CSBA Sample Board Policy
Placement In Mathematics Courses

BP 6152.1
Instruction

***Note: The Governing Board of any district which serves 9th-grade students and has not adopted a mathematics placement policy is mandated pursuant to Education Code 51224.7, as added by SB 359 (Ch. 508, Statutes of 2015), to develop and, at a regularly scheduled public Board meeting, adopt a fair, objective, and transparent mathematics placement policy with specified components, before the 2016-17 school year. Even a district with an adopted mathematics placement policy must ensure that its policy includes components specified in Education Code 51224.7. Districts serving students that are transitioning between elementary and middle or junior high school are authorized, but not required, to adopt and implement a policy that satisfies the components specified in Education Code 51224.7. ***

***Note: 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, as amended by AB 220 (Ch. 165, Statutes of 2015), 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. ***

***Note: According to a report released in 2013 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, in many districts, high school freshmen who have successfully completed Algebra I in 8th grade are placed in 9th grade Algebra I class. In adding Education Code 51224.7, the legislature declared that placement in appropriate mathematics courses is critically important for a student in his/her middle and high school years, and that misplacement in the sequence of mathematics courses creates barriers for educational success, especially for students of color. ***
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 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.

(cf. 6141.5 - Advanced Placement)
(cf. 6142.92 - Mathematics Instruction)
(cf. 6143 - Courses of Study)
(cf. 6146.1 - High School Graduation Requirements)

***Note: Education Code 51224.7 requires the use of multiple objective academic measures for student placement in mathematics courses. For nonunified districts, Education Code 51224.7 also requires 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 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.

(cf. 5121 - Grades/Evaluation of Student Achievement)
(cf. 6162.5 - Student Assessment)
(cf. 6162.51 - State Academic Achievement Tests)

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.

***Note: The following optional paragraph provides a limited exception to the use of objective measures for making placement decisions and may be revised to reflect district practice. ***
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.

***Note: Education Code 51224.7, as added by SB 359 (Ch. 508, Statutes of 2015), requires that the district's policy include 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 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.

***Note: The following paragraph contains timelines that may be revised to reflect district practice. Pursuant to Education Code 51224.7, as added by SB 359 (Ch. 508, Statutes of 2015), the district's policy must offer a clear and timely recourse for any student and his/her parent/guardian who question the student's placement. ***

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.

(cf. 5123 - Promotion/Acceleration/Retention)

***Note: The Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights of San Francisco Bay Area's report also found that the practice of having 9th graders 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' race, sex, gender, nationality, ethnicity, socioeconomic background, or other subjective or discriminatory consideration in making placement decisions.

(cf. 0410 - Nondiscrimination in District Programs and Activities)

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.

(cf. 4131 - Staff Development)

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)

(cf. 1113 - District and School Web Sites)

***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 in the manner specified in the following paragraph, Education Code 51224.7, as added by SB 359 (Ch. 508, Statutes of 2015), requires an annual examination of aggregate student placement data which must be reported to the Board. ***

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.

(cf. 0500 - Accountability)

Legal Reference:

EDUCATION CODE
200-262.4 Prohibition of discrimination
48070.5 Promotion and retention; required policy
51220 Areas of study, grades 7-12
51224.5 Completion of Algebra I or Mathematics I
51224.7 California Mathematics Placement Act of 2015
51225.3 High school graduation requirements
51284 Financial literacy
60605 State-adopted content and performance standards in core curricular areas
60605.8 Common Core standards

Management Resources:

CSBA PUBLICATIONS
Math Misplacement, Governance Brief, September 2015
Governing to the Core, Governance Briefs

CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION PUBLICATIONS
Mathematics Framework for California Public Schools: Kindergarten Through Grade Twelve, 2013
California Common Core State Standards: Mathematics, January 2013

COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS INITIATIVE PUBLICATIONS
Appendix A: Designing High School Mathematics Courses Based on the Common Core State Standards

LAWYERS' COMMITTEE FOR CIVIL RIGHTS OF THE SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA (LCCR)

Held Back - Addressing Misplacement of 9th Grade Students in Bay Area School Math Classes
WEB SITES
CSBA: http://www.csba.org
California Department of Education: http://www.cde.ca.gov
Common Core State Standards Initiative: http://www.corestandards.org/math
Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights of the San Francisco Bay Area (LCCR): http://www.lccr.com

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