

## Some Math Initiatives



When our students took the Terra Nova tests and the Explore test last year we were happy to see that we were well above average in all subject areas. At the same time, however, we noticed that our lowest subject in almost every grade was math. Upon further investigation we noticed that this has been the case for the last few years. In response to that we took some initiative steps to address student achievement in math. Some of these steps were calculated to have an immediate impact on achievement and others a more gradual, comprehensive impact.

One of the first things we did was to take the Terra Nova test results and do an item analysis of the results. We checked to see how our students did on the items that we were supposed to have taught them. Since the Terra Nova is a standardized test which is not perfectly aligned with our curriculum it was necessary to dissect the results like this so we could assess classroom instruction. Based on what teachers learned from this analysis they wrote and implemented plans to improve their instruction in the classroom.

Of course that brings up the question of whether or not we were teaching what we were supposed to teach. So we started verifying and documenting which math standards were taught each quarter of the school year. Too often we just assume that teachers know this. Keep in mind, however, that most teachers teach five or six subjects at a time. Without some kind of system or “map” in place, it’s just too easy to leave things out. This practice helps ensure that students have the knowledge and skills that they need to progress through the curriculum.

Beginning last spring we began to focus our professional development on improving math instruction. This emphasis continues this entire school year and will very likely continue into next school year. This will result in better math instruction in the classroom up and down the grades.

We also felt that we needed something that would show an immediate impact on an individualized student level. We implemented an online math program for grades 4, 5, and 6. This allowed students to work at their own individualized level. As we had hoped, this resulted in a significant jump in our math scores.

All of these efforts work together to improve student math achievement. And this list is not complete. There are other pieces to the puzzle that will need to come into play as we move forward. In a way it’s kind of like St. Paul’s description of the Body of Christ where he talks about the importance of each part no matter how insignificant it may seem. As we put everything into place it should lead to a sustained and high level of student achievement in math.