

BUILDING  
*capacity & consensus*  
THROUGH A TEACHER-LED  
MATERIALS ADOPTION

.....  
*A Case Study from Newport-Mesa Unified School District*



# About the District



32 SCHOOLS



21,000+  
STUDENTS  
FRL- 38%



1700+  
TEACHERS



ENGLISH LANGUAGE  
LEARNERS:  
24%



STUDENTS WHO  
IDENTIFY AS:

White - 45.1%  
Hispanic - 44.7%  
African American - 1.0%  
Asian American - 4.5%

## NEWPORT-MESA Adoption Process Timeline





## *A Transparent Approach to* **CURRICULUM ADOPTION**

In 2016, Newport-Mesa Unified School District began the process of adopting a new math curriculum. The central office team, led by director of curriculum and instruction, John Drake, understood that they needed to develop a transparent, comprehensive approach to the curriculum adoption process and that it would require extensive planning and preparation. Selecting high-quality instructional materials as well as building trust between the district and school communities would not be achieved by chance.

George Knights, director of professional learning and assessment says, "You have to plan for trust; it doesn't happen by accident. You have to organize a team, be open, and be transparent." Principal Gabe Del Real concurs, "It was really crucial to make sure that the teachers, the community, and all of the stakeholders understood [the district] was not in any way trying to tilt this toward one program or the other. What teachers selected through the process would be our recommendation to the board."

And so, Newport-Mesa committed to an adoption process that would be transparent, data driven, alignment focused, and above all else teacher-centered. In August of 2016, the district team proposed their plan to the board. Less than a month later, the work began.

### **THE STEERING COMMITTEE**

One of the first crucial steps in meeting the goals of the new math adoption process came in the form of the steering committee. The committee was made up of educators from throughout the district and designed so that primary and upper level grades were represented. The committee's first charge was to winnow the field of potential programs and determine which two would be piloted by 123 teachers across the district. This was a critical task. In order to ensure the decision-making was focused on materials' alignment to the standards and the district's specific needs, the district team knew additional training was required. The district turned to their local county office, the Orange County Department of Education (OCDE), which offers support

and technical assistance to districts, to work with the steering committee and provide extensive professional development in the math instructional shifts: focus, rigor, and coherence. The county and district designed a comprehensive multi-day program. Teachers and principals spent an intensive day in September learning about the shifts and how to evaluate evidence in support of those shifts. An additional full day of professional development was also provided for the expanded number of lead pilot teachers in October in advance of pilot process. Ensuring every member of the committee was anchored in the shifts and that there was a shared understanding about how materials would be winnowed was vital to keeping alignment front and center. OCDE instructional staff Vanessa Cerrahoglu, who co-led the professional development reflects, "I've been through processes where a group of us sat in a room, among piles of textbooks to sift through. Who knows if we were looking for the same things, let alone the right things? Developing a shared understanding of what "aligned to the standards" means and what that might look like, is critical. There's nothing more powerful than a room full of educators co-constructing a district lens by which to evaluate curricular materials."

As part of the training, OCDE introduced the steering committee to EdReports.org, a non-profit that provides free reviews of K-12 instructional materials based on their alignment to the standards and shifts. Its reviews are based in the same instructional shifts the committee explored during professional development. EdReports ratings and criteria became a guide in the steering committee winnowing process, as the group examined many possible programs to pilot. Lorie Hoggard, principal of Killybrooke Elementary, says, "We started using EdReports early on in the process to study the different materials that were

available. As a steering committee, we were able to focus on the EdReports criteria and rankings to make our decision."

For three weeks, the steering committee worked in teams of four, spending 5-10 hours per week using EdReports reviews to shrink the pool of potential pilot programs. Gabe Del Real was also impressed by a winnowing process grounded in alignment, supported by OCDE, the district, and EdReports that allowed the committee to do a



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**- GABE DEL REAL, PRINCIPAL**

comprehensive job in a matter of weeks, “The way we were able to have such a thorough analysis inspired a lot of confidence. Once we chose which materials to pilot, we knew we were looking at two programs where either way we’d be in a good place. We were in a position to make the best choice of the two programs for our community.”

