

At 211° degrees, water is hot. At 212° degrees, it boils.

With boiling comes steam...  
steam that can power a locomotive...  
steam that can move mountains.

One extra degree makes all the difference between good and excellent!  
Excellence is what we are about at Willowcreek Middle School



## Frequently Asked Questions:

### Walk Aways in Algebra?

How many Walk Aways can my student expect each term?

*About 3-4 per term.*

How can I help my son/daughter prepare at home for their Walk Aways?

*Make sure that their homework assignments have been completed and that they are reviewing the concepts covered in those assignments.*

What tools will the teacher provide my student with to ensure that they are prepared for their Walk Aways?

*All of the assignments done in class and for homework are covering the concepts that the students need to have mastery of for the Walk Away.*

How often will my student have homework in Algebra?

*There will be homework assigned every night in Algebra. Not having a homework assignment is the exception, not the rule.*

How can I help my student with his/her homework in Algebra?

*On the following page are some ideas for questions you can ask to help your student while they are doing their assignment and ask for help. There is also an interesting article addressing the question of "What to do if my student struggles with Math?"*

How can my son/daughter prepare for their Walk Aways at home?

*Many of the Algebra teachers have websites that have review worksheets and possibly links to websites that offer help on certain concepts. There is also a reference book, "Algebra to Go" that will be checked out to each student. This book has examples of how to do certain types of problems. Each homework worksheet has the page reference in the "Algebra to Go" book listed.*

Are Walk Aways really helping students succeed in Algebra, especially if my student just isn't very good at math?

*We have found that students work harder to pass Walk Aways and it really helps them to master concepts that they might not otherwise, especially if they are just satisfied with just passing and not mastering the class.*

### Advisory in Algebra?

What will advisory "look like" in Algebra?

*Students who have I's in their Algebra class will be given time during Advisory to go to their teacher's classroom for extra help and time to finish their remediation assignments and to retake Walk Aways.*

How can I ensure my son/daughter takes advantage of advisory time?

***Parents should make sure that their child comes to school on Tuesday's with the necessary remediation assignments completed and ready to turn in to retake the Walk Away. It is also beneficial if the student comes with questions on problems he/she has attempted but doesn't understand.***

### **Enrichment Opportunities in Algebra?**

What enrichment opportunities will be available for all students in Algebra?

***The Algebra teachers are planning activities for students who pass their Walk Aways on the first try. We are hoping to team with each other and one teacher will take the students who have passed and do technology based activities, (video tutoring presentations, voice threads, Geometer's sketchpad activities, etc.) while the other teacher will work with the students that need to do remediation and retakes.***

### **Using PowerSchool in Algebra?**

How can I use PowerSchool to help my son/daughter succeed in Algebra?

***Parents should check PowerSchool often and follow up with their child to make sure they are turning in their assignments on time and regularly.***

When are grades updated in PowerSchool?

***Every teacher at Willowcreek is required to update their grades by the end of the day each Friday.***

### **Curriculum in Algebra?**

What is my son/daughter studying in Algebra?

***The Utah State Core Curriculum can be found at the following website:***

***[http://www.schools.utah.gov/curr/Math/Sec/PDF/Core/Secondary\\_Mathematics\\_Core\\_2007\\_Algl.pdf](http://www.schools.utah.gov/curr/Math/Sec/PDF/Core/Secondary_Mathematics_Core_2007_Algl.pdf)***

***There is also a concept matrix for each area of instruction at the Alpine District website:***

***<http://www.alpine.k12.ut.us/phpApps/genericPage.php?pdid=499>***

## HELPING YOUR STUDENT WITH HOMEWORK

### **Getting Started**

- What do you need to find out?
- What do you need to know?
- How can you get the information?
- Where can you begin?
- What terms do you understand or not understand?
- Have you solved similar problems that would help?

### **While Working**

- How can you organize the information?
- Can you make a drawing (model) to explain your thinking?
- Are there other possibilities?
- What would happen if...?
- Can you describe an approach (strategy) you can use to solve this?
- What do you need to do next?
- Do you see any patterns or relationships that will help solve this?
- How does this relate to...?
- Can you make a prediction?
- What did you...?
- What assumptions are you making?

