prep and traditional public schools on *Eureka Math* and *Wit & Wisdom*.

"You rarely see charter schools working with their authorizer and traditional district schools," he says.

Classroom teachers play a central role in training new teachers, Crowe says. That's because they believe in the curricula and want all students, especially those entering new classrooms from lower grades, to master its concepts and strategies.

"Our teachers are bought in and want to be the ones who train new teachers," Crowe says.

Crowe, like his peers in other districts, says that teachers appreciate the materials the more they use them.

"They see how thoughtful and intentional both *Eureka Math* and *Wit & Wisdom* are. And then they saw the huge jump in achievement—number one in the state," he says, adding that that success reinforced teachers' enthusiasm and commitment.

Students also welcome the increased rigor. "*Eureka Math* has helped students see math as connected from year to year," Crowe says. "*Wit & Wisdom* has helped show students that there are themes across multiple sources that can be used to pull out greater meaning."

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