

PARTNERSHIP STUDY

Making the Instructional Shift: A Network's Success Story

Independence Mission Schools



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Making the Instructional Shift: A Network's Success Story

SchoolKit partnered with Independence Mission Schools to:

- ✓ Support a network of schools through an instructional transition
- ✓ Improve performance on network “success metrics” in their first year of partnership
- ✓ Observe and support learning and growth for teachers and leaders within the first year

PARTNER OVERVIEW

Independence Mission Schools

Independence Mission Schools in Philadelphia, PA, is a non-profit network of 15 independent Catholic schools providing education to children of all faiths in low-income neighborhoods across the city. In 2012, when the future of Catholic schools across Philadelphia was threatened, investors, along with a small group of other engaged citizens, rose to the need for leadership and set out to emulate the success of the first school, St. Martin de Porres. In 2013 Independence Mission Schools was established as a non-profit, assuming the complete and independent operation of 15 schools from their parishes and the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. By 2018, with a new academic network leadership team in place, the stage was set to ensure that all leaders and teachers across the network had access to high-quality math materials and the training and support needed to guide network-wide implementation.



15

K-8
SCHOOLS

300

NETWORK
EDUCATORS

98%

ELIGIBLE FOR
FINANCIAL AID

THE CHALLENGE

Supporting IMS Leaders & Teachers as They Adopt and Implement an Aligned Math Curriculum Across 15 Schools

The IMS network team had a daunting task in front of them: guide a network-wide implementation of a new math curriculum (Eureka) to a newly formed education community across fifteen K–8 schools.

The IMS team knew this change would require both technical and adaptive changes on behalf of school leaders and classrooms teachers. The path forward to successful implementation would demand time, attention, and commitment to learning across the entire network. Not only would it be a network-wide change to recognize and solidify best practices of teaching, but for the implementation to be successful it would require hands-on engagement and training for teachers and leaders.

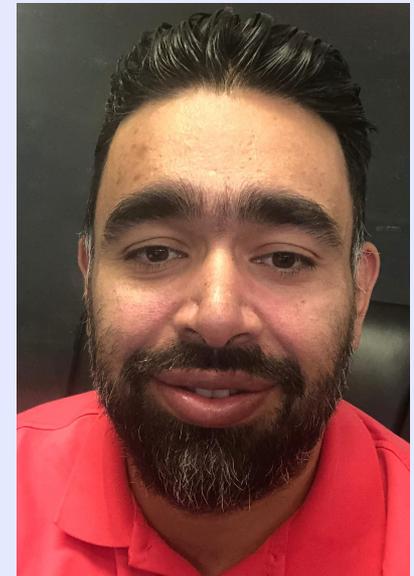


“Our mathematics vision is to place rigorous, standards-aligned, on-grade math content in front of every student in grades Pre-K to 5, every day, and support teachers and leaders in that effort.”

Gregory Vincent, Chief Academic Officer, IMS

“We were not using Eureka math prior to our work with the SchoolKit team....Even though there was apprehension from staff about moving away from a long-standing curriculum, there was an exciting opportunity for our network to start over. Our decision to adopt a new curriculum and dig deep into what it would take to understand the standards and shifts was centered on our kids. We kept coming back to ‘we want our student to have college and career and happiness in life’ and we let that guide our steps and conversations.”

Charles Arroyave, Principal, St. Rosa Lima



GETTING READY

Building Engagement

Authentic engagement of the network started with the creation of a Math Steering Committee. This group of educators—which consisted of the SchoolKit and IMS academic team, and select school and teacher leaders—helped lay the foundation for launching Eureka Math across schools.

The committee focused on the selection of a high quality and aligned curriculum. Once Eureka was selected, committee members held information sessions in their schools so that they could share the program overview, answer questions, and create excitement about the shift. The committee also built their knowledge of the standards and shifts. They strategized about how to best align systems and structures to ensure that all students had access to at least an hour of math instruction each day. They also made sure that there were weekly opportunities for same-grade or grade band math teachers to meet and plan as a PLC with a coach or administrator.

“With SchoolKit’s partnership, we formed a steering committee that looked at math curriculum options. Whatever decision we made—we wanted it to be inclusive of the network so we asked a set of network leaders, teachers, and leaders to join the committee. The committee was instrumental in helping us to think about how we were going to create real opportunities to build training and support educators in learning and unpacking the standards and shifts.”

Joshua Taton, Director of Mathematics, IMS

BUILDING A LEARNING COMMUNITY

Network Leadership Support

SchoolKit and IMS created a customized plan for the first year of partnership—the goals of the plan were to ensure that educators had a mix of training and support.

The network leadership team is small and supports 15 schools, 25 school leaders, and 270 teachers, with 220 of those as core subject area teachers.