An additional outgrowth of the steering committee was the foundation of trust that was created. Such trust would be integral throughout the adoption process and in repairing old wounds from the previous program adoption. Stacy deBoom Howard, principal on special assignment says, “The steering committee really built the relationships between those teachers. There was an open forum and dialogue that led to honest feedback. Building those open lines of communication and trust was huge.”

Near the end of the steering committee winnowing process, the district invited publishers from four different programs to visit and answer questions to help make a final decision on which two programs would be piloted. These programs all met or partially met EdReports criteria for alignment and Newport-Mesa’s priorities for a quality program. This was not the traditional publisher sales call visit. Instead, because of their work with OCDE on the shifts and with EdReports reviews on evaluating alignment, the steering committee was able to focus on the quality of the materials and specific questions they had in relation to district priorities and usability.

Finally, after many hours of deliberation, the teachers and principals on the steering committee chose two programs to pilot: one that fully met EdReports criteria for alignment and one that came very close to meeting the criteria.

## THE PILOT

The focus on evidence gathering and data didn’t end with the steering committee. As the pilot approached, 30 lead pilot teachers (some who were included in the steering committee and others who were new to the process) received additional intensive training in October in the math shifts, the EdReports review framework, and evidence gathering. Fifth grade teacher Becky Brockman notes, “We wanted to make sure everyone was looking at the same criteria with the same idea in their head of how we were going to be looking at it.” These lead teachers then worked with additional pilot teachers from each grade level at their schools to make sure that the

the shared understanding extended to all who would participate in the pilot.

From December 2016 - April 2017, 123 teachers piloted two programs for seven weeks each. Pilot teachers were required to enter weekly data based on a rubric the steering committee had co-developed. The large swaths of evidence gathered specifically concentrated on alignment criteria. Fourth grade teacher James Christman says, “A lot of the focus of our pilot process was on the three shifts: rigor, coherence, and focus. In evaluating the programs, those [shifts] were weighted more heavily when you entered the quantitative scores for evidence. Then there were other categories that were weighted less, like teacher usability, assessment, and technology.” The emphasis on evidence left an impression on principal Lorie Hoggard, “To really have evidence so [the evaluation] could go beyond how somebody feels about the program was powerful. The pilot process really went deep into the evidence, and I respected that.” Throughout the pilot process, evidence wasn’t simply collected, it was also analyzed. Equipped with the professional development they had received from OCDE, teachers and the district staff were also able to identify trends in the materials, as well as gaps that might require additional professional development and support.

Central to the pilot process was teacher voice and leadership. Teacher Becky Brockman says, “We were at those pilot meetings, and it was teacher led. We all felt like we had a sincere voice in the decisions. All of our comments, positive and negative, were definitely heard and thought through. We really got to say how we felt while analyzing the materials and people were listening.”

## A Conversation with Publishers

When meeting with publishers the steering committee focused on program specific questions as they related to district priorities. Questions included:

- What online resources are available for both classroom teachers and families at home? Are formative and summative assessments available online? What question types do you use?
- Please share with us the instructional materials you have to support students who need intervention, enrichment or language support? Is differentiation built into your lessons?
- How does the K-2 curriculum support the learning progressions in grade 3-5? Do you have any data on how the students who have used the program in grades 3-5 did on the SBAC?

## Professional Development Deep Dive

### September 19<sup>th</sup> - Steering Committee Meeting Training

- Overview of Focus, Coherence, and Rigor
- Criteria for Evaluation Identified
- Request for Publisher Presentation

### October 19<sup>th</sup> - Pilot Lead Teacher Training - Day 1

- Overview of Focus and Coherence
- Evidence Gathering: What Counts

### December 1<sup>st</sup> - Pilot Lead Teacher Training- Day 2

- Revisiting Focus and Coherence
- Rigor and Standards of Mathematical Practices
- Identifying Alignment and Evidence Gathering
- Permission to Author Evaluation Tool

### January 31<sup>st</sup> - Pilot Lead Teacher Training- Day 3

- Making SBAC Connections and Communication Tools
- Calibration of Evidence and Team Evaluation for Round #1



## Using EdReports.org in the Newport-Mesa Adoption Process: Orange County Department of Education Perspective

Newport-Mesa partnered with the Orange County Department of Education throughout the adoption process. County instructional staff Jody Guarino and Vanessa Cerrahoglu led this effort, supported by their deep content knowledge and expertise, as well as the tools, evidence guides, and reviews from EdReports.org.



