

# DISTRICT VIGNETTE

*The purpose of this vignette is to tell the story of one district's experience with curriculum selection and implementation. This vignette represents a detailed view of a comprehensive approach toward selecting, planning for use, and supporting high-quality materials. This is based on a real district's story but written with enhanced detail on the key actions that we found differentiated successful implementation across districts and – in those places – we included the wisdom of multiple system leader's experience.*

*This is detailed in order to tell the full story of the work involved. It can either be read in full to see the story play out or can be read in pieces as your school or system team is about to engage in those actions. Please share feedback freely.*

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InstructUP School District (ISD) is a public school district. It serves approximately 5,500 students across 10 schools. Half of its students qualify for free or reduced lunch and a fifth of its students are English learners. On last year's state mathematics assessment, 41% of ISD's 3rd through 5th graders scored Proficient or higher. Proficiency levels in math have remained between 39% and 42% for the past five years.

There are five elementary schools (grades K-5), three middle schools (grades 6-8), and two high schools (grades 9-12) in ISD. Each elementary school has a principal, an assistant principal, and an instructional coach who serves all grade levels and content areas. At each elementary school, there are approximately five teachers in each grade level. Teachers meet weekly in grade level teams for common planning time.

ISD has a small Curriculum and Instruction department that includes a K-5 Supervisor and a 6-12 Supervisor. Leaders from other departments, namely the Special Populations Director and the Assessment Director, are often involved in curriculum projects. The Director of Schools meets regularly with district leaders.

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# CHAPTER

# 1



In response to persistently low mathematics test scores, concern that their current curriculum didn't align with state standards, and teacher complaints that they were spending too much time creating their own instructional materials, InstructUP School District (ISD) decided to adopt a new math curriculum for its K-5 classrooms. Mr. Hughes, the superintendent, emailed all district educators to announce the beginning of the curriculum selection and implementation process. The email explained that the decision to adopt a new math curriculum was in response to teachers' feedback and that he believed that getting teachers high-quality materials would support them in teaching engaging lessons and reaching all students. He told teachers to look out for more information about the selection process and for opportunities to get involved.

### I.1

Mr. Hughes appointed Ms. Walker as the leader of the project and Ms. Walker worked to assemble a Selection Team to support the process. She asked district and school leaders to recommend Selection Team members representing diverse perspectives, such as a mix of teachers and leaders as well as expertise in different grade levels. She provided the following nomination criteria:

- Highly knowledgeable about elementary math instruction
- Demonstrated effectiveness as an educator
- Able to critically analyze and compare instructional materials
- Collaborates well with colleagues
- Believes all children are capable of meeting grade level expectations

**Based on recommendations, Ms. Walker formed the following group:**

#### **ISD's Curriculum Selection Team Membership**

2 district leaders (Special Populations Supervisor and Ms. Walker)

3 teachers (from different schools)

2 principals

2 instructional coaches

1 parent

**10 total members**

At their first meeting, the Selection Team talked about past district initiatives that had succeeded or flopped, the lessons they could learn from those experiences, and what success would look like for them this time. They decided that must-haves for their work included lots of participation from teachers and regular communication with students and families about what was happening and why. Their “wishes” included having leaders and teachers from every school involved in the review of materials and finding ways to make students feel involved in the selection process.

At their second meeting, the Selection Team tackled logistics. It was currently the end of January, and the goal was for teachers to begin using the new curriculum at the start of the new school year. The Selection Team backwards-planned major events, like choosing a final curriculum and training teachers on the new materials, and put them on a calendar.

Next, the Selection Team discussed the details for how they’d select the new curriculum. Some members wanted the Selection Team to choose the materials – they thought a smaller team would move quickly, which was important for meeting their timeline goal. Other members thought that the Selection Team wasn’t diverse enough, and that more perspectives were needed to ensure that the final curriculum decision reflected the community’s interests. Ultimately, the Selection Team decided that their must-haves around teacher involvement and community engagement meant that they needed to involve more people in the review of materials, so they decided to form an expanded Review Committee. They then planned the remaining logistics for selection, including training on a rubric for the Review Committee to objectively evaluate curricula and a process for getting teacher feedback before the committee made their final decision.

While the Selection Team had been appointed by Ms. Walker based on recommendations, the team thought that service on the expanded Review Committee should be an opportunity available to all educators and community members, not just those who were well-known and likely to be nominated. Ms. Walker organized an email for educators and community members with a short online application which asked for basic information, such as where you work and position, and the following short essay question: What do you think is important for our math curriculum? She also included a link to an online survey asking educators and community members for input on what the Review Committee should look for. She stressed that the district wanted to hear from everybody, and encouraged all educators to consider applying for the Review Committee and complete the survey.

The instructional coaches reviewed applications, focusing on knowledge of math instruction, an understanding of how curriculum impacted instruction, a desire to support teachers, and a belief that all children can learn math. They also made sure to select applicants who represented diverse roles and school communities, including teachers from all grade levels, educators from all schools, and parents of primary and upper elementary students.

### **The coaches recommended the following members for the Curriculum Review Committee:**

#### **ISD's Curriculum Review Committee Membership**

- 1 district leader
- 2 principals
- 1 assistant principal
- 2 instructional coaches
- 6 teachers (one from each grade level K-5)
- 2 parents
- 14 total members**

One of the most important outcomes of ISD's curriculum selection was to choose a set of materials that closely aligned to state standards. The district's current elementary math curriculum was not fully aligned to standards, which put teachers in a position of having to find and create new materials to fill in holes. What had become more problematic, though, was that some educators in the district thought the current curriculum was aligned to standards. These mixed perceptions about alignment led to conflicting messages about how closely teachers should follow the curriculum, inconsistent expectations about what standards-based instruction looked like, and confusion about why some teachers spent so much time creating their own lesson materials. Ms. Walker knew that conflicting beliefs about what "standards-aligned" meant would interfere with the Review Committee's charge to select a new curriculum aligned to state standards, so she arranged for the Review Committee and the Selection Team to participate in a daylong, in-depth training on the standards led by a partner organization.

