



Notre Dame School

August 18, 2009

Dear Seventh Grade Parents,

I am looking forward to working with our 7th grade students in *Pre-Algebra* this year. I spent part of the summer reviewing our junior high math curriculum, and I wanted to share with you an outline of the pre-algebra course and how I intend to implement the program. The following information is designed to help you help your child experience success in *Pre-Algebra*.

Course Description

This math course is an up-to-date *Pre-Algebra* course in line with the current Diocesan and State Content Standards. Successful completion of this course will prepare the student to make the transition to *Algebra I*. *Algebra I* is required for admission to most colleges and is found on an all college entrance examinations. This course weaves three themes—applied arithmetic, operations in mathematics, and pre-geometry—by focusing on arithmetic operations in mathematics and the real world. Variables are used as pattern generalizers, abbreviations in formulas, and unknowns in problems, and are represented on the number line and graphed in the coordinate plane. Basic arithmetic and algebraic skills are connected to corresponding geometry topics. There will also 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 each student 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. 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. The students should study the examples and take notes as they read each lesson. Students will then complete the “Applying the Mathematics” and “Review” questions. No homework will be accepted late after the chapter test has been given. Homework will be worth 40% of the final quarter grade.

Tests and Quizzes – I will give frequent quizzes and chapter tests. There will be many “covering the reading” quizzes to validate the importance of the reading required in algebra as well as unannounced “homework quizzes”. Quizzes covering three or four lessons will be given each week. The students will complete and score 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 45% 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. 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.

How Can Parents Help?

Mathematics is not a spectator sport! Students are expected to read. Encourage your child to read the textbook, work through the examples, and take notes. Check with your children to see that they have the supplies they need. See if your child is doing math homework every night. Encourage determination and perseverance! If your child is having a problem, ask your child to tell you what he or she knows about the idea. Encourage your child to seek help whenever necessary. Success in *Pre-Algebra* 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 am excited about working with each of our 7th graders this year—helping them to make the transition to next year’s *Algebra I* and beyond!

Sincerely in Christ,

Mrs. Charlotte Harkness