

LA Schools Make Double-Digit Gains with *Eureka Math*

For the Partnership for Los Angeles Schools, the adoption of *Eureka Math*® at the elementary level five years ago was part of a broad, long-term, system-wide strategy to transform some of the city’s highest-need schools and then scale up successful practices across the district.

It’s working.

Data from the state’s Smarter Balanced assessment show steady and major gains by all nine Partnership elementary schools using *Eureka Math*. Gains averaged 16 percentage points from school year 2014–2015 (pre-*Eureka Math*) to school year 2018–2019.

Progress was especially strong at two recent Partnership additions: 20th Street Elementary, which joined in 2015, and 107th Street Elementary, which joined in 2016. Scores are up 22.6 percentage points and 21.8 percentage points, respectively, at these schools. Both 20th Street and 107th Street benefited from what the Partnership learned from implementing *Eureka Math* in the network’s original six elementary schools.

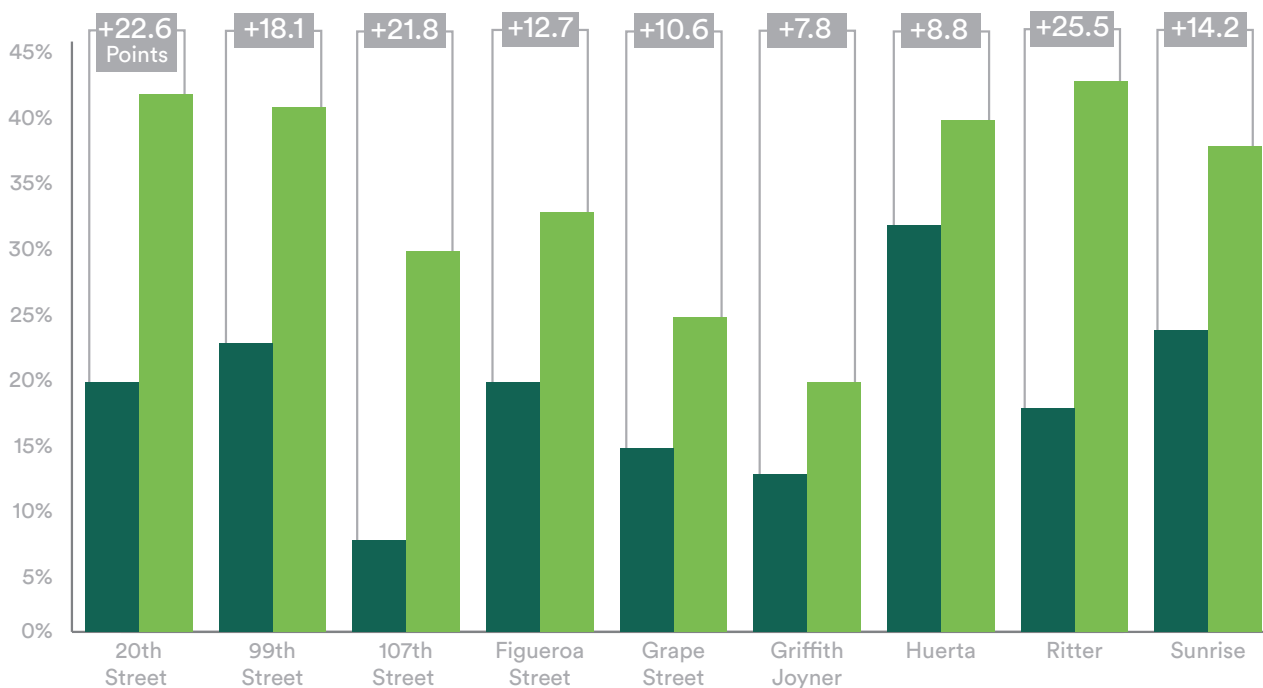
PARTNERSHIP PROFILE

18 schools: 9 elementary, 4 middle, 5 high school
13,500 students
100% low-income

Most elementary schools adopted *Eureka Math* in school year 2015–2016. Two others adopted when they joined the Partnership later.

Percentage of students meeting or exceeding proficiency, Smarter Balanced assessment, SY 2014–2015 through SY 2018–2019

■ SY 2014–2015 (pre-*Eureka Math*) ■ SY 2018–2019



PARTNERSHIP FOR LOS ANGELES SCHOOLS, CALIFORNIA

“When we began managing schools in 2008-09, most of our schools were in the bottom five percent of math proficiency in the district. We have closed that gap and in some cases our schools now exceed the LAUSD average,” says Ian Guidera, the Partnership’s chief academic officer, referring to the Los Angeles Unified School District. “*Eureka Math* has been a big part of that.”

“We have a clear math vision,” Guidera adds. “We want all our students to be lifelong problem solvers, mathematical thinkers, and independent learners, even though they won’t all end up in STEM careers.”

