



Cumberland Valley School District
Mathematics Department
6746 Carlisle Pike
Mechanicsburg, PA 17050

June 2015

TO: Parents of students entering
Algebra I/Algebra II
RE: Calculators

We want your child to thrive in school and succeed in their mathematical studies both here at CV and in the future. We believe students must become comfortable with hand held technology because it offers a means to develop mathematical concepts, solve complex real life problems, recognize patterns, analyze data, and develop other skills that can help keep students excited about math. In addition, tests such as the Keystones, AP Exams, and the SAT's encourage or require students to use a calculator on much of the test. While we encourage students to use calculators in their mathematical studies, we also recognize that using technology in the classroom is not a substitute for mastery of basic skills. Our department has a goal of teaching students how to use a calculator appropriately and has adopted texts that are calculator based.

As a result, **we require students to purchase a graphing calculator upon entering Algebra II but recommend students to purchase a graphing calculator upon entering Algebra I. It is important that your child have the calculator by the beginning of school as we will be using them in an investigation to study important features of mathematical functions on the second or third day of class.** The calculator you purchase now will be used in all subsequent math courses and science courses including those at the college level. There are many good graphing calculators on the market. We have found that the **TI-NSpire CX, TI-83+ or TI-84+ made by Texas Instruments** are good quality calculators that hold up well to student use and best suit the needs of our program. (The TI-84+ is a newer version of the TI-83+.) Our teachers will demonstrate procedures using one of these three calculators. We have found that students who use one of these models can easily follow class demonstrations and will not be distracted while trying to figure out how to execute a similar operation on a calculator with a different operating system. Some students or parents may feel that if the TI-83+ or TI-84+ are good, a TI-86, 89 or 92 are better. This **IS NOT** the case. The TI-86 is designed for a different purpose and lacks some of the programming that is frequently used in math classes. The TI-92 is not allowed on SAT and AP tests. And the TI-89 is more expensive because it contains programming that is not necessary until students reach much higher level courses.

The TI-83+ calculators are readily available in many local stores and usually cost about \$95.00. The TI-84+ costs about \$20.00 more. The TI-Nspire is about \$150 because it is the most comprehensive calculator. It will allow the students to collect data and transfer the data to a computer if needed. Many stores such as Wal-Mart, Target, and Staples will offer discounts on calculators when they begin their back to school sales, and you can save a substantial amount of money. Online shopping services such as E-bay and Amazon also frequently offer good deals on new models. Be careful about buying used calculators, however.

We hope that this information will assist you in purchasing an appropriate calculator for your child. We look forward to a productive year. If you have any questions or need to make special arrangements to equip your child with a calculator, you may phone me at 717-506-3412 or email sknerr@cvschools.org.

Sincerely,

Stacey Knerr
Mathematics Department Supervisor