

BAC 8 Minutes at Laurel Park Elementary  
Feb. 9, 2009

I. TOPIC: Administrative:

Nancy calls meeting to order at 5:30.

Nancy's comments: Please check attendance records to see if they are accurate.

December 8, 2008 BAC 8 meeting minutes approved and seconded.

II. TOPIC: **Math acceleration options for WCPSS middle schools and high schools and how those options impact college applications.**

Presented by:

Christina Zukowski, Middle School Math Senior Administrator

Sonia Dupree, High School Math Senior Administrator

Eric Sparks, WCPSS Student Support Services

A. **See attached pdfs for a summary of their presentation.**

B. Comments and answers to parents' questions about MS and HS math courses:

### **ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS**

Children in 5<sup>th</sup> grade taking 6<sup>th</sup> grade math can go to a MS to take it if it is not provided at ES.

### **MIDDLE SCHOOLS**

Some MS give an additional test to see what math course a 6<sup>th</sup> grader qualifies for in addition to what's on the sheet for requirements. This is up to the MS and it is a school-created test.

Some schools still offer algebraic thinking, but not all.

8<sup>th</sup> grade geometry classes may have only a few students or no students from year to year, depending on how many students qualify. It is very rare for an 8<sup>th</sup> grader to be ready for geometry. If there is only one child who qualifies, whether the student can take geometry online is up to the school.

As you go into HS math is the most complex of courses to choose from. Courses you take as early as MS do direct how many you will take throughout HS. Start thinking about this in elementary school if necessary. Plan backwards so you can map out the math sequence to get them to their area of interest. If your child doesn't yet know what they want to focus on in college, they should take the most rigorous courses as possible as a safety net. Review the course sequence for your particular high school while your child is in middle school.

CFNC.com shows the 4-year plan that helps your student map things out as they are planning for college. Follow your teacher's recommendation but keep in mind that CFNC.com offers a guideline for navigating this system.

During high school registration period, go to open houses where individual departments offer information on course sequences. Most schools' program planning guides are online. Pull all of this info together to make the best choice for your student.

### **Middle School to High School Transition:**

Parent question: What do the 6<sup>th</sup> graders who have had Trailblazers math for 6 elementary school years do in middle school if they have not learned true math. What should we be doing for this rising 6<sup>th</sup> grade class? There is a disconnect between guesstimating and getting the correct answer. Grading goes along with this as well.

Zukowski: In 6<sup>th</sup> grade we do remediation and enrichment based on students' needs. Students should still have been taught the standard course of study, which should enable them to move on to 6<sup>th</sup> grade math without any problems.

Dupree: one of things we're working on is teaming between elementary and middle school. We're excited about new curriculum starting next year.

Parent: the grade system transition (from 4-1 to A-F) should be covered in elementary school 5<sup>th</sup> grade.

WCPSS: We are in the very premature stages of looking at standards based grading for MS as possibly an addition or replacement of A-F grading. We don't want to mix in behavior or organization, but how a student is doing academically and separating those things from student achievement.

7<sup>th</sup> grade algebra: what happens when a new HS opens with no advanced math classes being offered?

The course should be there because we offer classes through algebra 2 when we open a new HS.

(Parent whose child had to wait (Cindy Sinkez) says: you may have to wait until you get that next class and take other classes in between.)

Dual course program: classes offered outside of the school can be included on transcript for students who need classes not available at their particular HS. Online learning opportunities are also available.

## **HIGH SCHOOLS**

Some HS have been offering algebra 2 right after algebra 1. Students have to adjust from taking algebra 1 for an entire year in 8<sup>th</sup> grade to a semester-long algebra 2 class.

Calculus AB/BC: taking AB is worth 1 semester of college credit; taking BC is worth 2 semesters of college credit. Most colleges want to see students take both AB and BC. Varies from university to university. Most universities are going to look at how many opportunities students had to take AP courses, so it's a bit of a numbers game in terms of whether you keep a low BC score. If you're keeping student in BC who isn't doing well, consider how much of an impact it is going to have on the rest of their year (socially and academically). Will it cause problems in math or other areas? But overall, colleges definitely like to see students take both AB and BC. (These classes are typically taken in fall and spring.) Also, a majority of AP test preparation is given during the BC class, so if a student opts out of that class and then tries to take the AP exam, they are "shooting themselves in foot," Sonia says.

Taking stats before pre-calc is NOT a requirement. Sometimes students double up on both at the same time.

