

# EverydayMathematics® Success Stories



## Making Progress in the School District of Philadelphia

The School District of Philadelphia is the eighth largest in the nation by enrollment, serving a racially and ethnically diverse student population. The district educates a total of 180,000 students in 272 public schools composed of 177 elementary schools, 33 middle schools and 62 high schools.

The student population is primarily African-American (65%), as well as Hispanic (16%), Caucasian (14%), and Asian (6%). A recent study conducted by a local university found that 76% of the District's students are eligible for free or reduced-price meals.

The share of students in Philadelphia schools who score in the Advanced and Proficient categories on PSSA mathematics tests has doubled since 2002.

The Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA) was established in the 1990s to assess students' conceptual and procedural knowledge, and students' ability to apply that knowledge to problem situations. Under this assessment system, a few schools in Philadelphia would post high mean-scaled scores or see significant gains on the PSSA. In general however, there were low expectations for the performance of city schools, especially when compared to suburban districts.

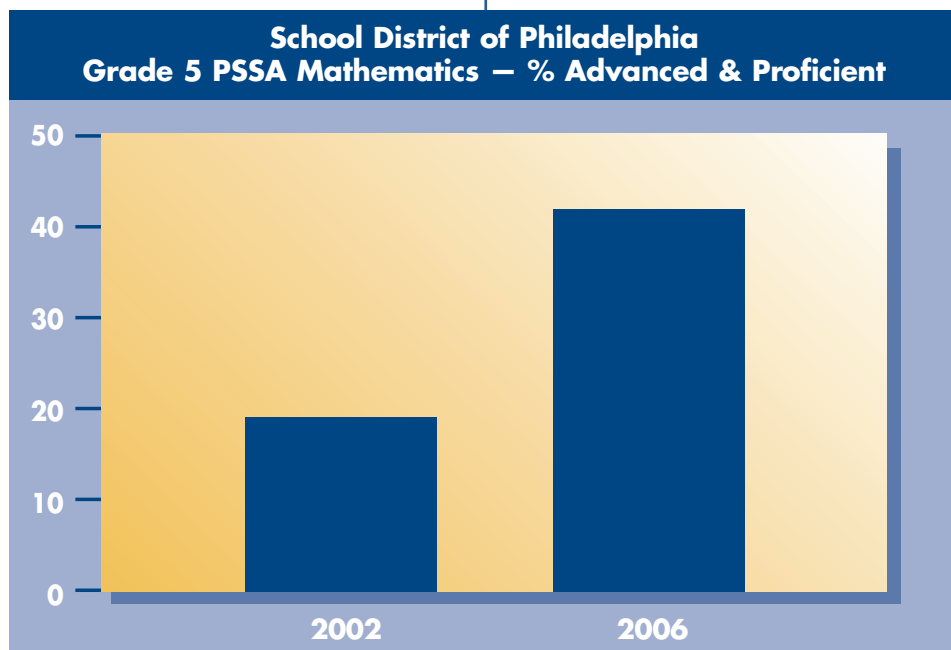
In 2001, PSSA results were reported according to performance levels and the results for the School District of Philadelphia were disappointing. On the elementary math portion of the PSSA, 59% of fifth graders in Philadelphia scored in the Below Basic category, the lowest level, compared to 22% of the state total. In 2001, only 18% of Philadelphia students scored at the Advanced and Proficient levels on the Grade 5 PSSA in mathematics.

### Seeking a Turnaround

In December 2001, leadership of the School District shifted to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and a five-member School Reform Commission was established at this time to govern the school system.

Officials in the School District then won the opportunity to re-create the educational model used in the district by taking on the responsibility for what became known as the Restructured Schools. The 21 Restructured Schools were among the lowest-scoring schools in the district. Two key changes implemented in elementary mathematics instruction were the adoption of *Everyday Mathematics* course materials at all grade levels K-5, and the expansion of the math block to 90 minutes.

By 2003, PSSA mathematics scores in the Restructured Schools had risen significantly. District leadership then



moved to expand the math instructional model from the Restructured Schools to all elementary schools in the district.

In the 2003–2004 school year, the *Everyday Mathematics* program was adopted as the core mathematics materials in the School District of Philadelphia. This represented the first time that the School District of Philadelphia selected any program on a district-wide basis. The School District then purchased *Everyday Mathematics* materials for every classroom, both regular and special education, another first.

“*Everyday Mathematics* addresses to the abilities of all children,” states Hope Yursa, Director of Mathematics in the School District. “We need to educate every child to his or her highest potential. Especially in an urban setting, students need more opportunities to learn.”

The Office of Curriculum and Instruction supports teachers in the *Everyday Mathematics* program with a planning and scheduling time line aligned to Pennsylvania state standards. The plan features periodic assessments every six weeks where students in Grades 3–8 take a criterion-referenced test based on the learning goals in *Everyday Mathematics*. With the quick turnaround of data, teachers are able to re-teach and/or enrich based on the student assessments. Yursa reports that periodic assessment every six weeks is a best practice in high-performing schools.

Philadelphia teachers are willing to use *Everyday Mathematics* materials in their classrooms because they are seeing successful results with their students and in the PSSA scores. “Success is necessary given the requirements of No Child Left Behind and Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP),” claims Yursa. “It’s fairly clear what needs to be done.”

## Results

Since adopting *Everyday Mathematics* district-wide in 2003, scores on the Grade 5 PSSA mathematics test have steadily improved. In 2006, over 42% of students in Grade 5 scored at the Advanced and Proficient levels, twice the rate four years earlier. Just as important, the number of students who place in the lowest category, Below Basic, has been reduced by about one-half.

PSSA testing was expanded to more elementary grades beginning in 2005. On the 2006 PSSA mathematics test in Grade 3, 59% of Philadelphia students scored in the Advanced and Proficient categories, an increase of 7 percentage points over 2005. The Grade 4 PSSA was first administered in 2006, and on this measure, 51% of Philadelphia students scored at the Advanced and Proficient ranges in mathematics.

## Preparing Students for Future

Yursa concludes: “As the United States participates in a more competitive, global economy, all students need to know math. All students need to be successful in math.

“A new way of mathematics education is necessary to allow our children to succeed in the 21st century. Philadelphia saw the need to change and did.”

For additional information on the *Everyday Mathematics* program, please contact us toll-free at 1-800-382-7670 and visit our Web site at [www.WrightGroup.com](http://www.WrightGroup.com).

## Meeting All Expectations