Managing a total of 18 schools today, the Partnership was founded in 2007 as an in-district partner to LA Unified, and it is committed to piloting and scaling innovative education solutions throughout the district, but especially at high-need schools. The district continues to embrace and implement successful approaches that the Partnership has pioneered.

The Partnership is not a charter organization. Its schools are staffed by district employees and bound by the same rules as district schools, such as collective bargaining. But as part of the Partnership network, schools can try alternative approaches to curriculum, teaching and learning, organizational structures, and school leader hiring, among other areas.

EUREKA MATH—PART OF A BROADER TRANSFORMATION PLAN

When the 1,386-school LA Unified signed a seven-year contract in 2015–2016 to use *My Math*, the Partnership decided to use *Eureka Math* instead in its elementary schools. The Partnership had been using *EngageNY Math*, which was developed by Great Minds® for New York state, as a pilot the year before. When Great Minds built on *EngageNY Math* to develop *Eureka Math*, with many additional resources, the LA Partnership formally adopted the *Eureka Math* curriculum. Leaders especially valued its alignment with the Common Core State Standards; a high rating by EdReports.org, the independent third-party curriculum reviewer; a focus on concept development; and coherence across grades.

Key to the Partnership’s broad focus on systemic change is strengthening professional development for teachers across the network. *Eureka Math* teachers spend one day per unit preparing to teach each set of lessons, which translates into seven to nine days of focused lesson planning every year. Across many big school systems, teachers traditionally get only one day of textbook training from publishers. In LA Unified this was true as well, with one day of free training system-wide.

EXTENSIVE PLANNING TIME AND MULTIPLE SUPPORTS

That dedicated planning time is on top of the many other supports the Partnership provides, such as Saturday and summer workshops; professional development institutes from Great Minds; extensive training for instructional leadership teams including principals and assistant principals; goal-setting and close analysis of performance data; and instructional walk-through tools for school and teacher leaders.

“*Eureka Math* offers great content,” says Francisco Villegas, the Partnership’s director of school transformation. “We focus on helping teachers make the content their own—customizing the provided lesson plans with their students



Ian Guidera, Chief Academic Officer



Francisco Villegas, director of school transformation

in mind, as recommended by *Eureka Math*, not treating it like a ‘script’ of teaching activities. The teachers need to internalize the lesson plans. We’re creating a safe space for teachers to learn, too, so that they’re comfortable and they feel safe trying new instructional approaches.”

Philanthropic funding helps pay for additional professional development, but the Partnership’s commitment to systems change means school teams are also expected to be creative in freeing up time for it.

“Most elementary school teachers are not content experts,” Guidera says. “They teach multiple subjects. A strong curriculum, combined with planning days, are really useful to help teachers learn how to teach math in ways they didn’t learn as students themselves.”

Villegas emphasizes that it’s critical for school leaders to learn alongside teachers. “Teachers receive more helpful and actionable feedback when we align professional development for school leaders and teachers.”

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— Ian Guidera, Chief Academic Officer

CHANGING THE CULTURE OF CLASSROOMS

The Partnership’s investment in professional development and coaching is transforming Partnership classrooms.

“We’re changing the culture so that students are not fearful of failure,” Guidera says. Instead, they’re regularly encouraged to come up to the front of the class, show their thinking, and take questions from classmates.

Teachers often showcase common mistakes—not to ridicule, but as teachable moments. Guidera adds: “Kids are always celebrating each other. It’s a whole different culture.” In addition, because *Eureka Math* places such a premium on explaining problem-solving strategies, writing in math class is much more commonplace as students must describe their thought processes.

The focus on concept development also has helped teachers. “Teacher confidence is through the roof,” Guidera says. “Even really great teachers often struggle to explain their own answers and approaches to problem-solving. Focusing on concept development in professional learning really helps.”

As the skills of both teachers and students have grown, the Partnership’s priorities have evolved. This year, Partnership schools are focusing on two National Council of Teachers of Mathematics practices—questioning and meaningful mathematical discourse—that aim to strengthen student engagement and promote more active classroom discussions.

AN “EQUITY OPPORTUNITY”

Ongoing challenges include ensuring that all educators master the concept development strategies at the heart of *Eureka Math*, finding time for professional learning, and staying on track as new schools and educators join the network. Challenges aside, the Partnership team acknowledges that high-quality curriculum is essential for students to achieve academic success in math, especially at high-need schools.

“The lack of quality curriculum is a national equity issue,” Villegas says. “But it’s also an equity opportunity. The best way to address inequities is to provide teachers with high-quality, grade-level materials like *Eureka Math*, plus the skills and ongoing support to implement the curriculum effectively.”

“Curriculum is not a silver bullet,” Guidera adds. “But with a great curriculum, great systems, and great supports, we’ll be able to get all of our students to and through college. That’s our goal.”