

Evaluating the Impact of Innovamat Elementary Math Curriculum on Student Learning

**A Quasi-Experimental Matched-Comparison
Study**

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Contents

Executive Summary	1
Introduction	2
Study Design and Methods	3
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Study Design	3
Sample and Setting	4
Data Sources and Measures	5
Analytic Approach	7
Identifying a Matched Group for Impact Analysis	7
Primary Impact and Subgroup Analyses	7
Results	8
<hr/>	
Baseline Equivalence and Matching Results	8
Impact Results	9



Two-Year Impact (Primary)	9
One-Year Impact (Exploratory)	11
Differential Treatment Impact and Subgroup Analysis (Exploratory)	11
Interview and Implementation Findings	12
Cross Participant Themes	13
<i>Instructional Shifts and Pedagogical Alignment</i>	13
<i>Student Engagement and Participation</i>	13
<i>Perceived Impact on Student Learning</i>	14
<i>Supports for Implementation</i>	15
<i>Implementation Challenges</i>	16
Conclusion	17
Limitations	18
References	19
Appendix A: Interview Protocol	20



Executive Summary

This study examines the effects of Innovamat, a mathematics curriculum and instructional approach that more closely aligns classroom practice with research in mathematics education, on math achievement among students in Grades 2 and 3 in two school districts in New Jersey during the 2023–24 school year. Using the quasi-experimental matching methods and LinkIt! Assessment data, WestEd analyzed outcomes for approximately 460 students who were exposed to Innovamat, as well as their matched peers without exposure.

- After two years of implementation of Innovamat, the treatment group significantly outperformed the matched-control group by about 0.2 standard deviation units, with an effect size of 0.24, equivalent to moving an average student from the 50th percentile to approximately the 58th percentile.
- Subgroup analysis to study the differential treatment impacts indicates that the intervention seemed to benefit Grade 3 students more than the students in Grade 2.
- Implementation findings suggest that the Innovamat curriculum was associated with meaningful shifts in instructional practice toward student-centered, discussion-based learning, providing important context for interpreting the impact results, particularly the stronger effects observed after multiple years of implementation.



Introduction

Innovamat is a mathematics education organization founded in 2017 to better align classroom practice with research in mathematics education. Their program was designed to bridge the gap between research and day-to-day instruction, particularly by supporting deeper conceptual understanding rather than reliance on memorization

The program aims to develop students' problem-solving, reasoning, and communication skills through a competency-based approach that places students at the center of the learning process. Grounded in socio-constructivist principles, Innovamat emphasizes learning through exploration, the use of manipulatives, and structured mathematical discussion. Instruction is designed to build connections across concepts, provide meaningful learning contexts, and develop fluency through purposeful practice.

Innovamat integrates multiple components to support implementation. Teachers are provided with detailed lesson guides in paper and access to a digital platform for lesson planning and progress monitoring. Students engage with both hands-on manipulative materials and an adaptive digital application that offers individualized practice. The program also includes comprehensive ongoing professional development and coaching for teachers and school leaders to support instructional shifts and effective implementation.

Given its comprehensive design and focus on improving student engagement and learning outcomes in mathematics, Innovamat is well-positioned for rigorous evaluation.

The present study includes two components. The primary component is a curriculum impact study that examines whether the use of Innovamat's curriculum is associated with improved mathematics outcomes among second- and third-grade students compared with business-as-usual instructional approaches. A secondary component is a brief implementation study, which draws on interviews with approximately two to three teachers in each study year to document how the curriculum is enacted in classrooms and to provide contextual information on implementation

The study is guided by the following research questions:

- Impact (primary): Does using Innovamat's curriculum improve second- and third-grade students' mathematics learning, compared to business-as-usual curricula, after students use the curriculum for two years?
- Impact (exploratory):
 - What is the effect of Innovamat after one year of curriculum implementation?
 - Do the impacts vary across different student subgroups?



- Implementation: What factors facilitate or hinder implementation of the curriculum in classrooms?

The study was conducted in New Jersey and examines implementation over two academic years: 2023–24 (the first year of curriculum use) and 2024–25 (the second year of use). Importantly, 2023–24 marked the first year of Innovamat’s implementation in the United States, meaning that the participating schools had not used the program previously. To address the research questions, the study employs a quasi-experimental design (QED) with a matched-comparison group to estimate the relationship between participation in Innovamat and student mathematics outcomes. Schools from two districts were selected for the treatment group because they used the same assessment. A third potential participating district was excluded from the study because comparable standardized pre-test data could not be collected. The remainder of this report describes the study design and data sources, presents findings from the impact and implementation analyses, and discusses implications for practice and future research.