### ADOPTION PLANNING PROCESS

- Incorporation of EdReports as an external objective evaluation source
- Inspiration from EdReports 8 adoption steps



### DEVELOPMENT OF DISTRICT EVALUATION TOOL

- Teacher analysis of EdReports to decide what should be included in district evaluation tool
- EdReports as a guide to determine weight of particular indicators



### PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLANNING

- EdReports tools, evidence guides and reviews used as a framework for professional development sessions for pilot teachers



### WINNOWING

- Teacher analysis of EdReports reviews to identify which programs to pilot in winnowing process
- Resource for steering committee as they considered publisher sessions



### CALIBRATION DURING PILOT

- Built a shared understanding about what quality evidence of alignment looks like based on EdReports reviews.



### PROGRAM SELECTION

- EdReports review data was a source used on consensus day to inform program selection



*“EdReports’ tools and instructional reviews not only supported a shared understanding of alignment indicators but provided structures to facilitate a large group in calibration processes.”*

- JODY GUARINO, OCDE INSTRUCTIONAL STAFF

Hoggard concurs, “As administrators, we did not complete any of the criteria, feedback or evaluation of the curriculum. Our role was to facilitate and collaborate with teachers in a dialogue. I think that’s something that’s really noteworthy in this process: the true value that was put on teacher feedback about the materials.”

After five months of meetings, piloting, and evidence gathering, the district team sat down to look at the pilot results. Based on pilot evaluations, recommendations for the two programs were split in half. Half of the pilot participants thought one program should be adopted. The other half thought the other program was the best choice. John Drake remembers meeting with his team and trying to figure out the next step, “We said ‘How are we going to come together and make a decision here? We can’t have winners and losers.’ At that point, we started to explore the idea of a consensus protocol.”

## THE CONSENSUS PROCESS

Stakes were high for the day of consensus. The adoption process had already been going on for eight months. Thousands of hours of collective work had been poured into preparation, the steering committee, and the pilot. And now it had all come down to April 26, 2017 when the lead pilot teachers came together to reach consensus. At the beginning of the day there were three possible outcomes: recommending one of the two new programs to the board or continue using the current program. There was no predetermined outcome.

The first task was to ensure there was a shared definition and understanding of what consensus means. George Knights talks about the importance of framing consensus and distinguishing consensus from the concept of voting where a 51 percent majority automatically prevails, “The idea is that all voices are heard, and you don’t move forward until everyone in the room, even those who most oppose it, can see the will of the group emerging.” Throughout the day, there were ways for teachers to weigh in on whether or not their voice was being heard through activities as well as “dotting in” with stickers on wall charts.

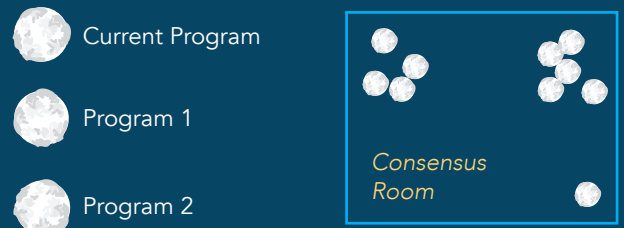
Keeping the commitment to the data driven nature of the adoption process, the day began with a review of

all the evidence gathered in the pilot. The data was made especially accessible and effective through real-time data visualizations put together by Knights’ team. For the first time, teachers were able to see not just their own pilot evidence but how the programs had fared across the district and why. James Christman discusses the impact of seeing all the evidence for the first time, “From my perspective when we were able to view all of

## CONSENSUS PROCESS PROTOCOLS

*Each activity was designed so that all voices would be heard and to reveal the will of the group.*

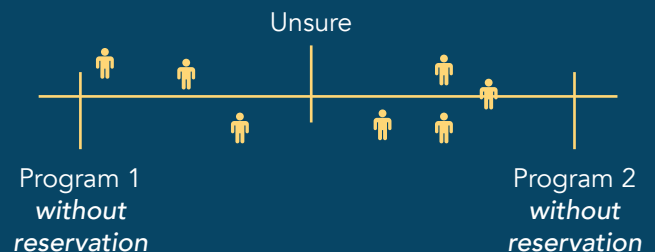
### SNOWBALLS - Individual, Anonymous



### CONSENSUS CUPS - Small group discussion



### ON THE LINE - Whole group, declarative





the data, it was interesting to see the tilt between K-2 and 3-5 and to understand this was truly a K-5 process. It was interesting to see the scores that had come in for each of the two programs. And it was especially impactful for us to use the data collected in our consensus discussions.”