## I.2

At the training, the Review Committee reviewed the three instructional shifts in math and what it meant for instruction to reflect the shifts. They picked one particularly complicated standard to really understand deeply – a 4th grade standard involving operations and algebraic thinking – so that they could look at all of the materials for that standard first and know that they all had the same understanding of its expectations. They looked at the language of the standard, did several practice problems from the state test on that standard, and looked at some high-quality curriculum samples (from Achieve the Core and UnboundEd) to make sure they understood what it would look like for that standard to be taught well. After deep focus on one standard, the committee analyzed the progression of standards through the elementary grades, identified the major work of each grade, completed additional assessment items, and discussed how the shifts were reflected through the assessment items.

They also observed a group of elementary math teachers using a standards-based rubric aligned to the shifts, the [Instructional Practice Guide \(IPG\)](#), as an anchor. They focused their observations around Core Action 1 from the IPG: “Ensure the work of the enacted lesson reflects the focus, coherence, and rigor required by college and career ready standards in mathematics.” Specifically, committee members asked: What materials are teachers using? Are the materials aligned to the standards? In addition to observations, committee members talked with teachers about the standards and the materials they were using.

When the Review Committee met to discuss their observations, they shared the following reflections:

- Teachers are working really hard!
- Students are consistently doing the work that’s put in front of them.
- Most of the problems on student worksheets are not at the level of the standards.
- Very few teachers are using our current math curriculum.
- Some teachers make their own lesson materials, some find materials online (especially Teachers Pay Teachers and Pinterest), some have bought test prep books – materials are all over the map.
- Teachers seem to have different ideas about what rigor in their grade level looks like and there is confusion around which standards and concepts in each grade level deserve the greatest focus.

### Prevent the Pitfalls

Developing a shared instructional vision was a major differentiator for districts who experienced successful implementation.

Through their own experience in training and classroom observations, it was clear that not everyone in the district was on the same page about what standards-aligned math instruction looked like. **The team realized they needed to clearly define the vision for math instruction, recognizing that materials would help them achieve that vision but that the materials were a means to an end.** A few members of the committee noted how the IPG had helped them see a vision in action and gave them a shared language for observing math. Others agreed, prompting Ms. Walker to suggest that the Review Committee adopt the IPG as its walkthrough tool for great math instruction and consider ways to share the IPG with educators throughout the district. The team decided to name a few bullets that represented their core beliefs about math, which would help their materials selection and bring coherence between selection and implementation.

### **Their core beliefs included:**

- All students are deserving and capable of learning the mathematical standards and demonstrating the standards for mathematical practice.
- Students learn math by having the time and space to engage in authentic problem solving.
- Students learn math by watching and listening to others demonstrate mathematical thinking and by having the opportunity to explain their thinking and reasoning about the content.
- Students have the opportunity to make connections within and across grade levels that support their understanding of mathematics as a connected and coherent discipline.

Ms. Walker sent an email to teachers explaining more about why Review Committee members had observed their classrooms and shared some of the committee's reflections. She also explained that the committee had been inspired by the IPG and would be using it to identify the traits they needed in their new math materials as well as a tool for classroom observations in the future. She shared that she hoped to find other opportunities to use the IPG to support professional learning and help build a district-wide understanding of what great math instruction looked like.



### I.3

Next, based on the IPG and their knowledge of academic standards, the Selection Team met to create a list of key criteria for the new curriculum. During this meeting, the team also looked at the responses that educators and community members submitted through the survey that Ms. Walker sent out the previous month.

#### The key criteria for the new curriculum included:

- Close alignment to academic standards and the instructional shifts.
- Availability for all K-5 grade levels, so that the learning progression is coherent for students.
- Structures that support students in solving problems on their own.
- Lessons that help kids meet the standards and prepare them for the next grade.
- Features that regularly prompt students to read, write, listen, and speak in service of math learning (i.e. math journals, discussion protocols).
- Built-in resources for English learners.
- Materials that are engaging for students and get students excited about learning.

Members of the Selection Team brought the initial key criteria back to their schools for feedback, hosting conversation hours and meetings with teachers. The Selection Team found that educators were concerned about the time and effort it would take to learn how to use new materials and they wanted a curriculum with plenty of training and support resources. Another trend was that teachers wanted a math curriculum that had digital materials.

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In response to this feedback, the Selection Team added “professional development materials that support teachers and leaders in using the curriculum (i.e. teacher resource guides)” to their key criteria list and “high-quality digital/online materials or other resources that support technology education” as a nice-to-have.

After the list of key criteria was finalized, the Selection Team worked to turn their list of criteria into a rubric with four levels that the Review Committee could use to evaluate materials:

- 0 = this criterion is not present in the materials
- 1 = this criterion is somewhat present in the materials
- 2 = this criterion is present in the materials
- 3 = this criterion is consistently present throughout the materials

Based on their rubric, the group decided that to be selected, the final curriculum would have to earn a score of 2 or 3 in all rubric rows.

The Selection Team used their new rubric, ratings from [Edreports.org](https://www.edreports.org) (an educator-led organization that reviews instructional materials), and the state-approved textbook list to create a shortlist of four potential math curricula for the Review Committee to review in detail. Ms. Walker worked with the superintendent and the district's finance director to make sure the curricula on the team's shortlist was realistic, given the available budget.

Ms. Walker worked with the Developers of the four curricula on ISD's shortlist to provide digital copies of curriculum materials for the committee to review. She also created agendas for how the Selection Team would spend time during meetings. Her agendas included time to review the design of units and lessons and to complete daily practice and assessment problems from each curriculum to better understand each set of materials.

#### I.4

The Review Committee met in mid-April to start reviewing materials. At the first meeting, Ms. Walker and members of the Selection Team trained the other members of the Review Committee on the key selection criteria, rubric, and procedures for selection, including practicing scoring one set of materials. Over two more meetings, the Review Committee examined the three remaining curricula from the shortlist. At the end of the review, the committee agreed on the two finalist curricula that stood out in terms of their alignment to the IPG and key criteria rubric. The next step was to share these two curricula with teachers and community members for further input.

The team gathered feedback in three ways. Ms. Walker delivered sets of materials to each school and invited teachers, families and community members to explore them and leave notes in a feedback form. The Selection team also organized a town hall event for teachers, families, and students to come to the district office and see the finalist materials in action. At the town hall, members of the Selection Team explained the basic components of the curricula and why they had been selected, taught sample lessons, and answered questions. Families and students were given copies of problem sets and homework pages to get a sense of how the curriculum presented content. After the town hall, some teachers decided to "test out" the materials with their students and agreed to share back what they learned. Lastly, a few committee members observed neighboring districts who were using the materials and reported their observations back to the committee.