Study Design and Methods

Study Design

This study employs a quasi-experimental design (QED) with a matched-comparison group to examine the relationship between use of the Innovamat curriculum and student mathematics outcomes. Students in classes where the teachers implemented Innovamat during the 2023–24 and 2024–25 school years were designated as the treatment group and continued using the curriculum as part of their regular instructional program. The treatment sample consists of three schools across two districts in New Jersey.

To construct a comparison group, WestEd first identified a statewide pool of 335 schools that had not adopted Innovamat using data from the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). These schools were organized into two priority tiers based on their similarity to the treatment schools in key school-level characteristics, including prior performance on state tests and locale, to identify comparison contexts that are broadly comparable to the treatment conditions. The prioritized list of potential comparison schools was then provided to LinkIt!, the assessment vendor, to identify eligible schools that administer the LinkIt! mathematics assessments during the study period. Student-level data were obtained for both treatment and potential comparison students.



Matching was conducted at the student level within this pool of eligible comparison schools. Treatment students in Innovamat classes were matched to similar students in comparison schools based on available characteristics and prior achievement measures derived from LinkIt! assessment data. This approach was designed to improve baseline equivalence between groups by aligning students with comparable academic profiles and backgrounds, while restricting the comparison pool to schools with similar contextual characteristics.

Using the matched analytic sample, WestEd estimated whether students in schools implementing Innovamat achieved different mathematics outcomes compared with matched students in schools using business-as-usual curricula.

Sample and Setting

The study was conducted in New Jersey and includes students enrolled in Grades 2 and 3 during the 2023–24 school year. The treatment group consisted of students attending three schools, namely, Rolling Hills Primary School, Millstone Township Primary School, and Millstone Township Elementary School, across two districts that implemented the Innovamat curriculum in two consecutive school years (2023-24 and 2024-25).

The comparison group includes students from schools across New Jersey that did not adopt the Innovamat curriculum but administered the LinkIt! mathematics assessments during the study period. Based on a prioritized list of 335 schools provided by WestEd, LinkIt! identified 1,650 students across 118 classrooms in 17 districts who have used LinkIt! assessment during the study period. WestEd then applied matching methods to select comparable students for inclusion in the analysis. The analytic sample was restricted to students with available assessment data and sufficient information to support matching and outcome analyses.

As shown in Table 1, across both groups, the sample includes students with varying demographic and academic backgrounds, reflecting the populations served by the participating schools.



Table 1. Student Sample Characteristics before Matching

	Treatment Students		Comparison Student Pool	
	# of Students	%	# of Students	%
Grade level				
2nd Grade Students in 2023-24	311	58.90	777	47.09
3rd Grade Students in 2023-24	217	41.10	873	52.91
Gender				
Male	279	52.84	862	52.24
Female	249	47.16	788	47.76
Ethnicity				
Asian	11	2.08	250	15.15
Black	12	2.27	50	3.03
Hispanic	111	21.02	188	11.39
White	371	70.27	1057	64.06
Multi-racial	22	4.17	81	4.91
Other background				
Low Socioeconomic Status	110	20.83	278	16.85
English Language Learning	14	2.65	NA	NA
IEP	136	25.76	277	16.79

Data Sources and Measures

The primary outcome measure is student performance on the LinkIt! mathematics assessment for students in Grades 2 and 3. The LinkIt! assessment is a benchmark assessment system used to measure student progress in mathematics over the course of the school year. It is composed predominantly of multiple-choice items and is designed to evaluate content standards of a conceptual and procedural nature, rather than mathematical processes or Standards for



Mathematical Practice (SMP). The assessment is aligned with the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) or the corresponding state curriculum. Most items focus on Number and Operations. Administered multiple times annually, the assessment evaluates students’ mastery of grade-level standards and provides comparable measures of performance across students, classrooms, and schools. Assessments are typically delivered online and automatically scored, generating performance metrics for longitudinal tracking.

To enable comparisons across grade levels, raw assessment scores were standardized within each grade by converting them to z-scores using the system-wide mean and standard deviation for that grade and by form provided by LinkIt!. This transformation placed student performance on a common scale, allowing outcomes from Grades 2 and 3 to be combined in a single analysis while preserving relative differences in achievement.

As shown in Table 2, students’ LinkIt! scores from fall 2023 were used as the baseline measure for all analyses. To address the primary impact question regarding student learning after two years of curriculum use, students’ fall 2025 scores (when students started Grades 4 and 5) were used as the outcome measure. To address the exploratory question about the impact after one year of use, students’ spring 2024 scores were used as the outcome measure.

