

FAQs: Mathematics Course Level Selection for 8th Grade at WMS

What are the main differences between the Algebra 8, Algebra 8R, and Concepts in Algebra levels?

In the Algebra 8R level, you will be asked to apply the skills and concepts that you have learned to varying and unfamiliar problems and situations both in the classroom and on assessments; you will learn some content not contained in the Algebra 8 course; you will be expected to do more independent work and learning; and you will move at a faster pace. Algebra 8R is similar to the Honors level at the high school.

In the Algebra 8 level, the teacher does more to break down the concepts and the problems; you will move through the material at a more measured pace; and there is more structure to the class discussions and more opportunity for guided practice. Algebra 8 is similar to the Advanced College Prep (ACP) level at the high school.

The Concepts in Algebra level is designed to help provide a solid algebraic foundation to students for whom mastery of mathematical skills and concepts has been challenging in the past. The pace of this course allows for a great deal of practice and review and the focus is on algebraic problem solving and linear relationships, with only brief explorations of quadratic and exponential relationships. Concepts in Algebra is similar to the College Prep (CP) level at the high school.

My teacher recommended me for Algebra 8, but I want to go into Algebra 8R; what should I do?

You may choose to enroll in Algebra 8R; however, before you do this, you and your parents should talk with your teacher and consider your decision carefully. Keep in mind that if you challenge yourself at a higher level, you may not earn the same grades that you've earned in the past. In deciding which level to choose, it may be helpful for you to know that students who succeed in Algebra 8R tend to: greet challenging problems with curiosity and enthusiasm; demonstrate persistence and resilience when the material is difficult; not be afraid of being wrong; willingly ask questions and seek out extra help as soon as they need it; be able to explain their thinking fully using appropriate mathematical terminology; compute easily and accurately with all rational numbers (fractions, decimals, signed numbers); work well with abstract ideas; and do well on assessments without the need for regular tutoring.

If I do poorly in my 8th grade math class, can I move down to the next level after the first month or two of school?

It's possible to move levels up to early November **if** there is space available in a section of the level you want. Changing levels may necessitate changing other classes in your schedule as well in order to prevent sections from being overenrolled. If you missed material in the new level that was not included in the old class, your teacher may require you to make up that work independently. Also, whatever grades you earned in the old level will travel with you into the new level and be incorporated into your term grade.

Is it easy to move from one level in 8th grade to a different level in 9th or 10th grade?

Changing levels can be challenging if you are trying to move up a level. Because mathematics is cumulative in nature, what you learn one year depends on the material you have learned and mastered in all of your previous years. For example, the three algebra courses in the middle school do not cover all of the same material nor do they cover material to the same depth. This influences the pacing and the content of the Geometry and Algebra courses in the 9th and 10th grades: where they start, which topics they include, and what expectations are in place in terms of students' prior knowledge. If you choose to

move to the next higher level of mathematics starting in 9th or 10th grade, there will be gaps in your understanding and experience, and you will have to work to bridge these gaps.

If I want to move into a more challenging level of mathematics after 8th grade, can I take a summer school course to help bridge the gap?

Taking summer school courses or online courses beforehand can definitely help to fill in some gaps, as can studying on your own or with a tutor. It's also likely that, as you progress in the higher-level course, you will discover other gaps in your knowledge that you'll need to address. If you decide to take a summer school or online course, you are welcome to share information about the possible courses that you find with Ms. Morris, the department head of mathematics at the high school, who will be happy to give you an idea of how fully the potential courses may be able to address the gaps between levels.

Is it possible to change my mathematics course level after I submit my course selection form?

Any changes that you would like to make after March 29, 2017 in your chosen mathematics course must be requested of and approved by Nancy Calì, the mathematics department head at the middle school.

I have other questions; how can I get them answered?

You and your parents are encouraged to talk with your math teacher and guidance counselor about any questions you may have. You are also always welcome to call or email Nancy Calì, the head of the mathematics department. She can be reached by phone at (781) 446-6250 x3613 or by email at calin@wellesleysps.org.