

After Four Years, Lafayette (LA) Students Continue Making Steady Gains

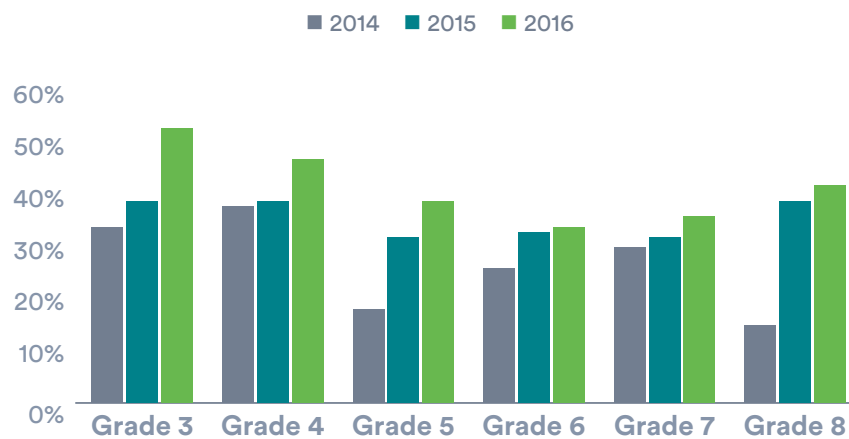
EDUCATORS TELL THE STORY

Lafayette Parish, Louisiana’s fifth largest district, was one of the earliest *Eureka Math* users, first using the curriculum districtwide in the 2013–2014 school year. The district has 42 schools and enrolls about 30,000 students, 70 percent of whom are low income. Its students have been making steady progress in math since Eureka was instituted, with average annual gains of 15 percentile points across the grades.

“It wasn’t about the scores. It was about what we saw in classrooms.”

— Miko McDaniel,
Math Instructional Coach

Percentage of Lafayette Students Scoring Mastery and Above on LEAP* Math



*LEAP is Louisiana’s standardized test which is aligned to state standards and taken in grades 3-8. In grades 3, 5, 6, and 7, the test is called iLEAP.

DISCOVERING EUREKA

In winter 2013, administrators, coaches, and teachers in Lafayette learned that the neighboring Vermilion Parish was using the *Eureka Math* curriculum through New York State’s EngageNY. Penny Gennuso, the district’s K–12 Math and Science Academic Specialist at the time, led a team of coaches in reviewing the sample modules in each grade. “We said to ourselves, ‘Wow, this is really aligned and also has professional development embedded into the modules.’ We saw that this would really change the practices of teachers and expectations of students,” reflected Gennuso.

Gennuso and her team built trust in the program by listening closely to teachers, supporting them, and encouraging them to stick with the new approach. “Over time, teachers came around and started to say, ‘Ah this is beautiful. This is exactly what we needed, our students can do this,’” Gennuso said.

“The message we have sent is to be faithful to the product in order to realize the true impact.”

— Jamie Hebert, K–12 Math
Academic Specialist

ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGES

The district proactively addressed every challenge. When teachers needed consistent, more intensive professional development, the district spread professional development days throughout the school year, rather than only during the summer. Pacing was another major challenge as many teachers only made it halfway through the curriculum by the end of the 2013–2014 school year. Teachers were distraught, but as they saw content in early modules revisited in later ones, they realized they did not need to teach to mastery when a topic or strategy was first introduced. (A Eureka writer [blogs](#) about resisting the urge to teach for mastery.)

In response to pushback from some parents and community members, the math coaches and teachers held community meetings to discuss *Eureka Math* — at traditional locations such as schools, but also in pizza parlors and local hairdressers. “I remember getting my haircut and showing parents on dry erase boards why it makes sense to use number bonds,” said Miko McDaniel, a math instructional coach working with Gennuso. “Those were some exciting times.”

The district partnered with nearby districts, such as Iberia and Vermilion, to write parent newsletters on *Eureka Math*. Lafayette also held an Academic Super Bowl, where parents and community members observed teachers doing fluency activities with students, heard math coaches teach Eureka strategies, and solve math problems on white boards that were provided for each attendee. Hundreds showed up to see the curriculum in action and better understand why the district had shifted its approach.

SHARING ADVICE WITH OTHER DISTRICTS

The school district is well known throughout the country for its generosity in sharing its experiences and resources with other districts nationwide. “I remember Miko saying, ‘If we share, it helps everybody,’” said Gennuso. So, the district proceeded to treat all of its materials as open educational resources. The district’s *Eureka Math*-related resources for educators and parents are widely used across the country and can be found here: <http://eurmath.link/lafayette>.

Educators from around the country started calling Lafayette for advice on implementing the curriculum. Gennuso answered questions, shared resources, and told them, “Really trust the curriculum. Teach the curriculum with fidelity. It will improve student performance and students’ deep understanding of mathematics. It’s ultimately about students understanding mathematics and the world that will open to them.”

The district continues to answer calls from districts. Jamie Hebert, the current K–12 Math Academic Specialist, reflected, “The message we have sent is to be faithful to the product in order to realize the true impact. The scaffolding that is built in will work if you are faithful to the curriculum.”

IMPLEMENTING WITH FIDELITY

In its fourth year of implementation, the district has come a long way. And while proud of consistently rising state test scores across all grades, the instructional team is proudest of how they are seeing teachers and students develop in mathematics. McDaniel observed, “It wasn’t about the scores. It was about what we saw in classrooms. When you hear the way that students are talking about math the way that they now are — the way what this curriculum brings out in them — it’s a powerful thing. It’s the sort of stuff that changes outcomes for kids and gives them an opportunity that they would not have had learning any other curriculum.”