

8th GRADE PREAP ALGEBRA I
LETTER FOR PARENTS
Mr. P. Michalik 2009-2010 Room #203

Hello! Things have changed a bit since I started teaching algebra 22 years ago, so I've compiled some questions that I am often asked. If the answers need clarification or more depth, please let me know. I sincerely hope that this school year will be a good one.

WHAT SUPPLIES ARE NEEDED FOR THIS CLASS?

You will need to designate a section in your binder for mathematics. This sections should always have a good supply of regular paper and graph paper. You should do all math in pencil and check math in ink. I have a set of TI83plus graphing calculators so you do not need to purchase one. A donation of four triple A batteries for the calculators would be nice, but is not required.

WHAT IS THE SEQUENCE OF THIS COURSE?

GISD's desired sequence is outlined in what is known as a scope and sequence. I will follow the Algebra 1 (Grade 9) scope and sequence as found at the following web address:

<http://www.georgetownisd.org/ccorner/math/highschool.asp>

HOW IS TAKING ALGEBRA IN 8th GRADE DIFFERENT FROM TAKING ALGEBRA IN 9th GRADE?

Taking algebra as an 8th grader is essentially pass/fail. If you pass ($>$ or $= 70$), you get credit for the course. If you fail, you don't get credit and have to retake it as a 9th grader. The grade received in 8th grade algebra will appear on your child's high school transcript, but will not affect his/her GPA. If, in the unfortunate case, your child does not pass the course in 8th grade, they must retake it in 9th grade and each respective final grade will appear on the transcript, but only the 9th grade score will count towards GPA. This is district policy.

MY CHILD DID NOT TAKE PreAP MATH IN 7th GRADE. WHAT SHOULD I KNOW ABOUT PreAP ALGEBRA IN 8th GRADE?

The following is provided so that parents are fully informed of the whole picture regarding your child taking this high school course as an 8th grader.

1. THE TAKS CONNECTION

Going from a 7th grade core class (non-PreAP) to 8th grade PreAP Algebra (a high school credit class) essentially skips 8th grade math. One expert on the Texas TAKS Test has concluded that approximately 38% of the material tested on the 8th grade TAKS Test is introduced in 8th grade core classes. Students in the 8th grade must pass the TAKS math test to be promoted to the ninth grade. (Also of note is that 75% of the SAT math questions are concepts introduced in 8th grade math.) Although PreAP Algebra classes do cover the 8th grade concepts, they are not covered at the depth and complexity as is the case with an 8th grade core class. I do not believe that the TAKS Test is a comprehensive indicator of success or failure in PreAP algebra; yet I strongly recommend that any student who scores less than an 85 % on their 7th grade TAKS Test NOT consider making the jump to PreAP algebra for the reasons indicated above.

2. **DEBUNKING THE MYTH**

A student who does not take Algebra as an 8th grader is not “falling behind” their peers. Students who wait until 9th grade to take Algebra can still construct their high school graduation plan to take PreCalculus as a senior. Students have, on some instances, taken two math courses simultaneously in order to take Calculus their senior year (if they really have a desire to receive that credit). The required four years of math needed for high school graduation can be accomplished by taking Algebra in the 9th grade, Geometry as a sophomore, Algebra II as a junior, and PreCalculus as a senior. It is not my advice to take Algebra as an 8th grader solely to “get a math credit out of the way”. College-bound students are ill advised to “sit out math” their senior year of high school just because they’ve already acquired their four high school math credits.

3. **PROPER PLACEMENT**

An incorrect math placement for the 8th grade year could be very detrimental. For example, if a student spends 9 weeks in a PreAP algebra class and struggles profusely, 9 weeks of 8th grade math concepts, which were presented in the core classes, have been missed. So the student didn’t succeed in the class he or she was in and has missed some concepts that will be tested on the 8th grade TAKS Test. That is the definition of falling behind. Improperly placed students also wind up spending unreasonable amounts of time doing reasonable homework sets and using large amounts of time seeking extra help from parents, teachers, peers, and tutors.

4. **SUMMARY**

I am not saying that a jump from 7th grade regular math to 8th grade PreAP cannot be accomplished. It can and has been done. I am saying that it is a significant jump that requires a student dedicated to working hard to cover any and all topics in which he/she needs to address. Students who are unmotivated or who refuse to show steps in a mathematical process have had a history of under performance and low scores. I would hate to have the first grade on a student’s high school transcript be a low or failing one. I hope this helps parents make an informed decision. If you have any questions, please call and speak to me or one of our counselors.

HOW CAN I KEEP UP WITH MY CHILD’S PROGRESS IN ALGEBRA?

1. GISD mandates 7 progress reports and 4 report cards throughout the school year. Please expect and inspect these reports.
2. GISD offers Parent Connect, a program that allows a parent to access their child’s scores via the internet 24/7. Information on this service can be accessed via the link supplied on Tippit’s website:
<http://www.georgetownisd.org/tippit/Tippit%20Midde%20School/Parents.html>
3. Call 943-5000 x 6459 or email me at michalikh@georgetownisd.org

MY CHILD NEEDS EXTRA HELP. WHAT ARE SOME OPTIONS?

