

Middle School Math Diocese of Richmond

Twenty teachers and or principals from nearly as many schools met to discuss how and to whom Algebra I should be offered at the middle school level. The following areas of agreement were reached:

- When Algebra I is offered to eighth graders or exceptional seventh graders for high school credit, this course constitutes an honors course, and should have the rigor associated with a high school course. It must be taught by a certified high school Algebra teacher.
- Students wishing to take Algebra I for high school credit in the middle school must meet the following prerequisites: a minimum score of 85% or higher on Math Terra Nova, 85 % or higher on the end of the year math exam, an acceptable minimum score on an Algebra readiness predictor: 80 percentile on the Orleans Hanna Algebra Prognosis, third edition by Harcourt, or 85 percentile on the Iowa Algebra Aptitude test by Riverside Publishing, fourth edition.
- Perspective Algebra I students should be asked to sign a form indicating their willingness to engage in a class that is rigorous. Parents and teachers must give their written approval as well. Principals should make certain that these benchmarks are put into place before the present 2006-07 school year ends, so that parents, students and staff are educated to the new guidelines.
- Once enrolled in Algebra I, middle school students must maintain an overall average of a B to stay in the course, and parents and students should sign a letter of agreement to that effect. If a student cannot maintain a low B average, he or she will not be allowed to continue in the class. Teachers and principals must be willing to work closely with the parents to keep them updated on students' progress so that there are no surprises.
- Students, who maintain the 85 percent average in Algebra I and pass the Diocesan exam, will receive credit for the course and will be placed in the next level math course that the high school offers.

The committee also talked about starting to identify developmentally ready students as early as the fourth or fifth grade so they are on track for pre Algebra before taking Algebra. This can be accomplished by grouping students internally in those grades and providing enrichment and an environment to nurture skills needed for math acceleration.

A book that was highly recommended as a middle school Algebra test is *Algebra: Structure and Method*, by McDougal Little, written by Brown, Dolciani, Sorgenfrey, and Cole. ISBN # student: 0-395-97722-3 teacher: 0-395-97723-1

Algebra in the middle school isn't for everyone. The committee agreed that schools should not push students who are not ready, but provide an opportunity for those who are. A thorough knowledge of algebraic concepts together with mastery of math facts and operations are needed for success in all other math and science courses that students will encounter. High school credit for Algebra should be granted when the student can demonstrate that he or she has the requisite mastery to move forward.

The above information is meant to be a guideline for offering Algebra I at the middle school level. Schools who comply with these guidelines can expect and that high schools in the diocese will accept a passing grade on the Diocesan Algebra exam without further testing. It was also decided that language teachers will look into developing similar guidelines for middle school language classes taught for high school credit, and that similar guidelines be put into place for any other high school courses taught at the middle school level.