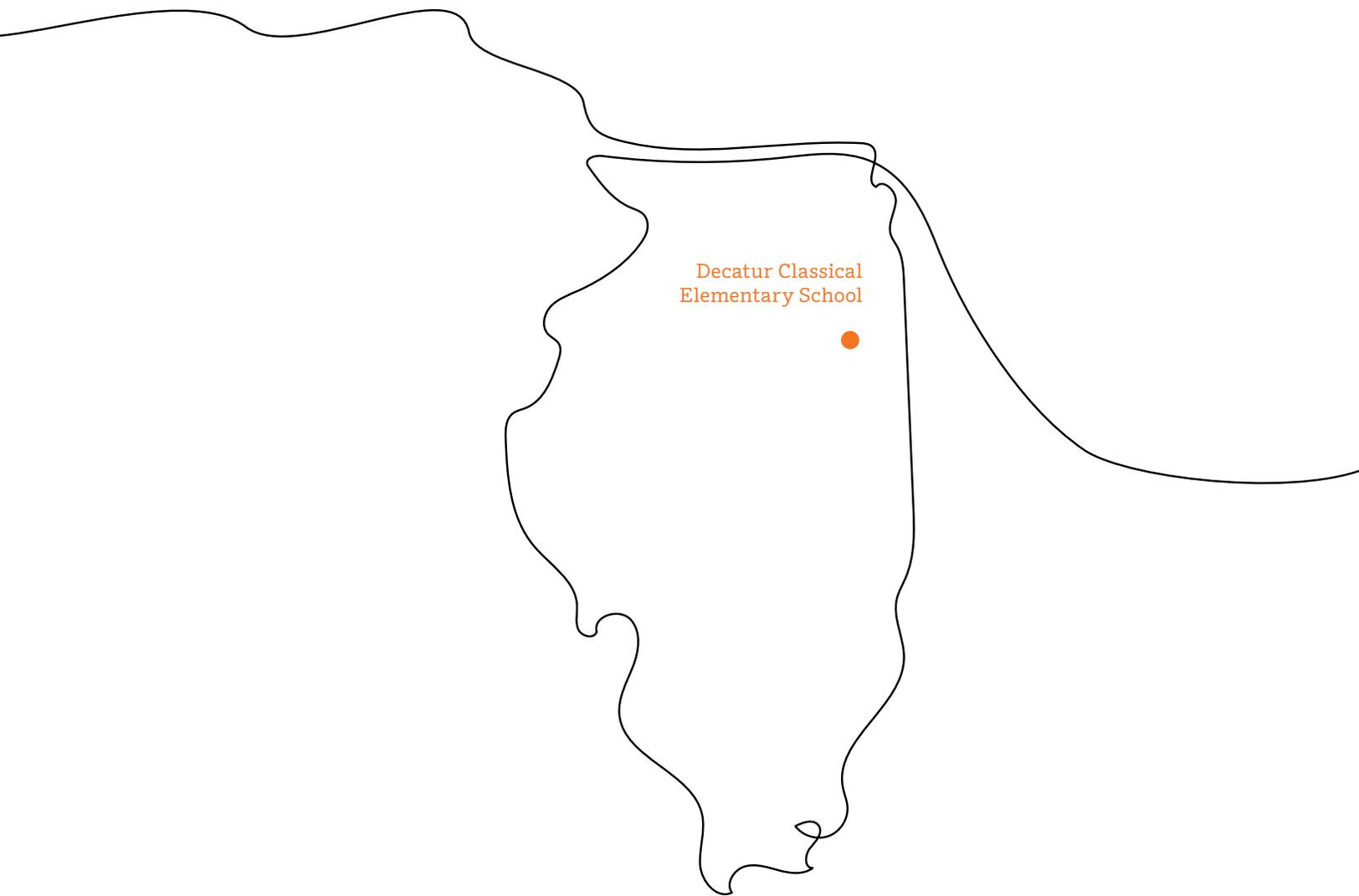


## District Success Story

# Making the shift to more student-centered math instruction

Unleashing math potential with Amplify Desmos Math at Decatur Classical Elementary School



Decatur Classical  
Elementary School

# Background

Located in Chicago, IL, Decatur Classical Elementary School serves just over 300 students in kindergarten through eighth grade. The student population is 45.3% white, 27.6% Asian American and Pacific Islander, 14% Hispanic/Latino, 4.3% Black, and 0.3% American Indian or Alaska Native, with 8.4% of students identifying as two or more races and 14% eligible for the federal free and reduced meal program. The school serves a high number of students with Individualized Education Plans (IEPs) and 504 plans, and the school's growing population of neurodivergent students further enriches its diverse environment.

## Challenge

Lizzie Martino, the former Director of Math at Decatur and now its assistant principal, noticed a disconnect. While the teaching staff was exceptional, the traditional math curriculum they were using felt outdated. "It was mostly about presenting a few problems, followed by a lot of repetitive practice," explains Martino. This misalignment with modern math instruction forced teachers into the time-consuming task of redesigning curriculum elements.

## Solution

In the 2024–25 school year, Decatur piloted Amplify Desmos Math in kindergarten through eighth grade. Grades 5 through 8 had already embraced Desmos Math 6-A1, and once Martino had the K–4 teachers observe its impact firsthand, their enthusiasm was immediate. Martino recalls their excitement during the training: "The teachers were gasping the whole time, saying, 'This is great. I can't wait to use it!'"