### **Reflecting about the Situation**

- How do you know your solution (conclusion) is reasonable?
- How did you arrive at your answer?
- How can you convince me your answer makes sense?
- What did you try that did not work?
- Has the question been answered?
- Can the explanation be made clearer?

### **Responding (Helping your student clarify and extend their thinking)**

- Tell me more.
- Can you explain it in a different way?
- Is there another possibility or strategy that would work?
- Help me understand this part...

*Excerpts from an article by Suzanne Sutton in "Bulletin" (Feb. 1997) – a periodical for the National Association of Secondary School Principals:*

## **FINDING THE GLORY IN THE STRUGGLE:**

### **HELPING OUR STUDENTS THRIVE WHEN MATH GETS TOUGH**

Learning mathematics is a struggle at some level for all of us. Rather than seeing this struggle as something to avoid, we can see it as one of the most valuable things offered to our students. Mathematics offers them an opportunity to learn how to work through the struggle, how to bring to it what they have, how to find and use the things they need. Regardless of their perceived aptitudes or gifts in mathematics, they can learn that they have within themselves what they need to meet this challenge.

Struggling in mathematics is not the enemy, any more than sweating is the enemy in basketball; it is part of the process, and a clear sign of being in the game. Math asks our students to think in ways they are not used to thinking; they will be asked to look at the obvious in ways they're not accustomed to, and then we'll ask them to explore the not-so-obvious in similar ways. A rigor of thinking and a clarity of expression is demanded that will stretch them beyond familiar styles. It will also require an honest pursuit; there really are no shortcuts.

Children learn many things in school, encompassing not just what they've learned, but how they've learned. Maneuvering through struggles in school, young people learn how to meet challenges for which there is no map, and no shortcut. Life will present them with struggles, whether we wish this to be so or not. How they approach the struggle of mathematics will affect how they approach the struggles in life.

The opportunity begins when the struggle begins.

### **HOW PARENTS CAN HELP**

Without knowing a factor from a function, the parent, more than anyone, is in a position to help the student engage in the struggle of mathematics. Parents don't need to fear this struggle, nor do they need to take it on themselves; it is an essential and important part of learning mathematics. If the parent accepts the struggle, the youngster can. And even more important, if the parent values the struggle, and sees math as more than just a series of right answers, the young person can approach mathematical learning in a way

that will not only make success in mathematics more likely, but carry over to pursuits far beyond the mathematics classroom.

Know that the struggle is okay, that it takes time to learn things.

Help students understand that they are not expected to get it all right or understand it all clearly, the first time. If parents believe that struggling means stupidity, students feel a tension that gets in the way of learning.

Students need to take responsibility for their own learning and their own struggle.

Believing, erroneously, that math learning comes easily to some and not to others results in an attitude of “why bother? I’ll never be good at this,” when the subject becomes unclear. If students expect to encounter confusion we can help them see that the way through that confusion is application of effort, their effort. Encourage youngsters to dig in when it gets tough, not flee into excuses.

Resist the very common temptation to explain the struggle as genetic.

Parents should not say, “I was never very good at math, either.” The goal is to help students learn how to use what they have to meet the struggle, not to fear, avoid, or abandon the struggle from a belief that they cannot do it.

Guide children to resources that can help (their textbook, their notes).

The answer to “where can I go for help?” is often sitting in the bottom of a backpack. What a valuable lesson for students to discover that answers come not from magic, but from reading and thinking and struggling to understand a sentence, or an equation in a book they have ready and available.

Value math homework - encourage children to do more than just ‘get it done’.

If parents actively praise and value the effort their youngster makes in pursuing understanding, the youngster gets the message that the struggle is important. They can feel a pride and confidence that is significant even when understanding is slow in coming.

Expand the focus beyond the grade.

Overemphasizing the grade too often results in negative behaviors to get the grade. Rather than learning responsibility, or the confidence that comes from struggling through his or her own efforts, the student seeks quick fixes; missing the bigger picture.

Praise the process.

If students are in the game, working at it, struggling and coming to understanding bit by bit, let them know how great this is! This is what doing math is all about.