Greetings. I hope everyone’s student is off to a great start at his or her respective school. As everyone is settling into their routines, I wanted to take a moment to explain a big change you are probably noticing in regards to our math program in grades K-4. Thanks to a DoDEA (Department of Defense Education Activity Grant), we’ve had the opportunity to partner with Boise State University and the Developing Mathematical Thinking Institute (DMTI) to implement the DMTI modules in all of our K-4 grades this year. Last year we piloted these modules with some teachers at West and Stephensen Elementary schools, and saw strong growth in student achievement and engagement. This year, we have replaced the Saxon math program with the DMTI math modules. I’ll be honest, these modules will look very different to most of us compared to the way we were taught math growing up. The DMTI materials are research-based, focus on making connections through spatial reasoning, investigating patterns and relationships and building models as opposed to the more familiar approach from many of our past school experiences in which students spent most of their time practicing procedures, following mathematical “tricks”, and memorizing disconnected pieces of information. Our staff has received professional development from DMTI’s staff and a large cohort of teachers are receiving additional instruction through BSU’s math education program in order to earn a graduate certificate as math specialists. These cohort teachers will become teacher leaders in the district for years to come. All teachers at participating schools will also be receiving in-class supports throughout the year from the DMTI staff. One of the biggest differences you will notice is that your child will not be bringing home 30 math problems a night this year. Instead, most math homework will be completed in class based on how the math modules are structured. Because of the fact that these materials look much different from the assignments we all grew up with we have decided as a district to try to avoid frustrating parents by sending home materials that ask students to work on tasks parents are unfamiliar with. To help you support your child, we will be scheduling math nights at all of the elementary schools where the DMTI staff will present on the new modules and will be available to answer any questions you may have. Look for those dates coming from your child’s school. As part of the grant, these math modules will move to Hacker and Mountain Home Junior High next year.

We realize that some parents want to be able to see what their child is working on daily, and you may be frustrated by the fact your child won’t be bringing a book home each day. If you would like to see these modules, your child’s teacher can email samples of lessons from them to you. There will also be practice worksheets from the modules, as well as from other resources, you may see coming home after teachers have developed a strong understanding of their students’ math knowledge and have a good sense of what type of work parents will feel comfortable helping their children with outside of school.

We look forward to working with all parents/guardians as we work to build a great mathematical foundation for each of our students. I welcome any of your comments, questions, and feedback as we progress through the school year. For those who would like to learn more about DMTI, I’ve attached a link below.

I hope each of your children has a great experience this school year.

Respectfully,

Jeff Johnson

Director of Instruction

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