After data review and discussion, the first activity was snowball activity. The purpose was to try to eliminate one of the three choices. Each teacher wrote on a piece of paper the program they would choose for adoption. Those papers were balled up and thrown into the middle of the room so that they could no longer be attached to the person who wrote it. The next step was for each teacher to pick up a random snowball and go into a corner of the room based on what program was written on the piece of paper. The new programs were fairly evenly split. The current program corner had only a few representatives. John Drake says, “That was the first opportunity to say ‘Is there a will that we can glean from this activity?’ Everyone could see that there was. The will of the group was that few believe the current program is viable.” The choice was down to two.

The consensus cups activity moved from the relative safety of anonymity to a small group discussion. Teachers were split into groups of five. Each group had two facilitators to help with the discussion. Through the use of six colored cups, teachers could weigh in on how they were feeling and where their state of mind was regarding the programs. John Drake discusses how the cups were particularly effective in ensuring all voices were heard, “That one protocol was really cool because you looked at your table and you had green, blue, green and then all of the sudden you had a red cup meaning someone was not in. Without that signal of dissension, that person would have been able to hide. The cup allowed us to recognize them and say ‘Thanks for sharing. I see you’re still red. Talk to me about what’s behind that.’ And then we’d have their voice in the conversation. Sometimes, somebody would go from orange back to red because they were convinced by others’ voices.”

After the group discussion, the next activity required whole group and individual participation. Stretched across the room, teachers stood on an invisible line.

Teachers chose where to stand on the line to signify how certain they were about one program or the other. Those with the strongest opinions stood at either end. Those still undecided and seeing equal value in both programs stood in the middle.

As the teachers stood on the line in the final activity, it was clear there was not yet a consensus on which program to choose. Many teachers were worried about colleagues back at their school site and how those teachers’ voices should factor into the decisions. Then, principal and lead facilitator, Duane Cox, reminded them about the training they had received, their understanding of the instructional shifts, and the fact that alignment had been the guiding principle throughout the process. John Drake recounts, “He said to them: Now what if you step back and look at the training you’ve received, where would you be on the line? Knowing that you have a lot more information than the people who didn’t participate, where would you go? And then they started to move.”

As teachers began to shift, one spoke up, crystallizing the moral imperative of the decision the group was facing. The teacher pointed out that one program would be easier for teachers to use, but the other program would be better for students. She said that if she thought about which classroom she’d want her child to be in, she would select the second program without hesitation. The entire group took in her statement, and as Dr. Cox continued asking questions over the next half hour, the line fluctuated towards the program that many believed would be a challenge to implement but offered tremendous promise for student learning.

Eventually, there were only three out of 30 people remaining on one end. One of those three convinced himself to move down the line. George Knights says, “And then there were two, and the two were just dug in. Duane asked them, ‘But do you see the will of the group in this room emerge?’ And that’s really when people realized, this is what consensus means, even if you disagree. This is not about winners and losers; it’s about moving forward.”

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**“This is not about winners and losers; it’s about moving forward.”**  
- GEORGE KNIGHTS,  
DISTRICT STAFF





## *Lasting Impacts*

### *Leadership Development and Building Capacity*

Based on their own analysis, evidence from EdReports reviews, and the decisions reached through consensus, Newport-Mesa was ready to recommend a high-quality K-5 math program to the school board. The lasting impacts of the comprehensive, teacher-centered adoption process have been wide-ranging. The internal capacity the district built for future adoptions, as well as the professional development and leadership skills teachers gained have proved invaluable. Kurt Suhr, executive director of elementary education, says, "The development of teacher leadership and expertise gained from the OCDE training continues. There was a big curve in learning, but now we have teachers who are much more equipped to teach mathematics than they were previously. They feel really good about being part of a process, and they have materials that are playing out with kids in a positive way." Duane Cox echoes Suhr's views about how the process built capacity and leadership skills, "The principals and teacher leaders in the room learned decision making strategies. They walked away with protocols. We're hearing people talk about those and hopefully we're moving to a place as a district where there's opportunity to articulate how a decision is going to be made, as well as what tools and protocols we'll use to make that decision." The next time the district is making an adoption decision, they won't be starting from scratch. They'll have a game plan, teachers, and principals who have been through it before and can share with colleagues all that they learned.