1. Stretch period (1:06-1:33) is undergoing a format change; however, I am sure that an avenue for algebra tutorials will be available.
2. Students may ask for a hall pass to come in for help during the recess portion of their lunch period.
3. The McDougal/Littell textbook offers on-line help via the website www.classzone.com

4. McDougal/Littell also offers an electronic version of the textbook (which contains hyperlinks to mathzone.com) and a tutorial program on DVD. Either both or one of these can be checked-out through me. They need to be returned at the conclusion of the course.
5. A web search will reveal thousands of algebra help sites. See my webpage (via the Tippit website) for just a few of them.
6. Southwestern University may have students who are looking for extra money via tutoring. Contact their student union for additional information.

HOW ARE AVERAGES FIGURED?

1. Daily work & Quizzes count 25% of a student's average.
 - Homework (Daily work) is practice and should not be a source of stress. I take pride in giving a reasonable amount of practice that reinforces and extends the day's lesson. After 5 completed homework assignments (all problems sincerely attempted with work shown), your child will have a homework daily grade placed in the gradebook. Do all 5, earn a 100. Do 4 of 5, earn an 80, Do 3 or 5, earn a 60, and so on.
 - In addition to the daily grade, each completed homework assignment will earn one bonus point on the next major test. If we have 5 homeworks before a test, there are five possible bonus points to be earned. If there are 7 assignments, 7 bonus points are possible.
 - We will not take an individual homework grade for each homework assignment.
 - Excuses such as "I did my work on another sheet of paper that I lost" will not be valid and will affect the homework daily grade. Except for long word problems, I expect students to copy the original problem and then proceed to show pertinent steps which result in the answer.
 - Other daily grades will come from periodic in-class quizzes that covered the homework assigned. Two consecutive failing quizzes or consistent academic non-compliance (not doing homework at all) will result in parent contact.
 - Quizzes can be re-taken to improve scores. This must be done within a reasonable time frame of the original quiz.
2. Major tests & projects count 75%. If homework is accomplished with understanding, tests scores will reflect this. If a student scores below an 89 on a test, they may retake the test with the maximum score allowed being an 89. Students need to visit with me to go over the original test before retaking the test.
3. There will be two (2) semester exams. They will count 20% of the semester average.
4. 1^{st} semester avg. = $(1^{\text{st}} \text{ 9 wks avg})(.4) + (2^{\text{nd}} \text{ 9 wks avg})(.4) + (1^{\text{st}} \text{ Sem. Exam})(.2)$
5. 2^{nd} semester avg. = $(3^{\text{rd}} \text{ 9 wks avg})(.4) + (4^{\text{th}} \text{ 9 wks avg})(.4) + (2^{\text{nd}} \text{ Sem Exam})(.2)$
6. Final average = $(1^{\text{st}} \text{ semester avg} + 2^{\text{nd}} \text{ semester avg})/2$

HOW CAN MY CHILD MAKE AN "A" IN ALGEBRA?

If your child wishes to make an A in this class, they will have to work for it. An "A" cannot be obtained by "winging it", guessing and checking, or going simply on past knowledge. Elementary mathematics is like looking at the external human anatomy while algebra explores the muscle and bone structure. In this class, we find out the "hows" and "whys" of what we've learned in our math classes up until now.

ARE THERE ANY ADDITIONAL PERKS FOR DOING WELL IN ALGEBRA I?

A student who earns an "A" average for the year in G/T or Pre-AP Algebra One, and then enrolls in Pre-AP Geometry their 9th grade year, may be eligible to join Mu Alpha Theta, the national high school honor society, as a freshman.

MY CHILD HAS BEEN ABSENT. WHAT DOES HE/SHE NEED TO DO TO GET CAUGHT UP?

I will do my absolute best to post the assignment for the day on my web page. This can be accessed at:

<http://www.georgetownisd.org/tippit/MichalikP/>

Since each student will have a copy of their textbook at home, students can check my website for the day's assignment. Students can read the assignment and give the lesson a try or write down questions they have to present to me upon return. If my website cannot be accessed, students should check the assignment log which hangs on my bulletin board. Students will be given one day for each day of absence to find out what was missed, read the lesson (or get help on the lesson), and practice some problems. Students will be awarded their test bonus point upon successful completion of the missed assignment(s).

WHAT ELSE DOES MY CHILD NEED TO KNOW TO BE SUCCESSFUL IN ALGEBRA?

Students must MASTER the basic concepts of Algebra if they wish to be successful in Algebra II. Good notes from this class will be invaluable for your child's Algebra II experience. When students step into Algebra II class 2 years from now, teachers will expect your child to remember most of what they learned in Algebra I. If your child has good Algebra I notes, they can refer to these pages when needed.

Mr. Paul Michalik

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Teaming Conference : 9th period (3:07 – 3:57)

This letter will be posted on my website for your convenience.

PLEASE COMPLETE AND RETURN THIS PAGE. THANK YOU.

To the student:

- I understand my job at Tippit Middle School is that of a student and will behave accordingly.
- I have read and understand all the above information on this class.
- I agree to support and follow all school rules, policies, and academic expectations.
- I understand that any violations of the class guidelines will result in consequences. I am responsible for my behavior.

To parents / guardians: I have viewed the guidelines for my child's Algebra I class.

Date: _____

Student Printed Name: _____

Student Signature: _____

Parent(s) Signature(s): _____

Parent daytime phone: _____

Parent email (if available): _____

Comments / Concerns: