

March 16, 2007

Dear Sixth Grade Parents,

This winter, the middle school mathematics teachers have been meeting to discuss the appropriate criteria for recommending students for Pre-Algebra in grade 7. This month, a small group of parents, teachers and administrators met to further discuss these criteria and the communication process regarding student mathematics placement in grades 7 and 8.

We are writing to inform you of our decision regarding these criteria for recommending students for Pre-Algebra in seventh grade. These criteria and the spring timeline are outlined on the reverse of this letter.

As the mathematics teachers and administration make a decision about your child's mathematics placement, many factors are weighed very carefully. Students who are ready to take Pre-Algebra in seventh grade must be prepared to have material introduced and learned at an accelerated pace, have excellent study habits, be a self-advocate when necessary, and be self-motivated. Cognitively, students who are ready for Pre-Algebra have strong mathematics skills, i.e. a thorough understanding of fractions, decimals, and percents and the ability to easily convert one to the other. Research has shown that students who are ready to study pre-algebra concepts have developed habits of mind that allow them to move from thinking of mathematics as arithmetic to a more abstract way of thinking.

We are very committed to preparing all of our middle school students for their study of algebra in the years ahead and are quite pleased that our new curriculum incorporates a good deal of algebraic thinking. However, we do recognize that students are developmentally ready for the rigors and academic challenges of a complete pre-algebra course at different points in their academic careers.

Students who do not take pre-algebra in the seventh grade will still be eligible to take Algebra in the eighth grade, should they meet the necessary qualifications to do so. As well, please note that all students, regardless of their middle school mathematics coursework will be given the opportunity to fulfill a full mathematics curriculum at the high school level that includes the study of calculus.

We will plan to inform you of the mathematics recommendation by the first week in June. In the meantime, please do not hesitate to be in touch if you have any further questions or concerns regarding this process of mathematics course selection.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Raucci
Principal

Karen G. Gartland
Mathematics Coordinator