

LISA HENNEFARTH: I'm Lisa Hennefarth, and I am a Algebra 1 teacher here at Menlo Atherton High School. The course this year is a brand new course. It's an initiative course. It's called the A1I Initiative. And it's basically a pilot program where we are, um, taking all 9th grade students in a heterogeneous classroom environment so that this is grabbing all of the students that are coming from our feeder schools. We have primarily students that are coming from Menlo Park and Atherton, and from East Palo Alto, and the Ravenswood School District. We are building a classroom environment where everybody has got access, and accessibility to the Algebra 1 program.

So this class is made up of students that would have scored into our readiness cohort model, which means they are performing below grade level in mathematics. We have students that are, um, ELL students, we have students that are IEPs students, and we have students that are- that had scored proficient in their 8th grade, uh, math, historically coming out of their middle schools. So this is a nice balance of students, um, again, all 9th graders. This class is very interesting again, based on our feeder districts, uh, Menlo Park, Atherton, even, uh, we have some students that come out of Portola Valley, which is part of, um, this district as well. That those students that come from those middle schools have no problem engaging with mathematics. This being an Algebra 1 course, it is the grade level course that you would normally enter into in high school. So they are familiar with the content, they've had a really good, strong relationship with their math program in 8th grade math. So those students come in ready to learn.

On the flip side, my classroom is made up of students that struggle to engage in mathematics based on their prior historical middle school experience. So some of these students had substitutes for a number of years in their 6th, 7th, 8th grade math. They've spent all of their time on a computer. So just getting 'em to be able to come in, and sit in a classroom environment where somebody's actually gonna be teaching them, it's really been a struggle. The other part of this class is the collaborative environment. So asking students to turn and talk to each other, to problem-solve, and to reason, and explain their mathematical thinking, if you've never been asked to do that, it's really a struggle. And so giving them the proper entry points, giving them the proper vocabulary, just being able to turn, and look somebody in the eye, it's really, really difficult for some of these students.