At the end of their process, the committee unanimously agreed on one curriculum – Eureka Math. In their recommendation to the superintendent, the committee explained their process and emphasized Eureka’s alignment to standards and other student and community needs. The teachers on the Selection Team crafted an announcement to share with all teachers. They included reflections on why they, as teachers, were excited about the curriculum and how they thought it would help teachers reach all students and lead to increased learning. The principals on the Selection Team crafted a principal-specific announcement that explained why the curriculum was chosen and how it would support teachers and students.

While the Review Committee was excited about their choice, they knew it wasn’t going to be easy. Based on their close review of materials and the experiences of the teachers and leaders from the neighboring district who they’d talked to, they made a list of questions and potential challenges to be considered during implementation. Their list included the following:

- Eureka’s pacing guide sequences learning objectives in an order that’s much different from what teachers are used to. How can we support teachers in understanding this new sequence?
- Each Eureka lesson has four parts (fluency, application problem, concept development, and debrief). This model is different from what teachers are used to. How can we best support teachers in making the switch?
- Will teachers be able to get through all four parts of the lesson in 60 minutes? If we can’t get through all four parts in 60 minutes, what do we cut out?
- Each lesson is written for one day. What happens if students don’t “get” the objective in one day? Can we teach a daily objective over again?
- Eureka is aligned to our state standards, but for some standards in some grade levels, it’s not a perfect fit (i.e. in our state, we teach the names and values of coins in Kindergarten, but in Eureka those skills are taught in 1st and 2nd grade). How and when do we supplement Eureka to ensure all standards are taught?
- Eureka uses vocabulary terms that are different from the current curriculum (i.e. what we call addition using a number line, Eureka calls the “arrow way”). How can we identify these terms and support teachers and students in transferring knowledge from the old curriculum to the new one, even when concepts have different labels?
- Some resources from Eureka are free, but there are a lot of add-on items we can pay for. Which ones do we need?
- Eureka lessons jump right into hard content. How do we help students who are significantly behind grade level?

### I.5

After the school board approved Eureka Math as the district's new K-5 math curriculum, Ms. Walker worked with administrative leaders at the district and in schools to order materials and have them shipped. She worked with the district's textbook coordinator to fill in a spreadsheet that included what materials were needed, how much of each were needed, and total cost. Ms. Walker used the same spreadsheet to keep track of other information, like when materials were shipped and received. She made sure that all the materials needed for the first module were organized and ordered right away to ensure that teachers had, at minimum, the materials they would need for August as early as possible. The team was able to get copies to teachers before summer started.

**This is the end of Phase 1: Select Great Materials.**

**In Phase 1, ISD completed these Key Actions:**

- **Plan your process**
- **Establish the vision**
- **Develop the rubric and prepare for reviews**
- **Review, pilot, and decide**
- **Procure and distribute materials**



### **Discussion Questions**

What factors were most important for ISD in determining a new curriculum?

What other decisions did ISD have to make during this phase? What information did they use to make these decisions?

How did ISD involve the community in the curriculum selection process?

How did ISD communicate with and learn from different stakeholders?

What did ISD do well in this phase?

What could ISD have done better in this phase?



**CHAPTER**  
**2**



## II.1

Ms. Walker now turned her attention to implementation preparation.

### **Prevent the Pitfalls**

The districts that experienced the greatest implementation success took their time in Phase II.

Moving too quickly from materials selection to distribution (without considering how the curriculum would impact pacing, grading, instruction, and assessment) can create anxiety and confusion.

She knew they now faced a different set of questions such as:

- What should our goals for curriculum implementation be?
- Who should be responsible for doing what?
- How will teachers use the curriculum?
- How does the curriculum fit with the district's assessment and grading policies?
- How can we best support teachers and leaders with the new materials?

She recognized that a new team was needed to guide the process of preparing to launch the curriculum. Ms. Walker asked members of the Review Committee, district leaders, principals, and assistant principals for recommendations on who to invite to serve on this new leadership team. Ms. Walker assembled a Eureka Leadership Team (ELT) of 14 educators, which would take the lead on answering existing questions and set additional expectations and guidance as more questions came up. The ELT included three district leaders, two principals, an assistant principal, two coaches, and six teachers. Seven of the 14 members had served on the Review Committee. There was a leader (principal, assistant principal, or coach) from each of the five elementary schools and a teacher representative for each K-5 grade level. The district leaders on the ELT were Ms. Walker, the Director of Data and Assessment, and the Director of Special Populations. Ms. Walker was the designated leader of the ELT.

At their first meeting, Ms. Walker shared a plan that included the topics the ELT needed to address and a tentative meeting schedule. The topics they needed to tackle included setting goals, clarifying roles and responsibilities, and drafting guidance on a range of structures related to instruction, such as assessment and grading. Ms. Walker suggested that the group focus their first meeting on establishing a vision of what a successful curriculum implementation looked like. That way, they'd have an anchor for their future work. Then they could draft some initial thoughts on goals, key roles, and responsibilities. Ms. Walker noted that getting a sense of potential goals, roles, and responsibilities would help inform their decision-making, and that they could revisit these parts of their plan later on as they continued to develop an understanding of the curriculum.

The ELT considered the perspectives of a range of stakeholders, and created the following vision for success:

**During the implementation of our new curriculum, success will mean that...**

### **District Leaders**

- Have a clear vision for excellent instruction and understand how curriculum fits in
- Align all systems, including curriculum, to their vision for excellent instruction
- Set and measure clear goals around curriculum implementation
- Invest time and resources in training and supporting all teachers and leaders
- Use multiple sources of data, including observations and student work, to make decisions
- Communicate frequently with teachers, families, students, and community members throughout the adoption process
- Encourage the refinement and sharing of curriculum practices

### **Teachers**

- Feel included and invested in the implementation process
- Understand the various components of the curriculum and use each appropriately based on the demands of academic standards and their goals for the lesson
- Deepen their knowledge of the standards and instructional shifts as they use the curriculum
- Employ new, content-specific methods and strategies
- “Do the work” of the lesson, including reading texts and working through tasks
- Spend less time creating materials themselves; spend more time tailoring content to the unique needs of students and preparing to teach
- Analyze student work
- Improve their instructional delivery (as measured by observation and evaluation data)
- Raise their expectations for what students are capable of