## *A Strong Implementation Plan*

Once the district adopted the materials, they put together a plan for implementation to ensure teachers could start the school year off strong and continue developing their expertise in the new curriculum.

### **Implementation Processes Included:**

- 2017 Summer Professional Development
- Yearlong 2017-2018 Moonlight Series:
  - Two hour grade level specific sessions held each month, available at a variety of times
  - One unit covered per monthly session
  - Lead pilot teachers and district staff leading sessions

### **Sample Moonlight Series Agenda:**

- Sharing of Success and Challenges
- Unit Introduction
  - End of unit assessment
  - Identification of big ideas within the unit
- Unpacking Modules
  - Concepts, representations, and strategies within the unit
- Making Sense of Workplaces



### *Implementation and Classroom-Level Impact*

In the fall of 2017, district schools began implementing the new program. The leadership skills of the teachers involved in implementation, as well as, the wider positive impact of the teacher-led and data centered adoption process on the community have been especially evident during the implementation phase. Principal Duane Cox says, "Because teachers felt their voices were heard and they were part of the decision, they are really making a very successful roll out of the new materials." The trust and buy-in has not been confined to those teachers who participated in the pilot or the steering committee. Cox continues, "The word came out to school sites about how the decision was made and I think it's given us so much leverage in the rollout of a curriculum that's not easy to [implement]." Principal Lorie Hoggard agrees, "There was buy-in



from having a very teacher focused process." Kurt Suhr, executive director of elementary education, says that even those who had hoped a different program would be chosen have contributed to a smooth implementation, "Because of the process, the conversations are centered around the collaborative spirit involved in reaching a final decision. There was so much transparency and teamwork that the teachers who participated in making the final decision influenced their colleagues in a very positive way to help everyone move forward with our implementation."

This is not to say that implementation has been easy or flawless. Principals Lorie Hoggard, Gabe Del Real, and Duane Cox all point out the cognitive load and extensive planning the new program requires, especially in the inaugural year. But despite the very real work, Gabe Del Real says, "People are still very enthusiastic about the program. They're excited about it." And that's because most teachers view the new program as potentially transformative for their students.

The commitment to student learning was at the heart of the adoption process. Student learning was central to the consensus protocol as well. Del Real says, "The fact that at the end of the day teachers chose to recommend a program they knew would take a lot more work and energy on their part, but would provide clear benefit and value for the students, speaks volumes about what they wanted to achieve in the end and the willingness to take on more work to achieve it."

Teacher Becky Brockman has seen the power of the current program first-hand in her classroom, "I'm seeing students think about math in different ways than they perhaps have ever thought about it before."

She also notes that the impact of the program is likely to increase as teachers work through an initial year of implementation. She says, "I'm excited that I have curriculum that I can really sink my teeth into for the next 2-3 years to keep learning. It's exciting and a big relief that we have curriculum that is well thought-out, already been used by other districts, and we know that we are presenting the students with quality materials and will continue to do so."

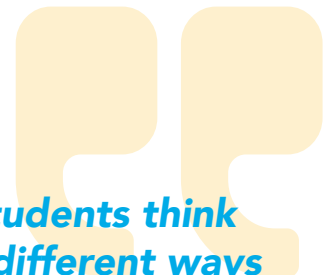
Gabe Del Real echoes Brockman's support and ties the potential impact and longevity of their new math program to the teacher-led, alignment focused process that led to the program's adoption. "I'm really inspired by the fact that because the process was so thorough and so genuine every step of the way, there's a great deal of confidence that we will have this program in our district for years to come. We won't have to go back

and have people second guessing on how the program arrived, or worse, move on to something prematurely just because they feel like it wasn't something that teachers had a say in, because they absolutely did."



***A textbook adoption affects a generation of students. We set out to develop a streamlined process in which district teams could work together to get aligned curriculum in the hands of every teacher and student.***

**- VANESSA CERRAHOGLU,  
OCDE STAFF**



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**- BECKY BROCKMAN, TEACHER**