

## **SB 359: California Mathematics Placement Act of 2015 for Wm. Finch Charter School**

SB 359 requires school districts with 8<sup>th</sup> grades and/or 9<sup>th</sup> grades to develop, establish, and implement fair, objective and transparent mathematics placement policies that (1) consider multiple objective measures (i.e. California statewide assessments, and pupil course grades) as the basis for placement and (2) permit multiple checkpoints to assess placement accuracy and pupil progress, especially at the start of the academic year.

Background:

If students are placed below their level of proficiency in 9<sup>th</sup> grade mathematics courses, their ability to complete the recommended sequence of mathematics courses for admission to the University of California and California State University systems and other higher education institutions will be compromised. If admitted to college, students who were forced to repeat lower level mathematics courses in high school will be behind other students, and less likely to be competitive for careers in the STEM fields upon graduation. Mathematics misplacement has also been shown to affect students' confidence and their overall educational experience.

The Governing Board affirms that 8<sup>th</sup> grade teachers and counselors play an important role in providing mathematics course placements recommendations to high school districts/schools and in counseling graduating 8<sup>th</sup> grade students on their mathematics course selection when they enroll in high school. A fair, objective, and transparent protocol for advising and recommending mathematics placement that strictly limits the use of subjective criteria will result in an appropriate 9th grade mathematics student placement and will prevent mathematics misplacement, particularly of students of color.

Pursuant to California Education Code Section 260, the Governing Board has the primary responsibility for ensuring that school district programs and activities are free from discrimination based upon enumerated characteristics, including race and ethnicity. Because the Governing Board is responsible for ensuring that all students, regardless of race or ethnic background, receive an equal chance to advance in mathematics, the Governing Board desires to ensure that the District implements a fair, objective and transparent protocol for advising outgoing students on their high school mathematics course selection.

The Governing Board therefore directs district/school staff to create, implement, and monitor a protocol for 9th grade mathematics placement recommendations that includes the following elements:

### Reliance On Objective Determinations

Recommendations made to the high school district and any advising of 8th grade students regarding their mathematics placement in 9th grade shall be based on objective measures. These measures may include:

- Standardized tests that reflect statewide mathematics assessments;
- Student grades that reflect comprehension and mastery of the subject matter, from both semesters of the 7th and 8th grade year; and
- Other objective indicators of student performance and proficiency in mathematics (i.e. State adopted content standards tests, Odysseyware assessments, etc.)
- If the objective data is inconclusive, then subjective measures for 9<sup>th</sup> grade placement can be considered.

#### Limitation On The Use of Subjective Measures for Recommendations

Recognizing that teachers and counselors are often aware of students' talents and abilities that are not reflected in objective data, an exception may be made to recommend advancing a student to a higher mathematics class than objective data indicates.

#### Timing of Mathematics Placement Decisions and Parent/Student Notification

Placement decisions shall be made according to a timeline that allows for maximum use of current objective measures. Placement decisions shall be communicated in writing to parents/students prior to the start of the school year; shall include the district's/school's mathematics placement protocol; and shall indicate the objective factors that resulted in the student's 9<sup>th</sup> grade placement.

#### Implementation, Monitoring, and Accountability

Once protocol is finalized, the district/school shall ensure that mathematics teachers and counselors at the school are aware of the recommendation and advising protocol and are appropriately trained on its proper use, implementation, and monitoring.

#### Governing Board Approval and Review

District/school staff shall report to the Governing Board on a regular basis while the recommendation and advising protocol is being developed. When the protocol is finalized, district/school staff shall return to the Governing Board to seek approval of the protocol. Once approved, the protocol shall be prominently posted on the district/school's website and shall be made readily accessible to parents/students and administrators. District/school staff shall subsequently report to the Governing Board on implementation on an annual basis.

November 16, 2016: approved by the Glenn County Board of Education