Table 2. Timeline and Measures

Student Grade Level	Implementation Year 1 (2023-24)		Implementation Year 2 (2024-25)		Post Implementation
	LinkIt! Assessment Administration				
2	Fall 2023	Spring 2024	Fall 2024	Spring 2025	Fall 2025
3	2 nd Grade Pretest	2 nd Grade posttest	3 rd Grade Pretest	N/A	3 rd Grade Posttest
	3 rd Grade Pretest	3 rd Grade posttest	4 th Grade Pretest	N/A	4 th Grade Posttest

To complement the impact analysis, qualitative data were collected through interviews with two to three teachers in the 2023-24 and 2024-25 school years. These interviews were designed to capture information on how the Innovamat curriculum was implemented in classrooms, including instructional practices, supports, and challenges. The implementation data provided contextual information to help interpret the impact findings and identify factors that may facilitate or hinder effective use of the curriculum.



Analytic Approach

Identifying a Matched Group for Impact Analysis

To estimate the impact of the Innovamat curriculum on student mathematics outcomes, the study employed a matching method to construct comparable treatment and comparison groups. For the primary impact analysis, a one-to-one propensity score matching (1-1 PSM) approach (Rosenbaum & Rubin, 1983) was used to match each treatment student with a comparison student, based on student-level covariates, including pretest scores, grade level, gender, ethnicity (Asian, Hispanic, multi-racial, and white), receiving free or reduced lunch (FRL) status, and receiving individualized education program (IEP) or not.

A one-to-one PSM approach was selected to create a balanced analytic sample with closely comparable treatment and comparison students while maintaining the original treatment students. Given the relatively small number of treatment students in the study, this approach is preferred.

In addition, if feasible, the coarsened exact matching (CEM) method (Iacus et al., 2012) was used to assess the robustness of the PSM results. With CEM, more treatment students than PSM may not be included in the subsequent impact analysis, as no exact matches are found in the control pool.

Following PSM or CEM matching, the balance between treatment and comparison groups was assessed using standardized mean differences on baseline covariates. Covariate balance was considered acceptable if standardized mean differences were below 0.10, a commonly used threshold indicating negligible differences between groups. This threshold is also consistent with the What Works Clearinghouse (WWC) standards for establishing baseline equivalence, which state that the magnitude of the baseline difference should be less than or equal to 0.25 (WWC, 2022).

Primary Impact and Subgroup Analyses

After identifying the matched groups using 1-1 PSM, we estimated the average treatment effect on the treated (ATET) using a nearest-neighbor propensity score matching estimator. Unlike traditional regression models, this non-parametric approach compares the observed outcomes of treated students with those of their matched control peers who have similar predicted probabilities of treatment. The fall 2025 test scores, after two years of Innovamat intervention, were used as the primary outcome variable. For exploratory purposes, the spring 2024 test scores were used as outcomes to evaluate the effect of Innovamat after one year of intervention. The “teffects psmatch” command in Stata (StataCorp, 2025) was used to find the matched group and then estimate the impacts.

Additionally, the two-year effect of Innovamat was also evaluated separately by grade level, baseline performance (low-performing versus high-performing), gender (male versus female), and ethnicity (white versus non-white) to examine whether there were treatment-by-subgroup interaction effects. The mean pretest score was used to determine whether students were low- or high-performing at baseline (low if below the mean and high if at or above the mean). These analyses are intended to provide insight into potential variation in program effects across different student groups. To carry out these analyses, the CEM was used to identify the matched groups, followed by a series of weighted regression analyses that included an interaction term between the treatment status and the subgroup variable. These models followed an Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) structure, including the same baseline scores and demographics used for matching as covariates to account for any residual imbalance. All analyses incorporated matching weights and robust standard errors to ensure accurate impact estimates. The “cem” (for matching) and “reg” (for estimating impacts) commands in Stata (StataCorp, 2025) were used.

Effect sizes (Hedges’ g) were computed for each impact estimate to quantify the magnitude of these differences following the WWC standards.

Results

Baseline Equivalence and Matching Results

After matching, the standardized differences between treatment and comparison groups were evaluated. Table 3 summarizes the results based on 1-1 PSM for the primary impact analysis.

Overall, the group difference after matching has decreased to less than 0.1 (except for the multiracial variable). In particular, the baseline test difference was quite small, indicating that both groups were comparable in performance before the implementation of Innovamat.



