



Notre Dame School

August 7, 2009

Dear Eighth Grade Parents and Students,

I am looking forward to another year of teaching Algebra I to the 8th grade students. I have been spending part of the summer reviewing our Algebra curriculum, and I wanted to share with you ahead of the first day of school an outline of the course and how I intend to implement the program. The following information is designed to help each of you experience success in Algebra.

Course Description

This math course is an up-to-date Algebra I course in line with the current Diocesan and State content standards. Successful completion of this course will satisfy the high school graduation requirement and prepare the student for any standard geometry course. Algebra is required for admission to most colleges and is found on an all college entrance examinations. This course emphasizes connections within mathematics and to other disciplines, develops concepts through real-world applications, implements the latest technology, and encourages independent learning. Exponential growth and compound interest are covered. Statistics and geometry are settings for work with linear expressions and sentences. Probability provides a context for algebraic fractions, function, and set ideas. There will be continual opportunities for problem-solving, practice and review, and mastery.

Course Expectations

Supplies – Each student will need a scientific calculator (I will be using a *TI-30* that I purchased for under \$20), ruler (metric & standard), protractor, binder or folder for papers, graph paper, pencils, erasers, and a large spiral notebook (graph paper pages preferred) for homework and notes. Students should have each of these items available at all times.

Homework – At the beginning of each chapter you will receive a calendar of assignments and activities. Prior to assigning a lesson or activity, I will complete it myself in a notebook that is available to my students. This reinforces to students the importance of doing the homework and alerts me to potential questions that students may have as they progress through the assignment. Homework will be assigned daily. Part of the assignment is the reading of the lesson. The material in each lesson is a valuable resource for the student. It is a resource for information, for examples of how to do problems, for the history of major ideas, for applications of ideas, etc. Students are expected to read the material, take notes, work through the examples, and complete the section “Covering the Reading”. Most of the time, I will assign the reading and questions for the next lesson prior to discussing it in class. Our class discussions and examples will be much easier to follow and will have more meaning if the students do some studying ahead of time. The next day the students will check their answers using the answer masters on the overhead transparencies or in the book. I will check for understanding with a short quiz or through the use of additional examples and practice. Students will then complete the “Applying the Mathematics” and “Review” questions. Daily bookwork will not be accepted late, and extra practice homework sheets will not be accepted after the chapter test has been given. Homework will be worth 30% of the final quarter grade.

Tests and Quizzes – I will give frequent quizzes and chapter tests. There will be unannounced “homework quizzes” to validate the importance of the reading and practice required in algebra. These quizzes are designed to measure the level of student understanding of skills and concepts and give some degree of assurance that each student is completing the work her/himself. If the students are completing, checking, and asking questions about the homework problems, they should be highly successful on these quizzes, as well as the rest of the course. There will also be quizzes covering three or four lessons and the students will complete the Progress Self-Test at the end of each chapter. The Chapter Review questions are designed to help the students review and prepare for the chapter test, and students may complete these for extra credit. Tests and quizzes will be worth 55% of the final quarter grade. I believe this will help prepare the students for their high school mathematics courses which heavily weight the test scores.

Participation/Preparation – Each student will be required to maintain an algebra notebook or folder. This notebook will contain their written assignments, vocabulary, reading and class notes, handouts, chapter quizzes and tests, assignment calendars, etc. Nightly assignments will be checked and points will be given for complete work. To encourage good note taking and consistent completion of assignments, I will allow the students to use their notebooks on quizzes and tests. The notes and vocabulary for each chapter will be part of their final quarter grade. Students will also be assigned activities and partner lessons in the classroom. In addition, each student will begin each week with 10 participation/preparation points. Students will lose points if they come unprepared for class (i.e. incomplete or missing homework, missing supplies, etc.), are tardy for class, or are disruptive. Participation/preparation will be worth 15% of the final quarter grade.

“Zero Period” – Each morning there will be an extra Algebra I class at 7:30 am. Although attendance at this class is not required, I highly recommend it. The students will have the opportunity to receive extra help with their assignments or ask questions about particular problems, review a lesson, or work on their projects. Students can also use this time to receive instruction and work ahead on their algebra assignments.

Getting Started

In order to satisfactorily complete the Algebra I course, we must move at a quick pace. Each student should review his/her basic math facts (addition, subtraction, multiplication, division) and be proficient with fractions, percent, and decimals. Each student was given a small “Pre-Algebra Basics” review booklet to complete over the summer. **(Be sure to bring the review booklet back to school.**

Unreturned books will incur a cost of \$10.) I am also assigning some preliminary homework that needs to be completed by the end of the first week of school. I would like the 8th graders to have time to get acquainted with their textbook, review using their scientific calculators and scientific notation, and get a head start on the first chapter’s lessons. Students may pick up their textbook and their first assignments at school beginning Tuesday, August 11. I will be available in the mornings from 10-1 on Tuesday and Wednesday, August 12, and from 2-4 PM on Thursday, Aug. 13, Friday, August 14, and Monday, Aug. 17.

Mathematics is not a spectator sport! Success on Algebra I will result from following good study habits – note taking, showing complete solutions, seeking help when needed, class participation, using the review questions, and attending the early morning class. I look forward to seeing each of you this month and starting our yearlong adventure in Algebra I.

Sincerely in Christ,

Mrs. Charlotte Harkness