### **Principals**

- Understand the important content and pedagogical goals of the curriculum (i.e. a focus on informational text, teaching through inquiry)
- Provide feedback to teachers that supports the curriculum
- Ensure teachers have time to collaborate and problem solve around the curriculum

### Families

- Feel informed about the curriculum adoption process
- Have opportunities to learn about the curriculum
- Ask questions and share feedback about the new materials
- Support the change in curriculum
- Support and extend students' learning outside of school

### Students

- Are engaged
- Are more willing to take risks and grapple with challenging content
- Believe curriculum content is interesting, useful, and fun
- Demonstrate learning in many ways, such as through writing, discussion, progress monitoring, and standardized assessments
- Learn more

The ELT decided they wanted to set goals for teacher practice, teacher and student investment, and student outcomes, but they would choose specific measures later on. The ELT decided that Ms. Walker should continue to be the overall leader of the process and outlined the ways that other district leaders, principals, coaches, and teachers could share leadership.

### II.2

At their second meeting, the ELT began to examine some of ISD's instructional systems and how to best align these systems with Eureka. They started with a study of Eureka's assessments that included mid-module and end-of-module assessments and daily exit tickets. For each assessment type, they determined its purpose, frequency, and quality. They also reviewed ISD's current assessment plan, which included progress monitoring, quarterly district-created interim assessments that were designed to mimic the state's summative assessment, and two mock state assessments (in January and March). Again, they labeled the purpose, frequency, and quality of each of the district's current assessments. Through these inventories, they recognized that teachers needed assessments that provided various kinds of data – daily, evaluative, and predictive – and worked out an assessment plan that would provide teachers with useful information about their students without being redundant or wasteful of time.



The ELT decided to set the expectation that all teachers administer Eureka’s mid-module and end-of-module assessments to all students, but that daily lesson exit tickets were suggested, but not required. Recognizing that daily lesson pacing could be a challenge, especially early on, the team didn’t want teachers to feel pressured to give the exit tickets every day. Therefore, they wrote guidance that teachers should “aim to give students an opportunity to demonstrate daily learning by completing exit tickets at least two days a week.” The ELT added that daily exit tickets should not be graded since it isn’t expected that students master every objective every day, but rather that they be used to identify students who “got it” and which ones may need additional support moving forward. The ELT also decided to maintain ISD’s policy of not grading homework or problem sets students completed during class – they wanted students to be able to practice with new concepts without the fear of “getting it wrong” – but added that teachers could give a grade for homework based on completion. In making these decisions, some members of the ELT worried that teachers wouldn’t have enough grades each quarter, especially if they were teaching a long module where there was a lot of time in between the mid-module and end-of-module assessment. The team decided to schedule a follow-up meeting where they would review the pacing guides for each grade level and determine places where additional assessments may be needed to ensure teachers had adequate data on student learning and enough assessments that could be graded for student report cards. In cases where additional assessments were needed, the ELT pulled practice problems from daily lessons to create new assessments and flagged these problems for teachers as ones that they shouldn’t use in class.

The ELT also discussed how assessment and grading with Eureka would fit with other district-wide assessment expectations. The team decided to continue having students complete progress monitoring assessments, but to discontinue use of the district’s interim assessments, which were modeled off the end-of-year state assessment and typically administered each quarter. They decided instead to have all 3rd–5th grade students take one full-length practice test prior to the state assessment in April. The district’s Director of Data and Assessment created a one-page memo for all educators and parents explaining which assessments students would be taking that year, why, and how to use the data.

### II.3

Next, the ELT tackled expectations for use and the plan for collaborative planning. They started with one meeting to ground their planning, and began with a study of the curriculum’s design for 4th grade. The ELT analyzed the curriculum’s yearlong design and then looked closely at how units and daily lessons were organized. They noted if the lesson plans had scripts, where there were scaffolds, and if there were specific instructional considerations for certain groups of learners, such as English learners. They also reviewed the Pacing and Preparation Guides, Curriculum Maps, and Curriculum Overviews. With this information fresh in their minds, they had a meeting the next week to address key questions related to scheduling, pacing, and use.

The ELT worked with principals at all schools to revise schedules based on Eureka's lesson pacing. Eureka lessons for Kindergarten were designed to take 50 minutes and 60 minutes for Grades 1-5. The ELT decided to give teachers a 10 minute buffer in their math block in case lessons ran long, giving all Kindergarten teachers in ISD an uninterrupted 60 minute math block and Grades 1-5 teachers 70 minutes.

For guidance on pacing, the ELT read the "Suggestions for Consolidation and Omission" section of Eureka's pacing guide. They decided that if teachers and leaders worked collaboratively and proactively, they could identify when an adjustment to pacing was needed and use Eureka's guidance on which daily objectives to omit, if needed.

### **They developed and shared the following principles:**

- Teachers should follow Eureka's pacing guide as written. Teachers should disregard the district's old pacing guides for elementary math.
- Teachers should work in grade level teams and with instructional coaches to determine the best way to use the 10 embedded remediation and enrichment days.
- Instructional coaches should read the "Suggestions for Consolidation and Omission" section of the pacing guide for each grade level closely so that they are familiar with how to best adjust pacing, if needed.
- If teachers fall behind the pacing guide more than five days, they should schedule a meeting with their instructional coach as soon as possible to make a plan for how to adjust daily lessons and catch back up.

The ELT also discussed how to address making modifications to the curriculum. On one hand, they talked about the importance of following the curriculum closely to ensure all students are prepared for the next grade – especially in this first year as the teachers were getting to know the curriculum. On the other hand, they recognized the need to allow room for teachers' expertise and talent to shine, for teacher-led innovation, and for teachers to use their knowledge of their students' interests and passions to drive engagement. In an effort to balance those priorities...

