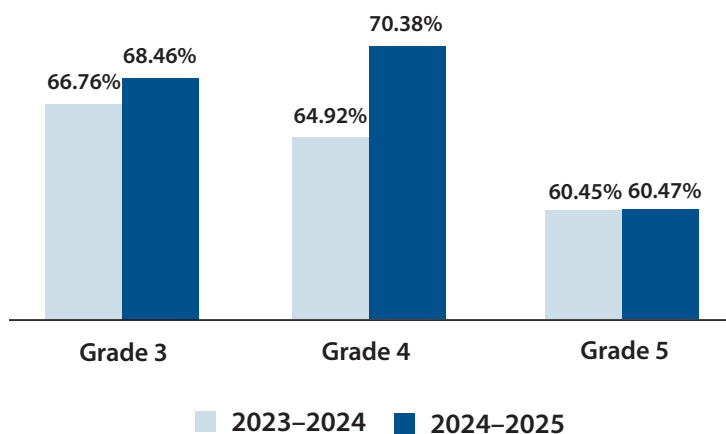


Scaling High-Quality Core Mathematics Instruction across 16,000 Students



Capistrano USD's commitment to coherence, strong leadership, and discourse-driven mathematics drives measurable gains in proficiency and deeper student sensemaking.

Capistrano USD Students Meeting or Exceeding Mathematics Standards on the CAASPP



This graph shows Capistrano USD Grades 3–5 student proficiency on the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress (CAASPP) from 2023–2024 to 2024–2025. Grade 4 saw especially strong gains, improving by more than five percentage points year over year.

Aligning to the California Mathematics Framework

When leaders in Capistrano USD set out to transform mathematics across the district, they knew the effort had to reach every classroom, every leader, and every student.

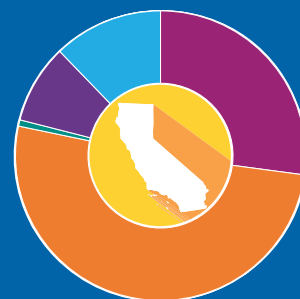
Serving more than 16,000 Grades K–5 students across Orange County, the district implemented *i-Ready Classroom Mathematics* in the 2024–2025 school year. The transition brought greater clarity and shared expectations for instruction across classrooms as Capistrano prepared for the release of the state-specific curriculum.

With the groundwork in place, Capistrano moved forward with its Grades K–5 adoption of [Classroom Mathematics California](#) in the 2025–2026 school year, a curriculum purposefully built to reflect the California Mathematics Framework and grounded in problem-based, discourse-driven instruction.

¹Source

Capistrano Unified School District (USD)
Orange County, California

40,358 Grades Pre-K–12 Students¹



White Black Hispanic
Asian Other

35% Socioeconomically Disadvantaged

"After implementing *Classroom Mathematics California*, walking into classrooms now feels joyful. Kids are talking with each other, sharing strategies. It feels like a community of mathematicians."

—Karen Gauthier, STEM Coordinator

A Clear, Aligned Instructional Vision

As *Classroom Mathematics California* was rolled out, leaders reinforced a “one team” culture with clear communication from the central office to site administrators to teachers.

“Everyone was actively involved in the curriculum rollout, with educators, site leaders, and district teams collaborating to shape implementation and its impact on instructional practices,” STEM Coordinator Karen Gauthier said.

Expectations were clear and grounded in a vision of math classrooms where students make sense of problems, discuss strategies, and connect ideas to formal mathematics.

Professional Learning Designed for Scale

Professional learning served as the backbone of Capistrano USD’s implementation strategy. Rather than focusing solely on teacher training, the district invested heavily in leader learning too.

Principals, assistant superintendents, and district staff participated in ongoing *Classroom Mathematics California* professional learning to build shared understanding of instructional practices, discourse routines, and lesson design.

