

Caregiver Guidelines for Accelerated Math Placement at Belmont High School

In the 2021-2022 school year, Belmont Public Schools initiated a pilot that allowed for student attestation for math courses completed outside of Belmont Public Schools. This pilot was initiated in response to community requests for acceleration opportunities in math. This allowed students to opt into a higher level math course by attesting to having completed the prerequisite course outside BPS. Under this pilot, students have not been asked to demonstrate that they have acquired the skills and understanding of math concepts from that outside instruction. The Belmont Public Schools has no way of ascertaining the quality of instruction and assessments that outside agencies or companies provide.

During the fall of 2024 approximately 75 high school students requested to move math classes because the class they were placed in was too challenging. This has led to a considerable disruption in course sizes and assignments as many students find themselves in classes that include more advanced mathematical concepts and require more work than they are prepared to do.

Given the data presented above and the lack of any way for the district to ascertain student's math understanding under the current attestation system, we are making a change to the course placement process. In order to place students in the math course for which they are prepared, the following guidelines outline the requirements for middle/high school placement. This aims to ensure that students meet the state math standards and demonstrate their proficiency in the required math course content before placement into higher level courses.

Guidelines/Overview:

To prevent the learning disruptions that occur as a result of improper placement, students requesting placement outside of the typical math pathway, in an advanced or specific math course, must provide evidence of having mastered the state math standards for the prior grade level(s) and/or course and demonstrate their ability to apply the required math skills for the course in which they wish to enroll by meeting the readiness assessment standard.

Requirements for High School Placement when requesting a more advanced math course outside of the Belmont High School Pathway:

1. Mastery of State Math Standards:

Students must show that they have met the state's math standards for their current grade level or course. This can be demonstrated through:

- Completing the course with a passing grade at Belmont High School

OR all of the following:

- Grade Report and/or syllabus from previous math courses (must meet a minimum grade threshold)
- Teacher recommendations that confirm the student's understanding of key math concepts and skills

AND

- **Successfully completing the [MDTP Readiness Assessment](#)¹ for the course they wish to take with a minimum score of 80%. (Must be completed for acceleration or advancement outside of the normal pathway.)** The assessment will be administered annually in the early spring to inform placement decisions for the following school year. Due to scheduling constraints, students will be required to place into a math course during the spring before the next grade level.

2. Demonstration of Mastery for Course Placement:

To be placed in a course in a more advanced class than they would otherwise be placed when following the regular course sequence as outlined in the [Massachusetts Mathematics Curriculum Framework](#), students will need to provide a demonstration of proficiency in the math prerequisite standards of the course they wish to attest to. This will include:

- Students must perform at least 80% mastery of all content in a formal readiness assessment that is aligned with the prerequisite skills and knowledge for the course's content and state math standards). [MDTP Math Assessments](#) AND
- Documented study of the course content standards (attestation that the student completed study of standards)

3. Placement Decision:

The final placement decision will be based on:

- The evidence provided regarding mastery of math standards associated with prerequisite courses as outlined in the [Massachusetts Mathematics Curriculum Framework](#) document.
- The outcome of the demonstration of prerequisite mastery for the requested course using [The MDTP Assessment System](#). Demonstration of mastery is a minimum assessment score of 80%. For students that are requesting placement into Algebra 2 (skipping Geometry), students must achieve an overall score of 80% on the Algebra 2 Readiness assessment and demonstrate 90% mastery of all Geometry specific problems. (#2 Demonstration of Mastery Above)
- Consultation with educators, including current teachers, math department heads, and counselors.

Conclusion:

These procedures ensure that all students are placed in math courses that align with their level of proficiency, offer appropriate challenges, and set them up for success, providing a clear path for advancement while maintaining academic integrity. Parents and students should work closely with school staff to understand the requirements and ensure a smooth placement process.

¹ This assessment system is standards aligned and is designed to assess for grade or course level preparedness.