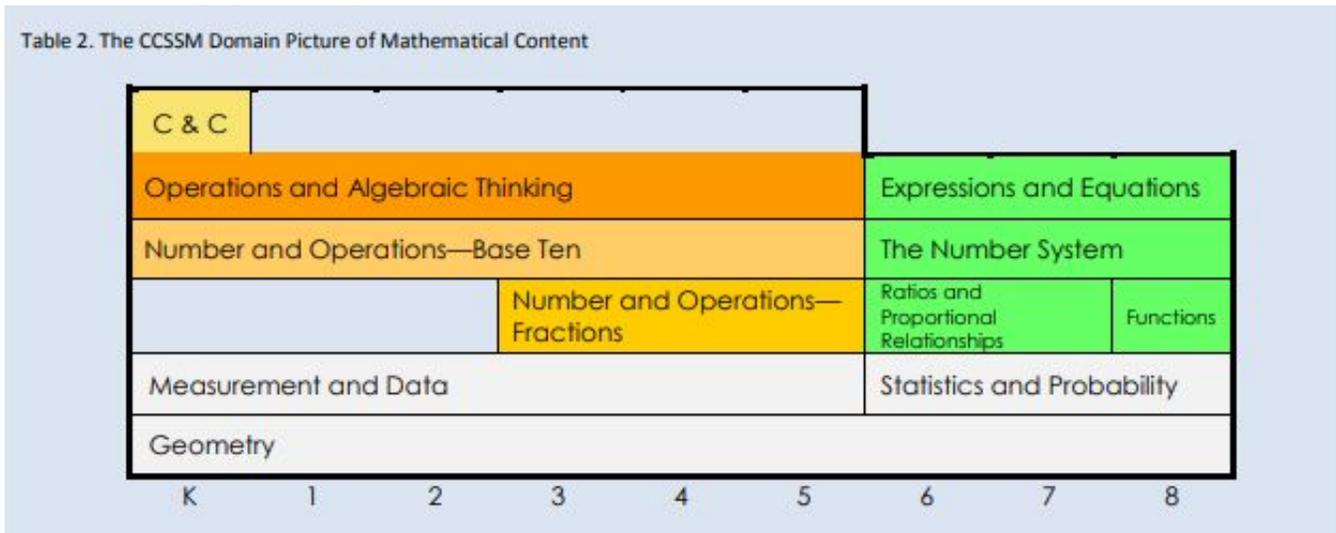




Dear Parent/Guardian:

For the last two years, the entire Ballard Middle and High School team of math teachers have engaged in systematic evaluation of our current programming. The team spent extensive time studying our historical K-12 math data, as well as consumed research around best instructional practices. Part of this work involved reading guidance from the authors of our math standards around designing an accelerated math course pathway. Through this additional study of the math standards, the team began to truly understand the cohesive story the math standards are designed to tell. The graphic below is a great visual to capture this.



As students move from 5th grade into middle school, a new foundation is being built to prepare students for algebra, most strongly through the conceptual understanding of ratios and proportional relationships. This emphasis on foundational pre-algebraic concepts (expressions/equations, the number system, ratios/proportional relationships) is the entire basis for success in more complex algebraic content: advanced algebra, trigonometry, and calculus.

In our current acceleration process, our most advanced students weren't provided sufficient direct instruction in those foundational middle school standards. As a result, the team has adjusted our accelerated math course pathway in order to build a stronger foundation of algebra. The changes taking place in the middle school will increase the likelihood of students experiencing success in more complex mathematics. The outcomes of the programming remaining the same: accelerated math students will have the opportunity to access post-secondary options such as Calculus I and II.

A visual that outlines the specific adjustments to the math course pathway can be found on the third page of this letter. Most notably, accelerated students will take Pre-algebra in 7th grade and Algebra in 8th grade. Additionally, as opposed to taking both Advanced Algebra *and* Trigonometry as separate year-long courses in high school, we will be offering a section(s) that merges these two into one course. Lastly, students can still double up and take both Geometry and Advanced Algebra their freshman year if they so choose. These high school adjustments keep students on the same trajectory as our previous accelerated timeline.

Our current 7th grade students in Algebra will continue with our past practice of taking Geometry in 8th grade. This new pathway will go into effect for the 2019-2020 6th and 7th grade classes. If you have any additional questions about this adjustment, please feel free to contact me.

Regards,

Katie Claeys
Director of Teaching and Learning

Tom Maher
Ballard Middle School Principal

Advanced Math Course Pathway