Table 3. Differences in Covariates after Matching for Two-Year Impact

	Standardized Differences	
	Raw	Matched
Baseline Pretest	-0.136	0.013
Grade Level	-0.354	-0.009
Gender	0.045	-0.009
Asian	-0.319	0.016
Hispanic	0.163	0.006
Multiracial	0.007	0.119
White	0.033	-0.080
FRL	-0.034	0.029
IEP	0.204	0.016

Note: The raw sample size for the treatment group is 455, versus 672 for the comparison group. After matching, the sample size is 455 for both groups.

Impact Results

Two-Year Impact (Primary)

The analysis of student LinkIt! assessment results from fall 2025 indicate that, after two years of implementation, the Innovamat curriculum was associated with a statistically significant and educationally meaningful improvement in student mathematics achievement. Students in schools using the Innovamat curriculum demonstrated higher mathematics achievement compared to matched comparison students. As shown in Table 4, the adjusted mean score for treatment students was 0.278 z-score metric (SD = 0.867, n = 455), compared to 0.081 for comparison students (SD = 0.786, n = 455), resulting in a statistically significant difference of 0.197 standard deviation units ($p = 0.002$). This corresponds to an effect size of 0.24, indicating a large positive impact of the curriculum on students' mathematics outcomes (Kraft, 2020). An effect of 0.197 standard deviations corresponds to moving an average student from the 50th percentile to approximately the 58th percentile. Figure 1 presents the adjusted means and the corresponding 95% confidence intervals for both groups.



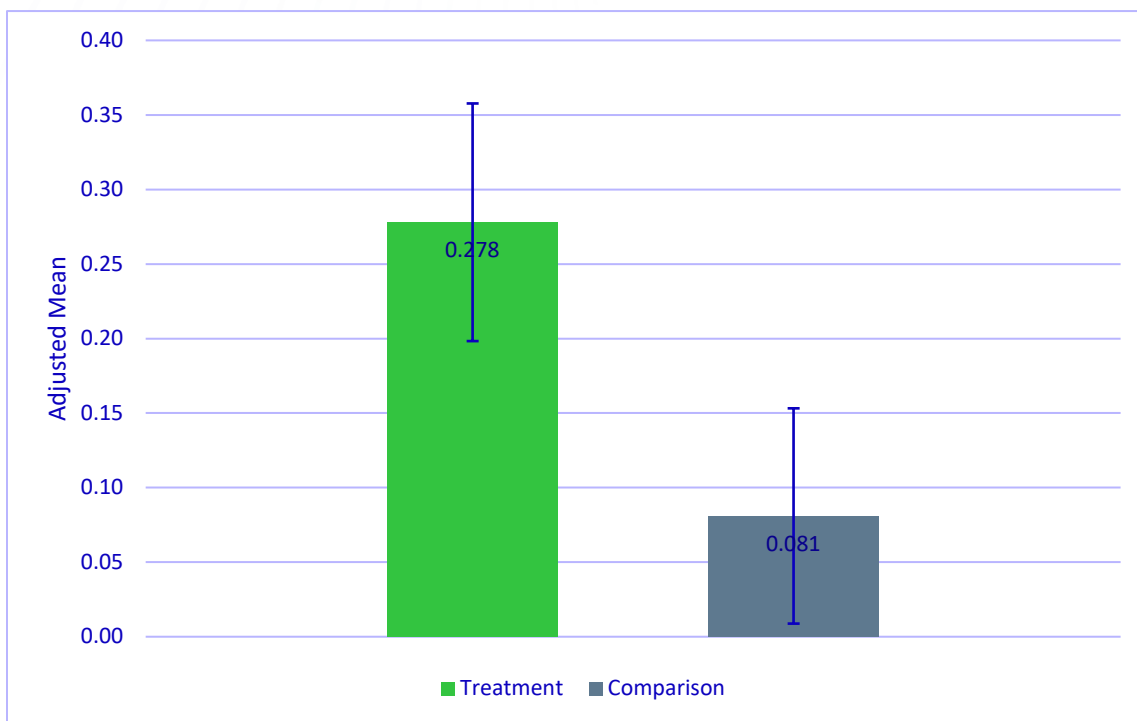
Table 4. Results for Two-Year Impact

Treatment			Comparison			Results		
Sample (n)	Adjusted Mean*	Standard Deviation (SD)	Sample (n)	Adjusted Mean	Standard Deviation (SD)	Difference (Effect Size)	Significance (p)	Standard Error (SE)
455	0.278	0.867	455	0.081	0.786	0.197 (0.24)**	0.002	0.063

*The adjusted mean and difference are on the z-score metric.

**Results using the coarsened exact matching approach confirmed a statistically significant positive treatment effect, with the difference = .111, $p = .028$, and the estimated effect size = 0.13.

Figure 1. Results for Two-Year Impact



Note: Error bars indicate the 95% confidence interval associated with the adjusted mean for each group.



