

SSC Recommendation: Advanced math tutoring requirement.

Input from students, parents, and teachers.

The School Site Committee has received significant input from students and parents communicating the following.

- Tutors have difficulty finding eligible students who wish to be tutored by them. For example, some students complain, that in the afterschool tutoring program in the College Career Center, they are not guaranteed access to a willing tutee.
- Teachers in non-math subjects complain about being put in the unfair position of signing off on tutoring hours despite their unfamiliarity with the subject and regardless if whether they were able to supervise the interaction.
- Some suggest that a potential tutee who is struggling with a math course is unlikely to voluntarily choose a student as a tutor when s/he has access to an adult or a college student tutor in the afterschool program. We believe the school's current emphasis is on increasing students' access to qualified tutors.
- Some complain that the math teachers under the current system are not responsible for making the system work for both tutor and tutee.

Recommendations.

The SSC recommends the following enhancements to the program:

1. Parents should be allowed to opt their students out of the tutoring program. The parents should be informed of the possible benefits of tutoring prior to opting out. We attach a sample opt-out form.
2. Math teachers should provide tutoring opportunities and/or guidance for tutoring for their advanced math students. For example, they can offer times in their own classrooms after lunch or after school, or by arrangement with the various coordinators for tutoring programs such as R.I.S.E., the AC academic coordinator, ELL program, and the college preparatory classes, or by referring the tutors to specific elementary, middle or community tutoring programs.
3. Math teachers should also consider recruiting tutees to specifically match to tutors.

Tutoring Program Information and Opt-Out Form.

Research has shown that tutoring provides significant academic and social benefits to students, particularly to the tutors. See, for example, [1] for a broad survey of research on numerous peer tutoring programs which suggests that nearly any formulation of a program is helpful. Furthermore, psychological research shows the explaining is a particularly helpful mechanism for understanding material at a deeper level. See, for example, [2].

Finally, there is reason to believe that students admitted to selective colleges and universities have nearly universally participated in tutoring programs as tutors.

We, thus, have a tutoring “requirement” for students in the advanced math classes at Berkeley high.

Ultimately, however, each parent is responsible for doing what is best for their child, so we are happy to allow a parent to opt-out of the tutoring program for advanced math.

Please sign below to opt your child out of the advanced math tutoring program.

Child’s Name: _____
Parent Name: _____
Parent Signature: _____

We would greatly appreciate any input on the tutoring program in general or why it is or is not a good fit for your child. Please let us know in the space below.

References

- [1] Katrina L. Steers-Wentzell Debbie R. Robinson, Janet Ward Schofield. Peer and cross-age tutoring in math: Outcomes and their design implications. *Educational Psychology Review*, 17(4), December 2005.
- [2] J. J. Williams and T. Lombrozo. The role of explanation in discovery and generalization: evidence from category learning. *Cognitive Science*, 34:776–806, 2010.