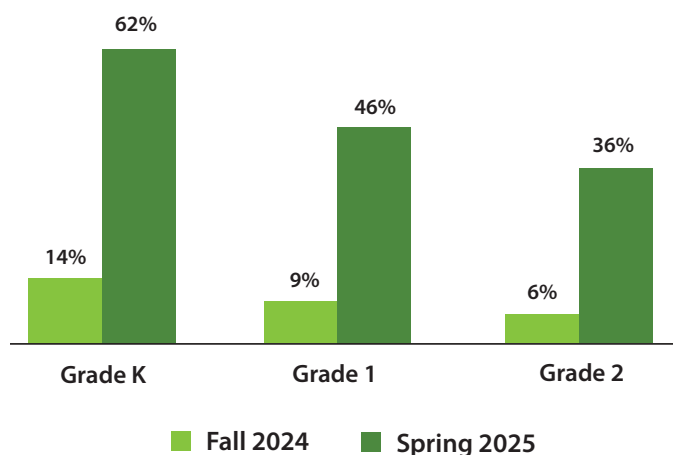
“Teachers knew that their principals were experiencing the same learning they were, which created a shared understanding and trust,” Gauthier said.

Walkthroughs as Additional Support

Walkthroughs also helped boost confidence and coherence across a district of Capistrano USD’s size. These were not evaluative observations but opportunities to identify instructional patterns and determine where additional support was needed.

“Walkthroughs were never about evaluating a teacher,” Gauthier said. “They were to help us know, as a district, what was working and what wasn’t, and where to offer more targeted support.”

Percentage of Students Scoring Mid or Above Grade Level on the *i-Ready* Assessment



Students in Grades K–2 showed substantial proficiency gains on the *i-Ready* assessment during the 2024–2025 school year, with Grade 2 increasing from six percent in fall 2024 to 36 percent in spring 2025—a sixfold increase.

A Culture of Supportive Accountability

Capistrano USD intentionally cultivated what leaders describe as supportive accountability, where data is used to understand needs and provide targeted support, strengthen instruction, and improve outcomes for students.

The district analyzed school-level data to determine which sites needed additional support, mirroring the same structures teachers use in their professional learning communities—reviewing data, identifying bright spots, and planning next steps.

This approach reinforced a districtwide mindset: progress is collective, and support is differentiated.

Data to Guide Instruction

In classrooms, this mindset extended to student learning. Teachers used *i-Ready Personalized Instruction*, implemented since 2019, to provide targeted support aligned to grade-level instruction.

With access to differentiation resources within *Classroom Mathematics California*, such as scaffolded tasks, enrichment activities, and fluency games, the program has been able to meet the needs of all learners.

"It's not just one-size-fits-all instruction," Gauthier said. "We're now able to differentiate our support based on student need."

Problem-Based Mathematics as a Non-Negotiable

Classroom Mathematics California aligns directly with Capistrano USD's instructional priorities.

Built around the Try-Discuss-Connect framework, the curriculum positions students as sensemakers first, encouraging them to explore multiple strategies and engage in meaningful discourse before formalizing procedures.

"The Try-Discuss-Connect framework was exactly what we needed to support teachers," Gauthier said. "It reflected the way we'd been trying to teach math. We just didn't have the right curriculum to support that work before."

By structuring lessons around student thinking, the framework cultivates classrooms where students own their learning, build confidence, and deepen their conceptual understanding.

Supporting Long-Term Learning through "Big Ideas"

Beyond its problem-based structure, *Classroom Mathematics California* reinforces coherence across units.

Lessons are organized around the California "Big Ideas" that connect concepts across time, helping students see mathematics as an interconnected discipline rather than a series of isolated skills.

"Students don't have to master concepts in that one lesson, or that one session, or that one week," Gauthier said. "It's building small learning targets of that standard over time to eventually master it."

This intentional revisiting prioritizes learning retention rather than short-term correctness.

"Students will retain concepts long-term, because they made sense of it," Gauthier said.



Through the Try-Discuss-Connect structure, teachers facilitate discussion-based instruction that positions students as active mathematical thinkers.

The Results That Followed

The district's mathematics transition is already yielding measurable results, with increased CAASPP mathematics proficiency.

More importantly, leaders are seeing sustained changes in classrooms: stronger discourse, deeper understanding, and students who are excited about math because it makes sense.

"My goal is for students to say they love math because they get it, not because it's easy," Gauthier said.

She added that this shift is opening pathways for more students—opportunities they may never have considered before.

Looking Ahead

With systems now in place, Capistrano USD is continuing to refine its mathematics implementation, deepening coherence and strengthening instructional practice across the district.

“We’ve reframed what math is,” Gauthier said. “It’s a space where students are making sense of content mathematically, where we honor their thinking, and where every student knows they can do math.”



Explore how problem-based mathematics is transforming classrooms in Capistrano USD.



Karen Gauthier
STEM Coordinator, Capistrano USD



Hear more about Karen’s experience with *Classroom Mathematics California*.