## They developed and shared the following principles:

- Teachers should use the instructional materials as their sole source of materials for daily instruction.
- Modifications can and should be made to support student learning – teachers know their students best and know how to support students in meeting the demands of the standards.
- Modifications should not be made to the lesson sequence, daily exit tickets, or assessments.
- Modifications should be minor (i.e. modeling an additional application problem to reinforce a particular strategy, adjusting the order of practice problems during the concept development section of the lesson) and focused on supporting student understanding and engagement, without compromising the rigor of the lesson.
- Teachers can make distinctions to prioritize problems in the Problem Set to support student mastery, (i.e., label problems as Must Do, Could Do, or Extension). Teachers can also select priorities for fluency practice (i.e., if given three fluency practices, teachers can prioritize so that fluency is time framed rather than task framed).
- If teachers want to make further modifications to the content of the curriculum in order to meet student needs, they should share their responses to the following reflection questions with their instructional coach, either in person or via email. This method gives teachers a thought partner for problem-solving challenges that arise.
  - Which piece of the lesson do you want to modify and how will you modify it?
  - Why do you think this modification will improve student outcomes?
  - How will this modification maintain alignment to standards and expectations for rigor?
- Teachers are encouraged to use collaborative planning meetings to discuss potential modifications that would benefit students.

Ms. Walker encouraged principals to review these expectations with teachers and share rationale for how this would support use of materials in their first year, naming that they will revisit these in future years as they become more experienced with materials. Ms. Walker encouraged principals to set aside specific time at the end of in-service trainings for teachers to meet and plan their 10 remediation and enrichment days and for coaches to read the “Suggestions for Consolidation and Omission” section of the pacing guide.

Next, the ELT created a plan to support teachers in collaborating around lesson preparation and reflection. ISD teachers met weekly in grade level teams for collaborative planning. Teachers were supposed to use this time for joint planning and reflection, but no formal structure or agenda was in place that told teachers what these meetings should look like. The ELT teachers admitted that some teachers didn't like planning meetings because they thought they were loosely organized and sometimes felt like a waste of time. The ELT thought that the curriculum adoption was an opportunity to repurpose the teachers' collaborative planning time into something more structured and focused.

This chart shows the supports the ELT decided on.



Planning Structure	Participants	Description	Pre-work
<p>Module Walkthroughs (Occur during school in-service days)</p>	<p>Teachers and Coaches</p>	<p>Before each new module, coaches meet with Ms. Walker to discuss the key concepts of the module, review pacing, complete the mid-module and end-of-module assessments, and norm on student expectations.</p> <p>Then, teachers meet with the instructional coach in grade level teams and repeat the process. Include time to identify the academic vocabulary needed in each module and plan how to teach this vocabulary to all students, especially English learners.</p>	<p>Teachers and coaches preview the module by reviewing the lesson sequence in the table of contents, looking at exit tickets, and reflecting on how learning objectives in the new module will build on previous learning. Time permitting, teachers are encouraged to work through the module as a student would.</p>
<p>Collaborative planning meetings (Occur during teachers' weekly grade level team meetings)</p>	<p>Teachers</p>	<p>Teachers meet weekly in grade level teams for collaborative planning meetings that follow a "Looking back/ Looking forward" model where they alternate between analyzing student work from a previously taught lesson and collaboratively planning an upcoming lesson. Teachers in the grade level rotate leading collaborative planning meetings.</p>	<p>For "Looking back" collaborative planning meetings, teachers bring student work from that lesson (i.e. exit ticket, application problems, notes about student responses during the debrief, etc.).</p> <p>For "Looking forward" collaborative planning meetings, teachers review the lesson objective, get clear about the work students are being asked to do, brainstorm a list of likely student misconceptions, and complete the exit ticket.</p>
<p>Support for individual teacher planning</p>	<p>Teachers and coaches, as needed</p>	<p>Instead of using a lesson planning template, teachers focus on annotating the materials and solving the math tasks of the lesson. Rather than write and turn in lessons plans, focus on "doing the work" of the lesson. As needed, coaches review annotations or do this work side-by-side with teachers.</p>	<p>Teachers annotate lessons and solve math tasks.</p>

11.4

After the ELT determined approaches for collaborative planning and reflection, they discussed how to best utilize coaching to support teachers’ work with the new materials. The first step was determining the observation tool coaches and principals would use for giving feedback. Members of the ELT who had served on the Selection Team recommended using the IPG as the observation tool. A few teachers disagreed – they wanted to use Eureka’s Lesson Observation Tool because they thought it was important for feedback and evaluation of math lessons to be based on a curriculum-specific walkthrough tool. After some brainstorming, the ELT decided to customize the IPG to make it specific to Eureka, adding Eureka-specific “look-fors” related to the four parts of Eureka’s lesson structure. The ELT also discussed how the new IPG should work alongside the regular observation rubric that principals used for formal evaluations. They decided that principals, coaches, and other observers should use the IPG for Eureka lessons when the intention of the observation was to support implementation, while principals should continue using the regular evaluation rubric for formal evaluations.

In order to prepare coaches, the ELT decided that coaches would join all Eureka-related training alongside teachers and that supporting Eureka implementation through effective coaching practices would be the focus of coaches’ monthly meetings together. They set some norms for teacher-coach interactions, and added the following notes to their overall planning document:

Coaching Structure	Participants	Description	Pre-work
Coaching Conversations	Teachers and Coaches	Instructional coaches observe a Eureka lesson each quarter and give feedback to teachers based on the IPG.	Teachers complete a Eureka-based reflection guide and share it with the instructional coach.  Coaches closely review the Eureka materials for the lesson they will be observing.

## II.5

Next, the ELT met to draft a plan for training teachers and leaders on Eureka. Ms. Walker shared the district's current training plan – up to one week of in-service days for teachers and up to three available days for principals prior to the school year – and an overview of the training resources Eureka had available. Eureka's Teacher Resource Pack had a lot of helpful tools for teachers, like preparation guides and curriculum maps, which they utilized when mapping out their own training agendas.

They decided that principals needed a separate training from teachers and coaches, ideally led by teachers and principals versus district staff members. Accordingly, they scheduled a 2.5-day, in-person training for principals three weeks before the start of the school year.

### **They mapped out a training agenda, which included the following objectives:**

- Review the instructional shifts of the standards and how they're reflected in Eureka.
- Name what excellent math instruction looks like in classrooms (analyze the IPG).
- Review the scope and sequence for multiple grade levels.
- Understand and describe how the curriculum is organized (i.e. modules).
- Unpack at least one module and explain how objectives are sequenced.
- Understand and explain the daily lesson structure and participate in a model lesson.
- Review the structure of assessments and complete the mid-module and end-of-module assessment for at least one module.
- Review and discuss new policies related to using and modifying the curriculum, scheduling, assessment, and grading.
- Prepare for Eureka walkthroughs and build content-specific feedback skills. (Repeat this section with coaches after they attend training with teachers.)

