

The School District of Philadelphia: A SUCCESS STORY

The passing of the federal “No Child Left Behind” legislation has placed school administrators under pressure to ensure that their schools meet Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) in core subject areas. To make AYP in math during 2003/2004, 35% or more of a school’s student population was required to score at the “proficient and above” level on state standardized tests. In the 2004/2005 school year, that benchmark becomes 45%.

Administrators who are meeting this challenge are providing their schools with a comprehensive package of resources that contain a solid core curriculum, and vibrant supplemental programs. These programs insure that students are engaged in the learning process and are spending the time necessary to internalize requisite skills.

The School District of Philadelphia used funding from their Urban Systemic Program (USP) grant for the implementation of a mathematics intervention to target the needs of its urban population base. The First In Math® program was used in more than 2,600 third through eighth grade classrooms throughout the district during the 2003/2004 school year. The program was selected to meet criteria defined by district CEO, Paul Vallas, that an intervention program in mathematics must: 1) strengthen basic skills; 2) contain a technology element; and 3) create competition to motivate students to achieve.

The first-year implementation of



John Rodriguez, a student at Conwell Middle School, receives accolades from his Principal, George Roesser, during a First In Math® Program celebration in March, 2004. Students received certificates and medals in recognition of their outstanding mathematics achievement.

the First In Math® program was a resounding success. Students in the District logged over 216,000 hours on the First In Math® site, proving their dedication and willingness to tackle a range of increasingly challenging math problems from simple addition through decimals, fractions, exponents and complex algebra.

The 2004 Pennsylvania State Standard Assessment (PSSA) results for the School District of Philadelphia showed a significant increase in overall performance in math. The scores showed a 7.4% increase in 5th grade students scoring at the proficient and above level. Improvement among their 8th grade students was a dramatic 11.1% increase. These results placed the district ahead of Pennsylvania’s average increase in scores, a 5.2% in 5th grade students and a 6.1% increase in 8th grade students.

The First In Math® program, developed by Suntex International Inc., draws on the company’s 16 years of experience in stimulating the achievement process in mathematics among diverse populations. The combination of the family of 24® game products with current technology allowed Suntex to design an online program that has a proven track record of improving math skills and raising overall test scores. The First In Math® program is easy to implement in schools, regardless of size. Students and teachers are given pre-assigned User IDs and Passwords. Suntex provides continuous follow up to ensure materials are used and the students are receiving all of the incentives set for each achievement level.

Teachers benefited by using the real-time assessment feature to see which teams/students were using the site, the percentage of students mas-

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tering basic facts, the degree of students’ test preparedness, how far students in the district were progressing and more. The online assessment reports allow teachers to identify which students are struggling and can intervene significantly earlier than in the past. Educators can also try out the games for themselves and improve their own numerical fluency and technology quotient.

Regionwide Case Histories

Northwest Region

One of the largest regions in the Philadelphia School District, it included 26 schools, 309 classrooms and 8,326 students that were actively involved in the First In Math® (FIM) program. These students were among the top performers in the program, having spent over 30,000 hours on the site and earning over 2,000,000 FIM award stickers.

The Northwest Region captured 1st Place with the most “Top First In Math® Schools” (9 out of 25) in the School District of Philadelphia. More importantly, the Northwest Region’s PSSA test scores showed dramatic improvement.

The Northwest Region’s fifth grade scores increased 15.1%, double the school district’s 7.4% and nearly triple the state’s 5.2% increase. Eighth grade scores increased 16.6%, exceeding the district’s 11.1% and more than 2 1/2 times the state’s 6.1% increase.

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Northwest Region Schools - 2004/2003 PSSA Scores in Math

5th Grade	% Proficient & up 2004	% Proficient & up 2003	% Change 2004-2003	Enrollment 2004	# Students Proficient & up 2004 vs. 2003*	
School Name						
Charles W Henry	55.4	22.1	33.3	57	32	13
Cook-Wissahickon	69.1	60.0	9.1	59	41	35
Day, Anna B	33.4	20.8	12.6	90	30	19
Dobson, James	50.0	44.1	5.9	28	14	12
Edmonds, Franklin S	55.0	29.1	25.9	106	58	31
Ellwood	46.1	40.4	5.7	87	40	35
Fitler Academics Plus	50.9	29.0	21.9	59	30	17
Houston, Henry E	33.3	18.3	15.0	82	27	15
Howe, Julia Ward	76.8	53.5	23.3	53	41	28
Jenks, John S	37.2	47.0	-9.8	53	20	25
Levering, William	38.6	77.8	-39.2	47	18	37
Lingelbach, Anna L	51.9	30.9	21.0	54	28	17
McCloskey, John F	18.4	10.8	7.6	69	13	7
Mifflin, Thomas	46.4	50.0	-3.6	30	14	15
Pennell, Joseph	29.9	7.1	22.8	84	25	6
Pennypacker, Samuel	45.7	12.0	33.7	89	41	11
Prince Hall	40.7	19.8	20.9	101	41	20
Rowen, William	41.4	24.3	17.1	89	37	22
Shawmont	67.2	41.3	25.9	71	48	29
Widener Memorial	33.3	0.0	33.3	8	3	0
Wister, John	21.9	17.2	4.7	63	14	11
REGIONWIDE	44.5	29.3	15.1	1379	613	405

