

Policy 6152.1: Placement In Mathematics Courses

Status: ADOPTED

Original Adopted Date: 08/01/2015 | **Last Revised Date:** 09/01/2024 | **Last Reviewed Date:** 09/01/2024

CSBA NOTE: Pursuant to Education Code 51224.7, the Governing Board of a district that serves students entering grade 9 is mandated to develop and, at a regularly scheduled public Board meeting, adopt a fair, objective, and transparent mathematics placement policy with specified components. Although not required, districts serving students who are transitioning between elementary and middle or junior high schools are encouraged to adopt and implement policy to address the transition from elementary to secondary mathematics courses.

Pursuant to Education Code 51225.3, high school graduation requirements include the completion of at least two mathematics courses in grades 9-12. Pursuant to Education Code 51224.5, one of those two courses must meet or exceed state content standards for Algebra I or Mathematics I. While the completion of Algebra I or Mathematics I coursework prior to 9th grade would satisfy this requirement, it does not exempt a student from the requirement to complete two mathematics courses in grades 9-12. See BP 6142.92 - Mathematics Instruction and BP 6146.1 - High School Graduation Requirements.

According to a report by the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights of San Francisco Bay Area, "Held Back: Addressing Misplacement of 9th Grade Students in Bay Area School Math Classes," many districts place students who have successfully completed Algebra I in 8th grade into Algebra I class again in 9th grade. In adding Education Code 51224.7, the legislature declared that placement in appropriate mathematics courses is critically important for a student's middle and high school years, and that misplacement in the sequence of mathematics courses creates barriers for educational success, especially for students of color. This is compounded by the fact that the University of California (UC) and California State University (CSU) systems require at least three years of mathematics for freshman admission.

The Governing Board believes that a sound educational program must include the study of subjects that prepare students for admission to higher education and/or fulfilling careers. District students shall be provided an opportunity to complete a sequence of mathematics courses recommended for admission into the University of California (UC) and California State University (CSU) systems.

CSBA NOTE: The "Mathematics Framework for California Public Schools: Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve," recognizes that schools are free to organize mathematics pathways in different ways but encourages districts to consider offering two potential pathways to enable students who would like to reach Calculus by the end of high school to do so. The California Department of Education's guidance recommends flexibility so that choices made by students during their first two years do not limit their later choices.

The district shall offer alternative pathways of courses designed in a manner that provides maximum opportunities for students to access advanced mathematics courses during high school.

CSBA NOTE: The following paragraph may be revised to reflect district practice. For nonunified districts, Education Code 51224.7 mandates that the policy address the consistency of mathematics placement policies between elementary and high school districts.

The Superintendent or designee shall work with district teachers, counselors, and administrators and the representatives of feeder schools to develop a well-articulated sequence of mathematics courses and consistent protocols for placing students in mathematics courses offered at district high schools.

CSBA NOTE: Education Code 51224.7 mandates that the district's policy includes the following statement. Also see the accompanying administrative regulation for further information regarding placement protocols.

Such placement protocols shall systematically take into consideration multiple objective academic measures that may include, but are not limited to, statewide mathematics assessments, including state interim and summative assessments; placement tests that are aligned to state-adopted content standards in mathematics; classroom assignment and grades; and report cards. (Education Code 51224.7)

CSBA NOTE: CSBA's 2019 Governance Brief, "Disproportionality in Math Placement," explains that the practice of having 9th grade students repeat Algebra I disproportionately affects students of color and from low-income families, and could therefore be found to be discriminatory. For more information about the prohibition against discrimination in district programs and activities, see BP 0410 - Nondiscrimination In District Programs And Activities.

District staff shall implement the placement protocols uniformly and without regard to students' socioeconomic background or any characteristic specified in Board Policy 0410 - Nondiscrimination In District Programs And Activities, including, but not limited to, race, sex, gender, nationality, and ethnicity.

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The Board of Education believes that a sound educational program must include the study of subjects that prepare students for admission to higher education and/or a fulfilling career. To the extent possible, district students shall be provided an opportunity to complete a sequence of mathematics courses recommended for admission into the University of California and California State University systems.