One-Year Impact (Exploratory)

Consistent with the expectation that impacts may take time to emerge, measurable differences in student outcomes were not observed after the first year of implementation. Based on spring 2024 LinkIt! assessment results, students in Innovamat schools performed at levels comparable to those of matched peers in comparison schools. The estimated difference in standardized scores was -0.072 ($p = 0.129$), corresponding to an effect size of -0.09 . Treatment students had an adjusted mean of 0.134 ($SD = 0.883$, $n = 523$), compared to 0.206 ($SD = 0.705$, $n = 523$) for comparison students.

Differential Treatment Impact and Subgroup Analysis (Exploratory)

The two-year effect of Innovamat was also evaluated separately by grade level, baseline performance (low-performing versus high-performing), gender (male versus female), and ethnicity (white versus non-white) to examine whether there were treatment-by-subgroup interaction effects. Only the treatment-by-grade-level interaction was significant at the $.05$ level ($p = .025$). The results indicate that Innovamat appeared to benefit 3rd-grade students more than 2nd-grade students (an effect size of 0.28 versus 0.01 , see Table 5).

These findings also indicate that the effects of the Innovamat curriculum are not uniform across all groups, with a stronger impact observed in a certain grade.

Table 5. Subgroup Analysis Results for Two-Year Impact

	Treatment			Comparison			Results		
	Sample (n)	Adjusted Mean*	Standard Deviation (SD)	Sample (n)**	Adjusted Mean	Standard Deviation (SD)	Difference (Effect Size)	Significance (p)	Standard Error (SE)
2nd grade	247	0.190	0.851	208 (254.8)	0.178	0.910	0.012 (0.01)	0.860	0.067
3rd grade	159	0.279	0.881	293 (249.2)	0.040	0.839	0.239 (0.28)	0.002	0.075

*The adjusted mean and difference are on the z-score metric.

**The sample size in parentheses is the weighted sample size resulting from the coarsened exact matching process.



Interview and Implementation Findings

To complement the impact data analysis, four teachers who implemented the Innovamat curriculum were selected (by school administrators) and interviewed to gain deeper insight into their experiences. Three teachers were interviewed during the 2023–24 school year, and two during the 2024–25 school year, including one who had also participated in the prior year.

The teacher interview protocol was designed to collect qualitative information on teachers' experiences implementing the Innovamat curriculum, focusing on instructional practices, student outcomes, and implementation supports and challenges. Interviews began with background questions on teachers' experience, grade levels taught, prior mathematics training, and previous curricula, establishing a comparison between instruction before and during Innovamat implementation. The protocol then explored instructional changes, including shifts in teaching philosophy, use of curriculum components (e.g., number labs, adventures, and digital tools), and changes in teachers' confidence and practices. Teachers were also asked about observed student outcomes, including engagement, participation, problem-solving approaches, and perceived impacts on learning, particularly for students who were struggling. Additional questions addressed preparation and support for implementation, including training, ongoing assistance from Innovamat and school or district staff, and challenges encountered during use. The interview concluded with teachers' reflections on continued use of the curriculum, recommendations for improvement, and overall perceptions of its effectiveness. The full interview protocol is included in Appendix A.

The four interviewees represented a range of teaching experience and backgrounds in elementary education. All were teaching in early elementary grades, primarily second grade, and had experience implementing the Innovamat curriculum during the study period. Their teaching experience ranged from early-career to highly experienced educators, including one with over 30 years and others with approximately 10 to 15 years in the classroom. Several teachers had prior experience with other mathematics curricula and had participated in piloting Innovamat before full implementation.

Findings from teacher interviews provide insight into how the Innovamat curriculum was implemented in classrooms and the factors that may facilitate or constrain its effectiveness. Overall, teachers reported positive experiences with the curriculum, while also identifying several implementation challenges, particularly during early adoption.



Cross Participant Themes

Instructional Shifts and Pedagogical Alignment

Across all interviews, teachers consistently described a shift in instructional practice toward more student-centered and discussion-based learning. Instruction under Innovamat emphasized conceptual understanding, multiple strategies, and student explanation of reasoning. Teachers noted that this represented a departure from prior curricula that focused more heavily on procedural steps and correct answers.

Teachers reported that this shift increased opportunities for student participation and engagement, particularly through structured “math talk” and collaborative activities. Students were encouraged to explain their thinking, compare strategies, and justify their solutions, which teachers viewed as strengthening both understanding and confidence in mathematics.