The initial training for teachers closely followed the agenda for principals, but included more time for digging into the pacing guides for teachers' individual grade levels, "doing the work" of modules by completing practice problems and assessments, and observing and participating in model lessons. Coaches would attend the teacher training and principals would join for at least an hour each day of the four day training. The ELT felt that it was important for leaders to join teachers during training, both to support leaders' continued learning about Eureka and to convey the message that everyone had a responsibility to understand the curriculum, not just teachers.

The ELT reserved the final in-service day before the start of school to train principals, coaches, and teachers on the Module Walkthrough protocol and collaborative planning meeting format. Teachers and coaches would work together to complete a Module Walkthrough for the first unit.

To get feedback, the ELT emailed teachers and leaders at their schools with drafts of the new collaborative planning meeting, coaching, and training plans and asked for feedback. Both teachers and coaches wanted to know if coaches could work with teachers more than once a quarter. Yet, some coaches were worried that they wouldn't have enough time to fully support teachers with the new materials, given other responsibilities they were assigned. After some discussion, the ELT decided that Ms. Walker should send guidance to principals and coaches around setting expectations for coaches around curriculum support and balancing other responsibilities.

In their feedback, principals shared that they looked forward to their initial training on the curriculum, but wanted to know what ongoing support they would receive. The ELT realized that they had overlooked this area and decided to reserve part of their quarterly meetings with the superintendent to discuss the progress of implementation and to have principals attend at least one Module Walkthrough alongside teachers each quarter to continue their learning about the curriculum.

### II.1

The ELT used their final meeting to set firm goals that would measure the success of implementation. They set goals in three categories – teacher practice, teacher and student investment, and student outcomes – and committed to formally measuring progress toward Year 1 and Year 2 targets every quarter.





Goal Area	Measurement Tool	Year 1 Target	Year 2 Target
Teacher Practice	As leaders conduct informal walkthroughs and formal observations, they will document the use (or evidence of the use) of strategies in classrooms on the walkthrough form. Our walkthrough form is the IPG.	Teachers will exhibit growth from baseline as measured by the IPG. Each teacher will have a goal they are working toward, based on the Core Actions. As a system, we'll see an average of 1 point improvement across focus indicators.	Teachers will continue to set goals based on the Core Actions of the IPG. As a system, we'll see an average of 1 point improvement across focus indicators.
Teacher and Student Investment	<p><b>Teacher and Leader Survey:</b> We will send an electronic survey to educators at the end of each quarter. We will have a survey for teachers and a survey for principals/coaches. Surveys are on a 5-point scale (Agree, Somewhat Agree, Neutral, Somewhat Disagree, Disagree). Surveys will be anonymous.</p> <p><b>Student Survey:</b> We will ask all teachers to choose five students to take a pencil and paper survey each quarter. The survey will be on a 3-point scale (Yes, Kind of, No). Teachers should try to choose five new students each quarter.</p>	<p>A 1.5 point increase on the scale from the beginning of the year to the end of the year.</p> <p>A 1 point increase on the scale from the beginning of the year to the end of the year.</p>	An average of 4.0 or higher on all questions.
Student Outcomes	Student scores on Eureka's end-of-module assessments	Average of 2.5/4 or higher on end-of-module assessments	Average of 3/4 or higher on end-of-module assessments

To step back and reflect on progress toward these goals, the ELT established quarterly meetings where they would review data together, celebrate what was working well, identify challenges, and create an action plan for responding to those challenges. They decided that school teams should follow a similar structure to celebrate the work of their teachers and respond to site-specific challenges.

Next, the ELT clarified the different roles involved in implementation, like those of principals and teachers, and their key responsibilities. Seeing the volume of work ahead of them, they knew this needed to be a top priority for everyone involved. Ms. Walker worked with the district superintendent to write a memo explaining how the math curriculum adoption supported the district's student achievement priorities and explicitly stated that learning how to use the new materials should be the top priority for teachers and leaders at all elementary schools. However, they also included guidance in the memo that allowed schools to give other initiatives less priority if teachers and leaders felt like their plates were too full.

Lastly, the ELT recalled that during their brainstorming conversation about what success with curriculum implementation would look like, they had talked a lot about the importance of communicating with educators, families, and other community members. To make sure that their commitment to communication didn't get lost among the district's other implementation tasks, the ELT decided to make a **proactive communication plan**:



Communication Channel	Purpose	How Often?	Key Messages to Emphasize
District and School Websites	Share data related to our progress toward goals; share new decisions or changes to systems that people should know about (i.e., update to grading policies); share examples of successes and challenges, ways we are trying to replicate successes across classrooms and schools, and how we are responding to challenges	Monthly, or as needed	<p>We selected a new curriculum so that we can better support teachers in planning for and teaching lessons that will engage all students.</p> <p>We want to be transparent about what is happening. We want to celebrate the hard work and successes that our teachers and students are experiencing, and we also want to be honest about the challenges we're facing.</p>
District Newsletters	Share quick information about key events, like teacher trainings; feature a "Classroom Curriculum Snapshot," where one teacher writes about what they're doing with the curriculum; remind readers that more detailed information is on the website	Monthly	
In-person PTSO Meetings	Have principals and teachers share both positive examples from classrooms and ways that they're responding to challenges	Quarterly	

This is the end of Phase 2: Prepare to Launch

In Phase 2, ISD completed these Key Actions:

- Set goals, roles, and monitoring plan
- Determine the plan for assessment and grading
- Determine expectations for use and the plan for collaborative planning
- Determine the plan for coaching
- Determine the plan for training teachers and leaders
- Revisit goals, roles, and monitoring plan



### Discussion Questions

What factors did the ELT consider when setting policies for how teachers should use the curriculum?

What factors did the ELT consider when setting policies for schedules, assessment, and grading?

What other decisions did leaders in ISD have to make during this phase? What information did leaders consider when they made these decisions? How did they communicate these decisions with others?

How were different leaders and teachers involved in the work of this phase?

