ALAMEDA UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
Excellence & Equity For All Students

2060 Challenger Drive
Alameda, CA 94501
Phone 510.337.7000

Frequently Asked Questions about AUSD's 7th Grade Math Program

Due to the ongoing pandemic, AUSD has adjusted its course offering for 7th grade math to better meet the needs of all our students for support and acceleration. The following FAQs were developed to respond to family's questions.

What is the plan for 7th grade Math in 2020-21?

In 2020-21, all 7th grade students will be enrolled in a grade level course focused on ensuring all students master the 7th grade standards with rigor and depth. This course will use the "Big Ideas Accelerated 7th" curriculum to provide capabilities for additional support, enrichment, and acceleration. Next year, course offerings at the 8th grade level will not change and advanced students will still be able to take Algebra 1 the following year.

Why did the district make this decision now?

To respond to the ongoing disruption and uncertainty caused by the pandemic, the district is redesigning its entire educational program. We are moving all of our courses from an in- person model to a flexible, technology-based, blended model, so that we are as ready as we can be to meet the challenges of the coming year. In addition, we wanted to find a curriculum that can support both students who need to catch up on essential sixth grade math concepts and those who are ready to accelerate towards 8th grade math concepts.

2019-2020 was the first year the district offered an "accelerated" and a "regular" 7th grade course, using two different curriculums. For 2020-2021, the decision was made to use the Big Ideas accelerated curriculum as it provides a rigorous, common-core approach and a strong technology platform to support blended learning.

Why did AUSD choose "Big Ideas"?

The "Big Ideas Accelerated" curriculum was used in the Accelerated 7th class offered for the first time this school year, 2019-2020. Placing all 7th graders into a heterogeneous class based on this curriculum provides multiple benefits, including:

1. All students will have the opportunity to catch up together on essential standards missed in 6th grade while in-class instruction was suspended due to COVID-19.
2. The Big Ideas Accelerated 7th grade book has an extensive online system and can be used for hybrid in-class/online instruction. This is ideal for our current situation, as we are aware it is possible that due to the ongoing pandemic we will need to provide at

least some distance learning next year. In addition, the online component allows students to better prepare for advancing into their next course.

3. Students will have the opportunity to focus on making sense of math problems and develop deeper conceptual understanding, which will provide them with a stronger foundation for future math classes.
4. Embedded differentiation and enrichment opportunities will allow teachers to provide more targeted intervention for students who are struggling to be successful in the course and allow more advanced students to work towards placement in Algebra 1 for 8th grade.
5. Having all 7th graders in the same course allows a larger group of teachers to collaborate on providing rigorous, engaging curriculum using performance tasks, writing, and discussion.
6. Teachers also can collaborate on using data to identify gaps for students who need more support and/or opportunities for re-engagement.

Will this negatively impact my student's opportunity to accelerate?
Algebra 1 will still be available in the 8th grade for students who want and are up to the challenge. In addition, we plan to leverage the technology platforms for distance learning to provide enrichment for students interested in acceleration.

How will differentiated instruction work in this Math 7 format? Does "Big Ideas" support differentiated grouping?
One of the benefits of a blended learning model in general is that it provides opportunities for "asynchronous learning," or learning at different paces and in different locations. This also gives teachers the flexibility to work with small groups to focus on key topics.

"Big Ideas," specifically, supports differentiation by providing a rigorous curriculum focused on the expansion of critical thinking and conceptual understanding through investigations and inquiry and a strong digital learning platform to support individuation and building strong foundational skills. The platform provides immediate feedback to support in the moment learning, while allowing teachers to provide problem sets to provide more challenge for those students who are ready for them.

