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Mark Mansell,
Superintendent La Center Schools

Re: Math A implementation

Mark,

I want to catch you up to speed on the progress we are making in implementing Math A in a manner that allows for all students to be successful. Our two teachers, Mrs. Croskrey and Mrs. Arave first came to me in about week five concerned that a larger proportion of Math A students were struggling with meeting the work habit expectations of the class and as a result were failing or getting low grades. Our review of class assignments and in-class observations revealed that many students were not doing their homework, were not completing their tool kits and as a result were not performing well on assessments.

In the last five weeks we have had many math department meetings to discuss this challenge and its causes as well as individual teacher meetings with myself and numerous classroom observations. I have personally spoken to each of the class sections at least twice and in some cases four different times. My focus, as has been our teachers focus has been two fold. Learn from the students what barriers or issues they are having that are impacting their ability to be successful, and secondly, to motivate students to work harder and wiser in relationship to their study habits and homework.

On our way to a solution that we believe will offer success to many students we have made many minor changes and accommodations based on student input that we believe are all positive. As an example, teachers gave all students a free "make-up" weekend for their toolkits if they hadn't completed or done well on them the first time around. This allowed all students to erase low or zero scores with passing scores. Teachers have across the board slowed the pace of the course to accommodate struggling students who need extra time to master the concepts. We have begun offering tutoring specifically for Math A students every Tuesday and Thursday after school for an hour with Mr. Johnson and Wednesday morning for an hour with Mrs. Arave. This is in addition to help which is always available to them normally before and after school with their own teacher.

As a result of these and other efforts we have noticed an improvement in student work habits and grades in general. However, we believe more systemic changes are needed to

insure on-going success for all students and for future transitions from middle to high school.

The transitions issues will be addressed with Mr. Cooke and the middle school staff later this year to help insure that we try to minimize these issues with next years freshman. The systemic issues we believe can be solved by creating two new sections of Math A that will be called Bridge-B. These two sections will be for the students that are struggling the most with the demands of this vigorous curriculum. We already have 1 section of Bridge math in place that uses the old IMP curriculum and was put in place purposely to meet the needs of the lowest math students in the freshman class. We felt that this one section would be adequate for one year as we transitioned to Core-Plus. The two new sections will still use the Core-Plus curriculum but we will move at a much slower pace and because of the more uniform ability level of the students in these classes, staff will have a much easier time with instruction.

I have a parent linkage meeting scheduled for Monday, November 23rd @6:30 in the high school library. I have invited all Math A parents to meet with me so that I might learn their perspective on their students experience so far and to glean information for future changes and modifications. I will be reviewing the class changes with them at this meeting as well. Teachers will be meeting with students individually who are going to be moved to these new Bridge-B classes. Our counseling department has done a remarkable job in a very short time to find acceptable changes for all affected students that will allow us to make the change effective on Monday, November 30th.

I will continue to keep you informed as we move through this process and learn more about how to make every student successful. I will add that Math B seems to be going very well.

Thanks, Dave.