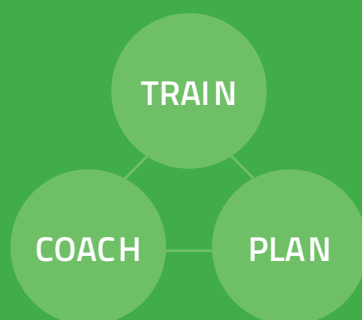
What did ISD do well in this phase?

What could ISD have done better in this phase?



**CHAPTER**  
3





### III.1

As the school year began, all district educators focused on putting their plans into action and teaching and supporting the new curriculum. Ms. Walker knew it was critical to understand teachers' experiences with Eureka. She stressed that ELT members observe classrooms, join collaborative planning, and gather informal feedback through conversations with teachers and coaches to better understand what was working and what was not.

Even early on, it became apparent that some parts of the ELT's original plan were working well, while others weren't. For example, teachers responded well to the new grading and assessment plan. In particular, they were glad that exit tickets were not expected to be graded since most students were getting used to the new curriculum and not performing particularly well on them. However, teachers weren't invested in the Teacher Practice goal the ELT had set. Some teachers felt that having principals or coaches observing and scoring them on the IPG for the sake of measuring the Teacher Practice goal was like another evaluation. Others thought the Teacher Practice goal was "too big." During the first quarter, teachers wanted to get a handle on the new materials and develop new classroom routines around the curriculum.

Ms. Walker worked with the ELT to solve problems quickly. For example, the ELT created a specific goal for Teacher Practice the end of the first quarter to give a reasonable benchmark for teachers to work towards: "All teachers are using Eureka and executing the components of the curriculum." They decided that coaches and principals could gather evidence on this goal based on classroom observations. Also, the ELT learned that many teachers felt nervous that they would be evaluated on Eureka lessons, and that because they were still figuring out the curriculum, their evaluation scores would be low. In response, the ELT decided to set the expectation that formal evaluations should be conducted during non-Eureka lessons during the first semester.

### III.2

At their first quarterly step back meeting, the ELT saw that data from the first quarter survey showed that over a third of teachers weren't finding the collaborative planning meetings a productive use of time, and coaches who sat in on collaborative planning meetings shared that some aspects of the routine seemed unclear to teachers. Teachers consistently engaged in the "Looking back" collaborative planning meetings, where they discussed student work and reasons why some students mastered objectives and others didn't. However, teachers' engagement in the "Looking forward" collaborative planning meetings was inconsistent. Many teachers wanted to talk about all of the lessons for the upcoming week rather than focusing on just one, and others had difficulty finding time for the pre-work, which included completing the exit ticket for the designated lesson.

#### **The ELT brainstormed multiple solutions, and landed on the following course of action:**

- Ms. Walker meets with instructional coaches to discuss the purpose of the "Looking forward" collaborative planning meeting, with emphasis on the idea that the close study of one lesson reveals understandings that can be transferred to all lessons.
- Focus on "doing the work of the lesson" during the collaborative planning meeting. Change collaborative planning meeting pre-work so that teachers are only expected to review the learning objective and bring relevant curriculum materials with them. Then, teachers will begin each "Looking forward" collaborative planning meeting by completing the exit ticket together and talking about the understandings that are needed to answer the problems and the likely student misconceptions they'll encounter and will need to address.
- Instructional coaches practice leading collaborative planning meetings together and get feedback from one another.
- Coaches lead a "Looking forward" collaborative planning meeting for each grade level team and discuss the rationale for focusing closely on one lesson.
- Coaches continue to participate in "Looking forward" collaborative planning meetings for the next two months.
- Ms. Walker works with district leaders to share new guidance with principals for how coaches should be spending their time, so that coaches have more time to work with teachers on establishing collaborative planning meeting routines.
- Ms. Walker works with coaches to create a list of "Collaborative Planning Meeting Look-Fors" so that coaches have a tool for sharing feedback with teachers on how to make collaborative planning meetings feel more productive.

At their second quarterly meeting, the ELT revisited their guidance on coaching. In a survey, some coaches indicated that it was difficult to find the time to sufficiently review the curriculum materials for each of the lessons they were observing. Other coaches reported that they didn't think they needed to observe all teachers each quarter and they'd rather spend time working with a smaller set of teachers who wanted or needed extra support. The ELT decided that they could probably address both concerns with one solution – focus coaching on the teachers who needed the most support, which would also adjust the number of lessons to review.

By the next quarterly meeting, coaches reported feeling that their time was being spent in a more focused way and that teachers who needed more help with the curriculum were getting it. However, some coaches shared that conducting fewer observations led to less time spent in classrooms. As a result, these coaches felt like they'd lost touch with how the curriculum was working across classrooms. One coach shared that she'd started doing more frequent classroom "pop-ins," where she would observe a Eureka lesson for only 10 minutes and leave the teacher a short note with feedback. She explained that she reviewed the lesson materials for that day to get a sense of the learning objective she'd be observing, but that she only spent 5-10 minutes doing so. She tried to observe as many teachers in that grade level as she could, provided that they were all teaching the same lesson. That way, the same 5-10 minutes of preparation could go toward multiple observations. She said that the "pop-in" approach to observations, combined with the more structured coaching conversations she had with teachers, gave her a comprehensive understanding of how the curriculum was working in classrooms across the school. The other coaches appreciated the efficiency of the "pop-in" model and decided to try it themselves.

Principals and teachers also met once a quarter in grade level leadership teams for school-based curriculum stepback meetings. These meetings were an opportunity for school teams to work together to respond to site-specific challenges. For example, during a meeting at one school, the team found that teachers were having a difficult time with the fluency component of the daily lesson sequence. Some teachers had difficulty setting up time-efficient procedures for fluency practice, while others felt the need to stop and teach additional strategies for arithmetic when students were slow or incorrect with their computations. Teachers often got stuck in this section and ran out of time for the rest of the lesson.



## The team brainstormed the following actions to support teachers in improving instruction in this important lesson component:

- During a collaborative planning meeting, discuss the purpose of the fluency section and how daily practice will lead to improved computation over time – it’s okay if students make mistakes, especially if it’s with a newer skill! Teachers don’t have to stop and correct each mistake every day.
- Allow teachers to spend time in a collaborative planning meeting rehearsing the fluency section of a lesson together. Observing teachers should pay specific attention to the pacing and routines of the fluency lesson, such as how the teacher asks students to pass out or return materials.
- Identify teachers who have found ways to teach the fluency section effectively, video record their instruction, then watch the video and discuss it together during a collaborative planning meeting.
- Have the instructional coach observe different teachers’ fluency lessons, compile successful strategies, and share them with all teachers.

