Advanced Mathematics Pathways and Automatic Enrollment Frequently Asked Questions

This Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document provides guidance for school districts on implementing the Advanced Mathematics Pathway and Automatic Enrollment requirements established in Iowa Code sections 279.89 and 279.90. It is intended to clarify statutory requirements, support consistent statewide implementation, and answer common questions related to student eligibility, placement, parent notification, advanced coursework, and assessment. School districts should use this guidance in conjunction with applicable Iowa Code, local board policies, and district procedures.

Advanced Mathematics Pathways and Automatic Enrollment

1. **Are the Advanced Mathematics Pathway and Automatic Enrollment requirements limited to students identified as gifted and talented?**
    - No. The Advanced Mathematics Pathway and Automatic Enrollment requirements apply to any student who meets the eligibility criteria established in Iowa Code. Participation is not limited to students identified for gifted and talented programming.
2. **Does eligibility for the Advanced Mathematics Pathway or Automatic Enrollment identify a student as gifted and talented?**
    - No. Identification for gifted and talented programming is governed by Iowa Code section 257.42 and is determined using locally established criteria. While eligibility for the Advanced Mathematics Pathway or Automatic Enrollment may be considered as one data point during the identification process, it does not automatically identify a student as gifted and talented. School districts should follow the identification procedures outlined in their local gifted and talented program plan.
3. **What assessments are used to determine eligibility for the Advanced Mathematics Pathway and Automatic Enrollment?**
    - Eligibility for the Advanced Mathematics Pathway is determined using the mathematics portion of the Iowa Statewide Assessment of Student Progress (ISASP) administered in grades 5, 6, or 7.
    - Eligibility for Automatic Enrollment is determined using the mathematics or English language arts portions of the ISASP administered in grades 3 through 11. School districts must also use other relevant data to determine whether an eligible student is academically prepared for automatic enrollment in advanced coursework or programming.
4. **May a school district use additional criteria to determine additional student placement in the Advanced Mathematics Pathway?**
    - Yes. School districts must automatically place any student who achieves the Advanced Performance Level on the statewide mathematics assessment into the Advanced Mathematics Pathway. Districts may also use additional local measures and procedures to identify students who would benefit from participation. Local procedures should expand student access to advanced learning opportunities and should not limit pathways available to students.

5. **Are school districts required to notify parents or guardians when a student qualifies for the Advanced Mathematics Pathway or Automatic Enrollment?**

    - Yes. School districts must notify eligible students and their parents or guardians of the advanced coursework or programming available to the student.

6. **Is parent or guardian permission required before an eligible student is enrolled in advanced coursework or programming?**

    - No. Eligible students must be automatically enrolled in the appropriate advanced coursework or programming. Parent or guardian permission is not required prior to enrollment.

7. **May a parent or guardian opt their child out of Automatic Enrollment?**

    - Yes. A parent or guardian may request that their child not participate in the advanced coursework or programming for which the student is eligible.

8. **What is the Advanced Mathematics Pathway?**

    - The Advanced Mathematics Pathway is a sequence of courses and instructional opportunities that accelerates or combines mathematics content typically taught in grades 6 through 8, allowing students to progress into higher-level mathematics coursework earlier.

    - The purpose of the Advanced Mathematics Pathway is to increase student access to rigorous mathematics instruction and expand opportunities for students to complete higher-level mathematics coursework during grades 9 through 12.

9. **Does Automatic Enrollment require grade-level acceleration?**

    - No. Automatic Enrollment does not require whole-grade acceleration. While enrollment in advanced coursework or programming may result in subject-specific or whole-grade acceleration in some cases, school districts should follow the procedures outlined in their local acceleration policy when making those decisions.

10. **What does the "next most rigorous level" of advanced coursework or programming look like?**

    - The "next most rigorous level" refers to providing a student with learning experiences that are more advanced, challenging, complex and/or accelerated than the current grade-level curriculum.

    - Examples may include:

        - Grouping eligible students for advanced instruction within the classroom;
        - Providing more complex assignments, deeper inquiry, and higher-level thinking opportunities;
        - Compacting curriculum or increasing the pace of instruction;
        - Subject-specific acceleration;
        - Whole-grade acceleration, when appropriate;
        - Honors courses;
        - Advanced Placement (AP) courses;
        - Concurrent or dual-credit courses; or
        - Postsecondary Enrollment Options (PSEO).
        - The specific opportunities available will vary based on grade level and local programming. School districts should have a clearly defined progression of advanced coursework and programming for eligible students.

11. What if a school district does not currently offer a "next most rigorous level" of advanced coursework or programming?

- School districts are expected to develop a clear progression of advanced coursework or programming for eligible students. Districts should provide learning experiences that are more advanced, challenging, complex and/or accelerated than the standard grade-level curriculum.
- Examples may include thoughtful scheduling, curriculum compacting, providing advanced instructional materials, expanding existing programming or developing additional advanced course options.

12. Why may students enrolled in accelerated coursework take the corresponding statewide summative assessment?

- Allowing students to take the statewide assessment that corresponds to the course in which they are enrolled, rather than their assigned grade level, provides a more accurate measure of their knowledge and skills. Above-level testing offers a more appropriate level of challenge, reduces assessment ceiling effects and provides valuable information to help educators determine a student's readiness for future learning.