Throughout the year, Martino and Principal Marisol Negrón encouraged teachers to use the program with fidelity and to support each other along the way. The school embraced regular discussions about the new curriculum in grade-level meetings, where teachers shared insights and challenges and Martino and Negrón created space for them to regularly observe each other's math instruction. Teachers were able to learn from and with each other, particularly critical when implementing a new curriculum.

Martino and Negrón also engaged in classroom walkthroughs, to get a sense of the program's implementation and impact and to identify areas of additional need. She said, "It's nice to walk into classrooms and hear kids talking about math and not just sitting there...students were used to worksheets, but Amplify Desmos Math introduced a more nuanced and rigorous approach."

1  
school

300  
students

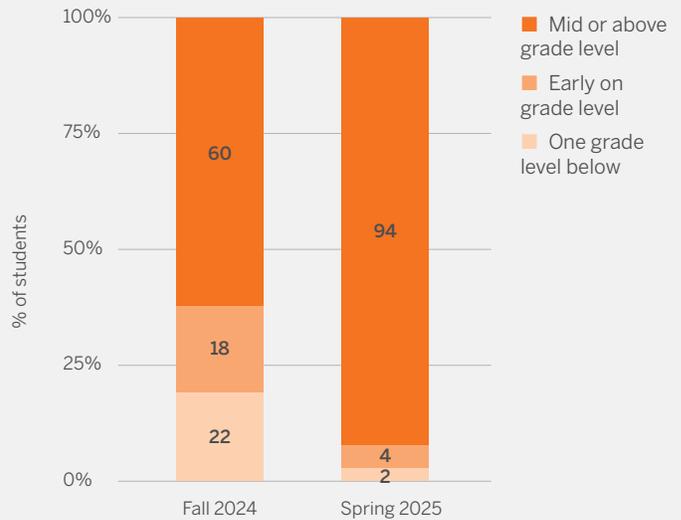
14%  
eligible for free or  
reduced price meals

# Impact

The impact of the shift to Amplify Desmos Math on both students and teachers was significant. In particular, teachers appreciated the teacher presentation screens and the Caregiver Hub. Martino appreciated that Amplify Desmos Math did more than enhance classroom learning—it sparked a conversation. “I hear students talking about Amplify Desmos Math outside a math class. So that’s feedback for me, too. If kids are discussing math at lunch, that’s cool!” Martino said.

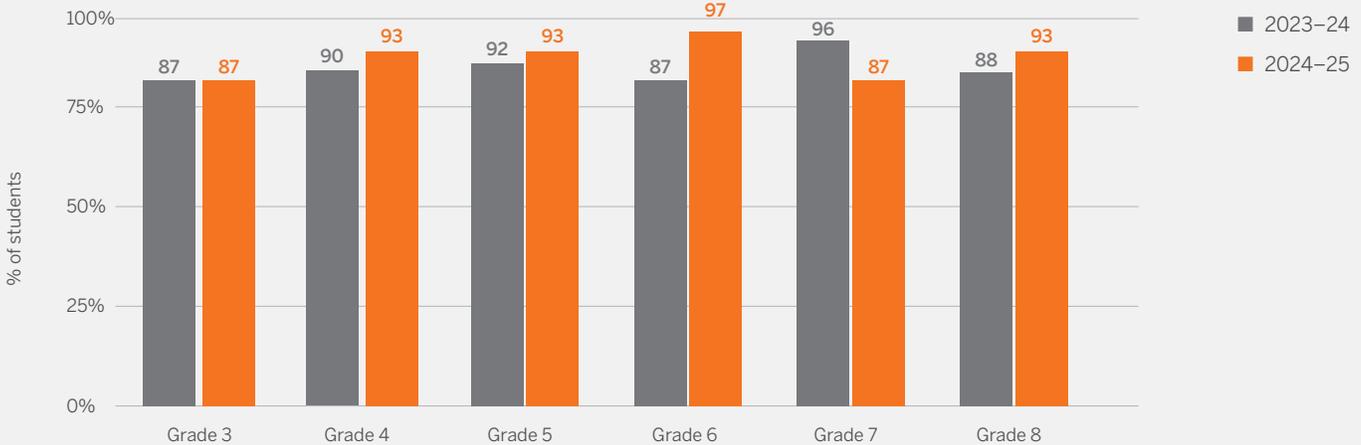
The data showed impressive growth in the pilot year, with student scores at or above grade level increasing by 34 percentage points in kindergarten through second grade.

**Decatur Classical Elementary School mathematics placement distribution**



Upper elementary and middle school students also showed progress. In grades 4, 5, 6, and 8, a higher percentage of students met or exceeded expectations on the Illinois Assessment of Readiness than in the previous year.

**Percentage of Decatur Classical Elementary School students meeting or exceeding expectations on the Illinois Assessment of Readiness**



# Conclusion

Looking ahead, Martino and Negron envision expanding professional development and plunging deeper into “the what and the why” of the curriculum’s strategies. Bringing caregivers into this loop with demo lessons also lies on the horizon. Decatur is also ready

to embrace CKLA and Amplify ELA next year—Martino and Negron are confident about these dual new launches, buoyed by their faith in their dedicated teaching team and Amplify’s support.

For more information about Amplify's comprehensive K–12 math suite, visit [\*\*amplify.com/math\*\*](https://www.amplify.com/math).

Amplify.

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