

FAQs Regarding the Grade 6 Mathematics Placement Process

See page 4 for Grade 6 Transition Math and Algebra Placement Criteria

The primary goal in recommending a grade 6 mathematics placement is to place the student into a grade 6 mathematics class that will be challenging but will also allow the student to experience success. It is difficult for all concerned when a student is placed in a mathematics class beyond his/her capabilities or a class that is far below his/her capabilities. All too often this places students into situations where they fail to reach comfort in their further mathematics studies.

Why is a *MAP* reading score used as part of the “entrance criteria?”

Readability analyses of the Pre-Transition Mathematics text at grade 6 and the Transition Math text have indicated that the reading levels differ substantially. We do not want reading difficulty to get in the way of a student’s success in mathematics. The reading requirement is set at a lower level than the math requirement so math is given the greatest weight in the recommendation process.

Why not use a procedure that allows a higher *MAP* math score to compensate for a lower *MAP* reading score?

District validity studies have explored the use of several “weighted” formulae that would implement this strategy. None of those resulted in better predictive results than the present process.

Why not use teacher recommendations as part of the placement process?

With 30-40 grade 5 teachers in the district it would not be possible to develop a process that would provide consistent and comparable information across all teachers. Also, students entering the district from a school outside the district would be placed at a disadvantage.

Why must the student take the *IAAT* before the parent may override the district recommendation?

As indicated in the next answer, the *IAAT* (*Iowa Algebra Aptitude Test*) provides additional, somewhat different information from the *MAP*. This additional information can help parents and staff as they consider this crucial placement decision.

Why not retest with *MAP* rather than *IAAT*?

The *IAAT* is a different type test from the *MAP*. It is designed to assess a student’s ability to apply previous mathematics knowledge and skills to somewhat unique situations—those not previously encountered. The *MAP* is an achievement test that is designed to assess a student’s knowledge of previously learned content. There is a moderate correlation between the two tests which indicates that they are, indeed, assessing somewhat different things. Thus, when a student has not successfully met the *MAP* criteria he/she has an opportunity to show success on a somewhat different measure.

Why is the *IAAT* used as the re-test when a student failed to meet either the *MAP* reading or mathematics criterion?

The case of a student who failed to meet the *MAP* mathematics criterion has been addressed above. For a student who failed to meet the *MAP* reading criterion if the student shows a strong aptitude for algebraic type mathematics as assessed by the *IAAT*, then those strong math skills will allow him/her to compensate for some difficulty in reading the transition math text.

Where can I obtain more information about the *Iowa Algebra Aptitude Test (IAAT)*?

There is a description of the test and a few sample items on the district website. The url is:

<http://www.edina.k12.mn.us/teach/r-and-e/pdfs/assessments/iaat.pdf>

How can I help my student prepare for the *IAAT*?

As noted in a previous question the *IAAT* is an aptitude or ability test rather than an achievement test. As such a student would gain little by “studying” a pre-transition mathematics or algebra text or by engaging in other “test prep” type activities. As with any test it is appropriate to be sure your student is well-rested and has had a healthy breakfast before the test. Many students bring water to drink during the testing. Time is provided between test sections for students who do wish to do so. It is also appropriate to talk with your student to inform him/her that some of the test items will be easy and some will be very hard; that no one is expected to correctly answer all items.

How was the *IAAT* criterion of 80 percent correct determined?

This criterion has been used in Edina since the early 2000s. The *IAAT* technical information indicates that students that score at or above this level have about an 80% chance of achieving a grade of A or B when they take algebra. In 2005-2006 the District’s Gifted Advisory Committee was asked to consider whether the criterion should be raised or lowered. That is, to predict a different algebra grade. There was no recommendation to adjust the criterion.

What if a student wishes to be considered for grade 6 Algebra but has not met the *MAP* criteria for transition math?

