LCUSD K–5 Math Curriculum Review

Parent Guide to the Four Finalist Curricula • March-April 2026

How to Use This Guide: The letter grades below reflect how well La Cañada Math Parents believes each curriculum aligns with what LCUSD parents and staff said they want via Hanover Research's *LCUSD Math Priorities* survey (explicit instruction, procedural fluency, paper-and-pencil focus, and smooth alignment with *Math In Focus* in grades 6–8) and what cognitive science research shows is most effective for K–5 students. You may use this guide to help you fill out one of the two textbook rubrics while reviewing the textbook materials.

Grade	Curriculum | Key Facts for Parents
A–	**Math In Focus: Singapore Math by Marshall Cavendish** *(Houghton Mifflin Harcourt)* – Singapore Math — the gold standard of explicit, teacher-led instruction used in one of the world's top-performing countries as measured by international benchmarks (e.g. TIMSS, PISA.) – Follows a clear Concrete → Pictorial → Abstract (CPA) sequence: kids manipulate objects first, then pictures, then numbers/symbols/equations — in that order, as research recommends. – Emphasizes mastery before moving on. Fewer topics per grade, covered in greater depth. – Already used by LCUSD in grades 6–8. Selecting it for K–5 gives students a seamless, coherent K–8 math education. – High volume of practice problems in print workbooks — exactly what the Hanover survey said parents and teachers want. – **Consideration: Ask yourself why LCUSD is ditching *Everyday Mathematics* in grades K-5 yet keeping *Math In Focus* for grades 6-8.**
C+	**Savvas enVision+** *(Savvas Learning)* – Student Edition workbooks do include concept explanations and some examples — better than Eureka Math² in this respect, and usable as a student reference. – **However, the teacher's edition prescribes that all lessons start with a class-wide Explore and Share activity where kids engage in productive struggle and attempt to solve an open-ended question before explicit instruction proceeds in the next step called Visual Learning. This front-loads cognitive demand before students have the prerequisite knowledge — the opposite of what research recommends..** – Guided practice sections are too short. Practice volume does not match *Math In Focus*, which had more worked examples, fewer distracting asides, and more problems per topic in direct comparison. – The 'Differentiation Library Teacher's Guide' is almost entirely a catalog of project-based learning (PBL) projects. PBL is grossly time-inefficient relative to the amount of math students actually encounter and practice. – No enrichment or challenge track for advanced students — differentiation resources cover intervention only. *Math In Focus* includes challenge extension components; *enVision+* does not. – Choosing *enVision+* recreates the constructivist-vs-explicit mismatch at the K–5 / 6–8 interface that LCUSD is trying to fix.
C–	**Eureka Math²** *(Great Minds)* – **Logistical overload: each grade has six modules, and each module ships two separate student consumable books — a 'Learn' book and an 'Apply' book. That is up to 12 student booklets per child per year.** – Neither the 'Learn' nor the 'Apply' book contains concept explanations or worked examples. All instructional content lives in the teacher's edition only — so students have no reference material to review at home. – The teacher's edition is scripted to the 5-minute mark, instructing teachers to coordinate across all 12 component books per grade. This level of complexity is a practical barrier to consistent implementation. – Prescribes sub-optimal instructional methods including mandatory 'partner practice' segments. Practice sets are not long enough to build the fluency that research requires. – A student who misses class or needs to review a concept has no self-contained resource to turn to — a significant gap for independent learning and parent support at home.
D	**California Math Expressions** *(Heinemann)* – **Student Activity Books are not terrible in isolation, but the teacher's guide directs fully inquiry-oriented implementation — the instructional quality of the curriculum depends entirely on whether the teacher follows it.**

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	– Severe logistical burden: teachers are required to cut out and physically prepare custom manipulatives and props for lessons as part of the standard lesson workflow. This is not a minor ask — it is a recurring preparation tax on teacher time. – Lesson activities are project-based learning in orientation, which is time-inefficient and mathematically thin relative to the time invested. – Published by Heinemann, the same publisher whose balanced literacy programs (Lucy Calkins, Fountas & Pinnell) damaged reading outcomes for a generation of American students, including many in LCUSD, before parents here forced the district to abandon them. – Weakest research base of the four finalists. The combination of inquiry-oriented design, logistical complexity, and thin evidence makes this the least defensible choice for LCUSD.

Questions to Ask When You Review the Materials

Open a sample lesson and ask:

- Does the teacher model the concept first, or are students asked to discover it?
- Are there clear worked example explaining concepts before students practice?
- How much practice is provided per lesson?
- Does the workbook look like it will prepare students for *Math In Focus* in 6th grade?

On the feedback form, favor criteria like:

- Explicit, teacher-led instruction (not "student discovery")
- Clear CPA sequence (Concrete → Pictorial → Abstract)
- Ample practice problems in print format
- Standard algorithms taught first and practiced to mastery

Recommendations:

Please fill out at least one of the two rubrics for at least one of the four curricula and return it to the district. It is a tall ask to fill out a rubric for each of the four curricula, particularly if you use Hanover's 8-page *LCUSD Math Adoption Rubric*. However, any feedback you provide is invaluable and will be summarized and provided to the all-teacher Elementary Math Adoption Committee when they meet on April 28, 2026 to down-select from the above four programs to two programs to pilot next school year (i.e. 2026-27.)

For more information about this LCUSD K-8 Math Adoption process, see our special section on the La Cañada Math Parents website here:

https://bit.ly/lcusdmathadoption