Welcome to the Thinking Classroom, ATYP Parents! 8/16/25

I'm so excited to have your child in class this year! Teaching your child is one of my highest honors. Given that class may look a little different than math classes your child and yourself have previously experienced, I want to make sure you have some important information up front. I am integrating many of the teaching practices gleaned from the work of Dr. Peter Liljedahl "Building Thinking Classrooms in Mathematics" (the book is linked if you're interested in learning more about the research behind the thinking classroom). Listed below are the major pillars of the framework.

● Thinking Tasks - these are given in order to encourage conversation and learning through and amongst students. These will look like a singular "task" that allow groups of students to discover the math we're focusing on OR groups may start with a very basic question and work their way through a self-paced progression toward a question that meets the depth of the targeted standard. These tasks are our classwork and participation is graded, but these group tasks can be used to gather data on individual student learning and understanding. Students will be expected to participate and collaborate with their group in responding to each task. We will do a number of thinking tasks in each class to address the different content standards and objectives.

● Random Grouping and White Boards - students will be placed into groups by selecting a randomized grouping card on the way into the room to be sorted. Each student will be paired with one or two others who share the specified item on their card. Cards include, but are not limited to playing cards, color, symbol, number, or food. They will meet their group peers at a vertical white board (attached to the walls) or horizontal white board (laid on the table) to begin working on a task or series of questions together after a very brief instructional introduction. Students will be given sufficient background information to complete each task building on skills they already possess as well as any relevant new information they need. **Students may not always be given all the information they desire, but will be, in turn, encouraged to think!**

● Questions answered by the teacher - there are three main types of questions in a classroom: (1) stop-thinking questions, (2) keep-thinking questions, and (3) proximity questions. I will do my best to encourage students to grow in their ability and confidence by answering primarily keep-thinking questions, as they do what the name implies: they keep kids THINKING - my entire goal this year! I may not give a response to the first or third type of questions. This does not mean I am not present or not listening to your students, I am simply trying to do my best to keep them thinking and learning!

● Student Autonomy - students have the ability when working on a task in class to get help from peers as needed, as well as to "steal" a next question from other groups in order to continue working. They only steal the problem, not the work, so that they may continue processing through the content. This allows them to set the pace and not be waiting for all other students to "catch up."

● Notes - notes will be made together. Students are welcome to bring them home for reference or for personal studying, and will often be able to be used on quizzes and exams (not on the final exam).
● Evaluation - students will be evaluated on their progression towards mastery of common core

Algebra standards as well as on “soft skills” such as collaboration, team work, cooperation, etc. These are skills that we want students to demonstrate, and I value them highly in my Thinking Classroom.

● Grading - Exams will be graded with a standards-based learning approach. Each standard will be broken up into “basic,” “intermediate,” and “advanced” question types. Not every standard will have all three categories to master. Students will be given feedback regarding their comprehension at these various levels, and data will be collected through formal assessment as well as observationally during in-class thinking tasks, or conversationally through in-class thinking tasks. The resulting data will be analyzed according to basic = 3 points, intermediate = 4 points, and advanced = 5 points. The total number of points earned will be divided by the total number of possible points and the resulting percentage will be awarded as their exam score.

This style of thinking and learning has been shown to be effective in assisting students in their learning of algebra topics. It is also currently used in the next ATYP course (Geometry/Precalculus.

Feel free to ask any questions either by email (kassie.reilley@wmich.edu) or within the google form.

I'm here to support your child's learning journey,
Kassie Reilley