

## SUCCESS SPOTLIGHT

# Approaching Math in a New Way Helps an Indiana School Adapt to Rigor



Students at Farmersville Elementary School in the Metropolitan School District of Mt. Vernon in Indiana (MSD Mt. Vernon) had historically performed above the state average on end-of-year assessments, but the school’s mathematics scores lagged behind their English language arts (ELA) performance.

In 2015–2016, Farmersville students achieved a 75.7 percent proficiency rate in mathematics on the Indiana Statewide Testing for Educational Progress exam—a higher rate of proficiency than the district as a whole or the state. However, that number fell short of their 84.3 percent proficiency rate in ELA.



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Based on their school’s annual state assessment results, Farmersville’s leadership team knew they needed to enhance mathematics instruction, specifically to support students’ development of skills, including critical thinking and problem solving.

# What They Did

In the 2016–2017 school year, Farmersville implemented *i-Ready Assessment* and Personalized Instruction for Mathematics alongside *Ready® Indiana Mathematics*.

Getting started with *Ready Indiana Mathematics* and *i-Ready* in fall 2016 proved to be fortuitous timing for Farmersville, as major changes to the state exam came not long after. In spring 2019, Indiana transitioned to the significantly more rigorous Indiana Learning Evaluation Assessment Readiness Network (ILEARN).

**With the adoption of *i-Ready* and *Ready Indiana Mathematics*, Farmersville was able to:**

“If we wouldn’t have gone with *i-Ready* and *Ready Indiana Mathematics*, our scores on the ILEARN would have been dismal once that test was released. We didn’t know the ILEARN was coming at the time, but we knew we needed to increase rigor.”

—Elizabeth Johns, Director of Curriculum, MSD Mt. Vernon



## Prepare for the More Rigorous, New State Summative Assessment

Elizabeth Johns, who recently became MSD Mt. Vernon’s director of curriculum, recognized that skills such as critical thinking and problem solving needed to be at the center of mathematics instruction, and she saw an opportunity to use the new programs to foster these skills. “When we learned about Curriculum Associates’ materials, I was impressed that they could help kids think about math differently,” she said.



## Offer Teachers Ongoing Professional Development (PD)

The ongoing PD provided by Curriculum Associates has helped the school achieve and sustain success. Teachers were encouraged to maintain their proven instructional practices, and PD on the new tools was readily available, which gave them the confidence to pursue new ideas and know they’d be supported.



## Adapt to Discourse-Centered Mathematics

Of course, teaching mathematics in a new way that requires students to think differently also means teachers must adapt to a new way of thinking. Despite some initial reservations, Farmersville teachers grew to appreciate the new programs. “As teachers watched and listened to how students were thinking, they went from skeptical, to liking *Ready* and *i-Ready*, to the point now where they love it,” Johns said.



## Gain Trusted Education Partners

As the school leader, Johns said she always knew she’d be able to get the right information from her implementation team to support her faculty. “I could call somebody, and I would have an answer immediately or get a call back the same day,” she said. “I’ve been doing this for 20 years, and I’ve never worked with a textbook company with such phenomenal customer service.”

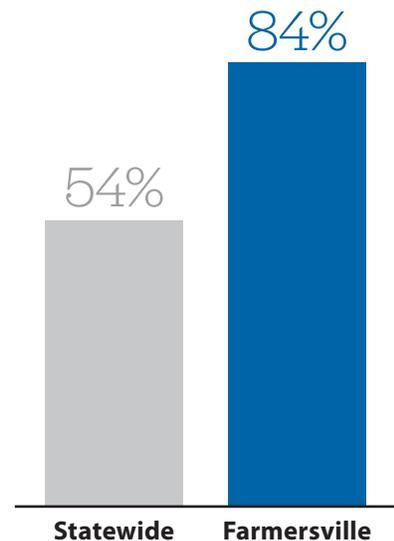
## What They Accomplished

All told, it took about two years to feel that implementation was complete, but Johns found the learning curve to be well worth it for her school. *Ready Indiana Mathematics* combined with *i-Ready* has positioned the school's students to better meet the high expectations of the ILEARN, and the results are indisputable.

Eighty-four percent of Farmersville students met or exceeded grade-level standards in mathematics at the end of the 2018–2019 school year—a tremendous number compared to the 54 percent of Grades 3–5 students who did so statewide. In fact, the percentage of students who were at or above proficiency in mathematics even outpaced their ELA performance.

All this success has been noticed by teachers at Mt. Vernon Junior High School. Johns said Grade 6 recently adopted *i-Ready* and *Ready Indiana Mathematics*, and she anticipates Grades 7 and 8 will soon follow.

Students Who Met or Exceeded Grade-Level Standards in Mathematics in 2018–2019, Grades 3–5



“Our teachers’ belief in the new way we were delivering math instruction grew through their experience in the trenches—in the classroom. Teachers saw students having those ‘Aha!’ moments. They realized kids were making connections that made them think, ‘Wow, I can’t believe they’re thinking that way!’ **Even before teachers saw any kind of assessment data, student discourse and [collaborative] comments made teachers believe in the *Ready/i-Ready* approach to instruction.**”

—Elizabeth Johns, Director of Curriculum, MSD Mt. Vernon



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