

CCSD Mandates New Algebra 1 Curriculum

BY AMANDA CASTILLO-LOPEZ
News Editor

Algebra 1 is changing at Creek. Next year, high schools in the Cherry Creek School District (CCSD) will have to use a new Algebra 1 curriculum written by Open Up Resources (OUR), a non-profit organization with the goal of creating accessible, problem-based curriculum. Creek math teachers were notified of this change in Dec. 2023.

“It’s a lot of changes at once and it’s going to be ongoing for the next few years,” Department Coordinator Johanna Lewis said.

According to CCSD K-12 Mathematic Performance Improvement Partner Amber Gardner, the district decided to implement the OUR curriculum due to recent advancements in the field of neuroscience.

“We have a better understanding of how students construct mathematical knowledge,” Gardner said. “Historically, a lot of the things that we have done in math classrooms are counter to how the brain naturally learns mathematics.”

This new curriculum offers more hands-on activities and less daily homework than Creek teachers usually assign. The program aims to make the math classroom more engaging and discussion-based, yet Lewis worries that some of the activities and review will leave less time for students to reach mastery of the material.

“I’m just concerned about what they

come away with knowing [and] what their understanding is,” Lewis said. “You know how important algebra is when you get to calculus and beyond.”

Next year, Algebra 1 teachers will have to follow the OUR pacing guide which requires all Algebra 1 classes in the district to take a test on chapter material in a two week window. Students will have to take the same tests, regardless of whether they are taking the CP or Accelerated class at Creek.

According to CCSD Executive Director of Curriculum and Instruction Dominique Jones, this pacing is designed to give all students access to every Algebra 1 concept.

“[The OUR pacing] is not about being locked in and rigid,” Jones said. “Ultimately, it’s about making sure that every single kid that’s in Algebra 1 has the entire breadth of that content.”

OUR offers a curriculum for each of three high school-level math classes: Algebra 1, Geometry, and Algebra 2. Next year, high schools only have to teach Algebra 1 using OUR, but middle schools will have to use the program for classes up to Geometry. According to Lewis, there is a possibility that high schools will have to adopt OUR in higher level math classes as well in the coming years.

To prepare students for higher level

math classes, Lewis believes that it’s likely that teachers will have to supplement the OUR material. Lewis anticipates that next year, Algebra 1 students will receive a combination of OUR and teacher-curated curriculum.

“Creek will still have all our workbooks ... we still will design a lot because that’s just who we are,” Lewis said. “We know what the kids need to do well in Calculus, Stats, or whatever class they’re taking.”

CP Algebra 1 teacher Christopher Stirrup is willing to adapt to the changes coming next year.

“It might be a very successful thing, but...it’s new, so we don’t know,” Stirrup said. “It’s very possible those kids are going to stumble and I’m going to stumble and any teacher is going to stumble. That’s part of learning.”

Math teachers will attend district training over the school year, and over the summer, they’ll work on creating a combined OUR and teacher-curated curriculum.


“We’re gonna have to figure out [where we] need to add some of our own stuff to make sure that kids learn, because our ultimate goal is to make sure that the kids learn what they need for future classes,” Principal Ryan Silva said.

“It’s a lot of changes at once and it’s going to be ongoing for the next few years.”

*Math Department Coordinator
Johanna Lewis*


Current Model for Modifying Math Curriculum

Implementing OUR could affect math teachers’ involvement in creating and modifying curriculum.



About 30 years ago, math teachers at Creek started writing their own workbooks to complement the content in the textbooks they used, making the material more digestible for students and emphasizing key topics.

Every week, the teachers that teach the same class get together to modify their math workbooks for the following year according to the changing needs of students. Often, this is based on the Learning Objectives of AP classes students will have to take in the future.



Workbooks guide students’ note-taking, provide practice problems, and in some classes, include homework questions as well.

