

ALGEBRA NATION IN THE CHICKASAW JOURNAL



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HOULKA – Algebra Nation has opened its doors to students who have to pass Algebra 1 and its corresponding state test to graduate high school.

An Algebra 1 pilot program offered through the State Department of Education is making it easier and more enjoyable for Chickasaw County School District students at the Houlika Attendance Center to absorb algebra education – a tough subject for many students, but a graduation requirement.

This year Algebra Nation is being offered at no cost in several districts across Mississippi, including Chickasaw. The program was developed by the University of Florida and Study Edge.

Chickasaw County was chosen by the state as a pilot school district and began offering the program last fall.

“We are excited about participating as a pilot school for Algebra Nation,” Chickasaw County Superintendent Dr. Betsy Collums. “I think it will be a great resource to help students at all ability levels.”

The state’s decision to offer the program followed disappointing Algebra 1 state test results. In the spring of 2015, about 27 percent of high school students passed the Algebra 1 statewide assessment. In response, the Mississippi Legislature funded support for students and teachers through Algebra Nation.

Houlika algebra teacher Carra Turner explained how the program works for her 37 students taking Algebra 1. The students – mostly 9th graders but with some 10th and 11th graders – take the program during second or fifth period each day.

Algebra Nation videos are organized into easy-to-navigate sections. Each section contains study guides and 5-8 video lessons taught by tutors and algebra teachers.

Algebra Nation is available online and on iPhones and Android phones. The interactive videos help students review material they learn in the classroom, any time of day, or on the weekends.

Students, parents and teachers can download, print and/or view study guide packets containing review sheets which link to and reinforce the videos. Tutors and teachers encourage students to pause the videos and try out problems on the guides themselves. Then, the videos explain how to do the problems so students can always check their work, said Turner.

“We’ve found that students will often gravitate towards one teaching personality over another,” she explained, “and we wanted to offer that choice for students, so multiple instructors are available for each video.”

The “Test Yourself!” practice tool, only available online, lets students make sure they understand the material. The “Test Yourself!” section also looks similar to the MAP, so it helps students get comfortable with computer-based testing. A results page shows which problems students got right or wrong, but also contains videos that show how to solve each problem.

“It has helped me by explaining how to work the problem out,” said student Abby Williams, “and if you get it wrong you can watch a video and it will show you what you made a mistake on.”

Algebra Nation also has Algebra Wall: An interactive discussion forum where students can ask and answer questions about the material. Tutors and teachers answer questions and read every post to ensure peer replies are correct.

When Turner says “interactive” – she’s not kidding. The program can also involve parents who want their children to have the best possible education.

“Parents can go to www.AlgebraNation.com and click “Enter Algebra Nation,” said Turner. “Have your child enter the name of his/her school. The next screen will prompt them to enter their user name and password.”

“Parents can also access videos, study guides and the Algebra Wall on free smartphone apps,” she added. “Download the iPhone and Android apps by searching for ‘Algebra Nation’ in your phone’s app store.”

The videos offer instructors who speak in different styles and speeds. To get another point of view, a second teacher explains the lesson again.

“It is very helpful for someone who struggles in math” said student Diamond Turner. “They show step by step how to solve the equations that are given to you.”

“Another good feature is that the Algebra Wall is monitored 24/7 by an algebra tutor. Students can paste questions about homework or other information,” said Turner. “That helps other students, and students can get points for answering other students’ questions.”

“I’m excited about the program because the kids are excited about it. The kids go to computer lab and work on Algebra Nation. The kids like the tutors, the program, the way it’s set up. They’re really into it.”

“It has helped me pull my math grade up a lot,” said Carrie Walls.

“We had a tutor visit the school recently, and the way the kids responded, you would have thought he was a rock star,” said Turner. “They’re excited about the program and that’s not common with algebra in high school.”