

News Release

For Immediate Release

Saxon Math Selected for Three-Year U.S. DoE Study of Math Curricula

Large-Scale Evaluation Will Implement and Compare the Ability of Four Different Curricula to Develop Fundamental Math Skills in Early Elementary Education

AUSTIN, TX – April 18, 2006 – Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. selected *Saxon Math* for inclusion in a large-scale comparative evaluation of four math curricula. The three-year study, funded by the U.S. Department of Education’s Institute for Education Sciences (IES), will explore the potential of these programs to improve math achievement in first and second grade classrooms.

In the 2005 National Assessment of Educational Progress, only 36 percent of fourth graders were deemed “proficient in mathematics,” while 20 percent scored below “basic.” Fourth graders living in poverty had substantially lower math scores than students in more advantaged families.

What is taught to students and how it is taught may be important factors in a school’s ability to improve student math achievement. Yet little research exists to help educators choose appropriate tools and strategies.

“While reading instruction has a long history of research support, math instruction suffers from a paucity of well-crafted research to describe effective educational practices,” said Bill Wilkinson, Harcourt Achieve vice president and director of research. “It is critical that more comparative research be conducted in the case of early math curricula, and this rigorous Mathematica study takes a large step toward doing so.”

The evaluation seeks to determine the relative effects of four different early elementary math curricula on student achievement in disadvantaged schools, and under what conditions each math curriculum is most effective. Results will be based on teacher surveys, classroom observations and formal and informal assessments of student achievement.

“For nearly two decades, *Saxon Math* has had a positive impact on the academic performance of minority, special education and at-risk students,” said Harcourt Achieve President and CEO Tim McEwen. “As children gain competence in fundamental math skills and improve their test scores, they also gain self confidence that motivates them to work harder and continue learning new concepts.”

Pedagogy Grounded in Research

Harcourt was one of several developers and publishers that responded to the request for proposal (RFP). Selection criteria included the quality of curriculum design, teacher training and support materials, and the appropriateness of the curriculum for grades 1-3 children in Title I schools.

Legislation requires Title I schools to show continuous and substantial improvement in student math achievement.

Research-based *Saxon Math* differs from most programs in that it distributes instruction, practice and assessment throughout the lessons and school year instead of massing these elements. In a massed approach, instruction, practice and assessment of a skill or concept occur within a short period of time and are clustered within a single chapter or unit.

Foundational research helped to shape this unique pedagogical approach, including R. M. Gagne's cumulative learning theory and J. Anderson's ACT theory. The Gagne theory is based on the premise that intellectual skills can be broken down into simpler skills. Anderson's ACT theory tracks the development of expertise through three stages: cognitive, associative and autonomous.

During the cognitive stage, learners rehearse and memorize facts that guide them in problem solving. During the associative stage, learners detect errors and misunderstandings through continual practice and feedback. By the time learners reach the autonomous stage, they have practiced a skill sufficiently to acquire expertise.

Approximately 20 school districts and 100 Title I schools across the nation will participate in the three-year comparative study of *Saxon Math*, Everyday Mathematics (Wright Group/McGraw-Hill), Math Expressions (Houghton Mifflin), and Scott Foresman-Addison Wesley Mathematics (Pearson Scott Foresman). Mathematica, a nonpartisan research firm with offices in Princeton, N.J., Washington, D.C. and Cambridge, Mass., will perform the evaluations. RG Research group of Long Beach, Calif., and SRI International of Menlo Park, CA will serve as subcontractors. In addition to providing curriculum materials at no cost to teachers and students at approximately 25 schools, each publisher will provide ongoing teacher training and support.

During the 2006-7 school year schools will implement the math curricula in first grade and add second grade classrooms in year two. Researchers will randomly assign schools in participating districts to the four curricula, visit classrooms to observe implementation, and administer a consistent achievement test across the districts.

About Harcourt Achieve

Harcourt Achieve produces learning solutions and content that fundamentally and positively change the lives of young and adult learners. Published under the Rigby, Saxon and Steck-Vaughn imprints, its products are based on a developmental philosophy that assesses learners' skills, matches them to appropriate content and accelerates them to meet and exceed expectations. The Rigby imprint offers progressive learning solutions for core reading and English language learner instruction that provide differentiated instruction to match each student's instructional level. The Saxon imprint offers the nation's best selling and most thoroughly researched skills-based mathematics program for grades K-12, as well as popular phonics, K-3 spelling, and early learning programs. The Steck-Vaughn imprint offers easy-to-use, innovative learning solutions that accelerate content-area knowledge, reading skills, and preparation for standards-based tests, allowing learners to meet and exceed expectations. For more information, please visit www.HarcourtAchieve.com.

Harcourt Achieve is part of Harcourt Education, a global education provider serving students and teachers in Pre-K through grade 12, adult learners and readers of all ages. The Harcourt Education companies are Harcourt School Publishers; Holt, Rinehart and Winston; Harcourt Achieve; Harcourt Assessment; Classroom Connect; Harcourt Religion Publishers; Harcourt Trade Publishers; Greenwood/Heinemann and Heinemann Global Library. For more information, please visit www.harcourt.com.

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