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[External Email] Fwd: Mathematics Instruction Update

1 message

Cindy's Super family <cindywarnerkruger@gmail.com>

Sun, Jun 16, 2024 at 7:34 PM

To: Beecher Road School <asherman@woodbridgeps.org>, Vonda Tencza <vtencza@woodbridgeps.org>, Woodbridge School District / Beecher Road School <mdegennaro@woodbridgeps.org>

Cc: Lynn Piascyk <lpiascyk@woodbridgeps.org>, Michael Strambler <mstrambler@woodbridgeps.org>

Dear Mrs. Sherman, Ms. Tencza, and the WBOE,

As the school year ends, I reflect on our "community conversation" about math and come to the very disappointing conclusion that nothing has changed, and in fact, no meaningful "conversation" has even occurred. The parents have spoken up at school board meetings and made passionate pleas for an engaging and exciting math education for our children, based on current math educational knowledge, and appropriate social-emotional support. The school wrote the note below. The teachers had nothing else to add. Once again, only 3 of so many talented 5th grade children passed the newly created "district assessment" to qualify for a pre-algebra test. It has been a frustrating engagement. Perhaps it is time for a new approach.

You promised below to "compact curriculum in upper grades," and "to support all of your learners, academically and emotionally." The school identified children with strong math aptitude. These students were gathered into a room and told, in sum, "you are good at math; you can expect people to make fun of you; we will be testing you." This sort of "Breakfast Club" attitude is one we need to break, if the school is really committed to a culture of kindness. My son's teacher commented that she could see my son (and other students) were ready to learn higher level math, but she was not allowed to teach it to them. Administrators told me not to seek tutors, as they do not recommend going ahead. And, of course, the biggest issue is that the school assessed the children of their knowledge of 6th grade math without teaching it to them. In fact, it is amazing that so many of these students were able to score as high as they did, given the lack of instruction.

As a community leader, I have tried very hard to encourage a civil and respectful conversation about math and changes that parents would like to see in the school. Now I request that you fulfill your promise to these students, and place the students (I only personally know of 17 who met the criteria to take the test, but that is enough for a class) in a class where they may learn math together, with a teacher who is prepared to accelerate and work with students who already know so much of the curriculum you plan to teach them, with the aim of keeping them engaged beyond "enrichment" (where certainly my son learned public speaking skills, but not new math) and encourage them to soar. Sixth grade is often in middle school, and grouping students by math ability at this stage should not be controversial, and would help meet the needs of this cohort. This solution would address your concern that no math is skipped, but also the parents' concern that children be engaged and a pace of math learning that is engaging for them.

We are a community that strongly values education -- almost every one of us moved here for the school system -- and we have more than our fair share of talented young people. It is time for a culture change -- to value our students who love and excel at math and encourage them, just as the school does today with reading. I hope that the school will take this moment to reflect on how they can provide meaningful advanced math education to these students (and the ones coming up behind them), who deserve it, and deserve it now.

Respectfully submitted,
Cindy Kruger

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From: Beecher Road School <asherman@woodbridgeps.org>

Date: Fri, Mar 8, 2024 at 8:31 AM

Subject: Mathematics Instruction Update

To: <cindywarnerkruger@gmail.com>



Beecher Road School

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March 8, 2024

Dear BRS Community,

I hope this letter finds you well, and enjoying the longer days that are slowly coming our way! I am writing to share with you an important update regarding mathematics instruction at Beecher Road School. The information below was shared at the February 26th Board of Education meeting. You can view both the BRS and the Amity math powerpoints at this [link](#). You can listen to the math presentation by viewing the February meeting since Board of Education meetings are videotaped and can be viewed by following [this link](#).

Recently, questions regarding mathematics education at Beecher have been raised. Ongoing data and curriculum review, collaborative discussions and vertical conversations occur regularly. However, the questions raised by the community prompted us to take a deeper look at mathematics, as well as to engage with some additional learning. Our research included conversations with districts within our District Reference Group (DRG), meetings with our colleagues in the Bethany, Orange and Amity area, conversations with respected professionals in the field (including UCONN NEAG School of Education, Renzulli Center for Creativity, Gifted Education, and Talent Development) and reading and discussion of relevant articles. All of this research brought us to some key conclusions and allowed us to define our beliefs. Some of these beliefs include:

- Mathematical Practice Standards are a critical component of instruction in today's classroom
- All learners deserve opportunities to think deeply and practice inquiry
- Growth mindset research guides BRS instruction

- Gaps in student understanding are created by skipping foundational learning standards
- Passion, perseverance and being able to communicate mathematically are just as important as computational skills
- Teacher-student relationships drive instructional decisions

Our research guides us to make the following recommendations:

- Commit to cultivating a solid K-8 mathematics foundation by appropriate implementation of grade level standards and limiting acceleration options before high school
- Provide extension and enrichment opportunities, aiming for deeper understanding (which is great for future learning) before acceleration is considered
- Compact curriculum in upper grades rather than skip important foundational content
 - “The term compacted means to compress content, which requires a faster pace to complete; it does not involve skipping content.”
- Use high quality research based resources
- Provide ongoing, targeted professional learning

Finally, we recognize a need for continuous improvement. To that end we have identified several areas that we will grow in. Those areas include improving communication from a variety of staff, continued conversations with our colleagues in Bethany, Orange and Amity, a review and revision of resources utilized for curriculum compacting, professional learning focused around mathematics instruction and, finally an ongoing commitment to the strategic plan which includes work around inquiry teaching and learning and project based learning.

I'd like to end by mentioning that the teachers and staff at Beecher care deeply for all of their students. We want to continue to partner with you to support all of our learners, both academically and emotionally. If you have questions or concerns about what is happening in math or about your child's progress, please reach out to your child's teacher or a member of the administration team.

Sincerely,

Analisa Sherman
Principal

Jimmy Sapia
Assistant Principal

Cheryl Tafel
Assistant Principal

Our Mission

Beecher Road School is a caring, creative community that models and inspires the joy of life-long learning, embraces diversity, and celebrates the unique qualities of each person.

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