NOTE: Levering's 39.2% decrease can be explained in part by noting that only 18 of 47 5th grade students were active. Levering 5th grade students earned only 1,907 total stickers (106 stickers per student) compared to Edmonds 5th graders who earned 74,641 total stickers (655 stickers per student).

Northwest Region Schools - 2004/2003 PSSA Scores in Math

8th Grade	% Proficient & up 2004	% Proficient & up 2003	% Change 2004-2003	Enrollment 2004	# Students Proficient & up 2004 vs. 2003*	
School Name						
Amy NW	32.2	18.5	13.7	92	30	17
Charles W Henry	48.5	63.6	-15.1	70	34	45
Dobson, James	61.6	31.1	30.5	41	25	13
Fitler Academics Plus	58.5	16.9	41.6	55	32	9
Hill-Freedman	84.7	43.5	41.2	79	67	34
Houston, Henry E	44.1	21.8	22.3	87	38	19
Jenks, John S	55.6	48.2	7.4	57	32	27
Leeds, Morris E MS	17.5	21.3	-3.8	209	37	45
Levering, William	43.3	21.5	21.8	64	28	14
Mifflin, Thomas	47.2	14.3	32.9	36	17	5
Shawmont	50.5	37.8	12.7	93	47	35
Wagner, Gen Louis MS	50.0	25.2	24.8	298	149	75
Widener Memorial	14.3	0	14.3	28	4	0
REGIONWIDE	44.6	28.0	16.6	1209	539	338

* Assumes the enrollment figures for 2003 are the same as 2004.

School Case Histories — Fifth Grade

Anne Frank Elementary School. Fifth grade students here were ranked #1 in the FIM program for Philadelphia's Northeast Region and ranked #4 in the district. The school's PSSA scores **jumped 14%**, making Anne Frank Elementary the highest-scoring school in the Northeast Region—85.1% of 5th grade students performed at the proficient and above levels.

Longstreth Elementary School. Longstreth students were ranked #1 in the First In Math® program for the Southwest Region and #5 in the district. While only 7.1% of 5th graders were proficient in math in the previous school year, students demonstrated their willingness to work hard in the FIM program, and reached 38.1% proficient this year, a **31% increase**.

Charles Henry School. Ranked #4 in the Northwest Region in the FIM

program. Fifth grade students went from 22.1% proficient to 55.4% proficient, a **33.3% increase**.

The Top 14 First In Math® Schools' 18.1% increase is nearly 2 1/2 times the School District of Philadelphia's increase of 7.4%, and more than triple the state's increase of 5.2% for 5th grade.

Prince Hall School. Ranked #2 in the FIM program in the Northwest Region. Fifth grade students achieved a **20.9% improvement**, moving from 19.8% the previous year to 40.7% proficient in the 2003/2004 school

year. This effort helped Prince Hall make AYP in mathematics.

Fairhill Elementary School. Ranked #1 in the FIM program in the Central East Region, Fairhill 5th graders achieved a **24.3% increase** in PSSA scores, rising from 30.3% to 54.6% proficient.

Meredith School. Ranked #1 in the First In Math® program in the South Region. Fifth grade students achieved a **19.9% improvement**, moving from 45.1% the previous year to 65% proficient, in the 2003/2004 year.

Moffet Elementary School. Fifth grade students here were ranked #2 in the First In Math® program in the Central East Region. Moffet's 5th grade PSSA test scores **jumped 28.4%**, rising from 36.6% to 65% proficient.

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Top 14 Schools in the First In Math® Program - 2004/2003 PSSA Test Scores in Math

FIM Rank	5th Grade School Name	Region	FIM Stickers/Student	FIM Students Active	PSSA 2004 % Proficient	PSSA 2003 % Proficient	PSSA 2004-2003 % Change	Enrollment 2004	# Student Proficient & up 2004	# Students Proficient & up 2003*
1	Pollock	East	825	70	70.5	62.5	8.0	74	52	46
2	Spruance	Northeast	731	140	53.5	50.7	2.8	145	78	74
3	Edmonds	Northwest	654	114	55.0	29.1	25.9	106	58	31
4	Anne Frank	Northeast	648	156	85.1	71.1	14.0	140	119	100
5	Longstreth	Southwest	627	84	38.1	7.1	31.0	87	33	6
6	Fox Chase	Northeast	538	62	45.1	34.1	11.0	56	25	19
7	Comly	Northeast	505	67	61.8	50.0	11.8	70	43	35
8	Fairhill	Central East	499	62	54.6	30.3	24.3	60	33	18
9	Prince Hall	Northwest	497	92	40.7	19.8	20.9	101	41	20
10	Howe	Northwest	492	51	76.8	53.5	23.3	53	41	28
11	Hancock	Northeast	488	82	82.6	65.7	16.9	72	59	47
12	Charles Henry	Northwest	470	54	55.4	22.1	33.3	57	32	13
13	Meredith	South	466	57	65.0	45.1	19.9	58	38	26
14	Moffet	Central East	465	76	65.0	36.6	28.4	65	42	24
TOP 14 SCHOOLS					60.7	42.6	18.1	1144	694	487

School Case Histories — Eighth Grade

Hill Freedman Middle School. With a predominantly African-American student population, Hill Freedman is an excellent example of the First In Math® program's ability to motivate the desire to excel in a diverse student population. The school was ranked #3 in the state on the FIM site on May 17th, 2004 when students assembled for an awards ceremony to honor their achievement.

PSSA test results confirmed an extraordinary **41.2% improvement** among 8th grade students, 84.7% of who scored at the proficient and above levels.

Fitler School. Ranked #1 in the FIM program in the Northwest Region and #6 in the district, these 8th grade students made everyone proud when test scores **increased 41.6%**, taking Fitler from 16.9% proficient the previous year to 58.5% proficient this year.

Conwell Middle School. Located in the Central East Region of Philadelphia, this school has a large minority population. Approximately 40% of students

were from non-English speaking homes. Native languages included Spanish, Romanian, Albanian and Haitian dialects. The First In Math® program motivated Conwell 8th grade students

The Top 14 FIM Schools' 15% increase exceeds the School District's increase of 11.1%, and is nearly 1 1/2 times the state's increase of 6.1% for 8th grade.

to leave a "legacy of excellence" upon their graduation—they were ranked #1, #2 and #3 statewide for all three 8th grade teams by March, 2004.

PSSA test results again reflected Conwell's achievement with a **25.1% jump** among 8th grade students. 72.2% scored at the proficient and above levels. A dramatic improvement over the previous year scores at 41.7%.

What makes Conwell's achievement so remarkable is that most students in this school did not have Internet access at home. Students made the effort to come to school as early as 6:30 am to use the computer lab before class.

Reynolds School. Ranked #1 in the FIM program in the district and the state, these 8th grade students showed a **27.6% improvement**. Their hard work took Reynolds from 10.7% proficient in the previous year to 38.3% proficient this year, helping the school to achieve AYP for mathematics.

Dobson School. Ranked #6 in the Northwest Region and #14 for the district in the FIM program. Dobson 8th grade students achieved a **30.5% improvement** from the previous year PSSA results.

Farrell School. Ranked #1 in FIM in the Northeast Region and #4 in the district, Farrell's 8th graders achieved a **20% improvement** in their PSSA results, from 47% proficient the previous year to 67% proficient in the 2003/2004 year. ■

Top 14 Schools in the First In Math® Program - 2004/2003 PSSA Test Scores in Math

FIM Rank	8th Grade School Name	Region	FIM Stickers/ Student	FIM Students Active	PSSA 2004 % Proficient	PSSA 2003 % Proficient	PSSA 2004-2003 % Change	Enrollment 2004	# Student Proficient & up 2004	# Students Proficient & up 2003*
1	Reynolds	Central	948	36	38.3	10.7	27.6	36	14	4
2	Conwell MS	Central East	737	240	72.2	47.1	25.1	224	162	106
3	Meredith	South	564	49	80.6	62.7	17.9	63	51	40
4	Farrell	Northeast	538	107	67.0	47.0	20.0	101	68	47
5	Hamilton	Southwest	461	71	72.6	80.0	-7.4	51	37	41
6	Fitler	Northwest	460	58	58.5	16.9	41.6	55	32	9
7	Hill Freedman	Northwest	437	57	84.7	43.5	41.2	79	67	34
8	Charles Henry	Northwest	422	69	48.5	63.6	-15.1	70	34	45
9	Greenberg	Northeast	417	101	75.0	70.1	4.9	85	64	60
10	Clemente MS	North	381	350	11.7	6.5	5.2	323	38	21
11	AMY Northwest	Northwest	359	89	32.2	18.5	13.7	92	30	17
12	Shawmont	Northwest	351	99	50.5	37.8	12.7	93	47	35
13	Creighton	North	332	88	30.5	15.3	15.2	107	33	16
14	Dobson	Northwest	330	44	61.6	31.1	30.5	41	25	13
TOP 14 SCHOOLS					49.3	34.3	15.0	1420	700	487