

Tutoring group plus schools equal fired up math students

Students raise their hands during a talk given by Algebra Nation representatives on Wednesday at Pryor Middle School as additional motivation to help students with their end of year exams.

NICK TOMECEK | Daily News

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FORT WALTON BEACH — Math's magic was used to excite countless students at Okaloosa County middle and high schools this week as the district prepared them for an upcoming state end of course exam.



After seeing dismal pass rates statewide the first year of the exam, the Florida Department of Education formed a relationship with an online tutoring group called Algebra Nation. Current high school students must pass the Algebra EOC to graduate.

Wednesday and Thursday two officials from the company stopped at a dozen schools from Baker to Fort Walton Beach.

“We teach them in a way they want to learn the material.” said Algebra Nation’s Zach Stepp. “It’s getting them to enjoy math.”

The visits were used as an opportunity for students to not only ask math questions, but to learn more about the program, which also offers a practice EOC for them.

At Pryor Middle School on Wednesday, students asked about everything from the discriminant to what they considered the hardest part of math.

“Y $3x + 1$, what do you do? Stepp asked the students. “Nothing. I have to give you something called directions (first).

“Read the directions, that’s the hardest part.”

Students have been receptive to Stepp and his co-worker Amy Adams, according to Stephanie Thetford, the Fort Walton Beach High School math teacher who escorted them around the county.

“It has helped a lot with the new standards,” Thetford said of the program.

Students were impressed with Algebra Nation.

“I really did like it,” eighth grader William Huerta said.