



Marsha DeGennaro <mdegennaro@woodbridgeps.org>

Fwd: [External Email] Pre-Algebra

1 message

Lynn Piascyk <lpiascyk@woodbridgeps.org>
 To: Marsha DeGennaro <mdegennaro@woodbridgeps.org>

Mon, Jun 17, 2024 at 8:13 AM

Marsha -
 Please include this in Boardbook under Board Correspondence.
 Thanks you, Lynn

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **Joyce Shavers** <joyceshavers@gmail.com>
 Date: Mon, Jun 17, 2024 at 12:38 AM
 Subject: [External Email] Pre-Algebra
 To: <lpiascyk@woodbridgeps.org>, <lfrancese@woodbridgeps.org>, <sdelprete@woodbridgeps.org>, <jdahya@woodbridgeps.org>, <bhopkins@woodbridgeps.org>, <jhughes@woodbridgeps.org>, <slawrence@woodbridgeps.org>, Michael Strambler <mstrambler@woodbridgeps.org>, <ewilliamson@woodbridgeps.org>, <vtencza@woodbridgeps.org>

Dear Board Members,

I write to ask you to consider offering Pre-Algebra to the 21 rising sixth grade students who have shown high math aptitude by achieving a Math STAR score at or above the 97th percentile. Below I outline why offering Pre-Algebra would further the educational mission of our District, be in line with what other high-achieving districts offer, and be likely to succeed at Beecher.

The 21 fifth grade students sat for an exam to establish eligibility to take Pre-Algebra in sixth grade. The exam took place over three days for 90 minutes each day. What was the purpose of the test?

If the answer is to ensure that the students have a good grasp of 6th grade math, that would be a reasonable answer. However, that answer then would call into question the type of questions on the test. For example, there were questions about box and whisker plots, stem and leaf plots and interquartile ranges. Based on my experience with my older son, at no time were these subjects covered at school, at least up to Pre-Calc (the extent of my son's math education so far), and certainly not in sixth grade at Beecher. I know because I taught my son these concepts for the first time in preparation for the upper level ISEE, a standardized test for private high schools. These concepts are straightforward and take about 10 minutes to explain. While they are not complicated concepts, they do need to be taught in order for students to grasp them. They are also not fundamental for high level math. There may be other examples, but these are the ones my daughter mentioned to me.

One solution would be to give these identified students the post test for each unit in sixth grade. This approach would ensure that there are no meaningful gaps in math education for this group of advanced math students. At the same time, the students would not be held to a different and higher standard than any other graduating sixth grade student.

These 21 students have performed above grade level on STAR exams. They have therefore demonstrated more math knowledge and the ability to learn faster than their peers. If the district's mission is to meet every child where they are, Beecher should teach these 21 students at their level. 21 students make up an entire class.

Beecher Road School is a wonderful school in many important ways. Please help the district address the one area -- advanced math education -- that has generated many years of significant frustration in our community. Woodbridge has one of the highest educated populations in the country. There is a lot of talent and educational expectation in our town. Most of the districts in our DRG, including Orange, offer Pre-Algebra. There will be bumps in the road for the first few years of Pre-Algebra at Beecher, but the same would happen whenever we try to effect change. Change and progress begin at the end of our comfort zone.

The mission of our school district is to help each student grow. Please help our district fulfill this mission for 21 rising sixth graders in the area of math.

Joyce Shavers

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