Germantown Academy Middle School Mathematics Placement Policy

In order to serve the needs of all of our students, we offer a variety of courses taught at three different levels. Most students follow the first sequence shown below. Honors sections are reserved for students with exceptional ability, strong study skills, and a history of hard work and exemplary achievement. The sequence beginning with Math 6 is designed to give students extra time to review fundamental ideas and to master new concepts.

	6th grade	**7th grade**	**8th grade**
Sequences	Pre-Algebra →	Algebra A →	Algebra B
	Pre-Algebra (Honors) →	Algebra A (Honors) →	Algebra B (Honors)
	Math 6 →	Pre-Algebra 7 →	Algebra A 8

A process is in place for students to move between levels, so that students are not locked into a particular sequence during their time in Middle School. Placements are re-evaluated at the end of each school year and level changes are made for the following school year if necessary. Placements are based on demonstrated achievement, ability, and effort.

Placement of Students Entering 6th Grade from Germantown Academy Lower School

Students are placed in 6th grade mathematics courses by the Lower School based on several factors. Questions regarding placement should be addressed with the 5th grade mathematics teacher or the Lower School Mathematics Specialist.

Placement of Students New to Germantown Academy Middle School

Students new to GA are placed into courses and sequences based on the following factors: performance on standardized tests administered during the admissions process, performance on the GA math placement test given after enrollment, and information from the student's previous school including the content of the most recent math course and the recommendation of the most recent math teacher. Current GA students are placed into courses for subsequent school years as described below.

Placement Decisions for Regular and Honors Levels

The following factors influence the placement decision between the regular and honors levels.

1. Performance in current course: In order to demonstrate readiness for a change to the honors level, a student should be excelling beyond his or her peers in the regular level course, generally earning grades of A or A+. In order to demonstrate readiness to remain in the honors level, a student should be performing at a similar level to his or her peers in the honors level course, generally earning grades of B- or higher.
2. Performance on final exam for current course: In order to demonstrate readiness for a change to the honors level, a student should demonstrate thorough mastery of the material in the regular level course, generally indicated by an exam score of A or A+. In order to demonstrate readiness to remain in the honors level, a student should demonstrate a strong understanding of the material in the honors level course, generally indicated by an exam score of B- or higher.

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3. Observations from current teacher: In order to demonstrate readiness for an honors level course, the student should exhibit strong work habits in terms of homework and class participation, as well as higher-level abstract thinking through performance on challenging problems in class, on homework, and on quizzes and tests.
4. Performance on the grade-level placement test: In order to demonstrate readiness for an honors level course, the student should score within a range near the top of the distribution for his/her grade level, generally in the top 15-20%. In addition, the student should perform well on the problems designed to measure mathematical reasoning and problem-solving skills. These problems, which are not covered in classes during the school year, help to identify students who are adept at synthesizing ideas and applying concepts in novel situations.

We do not take summer work into account for placement decisions between regular and honors math courses. We feel that the information gained from the school year is much more significant and helpful in determining the best math courses for students.

Placement Changes from Math 6 Sequence

The following process is used for students to move out of the Math 6 sequence.

1. The student should have an initial conversation with his or her math teacher approximately midway through the school year. Based on the student's performance in the current course, the teacher will make a recommendation about whether or not a placement change can be pursued.
2. If a student receives approval from the teacher to pursue a change, he or she must master the material in the course to be skipped. For example, a student currently taking Math 6 who would like to enroll in Algebra A for the following year must master the content of the Pre-Algebra course. The teacher will provide information about the material to be covered, and the student must cover the material through independent and/or summer work.
3. In order to demonstrate mastery of the material, the student must earn a score of 80% or better on the final exam for the course to be skipped.

Independent Work and Summer Classes in Honors Sequence

Students occasionally request to replace a course in the honors sequence with independent work or a summer course. In general, we do not encourage this practice. We believe that students benefit immensely from the discussion, problem solving, and related activities that occur in our classes throughout the year. We cannot provide support for students wishing to skip courses, as our efforts are focused on providing the best group instruction possible.

A student who desires to accelerate through independent work or summer work must maintain a high A or A+ average (95% or above) in their honors level course and obtain prior approval from their teacher. In addition, the student must demonstrate mastery of the material by earning a score of 85% or above on the final exam for the course to be skipped.