"Feel like Innovamat really brought it [the why] more front and center... It really got kids thinking about math. It was a lot of conversation about math that we didn't have earlier"

"Innovamat spends a lot of time having the kids talk about math. Tell me how you did this. Tell me why you did this. Tell me what you're observing. So they're having to verbalize their math Innovamat forces that conversation. "

Teachers highlighted that the curriculum requires a shift in the teacher’s role, with greater emphasis on facilitating student thinking:

"You have to hand it over to the kids. You have to step back a little bit, have a little patience, let them figure things out, let them talk amongst themselves, and that's the switch."

Student Engagement and Participation

A consistent theme across interviews was increased student engagement and positive attitudes toward mathematics. Teachers reported that students were more willing to participate, less hesitant to share their thinking, and more likely to describe mathematics as enjoyable. In particular, teachers noted that activities such as warm-up, “which one doesn’t belong,” group-based problem solving, and hands-on tasks contributed to broad participation across ability levels.

Several teachers emphasized the broad participation observed in the classroom:



" What I love the most is the whole class enjoyed math. ... Those children who came in in the beginning of the year who didn't like math, who struggled with math in your math lesson, all of the children were able to participate.... I feel like a lot of confidence was gained through their lessons. ... a month or two in all the children were participating, which was unusual. A lot of times you had those children who just turned off to math. "

"Innovamat can swing towards a lower level student, but it has so many extra opportunities for those other students. There's so many extensions for them to go above the learning that it's just so age appropriate"

Teachers also noted gains in student confidence, especially among students who had previously struggled with mathematics. The curriculum's emphasis on multiple solution strategies and reduced focus on single correct answers appeared to create more accessible entry points for learners.

"And then that's building their confidence as well, because they know at the end of the day, there's a skill in the Innovamat that it's like, oh, which one doesn't belong, and there's no correct answer. They just have to tell me why they picked what they picked. ... 'it doesn't matter what I picked, I just have to defend my answer'. But then they feel confident to share in class because they know at the end of the day, I'm going to be like, yeah, that was great."

Perceived Impact on Student Learning

Teachers generally perceived improvements in students' mathematical understanding, particularly in conceptual reasoning, strategy use, and mental math. Several teachers noted that students demonstrated a stronger ability to explain their thinking and apply multiple approaches to solving problems flexibly. In addition, teachers observed that students retained skills over time due to the curriculum's spiral structure.

"... the conversations that kids can hold about math are phenomenal. They talk their way through it. They're getting to these understandings that I don't think I could have gotten to as a second grader because they're just constantly having to prove why. "

"they're either discovering like, oh, this does make sense, or, Hey, I was totally out in left field and I have to rethink it. So I think that math talk is really, we can



already tell that it's improving their math just because they're having to explain it."

At the same time, teachers indicated that measurable improvements in student outcomes may take time to emerge, particularly as students gain multiple years of exposure to the curriculum. One teacher noted that differences in student performance became more apparent in the second year of implementation, when students had prior exposure to Innovamat in earlier grades.

"I just told my class that this morning after our lesson that I am just so impressed by them because it's a huge difference from last year to this year. ... last year was the first full year. So I did not see this progression until now, because now I'm like you've already been exposed to these exact lessons and these exact strategies, but in the first-grade curriculum. So, it's really showing now what they're retaining, and I'm impressed. I wasn't overly impressed last year, and now I'm like, okay, it's clicking..."

Supports for Implementation

A central finding from the interviews was the quantity and quality of implementation support that Innovamat provided to teachers, which participants consistently described as a defining strength of the program and a key enabler of their shift in practice.

What distinguishes this support is the nature of the organization delivering it. Innovamat is a mathematics-only organization, and the dedicated Math Coaches who worked directly with teachers brought deep mathematics content knowledge and pedagogical expertise to every interaction. Unlike general instructional coaching, this content-specialist model meant that teachers received guidance grounded in the mathematics itself — the reasoning behind each activity, the conceptual progression across lessons, and the specific moves that surface student thinking. Teachers described this expertise as fundamental to their successful adoption of the curriculum.

The support was also sustained and multi-layered throughout the school year, including ongoing, direct communication with Innovamat Math Coaches; regular meetings and feedback loops; responsive updates and adjustments to materials based on teacher input; and facilitated collaboration among teachers within schools.

"...The support could not have been better... they were very receptive to our needs."



“They respond very quickly... we have direct access to them.”

Teachers reported that this combination of expertise, responsiveness, and sustained engagement was decisive in helping them navigate the changes required by a competency-based, discussion-driven curriculum — particularly during the initial year of implementation.

