

Frequently Asked Questions Regarding Secondary Math in the Lake Stevens School District

Q: What options are open for students in secondary math at Lake Stevens?

A: Beginning in 6th grade, there are three pathways a student may follow in math. All paths, if completed successfully, could qualify a student for admission to a four-year university. Although completing calculus in high school might be helpful in some instances, it is not an entrance requirement from a university, so students and parents should carefully consider math options and the student's goals for future study to determine which pathway best suits each individual's ability and need.

Q: How much math is required in secondary education?

A: Students must have 3 credits of math to graduate from high school. Four-year colleges and universities will require a 4th year of math while in high school at the level of Algebra 2 (Advanced Algebra) or higher. Although pre-calculus and/or calculus are options for the 4th year, there are other math options, among them AP Statistics and Math 107 (Math in Society).

Q: What are the three pathways in secondary math?

A: See the attached chart which delineates the courses that would be taken. Most students will follow the Grade Level path which has them work at grade level as they progress, and may result in a pre-calculus course taken during the senior year. Again, it should be emphasized that this is a very adequate math progression, which, with successful completion, will result in the student being qualified for the higher education option they choose to pursue beyond high school.

The Challenge Math pathway condenses two years of middle school math (i.e. grades 7 and 8) into the seventh grade year, and allows a student who qualifies for Challenge Math to begin algebra in 8th grade instead of 9th grade. This path may ultimately lead to AP Calculus or AP Statistics as a senior.

A few students may follow the HiCap pathway. This pathway is designed for students who have been identified as highly capable in mathematics through assessment in elementary school and therefore qualify for this special program.

Q: How does a student qualify for the Challenge Math pathway?

A: There are no set criteria or a rank-order list which qualifies a student. There are, however, a number of indicators that a student is likely to be successful in Challenge Math. Students most likely to be successful have a combination of high grades, exhibit good work habits, and have exceeded standard on state and/or district assessments.

The student's current math teacher will also be consulted regarding the most appropriate middle school placement. During the year, a teacher has the unique opportunity to recognize which students "get it" the first time through. This is critical. Students in the Challenge class typically move more rapidly through content and spend time going deeper into the mathematics. This pace can become very frustrating for students who just need a little more time to consolidate their learning and practice a concept before moving ahead to something new. Other factors considered by the teacher may be a student's ability to operate at the higher cognitive levels when presented with problem-solving, the willingness to be challenged and persevere when presented with difficult tasks, and dedication to completing work in a timely and organized manner.

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Q: How will I know if Challenge Math is the right choice for my student?

A: Review your student's performance, in terms of both grades earned and assessment scores. On the state assessment, scoring a **solid** 4 is a good indicator usually. Talk with the current teacher. If you're still unsure, talk with the principal at the appropriate middle school and/or the secondary math specialist.

Q: If a student is placed in Challenge Math for 6th grade, will he/she necessarily remain in the Challenge Math pathway in future years?

A: Every attempt is made to make an accurate 6th grade placement for Challenge Math, but continuation depends upon the student's performance, and choice, each year. A few students see it isn't working for them, and transfer out after a trial period at the start of the year or after the first year. Teachers, counselors or administrators will recommend changes if it's apparent the student has been misplaced. There is flexibility to adjust a student's schedule to fit individual needs.

Q: If a student was not originally placed into 6th Challenge Math but performed exceptionally well during the year, would there be any chance for placement into the program during that year or in 7th grade?

A: Yes. Just as when students are originally selected into the program, each student can be reassessed at any time to determine the best math placement for him/her. The student's current math teacher would be the best starting point to determine if such a move would be advisable or not. The teacher can not only evaluate a student's relative performance but also has access to assessments that may be a good indicator of a proper placement.

Q: Will there be a huge difference between math in the elementary school and math at a middle school which would impact a student's success?

A: There are clearly some differences. Many things, such as homework, are probably more dependent on the individual teacher than the grade level. However, all students will experience these differences:

- Math instruction at the elementary level typically lasts 70-90 minutes daily. This drops to about 55 minutes in middle school, a significant reduction.
- A student is mainly with one teacher during most of the day in elementary, so there may be more opportunity to give a student additional help in math as needed. In middle school, the students see their math teacher for only one period during the day and then move on. Additional help would have to come before or after school, or possibly during lunch.
- Letter grades are given and may be more dependent on tests than in the past.

In addition, the middle school experience is very different from elementary school aside from the math. Students are making many adjustments to a new situation, and this can be challenging for some until they get their feet on the ground. We want each student placed appropriately in math. They need to feel challenged, but it's not a time to experiment and throw students in "over their heads," so it's important to carefully consider the recommendations made regarding the student's math placement.

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Q: If a student is taking a high school math course (i.e. algebra or geometry) before entering ninth grade, do they have to take the state assessments for those courses?

A: No. Students in grades six, seven and eight take the respective grade level Smarter Balanced assessment regardless of the math course in which they are enrolled.

Q: If a student takes algebra or geometry before high school, are they earning actual high school credit for passing the course?

A: Possibly. Students MAY earn high school credit for algebra and geometry taken in seventh or eighth grade. However, a formal request must be made to a high school counselor to have the grade and credit posted to the high school transcript.

Q: If a student took algebra or geometry before high school and received a low grade, can they retake the course?

A: Yes. If they repeat the course it will be recorded on the high school transcript along with the grade earned. It does not, however, replace the earlier course if the student requested credit for it. Both courses would appear along with both grades. This could impact the high school grade point average.

Q: What is the high school math graduation requirement?

A: For students graduating in 2019 and beyond, the current requirement is three years of math (including algebra, geometry and a third year beyond those courses) and meeting standard on a state or district-approved exit assessment.

Q: What is Title I math?

A: Title I math is a federally-funded program that provides additional academic support to students who are performing below grade level. Title I funds are available to support programs in grades K-12 in reading, writing, and mathematics, and in readiness for those subjects.

Supplemental support can be in the form of additional adult support in the regular classroom, an additional class period of support during the school day, or an extended opportunity for support beyond the school day.