Guaranteed Access to Advanced Mathematics

Model Policy | Frequently Asked Questions | 2025

What are Advanced Math Opportunities?

Advanced math opportunities allow students to move through math course sequences at a faster pace. For example, students usually take algebra, or its integrated equivalent, in high school. With access to advanced math opportunities, students take algebra, or the integrated equivalent, in middle school so that in high school, students can eventually take college-level courses for credit, often through Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB) and Concurrent or Dual Enrollment.

How Are Students Guaranteed Access to Advanced Math?

States can ensure students have guaranteed access to advanced math by automatically enrolling students who are mathematically ready, which can be determined by a "highly proficient" score in math on end-of-year exams. Students who want to take advanced math but did not meet the state exam cutoff score can "opt in" with parent/caregiver permission. Student identification for guaranteed enrollment in advanced math should begin no earlier than middle school and should occur at least once in middle and high school.

Why is Guaranteed Access to Advanced Math Important?

For too long, students who are mathematically ready for advanced math have not been given access. Guaranteed access to advanced math ensures that students are placed in appropriately challenging math courses without barriers, such as registration, paperwork or meetings.

How Does an Advanced Mathematics Pathway Work?

Common ways students advance in math pathways: taking two mathematics courses in one school year (for example, Math 7 and Math 8 in grade 7), three mathematics courses over two school years (for example, Math 7, Math 8, and Algebra I in grades 7 and 8), taking an extra math course during the summer, enrolling in honors math, or skipping a course all together by showing mastery of course content on a test.

What Should States Consider When Enacting a Guaranteed Access to Advanced Math Policy?

States should understand that adopting Guaranteed Access to Advanced Math policy is an easy lift that requires little to no funding and guarantees students are placed in the appropriately challenging math course. States should prioritize other evidence-based K-8 math policies to increase the number of students who qualify for guaranteed access to advanced math by scoring "highly proficient" on end-of-year exams in middle school.

Learn More

Excel*in*Ed Comprehensive K-8 Mathematics Policy

Contact

Lindsey Henderson
Policy Director, Mathematics
Lindsey@excelined.org