



# OUSD MIDDLE SCHOOL MATHEMATICS PARENT NEWSLETTER

Big changes are afoot in Oakland Unified, as our District moves into full implementation of Common Core State Standards in Mathematics. In this newsletter, we seek to inform parents and guardians of the important changes you can expect in the way your middle school student engages with and learns mathematics.

## OUSD BOARD-APPROVED MATH COURSE PATHWAYS: WHAT MATH COURSES CAN MY STUDENT TAKE?

As part of OUSD’s strategy to prepare students for college, career, and community and provide the mathematical foundation required for admission to a UC or CSU school, we’ve revised all secondary mathematics courses to be more rigorous and:

- ✓ spend more time diving more deeply conceptually into the most important mathematic principles
- ✓ emphasize critical thinking, collaboration, practical application, and problem solving
- ✓ create greater student engagement that produces a deeper understanding more readily applied to novel problems or contexts

### Why are most 8<sup>th</sup> graders no longer taking Algebra?

The standards that defined an Algebra 1 course under the old California standards are now divided between the CCSS Math8 course and CCSS Algebra 1 course. The three-year middle school course sequence includes many topics previously taught in high school course under the old standards.

### What if my student is ready for Algebra in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade?

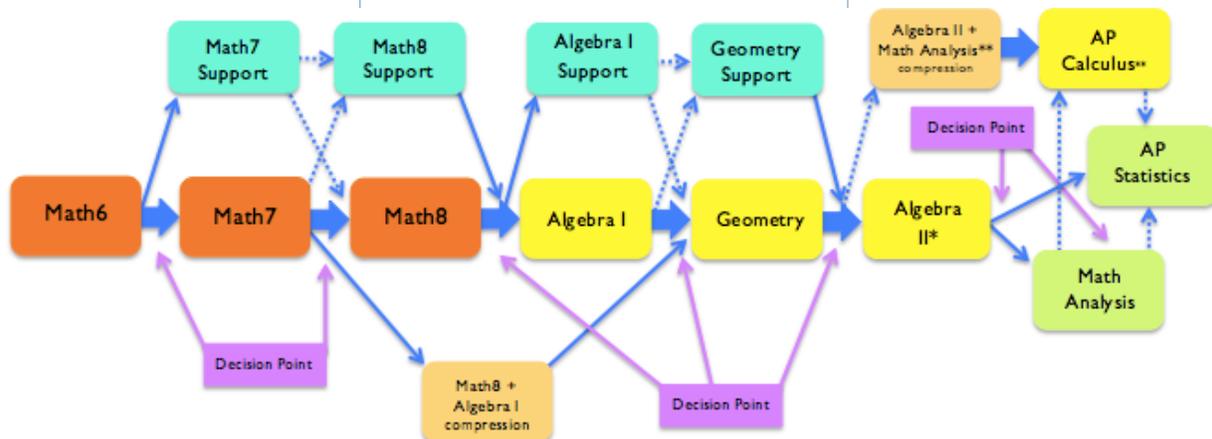
For OUSD students who demonstrate a commitment to a very high level of mathematical challenge, there is a compression course option in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade. Students exit ready for Geometry in 9<sup>th</sup> grade.

### What if my student needs some extra help to be successful?

There are support course options starting in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade. With these support course options, all students have access to mathematics courses that will prepare them to graduate ready for college and career.

### Will students be able to take AP math classes in high school?

Yes. Students who are successful in the Core Course sequence will be well prepared for AP Statistics in 12<sup>th</sup> Grade. Students planning to complete AP Calculus have options: they can compress Math 8 and Algebra I in 8<sup>th</sup> grade, and/or compress Algebra II and Math Analysis in high school.



## How Will My Student's Math Experiences Become More Rigorous?

### What students will do in class:

You can expect to see your student experiencing three important instructional shifts in class:

- **Performance tasks:** non-routine problems which provide students with the opportunity to engage actively with the math content in ways that go beyond simply finding the answer (the answer is important, but there is more to the mathematics than just that).
- **Productive Struggle:** grappling with rich mathematics with ample opportunities for true problem-solving and sense-making.
- **Academic Discourse:** talking to write and writing to talk; opportunities to talk to each other, critique one another's reasoning and build off each others' ideas

Lessons will be structured in ways that promote academic discussion—student-to-student conversations with sharing of ideas and strategies, constructing and critiquing each others' arguments, and explaining one's own and other students' thinking. Students will work in whole class settings, small group settings, and partner structures.

### How can I support my student at home?

If your student says:

- *My math class is too easy. I can get the answer right away but my teacher makes us talk about it forever.*
- *When I ask my teacher for help, he doesn't help me. He just asks me more questions.*
- *I hate working in groups. I like working by myself better.*

Try saying:

- *It sounds like there is more to math than just the answer. How does it help you understand math better when you hear/see the different ways other students thought about problems?*
- *What happened after your teacher asked you more questions? I bet you were able to answer your question yourself, or work with your partner to figure it out. Doesn't it feel good when you are able to help yourself?*
- *If you worked by yourself, how would your work look differently? What benefits do you think there are to working with a group? What is something that a group member said that surprised you or made you think differently?*



## Helping Your Child With Mathematics at Home

- Find opportunities to practice math in every day contexts: allow your child to pay for groceries, and practice finding the right amounts; ask your child if the change is correct when shopping; have her/him compare gas prices between stations.
- Have your child create charts to keep track of things (chores, number of minutes reading, how many servings of fruits and vegetables s/he's eaten, etc...). Ask questions about the data, to help your child understand the value of a data chart.
- Allow your child to share in the cooking, and figure out amounts of ingredients needed for a specific recipe. Try doubling, or halving the recipe.
- When doing homework, encourage your child to explain how s/he found answers. Emphasize articulation of the strategies as an important part of finding answers, even when there are mistakes in the work. Often students identify their own errors when explaining incorrect work, and the learning that results is valuable.

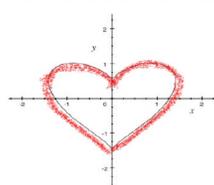
Have questions about Course Pathways, the Common Core and/or the SBAC assessments?

Want resources?

Email

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