INFOGRAPHIC BY AMANDA CASTILLO-LOPEZ

Gen-Z Shares Fervent Advocacy in the Israel-Hamas War

BY PETER PHILPOTT

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Senior Ben Ginsberg-Margo has lost two cousins in the Israel-Hamas War, one soldier and one reservist of the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). He remembered learning about the Hamas attacks through a missile alert app called Tzofar on Oct. 7, when the Palestinian Hamas terrorist group struck Israel.

“Basically every single place in Israel was hit,” Ginsberg-Margo said. “I had no idea what was going on.”

Israel formally declared a state of war the next morning. The fighting has been ongoing since. 1,139 Israelis and 30,365 Palestinians (as of Feb. 28) over the course of the war have died.

Sophomore Camila Parsons, whose name has been changed for her safety, is a Muslim Libyan, who has been adjacent to the Israel-Palestine history her whole life. “I’m not in the fire but I’m standing right next to it,” Parsons said.

Young people have been at the forefront of this war, and they have primarily sided with Palestine. A January poll from YouGov showed a large difference between age groups. 30% percent of 18-19 year olds said they sympathized more with Palestine, compared with only 13% of those 45 and older who feel the same. But 47% over total respondents said they were about equal between Palestine and Israel, or they weren’t sure.

Those young advocates have brought the political fight back to the U.S., with Protests at the Denver Capitol being frequent since the attack. One movement, “Shut It Down for Palestine,” has organized many of these.

“We’re watching a genocide be committed... all with American funding,” Denver School of the Arts senior Skye said at a Nov. 9 “Shut it Down For Palestine” rally. “As an American citizen, I can’t stay silent.” Protesters like her are told by organizers to not give away full names.

Skye was one of the first speakers at the protest. She led chants and criticized legislators for supporting Israel. Gen-Z, high school-age Americans like her, are one side of a sharp ideological divide between ages in the US.

Senior Isaac O’Connor, whose name has been changed for his safety, said that the conflict at the high school level makes it difficult for him to speak out for Israel. Parsons said the same, but from her pro-Palestine perspective.

O’Connor, Ginsberg-Margo, and Parsons all agreed on one thing: social media was the driving

factor in the disconnect between generations.

Sophomore Ayushi Sah has advocated as well, often using Instagram. “The things that are going on in Palestine are just horrendous,” Sah said. “The number of Palestinians displaced since Oct. 7 are increasing day by day.”

She believes the significant age gap was due to the fundamental educational ideas of older generations. “Their history books have been sugar coated,” she said. “Whereas today’s generation has social media. They have more access to other people’s opinions.”

O’Connor believes that adults support Israel more for the opposite reason: they know more about the history of the conflict. “They understood what was going on in 1948, when Israel was established by all these nations [for Holocaust survivors],” he said.

Ginsberg-Margo says many opinions are uninformed in the age of Instagram and TikTok. “They say, ‘we’re defending ourselves against terrorists that justifies everything that we do,’ or ‘we’ve been oppressed for a long time that justifies anything that we do,’” he said. “I don’t think the majority of people on either side have a nuanced opinion.”

For the minority of Gen-Z that supports Israel, Ginsberg-Margo said it’s difficult to support all of the IDF’s actions. “There aren’t good sides to war,” he said. “I’m not going to defend everything that the Israeli government does, but I do think that what is happening right now in Gaza is a direct effect of Hamas.”

According to Al Jazeera, pro-Palestine social media is being censored by some media networks, and pro-Israel endorsement is taking a downturn in popularity. Despite Gen-Z’s efforts, even with heavy waves of online advocacy, support for either side of the war not might be working to full success.



PHOTOS BY QUINN RUDNICK & PETER PHILPOTT

GEN-Z FOR GAZA: Pro-Palestine protesters at a Nov. 9 “Shut it Down For Palestine” rally raise signs and shout chants. Polls have shown more young people support Palestine than Israel, like Denver School of the Arts senior Skye (third photo down). She was a speaker at the protest.