Implementation Challenges

Within the context of this strong implementation support, teachers also identified several challenges encountered during early adoption. Notably, these challenges reflect teachers' experiences with the curriculum in use during the study period (2023–24 and 2024–25); each has since been addressed in the updated version of the curriculum, *Thinking Math!*, which is described later in this report.

Learning curve for teachers. Teachers described the curriculum as requiring a meaningful shift in instructional approach, with greater emphasis on facilitation than direct instruction. While this transition took time, teachers attributed their ability to make the shift to the depth and responsiveness of the Math Coach support that accompanied it: *“It was definitely a learning curve... just thinking differently and presenting differently.”*

Planning and preparation demands. Lessons often included multiple components and activities, requiring advanced preparation and familiarity with materials. Teachers noted that Math Coach guidance — particularly around lesson review and manipulative preparation — helped them build effective planning routines.

Alignment with standards. Some teachers reported gaps between the curriculum and state standards, particularly in areas such as multi-digit operations, and supplemented instruction to ensure coverage of required standards.

Assessment and progress monitoring. Teachers identified the limited availability of formal summative assessments as a challenge, particularly for reporting student progress and communicating with families: *“the assessment part is what's missing. We have an issue with that.”*

Technology and materials issues. Some teachers reported occasional technical challenges with the digital application and inconsistencies in instructional materials.

Since the evaluation was completed, the original curriculum has undergone targeted revisions to address several key concerns raised by teachers. In particular, *Thinking Math!*, a new version developed by Innovamat, demonstrates closer alignment with the Common Core State Standards, as evidenced by its acceptance in California's recent state adoption process. In addition, *Thinking Math!* incorporates expanded resources for assessment and progress monitoring, and previously identified inconsistencies or errors in instructional materials have



been addressed. Other challenges noted in the evaluation—particularly the learning curve for teachers and the demands of planning and preparation—are inherent to the program's instructional approach. Innovamat's strategy for mitigating these challenges centers on sustained support to schools and teachers, which, as highlighted in the findings, is consistently perceived as a key facilitator of successful implementation and a major strength of the program.

Overall, implementation findings suggest that the Innovamat curriculum was associated with meaningful shifts in instructional practice toward student-centered, discussion-based learning. Teachers reported increased student engagement and confidence, as well as perceived improvements in conceptual understanding. At the same time, implementation required adaptation by teachers and was accompanied by challenges related to assessment, alignment with standards, and instructional materials. These findings provide important context for interpreting the impact results, particularly the stronger effects observed after multiple years of implementation.

Conclusion

This study examined the implementation and impact of the Innovamat curriculum on students' mathematics outcomes in Grades 2 and 3, using a quasi-experimental design and complemented by teacher interviews. Overall, the findings suggest that the Innovamat curriculum was associated with positive improvements in students' mathematics achievement after two years of implementation, whereas no statistically significant effects were observed after the first year. This pattern is consistent with teacher-reported experiences, which indicate that both students and teachers may require time to adjust to the curriculum's instructional approach and that benefits may strengthen with sustained exposure.

Teacher interviews provide important context for interpreting these findings. Across participants, Innovamat was associated with greater use of and broader participation in mathematical discussion, increased student engagement, and improvements in student confidence and conceptual understanding. At the same time, teachers identified several implementation challenges, particularly during early adoption, including the need to adjust to a more student-centered instructional model, to align with state standards, and to access assessment tools. Strong support from Innovamat and collaboration among teachers were identified as key strengths of the program.



Taken together, the findings suggest that the Innovamat curriculum has the potential to positively influence student learning in mathematics, particularly when implemented consistently over multiple years and supported by appropriate training and resources. Continued attention to alignment with local standards, assessment practices, and implementation supports may further strengthen the effectiveness of the program.

Limitations

A key limitation of this QED with a matched-group design is that, although it improves comparability between the treatment and comparison groups on observed characteristics, it cannot account for unobserved differences. In particular, it is not possible to fully disentangle the program's effects from other factors, such as the intrinsic characteristics of schools that chose to adopt it (e.g., leadership, motivation, teacher training, or prior instructional practices). As a result, the estimated impacts may still be subject to selection bias. Additionally, in this study, the treatment students were mainly from two school districts, making it unclear how well the study sample reflects the broader student population in these grades. These limitations warrant caution in interpreting the findings as causal. Consistent with the criteria for ESSA Tier II evidence, the study provides moderate evidence of effectiveness, but with reservations.



