

## Math teachers lay problems on the surgery table

Sixth-grade math classrooms were transformed into medical operating rooms last week as students conducted order of operations “surgeries” to hone their math skills.

Northwood Middle School teacher Katie Spaldon said students had a lot of fun with the math exercises, which also took place across town at Creekside Middle School.

“It was a fun way to help students see different ways that we can use math and the idea of following a certain structure or protocol when solving problems,” Spaldon said. “If the students think about how a surgeon follows certain procedures to complete a routine’ surgery, it reinforces the idea of using the same order of operations each time we solve and calculate.”

Students and teachers at each middle school donned surgical gear and worked in groups divided up like surgery rooms to tackle problems that would lead to a successful brain, heart, kidney or other surgery.

They took turns as head surgeons working cooperatively with their assistants until their medical director/math teacher cleared them for the next procedure. “Congratulations! Your patient survived,” Creekside teacher Shanon Laidig told a surgeon after checking over her work.

“Some of our more junior doctors had to learn to be patient as they waited for feedback and suggestions for improvement,” Spaldon said. “I think that is a great life lesson for the students — learning to listen for ways to improve and then acting on those suggestions could make the difference between their “patient” having a successful surgery, or not.”

The Order of Operations exercise was just one way educators in Woodstock Community Unit School District 200 are working to improve middle school students’ math skills to better prepare them for high school. Some selected students also come in early prior to school two days each week for a Blended Math program designed to get students at and above grade level.



Sixth-grade math Teacher Shanon Laidig checks in at the "operating" table as her Creekside Middle School students go over their order of operations equation.



Medical Director and Northwood Middle School math teacher Katie Spaldon checks one of her sixth-grade student's work and declares a successful "surgery."