Collaboratively, the SchoolKit and network team mapped out a set of regular work sessions, check-ins, and processes to support ongoing learning, coaching, walkthroughs, and the collection and review of data. Together, they set data-driven goals, built stakeholder buy-in, and monitored progress. The focus of the work was to ensure that every touchpoint across the year was in support of building a strong network that helped to drive equitable outcomes for all students.

“We wouldn’t have been able to make the change without SchoolKit. As network leaders, our charge was to ensure successful implementation of the curriculum across classrooms. Our goal was to help teachers and leaders understand how the curriculum was designed. We wanted to support our leaders in building their math instructional leadership skills. For everyone, myself included, we were also building our collective knowledge of the standards and shifts.”

Claire Frosch, Director of Academic Initiatives, IMS

BUILDING A LEARNING COMMUNITY

Teacher Professional Learning

Teaching conceptually was a big shift for teachers because most didn't experience it as students. The learning pathway for teachers started with the unpacking of the standards and shifts in mathematics in the summer. Changes in the schedule were made to ensure that teachers had time and support to plan.

Across the year, teachers had the opportunity to address common implementation challenges (pacing), annotate lessons, examine student talk and learning. To support teachers in using the materials with integrity and creating experiences that allow their students to do the deep thinking on their own – a hallmark of high-quality math instruction – IMS and SchoolKit collected data regularly on Eureka Math implementation and talked with teachers about their experiences. All information gathered was used to make responsive adjustments to learning sessions and the coaching they received from school leaders.

“We kept a laser-like focus on the specific goals for what we wanted leaders, teachers and students to accomplish in the first year -- aligned teacher and leader support to those goals and monitoring progress monthly. In sessions, we spent time on the nuts and bolts of implementation as well as the math standards and the Eureka curriculum. We also really worked to create a safe space for learning and planning at the network, school and classroom level.”

Tammy Tuck, Director of School Partnerships, SchoolKit

BUILDING A LEARNING COMMUNITY

Leader Professional Learning & Coaching

The pathway for school leaders had two parts. The first focused on in-person, monthly learning sessions, which ranged from understanding and unpacking the standards and shifts to supporting teachers with planning and using data. Leaders had the time and support to think deeply about the systems and structures that needed to be in place to support rigorous instruction.

The second part of the leadership pathway was a focus on building the instructional leader through coaching. Leaders received one-on-one coaching to support the implementation of strategies from professional learning sessions. This is where the network and SchoolKit team saw real traction—leaders reported increased confidence in their ability to dig into lessons and student work. A new supportive learning community was carefully built.

“Over the summer, we worked collaboratively with SchoolKit to plan a year-long instructional leadership institute, where leaders practiced how to conduct a collaborative planning meeting and provide actionable feedback to teachers. Leadership training has been further supported by SchoolKit coaches, who meet monthly with our leaders on-site to provide feedback and support around the strategies they recently learned in training sessions. Our data to date suggests meaningful changes to school leader practice that we expect will lead to improvement in student learning.”

Gregory Vincent, Chief Academic Officer, IMS

OUTCOMES

Celebrating Successes

The IMS and SchoolKit team has much to celebrate after the first year of partnership. Hard work, planning, and a responsive partnership resulted in a strong foundation for the next phase of work.

The IMS and SchoolKit team closely re-examined the goals of the partnership to see what progress had been made towards a successful implementation of the curriculum across the network in the first year. What they discovered was exciting.

There was improved performance on network ‘success metrics’ for the initiative over the year. Metrics included an improvement of classroom walkthrough data. Leaders and teachers reported a perceived growth in the ability to implement Eureka including within lesson pacing and long-term pacing; understanding of and consistency with each lesson component; closer attention to conceptual understanding (vs. procedural skill & fluency) in instruction; and depth of students’ math thinking and discourse. Teachers and leaders reported that a stronger and focused learning community had been built across the network. Leadership coaching had taken root and both leaders and teachers reported changes in their understanding of content and the pedagogical moves that support it. Spring 2019 median achievement results showed that there were math gains across all grade bands. Network leaders shared that they have a strong and ambitious plan for year two of support and training.

As the director of mathematics of a network of schools, I've greatly appreciated the support and responsiveness of the SchoolKit Group team. In particular, the team has provided invaluable logistical and intellectual preparation support around our monthly leadership meetings and teacher-facing professional development. Moreover, they have hired a group of coaches to work in our schools and with our leaders, who are consistently thoughtful, well-prepared, and highly-respected for their work in data analysis, reviewing student work, lesson planning, and much more. It is great to collaborate with professionals, who listen to our needs and put the goals of instruction and teachers and students, foremost. We're excited about the second year of partnership.

Joshua Taton, Director of Mathematics, Independence Mission Schools



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