

August 30, 2019

Dear Dragon Families,



What a wonderful start to the new school year! After weeks of preparation, our students arrived and were warmly greeted by our staff. There is such a positive energy that it is palpable. The focus of every staff member and every student is on the positive culture we are strengthening with our PBIS initiative. It's a joy to positively recognize students all over the school who are showing **Perseverance, Respect, Integrity, Determination, and Empathy** and am so impressed with the many ways in which they are showing Dragon **PRIDE!**

This year, elementary classrooms will continue our academic focus on mathematics instruction, achievement, and growth. We're in the second year of our new curriculum, enVision 2.0, and working with our updated [math pathways](#). The changes we made support evidence based best practices in mathematics instruction to meet the new expectations and rigor of the Colorado Academic Standards. Daily lessons guide students in developing mathematical understanding as well as procedural skills, and both are treated as equally important. We are excited to have this resource which supports students in achieving what they need to know, understand and be able to do in order to succeed in high school and beyond, preparing them for the deeper thinking and reflection required of 21st century learners.

A question I have received several times this year is around differentiated instruction and how teachers provide for the needs of students at varying levels in the classroom. The old school of thought was that separating students into similar ability levels would make it easier to target their needs resulting in better outcomes for students. This practice is not supported by current research of instructional best practices. We found that separating students into homogeneous classrooms for mathematics instruction resulted in stilted growth, which is what prompted us to update our math pathways. All students benefit when they can discuss and share their mathematical thinking and problem solving processes with others who think and approach problems differently than themselves. Differentiating instruction is part of the art of teaching. Teachers are masters at managing their classrooms, discovering student learning styles and preferences, assessing proficiencies and gaps in learning, and tailoring their instruction accordingly. Learning is optimized when students experience a variety of learning formats, such as being part of a whole class, a small group, working with a partner, or connecting one-on-one with their teacher. If you would like to read more about differentiated instruction, I recommend [this article](#) by *Reading Rockets*.

Here is wishing you all a wonderful weekend, and sharing hopes that fall weather will return for good!



Warmly,

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