Why wouldn't you group the students by math level in 7th grade? Wouldn't it make sense for the higher-level math students to all be in one class (or two or three, depending on how many they are) so that the teacher can adapt the curriculum to their needs?
The idea of grouping or sorting students according to ability is commonly known as "tracking," and it has come in and out of popularity over the last 60 years or so. It's important to understand that

research shows that tracking actually has minimal effects on learning outcomes for higher-performing students and tends to very negatively impact students who are struggling. Indeed, research shows, it's the "quality of teaching and the nature of the student interactions" that most determines student outcomes, "rather than the compositional structure of the class." (Hattie, John, et. al., *Visible Learning: A synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to achievement,* Oxford, UK, 2009)

Research has also shown that high-performing math students often excel at procedural math, which can allow them to move superficially very quickly through the standards. However, when they reach more challenging levels, they find they have not developed the deeper conceptual understanding or cognitive learning skills needed to be successful. These students benefit from learning in heterogeneous groupings focused on developing deep conceptual understanding, the ability to communicate clearly about their reasoning and to critique the reasoning of others, building metacognitive learning strategies and flexible thinking, and the capacity to apply their learning in unique ways. This type of learning will support them in future math classes and in their entire academic career.

The goal for teachers who are planning this hybrid 7th grade course is to determine and expand on these opportunities. The goal for students taking the 7th grade course is to benefit from deeper learning that will help them better understand more advanced math concepts in future grades.

In what ways is the district committed to meeting the academic needs of advanced students? How will you guarantee enrichment for high performing students?
With a blended learning model, students won't need to spend the same amount of time on each concept. While the class as a whole will work together through the units, a high performing student will have the opportunity to go deeper, extend a project, or explore other areas in math within their grade level course. In addition, the district plans to provide enrichment opportunities via a virtual classroom, for students interested in more advanced math. This classroom will provide explorations, deeper tasks, and extensions of the curriculum and include virtual class time via Zoom during and outside of the "regular" school day. District staff and teachers will develop these enrichment activities over the summer.

In what ways is the district committed to meeting the academic needs of students who are struggling with math next year?
The district is working with each site to develop plans to coordinate support for struggling students. Given the ongoing dislocation in learning we expect to need to provide a variety of supports at each site. Based on screening at the beginning of the year, teacher teams will create class remediation plans and identify students for additional support. Given a blended learning environment, we can use technology to provide a virtual support classroom for small group or even one-on-one tutoring and use a learning platform like Khan for individual work.

What will you do to mitigate the loss of the 7th grade accelerated course? What does the district recommend now for how students can reach the advanced math levels in high school? Do kids have to choose between Calculus vs Statistics?

The pathways for math haven't changed since they were released last year. A student completing Algebra 1 in the 8th grade can still complete both Calculus and Statistics in high school. For a student taking Algebra 1 in the 8th grade, the "traditional" four-year high school math pathway would be Geometry, Algebra 2, PreCal, and Calculus and/or Statistics. In addition, students can:

- Enroll in summer study at COA, UC Scout, and other online or class options
- Double up on classes during the school year (e.g., Geometry/Algebra 2 or Calculus/Statistics)
- Explore individually paced blended and online options

AUSD is also exploring offering a compressed Algebra 2/PreCalculus cours. Given that students had an 8th grade Geometry option this year, and the uncertain situation next year, that course won't be offered until 2021-22

Can AUSD post summer courses that support acceleration and that give credit for Math on the AUSD website? Can you post other resources for math enrichment and support?

Yes, that's a great idea. We are looking at a number of options already, including COA and UC offerings. In addition, parents have been interested in online resources for general enrichment over the summer and we will be posting those as well.

Is Accelerated 7th grade math going away forever?

We have not made a decision about course offerings for future years. We do not yet know what will happen with the pandemic and how we will need to adjust our long-term instructional offerings.

What is the plan for current 7th graders going into 8th grade?

- If a student is currently in Accelerated 7th, the expectation is they will go to Algebra 1; if they are failing Accelerated 7, or the family requests it, they will go to CCSS8.
- If a student is currently in Course 2, regular 7th, the expectation is they will go to CCSS8, unless family requests and the teacher recommends placement in Algebra 1. Students will need to demonstrate math ability on one of the testing measures (SBAC, 3 or 4 , MDTP, or benchmark) and be willing to work on course mastery of 8th grade standards over the summer.

What are the plans for math summer learning?

We are working on plans to support students continuing to learn math over the summer. Like last year, we will primarily be using Khan to focus on math content and standards as it provides individual

pathways and practice. This year we will add Zoom teacher time for one-on-one check ins and small group tutoring. We hope to have information out to everyone shortly.