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## Bedford Middle School Math to Change

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The math curriculum at the McKelvie Middle School will change starting next year, reflecting a desire to raise standards even higher and increase the number of students taking Algebra I before the ninth grade, according to school officials.

Chip McGee, the assistant superintendent for curriculum, said one impetus for the change was the new state standards on math, established a year ago. School officials also want to make sure that middle school students are being challenged in math as much as they are in their elementary years, he said.

As early as kindergarten, McGee said students are taught basic algebraic concepts. For instance, he said a teacher may present a student with a rudimentary math problem in which a box produces three items after one is put into it. That same box turns a 2 into a 4, and a 3 into a 5. The students have to figure out what the box is doing to the numbers.

"That's just one example of many," McGee said.

If kindergarteners are already being exposed to Algebra-like thinking, McGee said the district needs to make sure the same rigor is being maintained all the way through middle school. "We need to make sure we're upping the ante in the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades," McGee said.

Students in Grade 6 Excel, a class for advanced learners, will be studying pre-algebra with the 2004 edition of McDougal-Littell, replacing an older textbook and bringing their curriculum into alignment with that of seventh graders who are studying the same material.

For regular sixth graders, the district will retire the Harcourt-Brace textbook it has been using since 1999 in favor of the Everyday Math program, which has shown its success in the fifth grade through standardized test scores, according to McGee.

Seventh and eighth graders learning at their grade level will exchange their current textbooks, also purchased in 1999, with the Connected Math 2 program, one version for each of the grades. The

new program, school officials say, will apply the math to everyday problems.

"It really gets kids more excited about math," said Cindy Chagnon, chair of the school board.

Meanwhile, students taking pre-algebra in seventh grade and Algebra I in the eighth will stay with the 2004 McDougal-Littell textbooks they already have, according to McGee.

The over-arching goal of the changes is to bolster the number of middle school students who learn Algebra. "My hope is that we'll have a lot more eighth graders taking Algebra I and mastering Algebra I by the end of the eighth grade," McGee said.

Connected Math 2 will be phased in over three years while Everyday Math will have a two-year roll-out period. As the new textbooks are introduced into classes, McGee said Bedford will adjust them to its specific needs.

"No matter what program we purchase in Bedford, we always make it our own," McGee said. "We add things. We subtract things. The word we use is 'Bedfordize.'"