

Decision: Upper Elementary Math

Earlier this year, a 5/6 Work Group was convened to review the upper elementary philosophy and to analyze the implementation of the schedule. Eleven recommendations from that Work Group were approved. We are happy to announce the final recommendation has been approved, and have provided a two year period for implementation for this recommendation.

The recommendation from the Work Group read:

“Given that Farmington Public Schools has a policy to accelerate students one or more grade levels in math, we recommend that decisions with regard to acceleration in math be made solely by following the process and using the criteria to determine if a child is eligible to accelerate. Further, we recommend that differentiation within a grade level of mathematics instruction occur within the teaching team and that the moving students into different groups for advanced math no longer be used at upper elementary.”

Implementation: The goal for our upper elementary schools is for math to be taught within the team, **with the exception of the “accelerated” students who have been placed in a grade level ahead of their current grade for the purposes of math instruction.**

2011- 2012:

- Upper elementary teaching teams will decide how to best meet the needs of their students. For those teams that are ready to differentiate, they will use current resources with heterogeneous groups of students. Our math curriculum at both 5th and 6th grade is designed for this. Fifth grade teachers will utilize Bridges and Number Corner teaching resources, and teach 5th grade math. Sixth grade teachers will use CMP2 teaching resources and all students will be provided what is currently called advanced 6th grade math.
- We recognize teaching teams may also be newer to Bridges/Number Corner and CMP 2 and may need more support before making this transition. If that is the case, for one year and one year only, these teams may elect to create homogeneous groups of students, based on demonstrated ability levels. These groups may be flexible and may be changed throughout the school year, depending on the prior knowledge demonstrated by students.
- Accelerated students who are more than one grade level ahead in mathematics, will either be on the same team or will attend a middle school for math instruction. For example, a 5th grade student who has been identified as “accelerated” will be taught 6th grade math on his or her team or may move to a 6th grade team for math. An accelerated 6th grade student will likely attend a middle school for math instruction.

2012-2013:

- The recommendation will be fully implemented and teachers will have the capacity to

differentiate for the vast majority of 5th and 6th grade students. All teams will teach math to heterogeneous groups of students using the current curriculum.

- Accelerated students who are more than one grade level ahead in mathematics, will continue to move to a different team/school for math instruction.

Q and A

- 1. Will my child learn the same thing all over again?** Every student will be exposed to the next grade level of content. No student will be asked to “repeat” a grade level’s content as a result of this recommendation.
- 2. How will my child get to a different school for math?** He or she will be transported both to and from school by a bus. More details will be provided to you before school starts.
- 3. Why will this be phased in?** Math is a complex subject and our teachers may need more training on how to differentiate math instruction. This will give them time to do this. Our ongoing professional development includes a focus in meeting the needs of all students in a heterogeneous classroom, which is sometimes referred to as “differentiation.”
- 4. What if my child is not doing well in math?** Like with other subjects, you should contact your child’s teacher. Just as we want to focus on meeting the needs of students who are strong in math, we also recognize that some students may need extra support and encouragement to perform well.
- 5. How do I know if my student should be “accelerated” to another grade level?** The district is in the process of reviewing past performance of all students to find those students that have both demonstrated skill and mathematical aptitude which suggests that they may be good candidates for acceleration.
- 6. When and how will parents be to informed that their child(ren) qualify for a higher level math classes?** Over the summer, families who have a child(ren) who qualify will be contacted by mail.
- 7. What are the cut-off scores for Iowa and MEAP for a student to qualify for higher level math classes?** The process used for acceleration will be posted soon.
- 8. What are the names of two 6th grade math classes?** We won’t have two different names for math in 6th grade. Students who take 6th grade math will be in 6th grade math. Students who are accelerated will take algebra prep.
- 9. What are the names of the two 5th grade math classes?** Students who take 5th grade math will be in 5th grade math. Students who are accelerated will take 6th grade math.

10. Can you give me an example of how teachers will differentiate? In 5th grade, students learn how to count in different bases (we normally use base 10). Let's say the lesson includes counting in base 5. If a student readily understands this, Bridges allows us for the teacher to extend the learning into base 8 or base 4 or base 100.