

## Loyola Questions

The majority of these questions were answered following the presentation. My responses will reflect the answers provided on that evening.

- 1. Grade 6 Pre- Algebra. Is there still a specialist brought in?*

Each Grade 6 pre-algebra class has a math specialist teaching at the school.

- 2. How do you judge the success of the tiered math approach?*

*Are there fixed fractions of the student body for each level?*

*That is, if only 1/6 of the incoming 7<sup>th</sup> Graders were ready for advanced, would that be bad or good?*

The goal of the new adoption is to bring the mathematics instruction in Los Altos School District in line with the achievement of the California State Standards. This was the critical criterion that needs to be achieved. A second important criterion was to meet the goal of the National Panel of Mathematics (2008) to meet the objective where **all** students are successful in the mastery of Algebra 1 in Grade 8.

Los Altos has been using a tiered math approach for many years. The success of the program can be gauged by the continued rise in the STAR Math Assessment scores each year. Go online to [startest.ca.gov](http://startest.ca.gov). Since all students will be expected to be successful in Algebra I in Grade 8, the stakes have gone up. Our new criteria for success will be based upon the overall success of our students achieving Proficient or Advanced in Algebra I in Grade 8.

Actually the number of advanced students is closer to 1/3 in Grade 6. The emphasis upon high expectations and problem solving using a critical thinking instructional model has supported our high STAR Assessment scores.

Los Altos does not use a fixed number to determine placement. Students who demonstrate the ability to achieve at the advanced levels participate in programs to meet their needs. Each school organizes the instructional program to serve their learner population.

*3. What is the best way to help 1st and 2nd Grade students with their math homework so they are ready for 4th, 5th, and 6th Grade math?*

*How are parents to know what you want in the "math vocabulary " on their homework?*

These questions were answered at the parent Evening. We have agreed to post the math vocabulary glossary on the district web site with a link to the math web page.

*4. How about the kids that are in Grades 3 and 4 who did not know or have not had the jargon that it takes to explain an answer. Are they getting extra instruction to bring them up to that level?*

*My daughter is getting correct numerical answers that she wouldn't get if she didn't understand, but she does not have the vocabulary and jargon. Is that being worked on?*

As a very famous mathematician once stated, a learner knows and understands a concepts when the learner can write an explanation of the operation. In the early grades, written expression comes in the form of the trusted technique of moving a learner from concrete to abstract. Early learners participate in explanations using concrete objects and manipulatives. The explanations are through the use of kinesthetic explanations. As learners progress in understanding through the grades, visual representations are used to "show" understanding. All the while, the learner is experiencing explanation of process. Actually, the enVision program offers teachers a 4 point rubric not unlike the rubric used in our writing program in all Los Altos Schools. Learners progress to actual visual models similar to those applied in the world famous Singapore Math visual models. From that point, the learners progresses to verbal explanations using outlines for details of explanation. Finally, written explanations are included

with verbal modeling in order for learners to "show" their responses in their writing.

*5. My son is in 5th Grade math. How will he be transitioned into this program without the benefit of the prior years of build up?*

At the conclusion of the Grade Three and Grade Four year, all students are administered the TEST OF ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDINGS and the STAR Test. Then, at the beginning of the Grade 4 and Grade 5 school year, all students are administered a 60 question diagnostic assessment that assesses potential understanding of the upcoming standards for that school year. The data from these assessments is used to initially place children in the appropriate differentiated instructional setting. The setting may be different from the homeroom classroom.

As the year progresses, the extension class may accept students for the grade level classroom. In other words, the classes are flexibly grouped. For certain topics, students who demonstrate strength may benefit from a more in depth, critical thinking approach used in the extension class.

It is important to note that both classes are teaching the grade level standards. Pacing of the topics is similar to allow for flexible grouping. The extension class has the opportunity to use Investigations materials.

During the course of the year, a benchmark assessment is administered every five topics. At this time, the grade level teachers again review student data to be sure students are placed in the most appropriate learning setting.

*6. Can we have Grade 2 extensions also?*

*How does the CA standard compare to U.S. - wide standards and/ or international standards?*

Every grade level and every classroom has many opportunities for extension. The enVision Program also has materials available for extensions. Please note the homework and independent practice offers extension possibilities. At this age, it is prudent to not move children in order to gain maximum understanding of their

learning style. Each teacher will offer extensions as they get to know the abilities of their children.

When California adopted their standards in all curriculum areas, the standards were entitled "world class." This means the research performed on the development of the standards incorporated the elements from other countries and other states to bring California students in line with the best and brightest.

When Los Altos was using standardized testing up until 2008, the students performed on average in the 90 - 95th percentile. This means our students on average were performing better than 90 to 95% of the students across the nation. This is the average of all students. That is a significant achievement.

*7. Are the students asked to show their work in math?*

Depending on the required task and the activity, the students would be required to show their work. This is a question for the teacher.

*8. Are there three levels of 6th Grade Math?*

The Grade 6 Program offers a Pre-Algebra section and depending on the school site, an accelerated section if the number of staff allows such an organization.

*9. What can we do for our 5th Grade children who have mostly missed this new program and may have holes on their background?*

*How can we make sure they have a good foundation?*

This is a good question. When a program/publisher change takes place, the concern expressed is natural. The good news is the math program offered to this date was based upon the California State Standards. So, the preparation the children have in Grade 5 is solid.

This program does emphasize reasoning, problem solving, and application. Since these are skills necessary for success in Algebra I in Grade 8, they are actually in a good place.

The teacher and the program will continue to emphasize mathematical thinking and the use of writing to explain process. Along the way, these expectations may cause students challenge, but better for these challenges to be addressed in Grade 5 rather than later down the road.

As parents, support, reasoning. Keep an upbeat tempo and ask the questions "what if" and "how did you find that answer?" By remaining positive and sharing thoughts, the wonder of number sense will begin to shine through. Whenever an opportunity presents itself to explain the process like in the store or in the bank, use it to your child's advantage

10. *Have teachers received training in encouraging students to use different problem - solving strategies to solve the same problem?*

Arriving at the same solution using different routes improve depth of understanding of concepts.

11. *Do we require students to take an assessment test or would the teacher make that determination?*

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*12. How is the 6<sup>th</sup> Grade Pre - Algebra class different from the Pre - Algebra class in Grade 7?*

Marron Honnigman answered this question at the Parent Evening.

Actually, the class is a continuation. The first seven chapters of the text are completed and mastered in Grade 6. Then, the last seven chapters are completed and mastered in Grade 7 leading to Algebra I instruction beginning in the second half of Grade 7.

*13. I see the instruction is web- based. Can parents access the material to help supplement instruction?*

The online component of the Scott-Foresman enVision program is one that we will be implementing as the school year progresses.

*14. In Grade 3 I find it frustrating when the teacher does not send home the math book with the workbook. Will this change?*

*In the groups that fourth graders are going to be put - together - will there be parent volunteers?*

*How long are the lessons?*

As discussed at the Parent Meeting, the Grade 3 textbook will eventually be placed online. The publisher is in the process of updating their web site to provide parents this opportunity to go on line to view the lesson of the day.

The classroom teacher determines parent volunteers used in the classroom. Speak with your child's teacher to determine if your gift of time can be used within the mathematical setting during the course of the week.

The publishers suggest a 60 - 75 minute mathematics period. The entire lesson does not necessarily have to take place for a strict 75 minutes. For example, the Quick Check could take place later in the day. Most teachers are making full use of 60 minutes.