

Mill Valley Middle School  
**Syllabus for Jay Schulman, Math 6**  
389-7711, ext. 2711  
*jschulman@mvschools.org*

## Course Overview

The intent of Math 6 is to develop student skills in number operations, enhance problem-solving strategies, engage students in group-work, and help students understand the language of pre-algebra and its many applications. Students work cooperatively in a group environment of 3-4 students. The curriculum spirals. This means that even as they learn new concepts students will have review problems, as well as new challenges that require them to build on previously-covered skills.

## Student Conduct

I expect students to arrive on time, come to class prepared, listen when someone is speaking, share their thoughts, respect each other, work cooperatively, and stay on task.

## Materials

Students should come to class every day with their organized Math 6 binder, two sharpened pencils, a red correcting pen, their Toolkit (a consumable book of notes), their Table of Contents/TOC (which has their assignments listed and warm-up work), and their homework. There are textbooks available for every student in class. The text checked out to each student can stay at home until it is time to return it. Each student will compile in class a portfolio of completed CPM units.

## Text

We use Foundations for Algebra, Volumes I and II, published by College Preparatory Mathematics (CPM).

## CPM Website

The CPM website is a wealth of information. There are both Student and Parent sections. Remember, when using it, our course is called Foundations for Algebra, Year I.

Students Page. There is a Student section of the CPM website with three sections.

1. *Skill Builders.* This is a summary guide of all the topics in the curriculum this year along with additional practice problems with answers for each topic.
2. *Resources.* Here you can find copies of all the Resource pages that are part of the homework. Those are the \*\*\*\* problems from the textbook. This is great if you ever are missing the pages and need to know what the handouts look like. You can print them yourself!

3. *Hotmath Tutorials*. You won't believe this section. It takes you to a Hotmath.com page. Here you'll find copies of almost all problems as well as a step-by-step hint and solution guide for many! Remember, homework is about practicing and learning, so simply writing down a correct answer without understanding it won't help you much. You still need to copy down steps and work to really figure it all out. Not all text problems are in there because some are designated class work problems, and some are designated for homework. They have solutions for what they call homework problems. Still, you absolutely should check this out at least once and use it as needed.

Parents. The Parent section of the CPM site is also very useful.

1. *Information About CPM*. This gives a complete explanation of CPM, its history, its philosophy, and more.
2. *CPM Resources*. CPM publishes a Parent Guide about the curriculum that provides a background for parents seeking to gain a fuller understanding of what we are covering and how they might help their children. There are also more practice problems there. The Parent Guide is available in three places: digitally on the website as a PDF document, in print form available by purchase from CPM, and in print form in the MVMS library.
3. *Reference*. This section details how the CPM curriculum correlates to the California math standards.

## Teacher Website

I have a website offered by the school located at:

<http://teacherweb.com/CA/MillValleyMiddle/schulmanJay/>

Currently I have several pages there, the most important of which are:

- Homework. I try to update homework assignments on a daily basis. Homework will generally not be posted in advance.
- Documents for Homework. When possible, I will upload documents that were passed out in class that can help students stay current. Again, resource pages for the book (\*\*\*\* problems) can be found on the CPM site (see above for info).
- Links. These are websites links that I have found to be useful. I plan to add more in the future for both students and parents.

## Homework

Students have homework 3-4 nights a week and often on weekends. Homework assignments are worth 5 points each.

Nightly homework will be scored based upon effort and completeness, not on how many problems were done correctly. Homework is about practicing and learning, but mastery of a topic is not yet expected. As a result, if the work is all there, and it is done to the best of a student's ability, an assignment can still receive 5 points.

Students do in-class corrections in red pen. This makes it easier for students to find a record of errors, focus on how to fix those errors, and spend more time on areas of weakness so that they can become stronger in the future. It helps me follow their growth over time as well.