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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

WestEd/Innovamat QED: Teacher Interview Protocol

Used in fall 2024 to discuss SY 2023-24

Introduction ~5 min

1. How many years have you been teaching (including last school year (2023-24))?
 - a. How many years have you taught [GRADE(S)] grade?
 - b. Do you have a background in math?
 - i. Do you have training or a certification in math?
 - ii. Do you typically participate in math PD? If so, how often?
2. How long have you been using Innovamat? [*likely just SY 2023-24*]
 - a. What curriculum were you using prior to Innovamat?
 - b. What year was the last school year that you taught [GRADE(S) grade] without Innovamat? [*likely SY 2022-23*]
 - i. Great! We'll compare how last school year (2023-24) went (when you used Innovamat) with [2022-23] (when you didn't use Innovamat) in a few questions during the interview.

Instructional Changes: ~20 min

3. Can you tell me about your math teaching philosophy, if you have one?
 - a. Do you think that using Innovamat has changed your math teaching philosophy?
 - i. What was your math teaching philosophy before using Innovamat?
 - ii. *Probe*: rather than using a textbook, the teacher is the expert to guide learning and the materials help the teacher guide learning; students discover and explore
 - iii. [*If the teaching philosophy has not changed*] Do you think Innovamat has supported your math teaching philosophy?
4. What are your overall impressions of Innovamat?
 - a. What have you valued or enjoyed the most about using Innovamat?
 - b. What has been the most challenging part about Innovamat?
 - c. How does Innovamat compare to [PRIOR CURRICULUM]?
5. Can you tell me about your math instruction practices with Innovamat?
 - a. What did you think of the different parts of the curriculum? Which resources and components of Innovamat did you use to guide your instruction?
 - i. *Probe*: Number lab, adventures, the app, word problems, printables, assessments
 - b. How effectively do you think you used the Innovamat materials? Do you think you followed the guidelines from Innovamat in your instruction?

- i. *Probe:* How closely did you follow Innovamat’s instructional guidelines? Did anything prevent you from following the guidelines?
 - c. Is there a mandated scope and sequence that you follow from the school or district? Does your school or district monitor your implementation?
 - i. *Probe:* If so, how well could you follow that sequence? Did you experience any challenges?
 - d. Do you think that your math instruction practices have change since using Innovamat?
 - i. *Probe:* awareness of: science behind math education, different ways to teach math, better ways to teach math
- 6. How confident, comfortable, or motivated did you feel about teaching math prior to using Innovamat?
 - a. Do you think that your confidence, comfort, or motivation for teaching math has changed since using Innovamat? If so, why? In what ways?
 - i. *Probe:* feelings about being a “math person,” interest in math teaching, satisfaction or fulfillment in teaching math, challenging but satisfying
- 7. Do you think that you have learned about math teaching in general through using Innovamat?
 - a. If so: What have you learned?
 - b. *Probe:* awareness of: science behind math education, different ways to teach math, better ways to teach math

Student Changes: ~ 15 min

- 8. What have you noticed when your students used Innovamat?
 - a. *Probe:* engagement, math talk, different methods for solving problems, student-led and discovery-based, connect to life
 - b. How does this compare with [PRIOR CURRICULUM]?
- 9. Do you think that Innovamat improved your students’ math learning?
 - a. If so, do you have any evidence about that improvement (like test scores)? How does that improvement compare with prior years using [PRIOR CURRICULUM] or prior groups of students?
- 10. Do you think that Innovamat helped students who were behind in or struggling with math?
 - a. *Probe:* differentiation, special education students in regular education classes

Preparation to use Innovamat: ~10 min

- 11. When you started using Innovamat, did you feel that you had sufficient training and support from Innovamat personnel?
 - a. How did you feel when you first started using Innovamat?
 - i. *Probe:* If excited – are you still excited? Why?
 - ii. *Probe:* If anxious – are you still anxious? Why?



- b. *Probe*: initial kick-off meeting, general training session, assigned Innovamat support person, possible extra training sessions or modeling
 - c. *Probe*: initial support for starting to use Innovamat, continued support throughout the schoolyear
12. Did you face any barriers or challenges when you started using Innovamat?
- a. If so, how were the challenges resolved? Did any challenges continue throughout the schoolyear?
13. Did you feel you had sufficient support at your school or district for Innovamat?
- a. *Probe*: support from admin, other teachers, district, grade-level team, math team

This School Year 2024-25: ~5 min

14. I understand that your district is continuing with Innovamat this year. If you had the choice, would you continue using Innovamat this year?
- a. If so, why? If not, why not?
 - b. If you did not have the materials/resources from Innovamat this year, would you still use something you learned from the program?
15. Is there anything that you are doing (or are planning to do) differently with Innovamat this year?
16. Would you recommend Innovamat to other teachers? If so, why?
17. How can the developers improve Innovamat?
18. Is there anything else that you would like to share about your experience with Innovamat?