Classes offered at the honors level: no honors credit for algebra 1. Pre-calc is an honors course and all AP classes are honors. Sonia stated that she thought ICM was honors but she was not sure.

Analytic geometry and trigonometry is not typically offered at Wake high schools because they are covered in the Advanced Functions and Modeling class.

Computer Science is offered under the math umbrella at some WCPSS high schools but not all. Sonia wasn't able to say at that time from memory which HS have it.

To graduate, a student must complete algebra and geometry, or algebra 1 and algebra 2. Lower performing students can substitute math electives for math class after completing math requirements.

Foundations and intro classes taken first semester of freshman year still count as credit. Foundations of geometry counts as an elective since it is designed to prepare a student for geometry.

Students have the option of repeating algebra 1 plus if algebra 1 in 8<sup>th</sup> grade wasn't enough to prepare them for honors geometry. HS courses in middle school do appear on HS transcript so colleges will see them. But colleges are really focusing on what student takes in HS. They are looking at a student's GPA and the classes he/she took. It's really on a case-by-case basis depending on the college a student is applying to. Also, they get an elective credit for taking algebra 1 plus. If they took geometry in 8<sup>th</sup> grade, there is no geometry plus class so if a student is not ready for algebra 2, the best option is to take algebra 1 plus their freshman year before moving on to algebra 2.

Can be quite a shock going from taking a year-long class to just semester-long from MS to HS. Make sure they have the maturity level they need before moving on to that course.

## **WHAT COLLEGES ARE LOOKING FOR IN STUDENTS:**

Look at the data on students already accepted: SAT score average and range, GPA average and range accepted, etc. Think of college choices on a continuum (sure thing, middle of the road, stretch).

Parents say universities want to see grades go up not down, but principals say the universities are telling schools something different. They hear from universities that they don't want to see seniors taking easy classes, and they instead should be taking rigorous courses throughout their senior year. If they stop taking advanced classes their senior year but were taking them before, that doesn't look good to a university. A C grade is a gray area. Students should keep an A/B on course report cards to get good recognition from college.

Rank: see what colleges look at in terms of ranking when they accept a student (top quarter, top 10, etc.) to get an idea of your child's chances for getting in. Class rank is calculated on weighted GPA. It's rare to find a university asking for an unweighted GPA.

WCPSS has more honors and AP courses than any other district in the state. Colleges want to see these classes on a student's transcripts when they come from Wake County. Taking algebra 1 in 8<sup>th</sup> grade will easily set you up for as many advanced math courses as you like. In 9<sup>th</sup> grade your student will have access to some, but not as many as they will if they take algebra 1 in (or before) 8<sup>th</sup> grade.

Well-roundedness is very important. Students who have taken advantage of extra curricular opportunities often make up for lower scores.

### **Parent waivers:**

There is a perception that children can go in a more advanced class if there is space, and another perception that it is an administrative decision? Which is it?

If space available that would typically be determined after start of next school year, but not current school year. This may require student to change other courses in their schedule as well if the desired class is offered during the same period as other class. In terms of middle school, parents have final say in terms of what level class child is in. If student hasn't had 6<sup>th</sup> grade math curriculum in 5<sup>th</sup> grade, advanced 6<sup>th</sup> grade math is more appropriate than going in to pre-algebra for 6<sup>th</sup> grade year.

Waivers: when you're skipping curriculum it's harder to accept a parent waiver; if a parent has taught a child during the summer to prepare the child to skip a class then it would be considered, but those are rare instances. Also keep in mind: once a child has been in an EOC course in high school for 10 days, they're required to stay in that course.

### **High school science classes in middle school:**

Advanced science classes worth high school credits that match advanced math paths are now authorized by state under a new state policy. We will discuss this during the next meeting.

III. Comments by Board Member, Mr. Ron Margiotta:

We just completed the 3-year reassignment plan. The budget for next school year is not going to be pretty so we all have to be prepared to tighten our belts.

The Panther Creek modular problem should be resolved soon—hopefully in the next week.

IV. Closing comments by Nancy Caggia:

March 9 meeting will be at Oak Grove Elementary. We will need to elect a new BAC chair during that meeting.

Schools that haven't hosted in last 4 years should consider hosting next year. Sheet provided at sign in table of hosting schools over last 4-5 years (attached to minutes.) Many schools have repeatedly offered to host, but the duty needs to be rotated among all schools in BAC8.

Meeting adjourned at 7 p.m.