He/she should take the *IAAT* as part of the appeal process for Transition Math. If he/she scores at least 85 percent correct on the *IAAT*—the required score for grade 6 Algebra placement—then we would re-test with *MAP*; only the subtest(s) that did not meet the criterion. He/she would have to meet the *MAP* criteria for Transition Math as placement in grade 6 Algebra requires both criteria to be met—meet the *MAP* criteria for transition math and achieve 85 percent correct or better on the *IAAT*. Because placement into grade 6 Algebra is a double acceleration, there is no appeal or parent override option.

Why is Algebra 1 often referred to as a “gate keeper” course?

Much research indicates that if a student does not have a strong background in the skills and knowledge of Algebra 1, then he/she will typically struggle in later mathematics and some science classes.

Why are there “entrance criteria” for grade 6 Transition Math and Algebra but not for AP or enriched courses?

Placement into grade 6 Transition Mathematics or Algebra is a course acceleration (grade acceleration in math). AP and enriched decisions are simply decisions about different level course choices at the same grade level.

Why does the district have the right to establish “entrance criteria” for a grade 6 mathematics course?

District legal counsel has indicated that case law has upheld that districts have the right to establish requirements for placement.

Why can’t individual circumstances be considered and waivers granted?

District legal counsel has indicated that the “entrance criteria” must be applied equally and fairly to all students. To consider individual circumstances would result in the criteria not being applied equally in all cases. The district does have an established appeal process which grants parents the right to make the final placement decision for transition or standard mathematics. This addresses the individual circumstances situations in a fair and equitable manner.

When might a mid-year acceleration to grade 6 Algebra be considered?

When a grade 6 transition mathematics teacher clearly sees evidence that a student is capable of performing beyond the level of that class, he/she will consult with the counselor and parents. Part of that discussion will focus on whether the student and parent are committed to the extra self-guided study that will be required to ensure that the student masters all of the algebra content that has already been covered in the algebra class. If the parents and student are interested in pursuing a possible acceleration to algebra, the counselor will request that the district administer the *IAAT* to the student. If the student meets the *IAAT* criterion, then the acceleration may be made. No acceleration will be made after the end of semester one.

What is the highest level mathematics course an Edina student may complete if he/she is in the standard grade 6 pre-transition mathematics course?

The student could enroll in either college algebra prep or pre-calculus as a senior.

What is the highest level mathematics course an Edina student may complete if he/she is in the grade 6 transition mathematics course?

The student could enroll in AP calculus AB or AP calculus BC as a senior.

What is the highest level mathematics course an Edina student may complete if he/she is in the grade 6 algebra course?

The student could enroll in Multivariable Calculus as a senior.

What are the various test score criteria?

See the next page.

MAP Criteria for Grade 6 Transition Mathematics Placement

Students must satisfy both the reading and mathematics criterion scores shown below to be recommended for placement into grade 6 accelerated mathematics (i.e., Transition Math).

Reading Test Date	Grade 5 RIT Score Requirement
Aug-Nov	222
March-July*	227
Mathematics Test Date	Grade 5 RIT Score Requirement
Aug.-Nov	231
March-July*	240
*Note: Spring MAP scores are used as the starting point of analysis. For students who do not meet spring scoring criteria in both subjects, Fall MAP results are examined for possible recommendation into grade 6 accelerated math.	

If a student does not meet both requirements, a parent may appeal the grade 6 placement recommendation. In the case of an appeal, the student is required to take the *Iowa Algebra Aptitude Test (IAAT)*. The student must score at least 80 percent correct to be recommended for placement into Transition Mathematics in grade 6. If the student does not achieve a score of 80 percent correct, the parent may request to override the placement recommendation.

Criteria for Grade 6 Algebra Placement

The student must meet both the *MAP* reading and mathematics criteria listed above AND must score at least 85 percent correct on the *Iowa Algebra Aptitude Test*. Because placement into grade 6 is a double acceleration, no parent override is allowed. If a student meets the two *MAP* criteria and scores between 80 and 84 percent correct on the *IAAT*, the parent may request an *IAAT* retest.