**Late work** will not be given full credit unless there has been an excused absence or I have granted permission for that. Late homework must be submitted in a timely manner, and no later than a week after it was due. Substantially **incomplete work** will receive no credit and will receive an initial score of 0. However, incomplete and late work should still be completed and turned in and can still receive a maximum score of 3 points. I reserve the right to grant exceptions to these guidelines. Homework after an absence is not late unless it takes the student too long to catch up.

When homework is assigned in class, students write it down on the TOC (Table of Contents). This is done for an entire calendar week. Over the weekend students organize the week's work, staple all of it in order with the TOC on top, get a parent to sign and review the package, and then turn it in any time during the following week beginning at the end of the first Math period they see me. A TOC package is late if it is turned in after Friday of the submission week. A TOC movie is available for viewing on my website in the Documents section.

Some homework during the year will require students using the Internet to access selected websites or to do some mild research. If this kind of homework is assigned, there will be more than one day available to complete the work to insure that all students will be able to access a computer. If there is not one at home, students can use the library computers during lunch and after school, and the public library has available computers as well. If this ends up being a challenge, please let me know and we can work something out.

Students are expected to have completed homework in class every single day. With so many resources (my webpage, CPM site, classmates in five upper pod sections) available to find out what the homework is, even missing textbooks and binders should not get in the way of finishing daily assignments.

## Extra Credit

There are a few extra credit possibilities. One way is to save and redeem unused bathroom and hall passes which are passed out every trimester. A second way will be through Problems of the Week (POW). These will be offered periodically. POW points will be added to the points accumulated for homework. Finally, very occasionally there will be bonus problems available during a homework assignment.

## Grading

**Class work, homework, neatness, and organization** make up approximately 40-50% of the trimester grade. Bonus points will be added on to this part of the grade. A portion of that is devoted to how well class time is used. Also factored in are important state and national math standards that are called process skills. These include five categories: problem-solving, reasoning and proof, connections, and representation.

**Quizzes, group tests, individual tests, and projects** comprise about 50-60% of the grade. Most often there is one individual test per chapter. Group tests carry about a third of the weight of individual tests.

If you have had a bad day when you take a test, one of two pathways will be provided depending on the assessment and material covered. One possibility is a retake if you receive a

score of less than 75. In that case you can **retake the test** and receive credit for your new score (not the average of the two scores) up to a maximum of 75. The new grade will replace the old one, whether you do better or worse the second time. The retake will have the same kinds of questions, but with different numbers. The second pathway for poor results is a meeting with me to go over missed problems. When that is done, the grade can be raised to a maximum of a 75.

Letter grades will approximately follow a percentage format:

93-100%	A	87-89%	B+	77-79%	C+	67-69%	D+	<60%	F
		83-86%	B	73-76%	C	63-66%	D		
90-92%	A-	80-82%	B-	70-72%	C-	60-62%	D-		

## Operational Skills That Students Should Know

There is a lot to cover in the sixth grade curriculum, and we don't have much time for a review of skills that ideally would have been mastered by the end of elementary school. If your child cannot regularly add, subtract, and multiply with success, and/or if they don't know most or all of the multiplication facts, it is strongly encouraged that they get independent practice in those areas. While we will do some review of long division, including the use of decimals for that, independent review is also recommended. On my webpage I provide links to sites that help with these things, and I can also provide extracurricular work for those who would like to have that.

## Extra Help

Students who seek out extra help are developing a terrific school and life skill! I try to make myself readily available. Besides class times, I will generally be around for help after school on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays until about 3:30. If those days don't work, students are welcome and encouraged to ask for another time before, during, or after school. No matter what, it's best if students check with me first to make sure I don't have any meetings or prior engagements.

## Staying in Touch

While I have a phone in my class, far and away the most effective way to communicate with me is to first get in touch by email.

Also, this year I'm planning to send occasional math email updates to parents who would like to receive information such as reminders about upcoming tests, quizzes, and projects, as well as other things here that might be of interest. Parents simply need to visit my website, go to the NewsFlash page, and follow the instructions for adding your email address to an automated list.