**Five Strands Task Grades 6 – 8**

* Assign a Strand Introductory statement to each group member
  1. Number and Number Sense
  2. Computation and Estimation
  3. Measurement and Geometry
  4. Probability and Statistics
  5. Patterns, Functions, and Algebra
* Have each group member read their statement and underline or highlight important ideas that will help them to make meaning of the passage
* In round robin format, each group member will summarize their assigned statement for the group
* As a small group, members will discuss each statement and the implications to mathematics instruction

# Focus 6–8 Strand Introduction Number and Number Sense

Mathematics instruction in grades six through eight continues to focus on the development of number sense, with emphasis on rational and real numbers. Rational numbers play a critical role in the development of proportional reasoning and advanced mathematical thinking. The study of rational numbers builds on the understanding of whole numbers, fractions, and decimals developed by students in the elementary grades. Proportional reasoning is the key to making connections to many middle school mathematics topics.

Students develop an understanding of integers and rational numbers using concrete, pictorial, and abstract representations. They learn how to use equivalent representations of fractions, decimals, and percents and recognize the advantages and disadvantages of each type of representation. Flexible thinking about rational number representations is encouraged when students solve problems.

Students develop an understanding of real numbers and the properties of operations on real numbers through experiences with rational and irrational numbers and apply the order of operations.

Students use a variety of concrete, pictorial, and abstract representations to develop proportional reasoning skills. Ratios and proportions are a major focus of mathematics learning in the middle grades.

# Focus 6-8 Strand Introduction Computation and Estimation

The computation and estimation strand in grades six through eight focuses on developing conceptual and algorithmic understanding of operations with integers and rational numbers through concrete activities and discussions that bring an understanding as to why procedures work and make sense.

Students develop and refine estimation strategies based on an understanding of number concepts, properties and relationships. The development of problem solving, using operations with integers and rational numbers, builds upon the strategies developed in the elementary grades. Students will reinforce these skills and build on the development of proportional reasoning and more advanced mathematical skills.

Students learn to make sense of the mathematical tools available by making valid judgments about the reasonableness of answers. Students will balance the ability to make precise calculations through the application of the order of operations with knowing when calculations may require estimation to obtain appropriate solutions to practical problems.

# Grade 6 Mathematics Strand: Measurement and Geometry

Measurement and geometry in the middle grades provide a natural context and connection among many mathematical concepts. Students expand informal experiences with geometry and measurement in the elementary grades and develop a solid foundation for further exploration of these concepts in high school. Spatial reasoning skills are essential to the formal inductive and deductive reasoning skills required in subsequent mathematics learning.

Students develop measurement skills through exploration and estimation. Physical exploration to determine length, weight/mass, liquid volume/capacity, and angle measure are essential to develop a conceptual understanding of measurement. Students examine perimeter, area, and volume, using concrete materials and practical situations. Students focus their study of surface area and volume on rectangular prisms, cylinders, square-based pyramids, and cones.

Students learn geometric relationships by visualizing, comparing, constructing, sketching, measuring, transforming, and classifying geometric figures. A variety of tools such as geoboards, pattern blocks, dot paper, patty paper, and geometry software provide experiences that help students discover geometric concepts. Students describe, classify, and compare plane and solid figures according to their attributes. They develop and extend understanding of geometric transformations in the coordinate plane.

Students apply their understanding of perimeter and area from the elementary grades in order to build conceptual understanding of the surface area and volume of prisms, cylinders, square-based pyramids, and cones. They use visualization, measurement, and proportional reasoning skills to develop an understanding of the effect of scale change on distance, area, and volume. They develop and reinforce proportional reasoning skills through the study of similar figures.

Students explore and develop an understanding of the Pythagorean Theorem. Understanding how the Pythagorean Theorem can be applied in practical situations has a far-reaching impact on subsequent mathematics learning and life experiences.

The van Hiele theory of geometric understanding describes how students learn geometry and provides a framework for structuring student experiences that should lead to conceptual growth and understanding.

**Level 0: Pre-recognition.** Geometric figures are not recognized. For example, students cannot differentiate between three-sided and four-sided polygons.

**Level 1: Visualization.** Geometric figures are recognized as entities, without any awareness of parts of figures or relationships between components of a figure. Students should recognize and name figures and distinguish a given figure from others that look somewhat the same. (This is the expected level of student performance during kindergarten and grade one.)

**Level 2: Analysis.** Properties are perceived but are isolated and unrelated. Students should recognize and name properties of geometric figures. (Students are expected to transition to this level during grades two and three.)

**Level 3: Abstraction.** Definitions are meaningful, with relationships being perceived between properties and between figures. Logical implications and class inclusions are understood, but the role and significance of deduction is not understood. (Students should transition to this level during grades five and six and fully attain it before taking algebra.)

**Level 4: Deduction**. Students can construct proofs, understand the role of axioms and definitions, and know the meaning of necessary and sufficient conditions. Students should be able to supply reasons for steps in a proof. (Students should transition to this level before taking geometry.)

# Focus 6–8 Strand Introduction Probability and Statistics

In the middle grades, students develop an awareness of the power of data analysis and the application of probability through fostering their natural curiosity about data and making predictions.

The exploration of various methods of data collection and representation allows students to become effective at using different types of graphs to represent different types of data. Students use measures of center and dispersion to analyze and interpret data.

Students integrate their understanding of rational numbers and proportional reasoning into the study of statistics and probability. Through experiments and simulations, students build on their understanding of the Fundamental Counting Principle from elementary mathematics to learn more about probability in the middle grades

# Focus 6–8 Strand Introduction Patterns, Functions, and Algebra

Patterns, functions and algebra become a larger mathematical focus in the middle grades as students extend their knowledge of patterns developed in the elementary grades.

Students make connections between the numeric concepts of ratio and proportion and the algebraic relationships that exist within a set of equivalent ratios. Students use variable expressions to represent proportional relationships between two quantities and begin to connect the concept of a constant of proportionality to rate of change and slope. Representation of relationships between two quantities using tables, graphs, equations, or verbal descriptions allow students to connect their knowledge of patterns to the concept of functional relationships. Graphing linear equations in two variables in the coordinate plane is a focus of the study of functions which continues in high school mathematics.

Students learn to use algebraic concepts and terms appropriately. These concepts and terms include *variable, term, coefficient, exponent, expression, equation, inequality, domain*, and *range*. Developing a beginning knowledge of algebra is a major focus of mathematics learning in the middle grades. Students learn to solve equations by using concrete materials. They expand their skills from one-step to multistep equations and inequalities through their application in practical situations.