

# EverydayMathematics® Success Stories



## Anchorage School District Earns Council of Great City Schools Honor

The Anchorage School District (ASD) serves an urban population and enrolls 48,600 students in Grades PK-12. The student population is ethnically and culturally diverse, with 120 different languages spoken in students' homes. The district operates 60 elementary schools, 9 middle schools and 6 high schools as well as several alternative and specialized programs and schools.

One particular challenge faced by educators in the Anchorage School District is a high transiency rate due to the structure of the local economy. Approximately 33% of the elementary students enrolled in ASD schools qualify for the federally funded free or reduced-price lunch program, although on a school-by-school basis the rate can be as high as 96%.

### Council of Great City Schools

In 2003, the Anchorage School District received national recognition from the Council of Great City Schools in the third edition of *Beating the Odds*, a report that looks at how inner-city schools are performing on state academic goals and

*“Although math is frequently viewed as a gatekeeper, when children understand the concepts behind the operations and relationships of numbers and have good problem solving strategies, those gates are open allowing students to go as far as they choose.”*

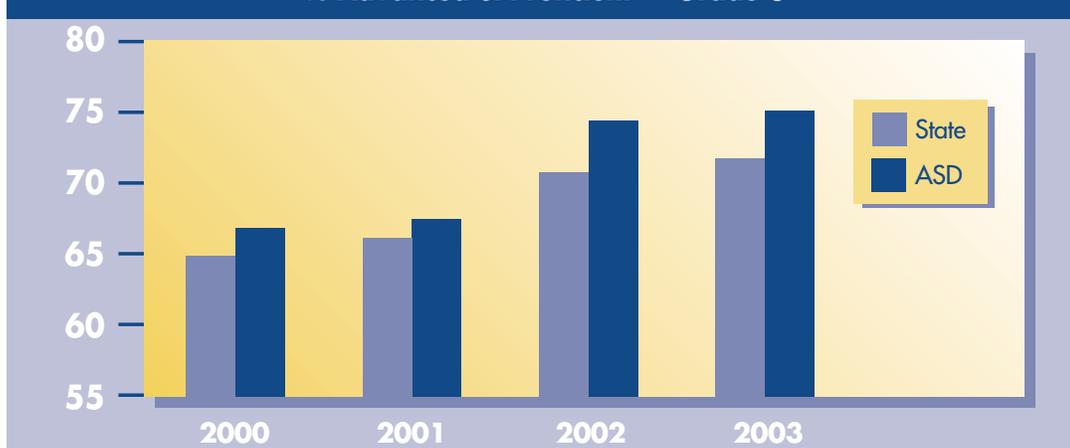
*Sandy Schoff,  
Math Curriculum Coordinator*

standards. The Anchorage School District was identified as one of 6 large urban districts nationwide which posted math and reading scores that met or exceeded statewide averages in all grades tested. The comparison to the state total is noteworthy because approximately 40% of all students in Alaska are educated in the Anchorage School District, and thus the ASD is very much being compared to itself when looking at the state totals.

### Mathematical Understanding

The mission of the Anchorage School District is to educate all students for success in life. For elementary mathematics educators in the district, this calls for all students to develop a meaningful understanding of mathematics. These educators believe that a meaningful understanding of

**Anchorage School District Mathematics Benchmark  
% Advanced & Proficient — Grade 3**



In the Anchorage School District, 75% of Grade 3 students are performing at the Advanced and Proficient levels of the state Mathematics Benchmark Evaluation.

mathematics will allow students to succeed as they continue their educations and pursue careers.

One specific goal in the ASD is to increase the number of middle-school students successfully completing algebra or pre-algebra courses by Grade 7. Students who have studied Algebra I before Grade 9 then have the opportunity to achieve at the highest level as they progress through the mathematics courses offered in high school. These students will have the solid mathematics background that is requisite for success in any college major or career.

“The real proof of *Everyday Mathematics*’ success is in the annual increase of students who successfully complete algebra by eighth grade,” states Penny Williams of the Anchorage Math Curriculum Department. “We have certainly experienced this in Anchorage.” The Anchorage School District currently reports that 28% of middle school students are completing Algebra I before entering high school, compared to approximately 18% six years ago.

### Early Adopter of *Everyday Mathematics*

In the mid-1990’s and with the goal of improving the mathematics curriculum, the Anchorage Math Curriculum Department reviewed state and national standards in mathematics and established mathematics content standards for the district. A committee comprised of teachers, parents and community members then examined all of the mathematics curriculum materials that were available at that time and rated them according to the ASD content standards. At the end of this analysis, *Everyday Mathematics* was found to be far above all of the other programs when measured against the content standards.

The Anchorage School District then moved forward with pilots of *Everyday*

*Mathematics* in five schools beginning in fall 1996. At the end of the school year, the pilot teachers reported very positive experiences with the program and their schools adopted *Everyday Mathematics*. The following year, an additional twelve Anchorage schools implemented *Everyday Mathematics* in Grades K-6. Over the next two years, another 33 Anchorage elementary schools adopted *Everyday Mathematics*.

### Support for Teachers

“Good training and support for teachers are part of the formula for a successful implementation of *Everyday Mathematics*,” comments Sandy Schoff, math curriculum coordinator in the district. With funding available from the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act, the Anchorage School District created 4 positions for Teacher Experts in mathematics.

One initiative undertaken by the Teacher Experts is delivering staff development training on *Everyday Mathematics* to all ASD teachers in the intermediate grades. In the 2003–2004 school year, teachers in Grades 4 and 5 received this training, and training for Grade 6 teachers will occur in the 2004–2005 school year. The main focus of these sessions is to assist classroom teachers with the mathematical content presented in *Everyday Mathematics* as well as with how to manage an *Everyday Mathematics* classroom.

The Teacher Experts also worked to align the secure goals in *Everyday Mathematics* Grades 1–6 with the district’s standards in mathematics. Pacing guides were created at each grade level, laying out week by week where teachers should be in the program in order to complete all of the lessons. The pacing guides show teachers how to regularly include extra practice, games and assessment rubrics in the classroom. Because of these pacing guides, many

teachers feel more confident teaching *Everyday Mathematics*.

### Results

In 1997 and 1998, the Alaska State Legislature enacted laws that require the assessment of Alaska students to ensure the accountability of Alaska’s public schools. The state’s department of education established an assessment system that consists of Benchmark Examinations in reading, writing and mathematics. Elementary school students have been taking the Benchmark Evaluations in Grades 3 and 6 since 2000.

On the Mathematics Benchmark Evaluations, many students in the Anchorage School District are performing in the Advanced and Proficient ranges according to the state standards. In 2003, 75% of Grade 3 students in Anchorage achieved scores in the Advanced and Proficient ranges of the Benchmark examination. At Grade 6, 68% of Anchorage students were performing at the Advanced and Proficient levels. Many of these students become the 7th and 8th grade students who complete algebra before entering high school

“As educators, we understand that focus makes a difference in teaching, and this is especially true when teaching *Everyday Mathematics*,” offers Schoff. “Our goal in the Anchorage Math Curriculum Department is to give teachers the tools and training to make *Everyday Mathematics* effective in their classrooms.”

For additional information on the *Everyday Mathematics* program, please contact us toll-free at 1-888-772-4543 and visit our Web site at [www.WrightGroup.com](http://www.WrightGroup.com).

Meeting All Expectations