



THE SCHOOL BOARD OF BROWARD COUNTY, FLORIDA

600 SOUTHEAST THIRD AVENUE • FORT LAUDERDALE, FLORIDA 33301-3125

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS & STUDENT SUPPORT

Dr. Joanne W. Harrison

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October 2, 2008

SIGNATURE ON FILE

Dear Eighth Grade GEM Parents:

Welcome to a new year of GEM. The eighth grade GEM Program follows the District Mathematics Curriculum Maps for High School Geometry Honors. The purpose of the GEM Geometry curriculum is not merely to create computationally efficient students, but to challenge and engage students in complex mathematical problems that can be directly applied to real-world settings. The supplemental GEM activities your child will receive are designed to accomplish this goal. To that end, these activities may be open-ended and demanding in nature. These challenging and engaging activities, projects, and technology unique to the GEM program will be integrated into the curriculum.

Your child's method of instruction will vary. Instructional formats will include small cooperative groups, individualized exploration, projects, and whole class instruction and discussion. Also, technology will play a major part in the classroom. Graphing calculator and *Geometer's Sketchpad* or *Geogebra* activities are included throughout the course where appropriate. *Geometer's Sketchpad* and *GeoGebra* are technological tools that replace pencil, paper, compass, and protractor. The *Geometer's Sketchpad* and *GeoGebra* allow students the opportunity to create their own geometric figures and then make conjectures about their properties. *GeoGebra* is available free on the internet and can be downloaded to your home computer. Also, by using a manipulative called "patty paper", your child will experience a smooth transition from concrete modeling to abstract reasoning, thereby increasing the depth and breadth of your child's mathematical knowledge.

Once your child completes eighth grade GEM, there will be many mathematical course options available at the high school level that include Algebra II Honors, Pre-Calculus, and ultimately Advanced Placement AB Calculus. The GEM Program has prepared your child to take advantage of advanced mathematical programs in high school. It is imperative that you encourage your child to pursue Advanced Placement courses in high school, as students who take these courses are much more competitive when applying to college.

The criterion for continuing in the GEM Program reflects the rigor of the program. Students receiving a D or an F for a quarter grade will be placed on probation. **Also, any student who does not complete the course with an average of C or above and 75% or higher on both district semester examinations will be exited from the GEM Program.**

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The GEM Geometry class is rigorous, but it should also be an exciting and enriching experience for your child. **Students who take high school courses in middle school earn a grade that count towards their high school GPA, except for the District's weighted GPA used for class ranking.** If at any point you and your child feel that the program is too difficult or overwhelming, you should schedule a conference with the GEM teacher and guidance counselor/ESE Specialist. Appropriate mathematical placement is paramount to ensure a continual and ongoing interest in pursuing upper level mathematics courses throughout high school and college. Please complete the attached Parent Acknowledgment Form and return it to your child's GEM teacher by October 17, 2008.

It is my sincerest desire that your child has a rewarding and exciting experience in the GEM program this year. **If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Jane Abramczyk, GEM Coordinator, at (754) 322-2870.**

Sincerely,

Joanne W. Harrison, Ed. D, Deputy Superintendent
Educational Programs & Student Support

JWH/LB/CP/JA:cp

cc: Area Superintendents
Leslie M. Brown, Executive Director, Educational Programs
Area Directors
GEM Principals
GEM Coordinators
GEM Teachers
Math Supervisors

GEM Program Parent Acknowledgment Form

I have received the parent letter for the 2008-2009 GEM Program and understand that my child:

- will be placed on probation if he/she receives a D or an F for a quarter grade.
- must complete the course with a grade of C or higher **and** receive a 75% or higher on both district semester examinations to remain in the GEM Program.

(Print Student Name: Last, First)

(Teacher Name)

(Grade)

(Signature of Parent)

(Date)

(Signature of Student)

(Date)

Please return this form to your child's GEM teacher no later than October 17, 2008