At another school, a team noticed that students in one grade level were consistently meeting their achievement goal for end-of-module assessment scores. The data team asked the grade level team leader about the cause of that positive trend. The team leader replied that the team had started doing weekly content overviews, like a condensed version of the Module Walkthrough, to discuss the learning goals for the upcoming week, work through practice problems together, and identify places where their students might have difficulty. The school principal asked the grade level team leader if she could write a brief description of their process and share it with other grade levels.

### III.3

At the end of Year 1, ISD celebrated the achievement of one of their three goals. By the fourth quarter, the district had improved their staff survey results by 1.5 points and their student surveys by a full point. Anecdotal data from conversations with teachers supported the survey data – by the end of the year, most teachers were happy with the Eureka materials and were excited to teach them again a second year.

However, they did not meet their student achievement goal. While they saw growth over the year, during the fourth quarter, most students were scoring a 2 out of 4 on mid-module and end-of-module assessments (where a 3 is “meeting” expectations).

The district also didn't meet its Teacher Practice goal based on classroom observations, although they took pride in getting close. With their Teacher Practice goal, district leaders found that most classrooms were scoring at or above a 2, meaning that there was consistently some evidence of each indicator across lessons. However, there was a small group of teachers who were still struggling with the curriculum and low observation scores from those classrooms were bringing down the average. District leaders realized a need to provide more intensive support to this group of teachers during Year 2.

Teachers and leaders in ISD worked together over the summer to prepare for Year 2. They looked at their end-of-year data to determine what needed to be adjusted. The task that Ms. Walker and other members of the ELT felt most urgent about was planning Year 2 professional development supports for different groups of educators. They focused on supporting teachers who were new to the district or new to the K-5 grade band and would be using Eureka for the first time, and teachers who had taught Eureka in Year 1, but were still having difficulty with content and pacing.

The ELT saw an opportunity to leverage the teachers, principals, and coaches who had found confidence and skill with Eureka during the first year. They thought that a peer-led model of professional support would be more effective than one initiated by district officers. The ELT created a Eureka Mentors Program where mentor teachers would lead training and provide ongoing support through in-person meetings and written correspondence for new teachers.

For teachers who needed more support, the ELT discussed how they could adjust their current coaching model to allow coaches to work more closely with this small group of prioritized teachers. They decided to have coaches try a working group model where every teacher was invited to participate in an interest-based working group with other teachers and their coach. Topics could include scaffolding through application problems or integrating writing into debrief discussions. The group of struggling teachers could review the basics of the curriculum together, work through common challenges collaboratively, and also receive additional one-on-one support from the coach through observations and feedback cycles. While the ELT initially thought of working groups as a way to support struggling teachers, it became a way to encourage all teachers to continue to study Eureka and improve their instructional practices.

Another trend that became apparent was the different levels of support teachers felt they received from their principals. Some teachers raved about how helpful their principals had been in sharing feedback and deepening their understanding of curriculum content. Ms. Walker thought about ways that she could help all principals learn more about Eureka and prepare them to give curriculum-specific feedback to their teachers. As a start, one of the coaches offered to make a 10-minute video each week where she would explain to principals the key objectives being taught in each grade level and what principals should look for when observing Eureka lessons.

This is the end of Phase 3: Prepare to Launch

In Phase 3, ISD completed these Key Actions:

- Work the plan and gather data
- Step back and adjust the plan
- Annually reset



### Discussion Questions

How did educators respond to challenges?

In what ways did educators learn, grow, and improve their work with the curriculum?

How were different leaders and teachers involved in the work of this phase?

What did ISD do well in this phase?

What could ISD have done better in this phase?

## EPILOGUE

### **Year 2** *(optional)*

During the second year with Eureka, school-based teams continued to meet quarterly to analyze data, identify trends, discuss challenges, and brainstorm solutions. While much of the focus the first year had been supporting teachers in “getting through” lessons that included adequate concept development and time to practice problems, educators spent the second year refining specific components of the Eureka lesson model. For example, one school chose fluency as their second quarter priority. Teachers rehearsed the fluency component of lessons during “Looking forward” collaborative planning meetings and gave feedback to one another based on the IPG. By the end of the quarter, the school’s average observation score on the fluency indicator jumped from 1.8 to 2.5.

Another school made the debrief component of the lesson model their priority. Teachers were cutting it due to time. The leadership team worked together to share guidance and resources with teachers to support debriefs. For example, they agreed that teachers could extend their math lesson up to 10 minutes, if needed, to give students sufficient time to discuss their learning. Coaches prioritized observing student debriefs and teachers spent time during their “Looking back” collaborative planning meetings discussing how debriefs had gone. By the end of the quarter, the school’s average score on the debrief indicator increased to 2.3.

The ELT also continued to meet quarterly during Year 2. In this second year, they focused more on identifying strengths and successes and finding ways to share best practices across school sites. They also spent more time working one-on-one with individual coaches and principals to support school-level priorities.

By the end of Year 2, schools across ISD had made significant progress and the district met all three of its goals. Due in large part to schools’ focus on precise IPG indicators and analysis of student work in “Looking Back” meetings, scores from classroom observations AND student achievement shot up. Student and Staff Investment Survey responses also improved as more and more teachers and students developed knowledge and confidence with the curriculum. When leaders took a closer look at the student outcomes data, they found something else to celebrate. There had been a dramatic decrease in the number of students earning a score of 1, and there were also more students exceeding expectations and earning a score of 4.

### **Year 3** *(Optional)*

District leaders will be focusing on providing tailored support to the group of students who were consistently earning a score of 2. Many of these students demonstrated conceptual understanding of the skill, but didn’t get the correct answer because of computational errors. District leaders are exploring closer coordination across interventions as a strategy for supporting students’ computational fluency. ISD’s Director of Special Populations committed to assembling a team of educators to review the intervention curriculum alongside Eureka. Their goal is to revise the intervention sequence so that students would concurrently practice computational skills in Tier II that they’d need to solve Eureka problems in Tier I.



**INSTRUCTION**  
PARTNERS

DISTRICT VIGNETTE