

A District's Journey to Finding a New Curriculum

A Step-by-Step Look at the Selection Process of *Stepping Stones 2.0*



The Challenge:

In early 2021, Norton Public Schools, a suburb outside Boston, Massachusetts, launched a full K–12 math curriculum review. The district wanted to ensure that the curriculum(s) they ultimately selected would (1) align from elementary to middle to high school, (2) meet their shared vision for mathematics instruction, (3) center on recent research on how best to teach math, and (4) earn an all green (highly effective) rating from EdReports.

The Vision:

As a K–12 team the Norton Public Schools wanted to:

- Develop an appreciation for and an understanding of the importance of mathematics by fostering a positive relationship for students structured around mathematical curiosity and a growth mindset.
- Create resilient problem solvers who can integrate and apply mathematical skills and concepts to everyday solutions, recognizing the real-world relevance of mathematics.

"Regardless of whether we were talking to elementary, middle, or high school teachers, they all said the same thing. They wanted kids to be excited to learn math. They wanted students engaged with authentic problems. And they wanted them curious about problem solving."

Assistant Superintendent



Core Team:

Assistant Superintendent; Elementary Math Coach; Elementary Math Interventionist; Middle School Math Teacher; and High School Math chair. Throughout the 18-month process the core team worked and consulted with many K–12 math teachers and specialists.

The Product:

ORIGO's Stepping Stones 2.0 is a comprehensive K–6 mathematics program (with a Pre-K component) that makes learning mathematics meaningful, enjoyable, and accessible for all teachers and students. The program fosters thinking skills and procedural fluency; provides opportunities to apply learning across real problems, open investigations, and enrichment activities; and promotes confidence with efficient thinking strategies.

Action Plan:

First the core team, with the collaboration of stakeholders, determined the K–12 mathematics vision, as well as the overarching selection priorities and parameters. At this point separate elementary, middle, and high teams met to explore specific programs. The elementary team quickly narrowed the pool to five elementary math programs that met seven key criteria:

1. Rated as highly effective by EdReports,
2. Highlighted recent research and data behind the program,
3. Included print and digital materials,
4. Provided differentiation and enhancement strategies,
5. Offered support for english language learners,
6. Aligned with our state's curriculum framework, and
7. Met budgetary guidelines.

After the elementary team reviewed the materials in greater depth, they narrowed the field to two programs, one being *Stepping Stones 2.0* from ORIGO. Rather than have some teachers test one program and other test the second program for a school year, the elementary review team opted to have two classrooms at each grade level teach a unit in each program. This unique approach allowed all teachers to teach, compare, and ultimately weigh in on both programs.



Throughout the field test period the math coach, provided support and guidance, using PD materials offered by the two math programs, to the teachers field testing the curriculum. ORIGO's staged-learning, spiral review approach challenged some of the teachers, so there was definitely a learning curve. She reported that initially teachers felt their kids wouldn't get it. But over and over, teachers in every grade reported that *Stepping Stones*' different models and concrete experiences improved their instruction. But even more important, students went beyond surface learning and had a deep understanding of the math concepts they explored.

"With *Stepping Stones 2.0*, concepts are revisited and built upon.

Problems and expected answers do not always follow a predictable path, which encourages students to think in different ways and understand concepts in ways that I have not seen them do in previous years. Also, they really enjoy what they are doing."

Teacher

Results:

Every teacher in the field test, across grades K–5, selected *Stepping Stones 2.0* as the program they wanted to use for elementary math.

"I've been with the district for 27 years and seen lots of math programs come in and out. I've been a part of some pilots and have not participated in others. I can honestly say that not once have I heard all K–5 teachers agree on a single math program. The feedback from the team was thoughtful, relevant, and connected with our vision and priorities."

Math Coach

"With other programs, we found that rigor translated into lots of words and content that overwhelmed our kids. Rigor is more about the way that students are looking at things and what we are asking them to do. *Stepping Stones* has a child-friendly approach that embodies growth mindset, trial and error, and all of those things we find important when teaching math."

Assistant Superintendent

Going Forward:

The Norton School district is so excited about transitioning to *Stepping Stones 2.0* in the 2023–2024 school year, that they brought in ORIGO's professional learning team before the school year ended. They want the teachers thinking about and engaging with the materials they'll be using next year. ORIGO will also provide professional learning in August before school starts and offer regular follow-up sessions throughout the launch year.

Additionally, the field test teachers, who unanimously selected *Stepping Stones*, are passionate about sharing their experiences and are looking forward to a full year of seeing their students grow as mathematicians with the *Stepping Stones* program.



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