The Superintendent or designee shall work with district teachers, counselors, and administrators and the representatives of feeder schools to develop consistent protocols for placing students in mathematics courses offered at district high schools. Such placement protocols shall systematically take into consideration multiple objective academic measures that may include, but are not limited to, interim and summative assessments, placement tests that are aligned to state-adopted content standards in mathematics, classroom assignment and grades, and report cards.

Students shall be enrolled in mathematics courses based on the placement protocols. No student shall repeat a mathematics course which he/she has successfully completed based on the district's placement protocols.

When a student does not qualify to be enrolled in a higher level mathematics course based on a consideration of the objective measures specified in the placement protocols, he/she may nevertheless be admitted to the course based on the recommendation of a teacher or counselor who has personal knowledge of the student's academic ability.

The placement protocols shall specify a time within the first month of the school year when students shall be reevaluated to ensure that they are appropriately placed in mathematics courses and shall specify the criteria the district will use to make this determination. Any student found to be misplaced shall be promptly placed in the appropriate mathematics course.

Within 10 school days of an initial placement decision or a placement decision upon reevaluation, a student and his/her parent/guardian who disagree with the placement of the student may appeal the decision to the Superintendent or designee. The Superintendent or designee shall decide whether or not to overrule the placement determination within 10 school days of receiving the appeal. The decision of the Superintendent or designee shall be final.

District staff shall implement the placement protocols uniformly and without regard to students' race, sex, gender, nationality, ethnicity, socioeconomic background, or other subjective or discriminatory consideration in making placement decisions.

The Superintendent or designee shall ensure that all teachers, counselors, and other district staff responsible for determining students' placement in mathematics courses receive training on the placement protocols.

Prior to the beginning of each school year, the Superintendent or designee shall communicate the district's commitment to providing students with the opportunity to complete mathematics courses recommended for college admission, including approved placement protocols and the appeal process, to parents/guardians, students, teachers, school counselors, and administrators.

This policy and the district's mathematics placement protocols shall be posted on the district's web site. (Education Code 51224.7)

Annually, the Board and the Superintendent or designee shall review student data related to placement and advancement in the mathematics courses offered at district high schools to ensure that students who are qualified to progress in mathematics courses based on their performance on objective academic measures are not held back in a disproportionate manner on the basis of their race, ethnicity, gender, or socioeconomic background. The Board and Superintendent shall also consider appropriate recommendations for removing any identified barriers to students' access to mathematics courses.

CSBA NOTE: Education Code 51224.7 mandates that the district's policy includes at least one placement checkpoint within the first month of the school year to ensure accurate placement and permit reevaluation of individual student progress.

The placement protocols shall provide for at least one reevaluation within the first month of the school year to ensure that students are appropriately placed in mathematics courses and shall specify the criteria the district will use to make this determination. Any student found to be misplaced shall be promptly placed in the appropriate mathematics course.

CSBA NOTE: Education Code 51224.7 mandates that the district's policy offers a clear and timely recourse for any student and the student's parent/guardian who question the student's placement. See the accompanying administrative regulation for additional language implementing this requirement.

If a student or parent/guardian questions the student's placement, the student or the student's parent/guardian may appeal the decision to the Superintendent or designee. The decision of the Superintendent or designee shall be final.

The Superintendent or designee shall ensure that all teachers, counselors, and other district staff responsible for determining students' placement in mathematics courses receive training on the placement protocols.

CSBA NOTE: To ensure that students who are qualified to progress in mathematics courses based on their performance on district-selected objective academic measures are not unlawfully or inappropriately held back, Education Code 51224.7 mandates that the policy includes a requirement for an annual examination of aggregate student placement data, which must be reported to the Board. In addition, pursuant to Education Code 52060, districts must annually review their progress toward the student achievement goals in their local control and accountability plan using measures that include, as applicable, the percentage of students who have successfully completed courses that satisfy the requirements for entrance to the UC and CSU systems.

The Board and the Superintendent or designee shall annually review student data related to placement in mathematics courses offered at district high schools to ensure that students who are qualified to progress in mathematics courses based on their performance on objective academic measures are not being held back in a disproportionate manner on the basis of any subjective or discriminatory basis, and shall develop strategies for removing any identified barriers to students' access to mathematics courses. The Superintendent or designee shall also report on the percentage of district students who have successfully completed mathematics courses that satisfy the requirements for entrance to the UC and CSU systems.
