Math Working Committee Minutes #3
May 10, 2018
Governing Board Room

In attendance: Tuan Do, William Schulze, Alphan Altinok, Josh Gottheim, Ajay Perumbeti, Sunyoung Fahimi, Anna Hasbun, Jane Chang, Karen Hurley, Christine Matthews, Lori Arbucci, Mandy Redfern, Debra Cradduck, Wendy Sinnette, and Ellen Multari.

The meeting began with the sharing of information from research completed by Group 1 and 2. A parent reviewed the packet prepared for the committee. Many students ready for more, but not necessarily ready for a Math Academy option. A recommendation was made to extend the compacted pathway into lower grades at elementary. CA standards warn against acceleration before grade 9; however, some research concludes there is no social/emotional harm with acceleration and there may be social/emotional harm for students that are not allowed to accelerate.

A Board member shared that when the majority of students demonstrate understanding of concepts, teachers move on and/or students have the option to work on Redbird/EPGY. Students may be given more in-depth projects to work on, based on grade level standards. Teachers reported that there are maybe 1-2 students that are truly above grade level and are ready for above grade level content. Students are given diagnostic exams at the beginning of the school year to determine their mastery levels. Teachers have a good sense of which students have mastery throughout the year and are able to differentiate.

A parent shared a concern about EPGY/Redbird being the main instructor for students and requires self-motivation from the students. Are there other avenues for those learners? Another parent shared concerns about labeling students. Students will stress out about assessments to qualify for the "accelerated" math class. A 6th grade teacher shared that the 6th grade textbook has excellent resources for students that require more challenging work. Another teacher shared that students are given more challenging problems and/or work that parents may not realize as well as projects and games that provide differentiation. Teachers are providing differentiated opportunities, but don't broadcast to students in class why specific students are assigned specific projects. A teacher shared an analogy of a gifted baseball player isn't given a specialized PE class based of their baseball skills, they participate in general PE just like the rest of the students. At times, the PE teacher may be able to give that student different activities more designed for his/her abilities, but they are expected to be part of the general education setting.

An administrator shared some history of ability grouping in math that was done several years ago. The accelerated class essentially learned the same curriculum, just at a quicker pace with more in depth projects, and became more project/application based after testing. The teachers did not move them beyond the grade level standards. It required every teacher to teach math at the same time, which we are not set up to do with teaming. The qualifying criteria was

augmented each year depending on the number of students qualifying. Students that just missed the cut off scores were upset and still wanted what the accelerated students were doing in the regular math class. Some students in the accelerated math excluded others in social settings.

Wendy Sinnette brought up a recommendation from the parent presentation which called for teaching 1st through 3rd grade curriculum in one year. The compaction model would also require one class across the district, and students would not be at their home school. A teacher pointed out this would be 12-14 students across the district in 5th and 6th grades, and that it isn't fiscally responsible to put into place.

Wendy Sinnette asked for feedback on an opt in math class that would follow the Spanish schedule. The curriculum could be designed in grades 4-6 with a mandatory summer school class after 6th grade to prepare them for 8th grade math in 7th grade. Students would have to test into it, forgo PE, Spanish and/or GATE, with an itinerant teacher. Students would also remain in their grade level math class. A parent felt this idea is incremental progress, but may not meet the needs of students on a daily basis.

There was a discussion about state standards. A parent suggested that La Canada students are ready for a higher than grade level standards. A teacher replied that the state standards are appropriate for their grade level and the scores are reason to celebrate. A Board member offered to restructure this committee to a Governing Board committee next year so that all parents could participate, but still retain a membership of the committee that will regularly participate. Board agendas and minutes would be posted, and the meetings would be open to the public. At these meetings the committee would come up with options with costs associated with each.

An administrator clarified that there is no compaction of curriculum in the 7/8 math courses. A parent asked about doing a parent survey about math. Wendy said she could take the idea to the Board. A Board member shared that the district is constrained by the associated costs and students are in self-contained classes and cannot take on the high school structure. Carrying out the Spanish model idea would have costs and may not give what the parents on the committee are looking for from this committee work.

Parents shared appreciation for the process and offered the following feedback:

a. Asked for the minutes to be presented to the Board as an agendized item.
b. After school math group policy that would enable parents to run private math instruction.
c. Collaborative process to address the needs of all students, including those students achieving beyond their grade level.
d. Information about content and strategies regarding math instruction today.
e. Optimism and excitement about the future.

f. Appreciation for the teachers' work and meeting the demands of so many levels of learners.

Teachers shared appreciation for the process and offered the following feedback:

a. Separation of student groups creates negative impact on how students feel about themselves and others.
b. Teachers are here to represent all students, not just the top 5%.
c. Math Olympiad questions could be added to classroom instruction.
d. There are benefits and disadvantages of both homogeneous and heterogeneous structures.
e. Realities of school life create challenges to meet all needs.
f. Students already have natural groups that they gravitate toward, math groups would increase that social pressure.
g. Parents know how terrific the teachers and district staff are, and believe they can do more for all learners.

District staff shared appreciation for the process and offered the following feedback:

a. It's important to address the needs of all students and together we can try to innovate. We're open to listening to parent interests for math instruction.
b. Can we create an IEP-like plan for the 5% of the advanced math students to address their needs and help with communication and foster engagement?
c. Expressed appreciation for parent involvement in all areas, especially in math.

Meeting adjourned at approximately 5:18 p.m.