



## **MIDDLE SCHOOL PLACEMENT CRITERIA FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

### **What pathways are available in middle school for CORE and Mathematics?**

Students can be placed in an Honors CORE (History/Language Arts) in grades 6, 7, and 8. Accelerated Math is available in grade 7 and 8. All sixth graders are placed in the Mathematics 6 course; struggling mathematics students in sixth grade are clustered together in order for teachers to support their needs.

### **How does the district determine course placement for the middle school?**

Placement in these courses is contingent upon performance-based criteria. For CORE, these include: 1) the Smarter Balanced Assessment in English Language Arts, 2) a reading diagnostic test, and 3) classroom reading grade. For Accelerated Mathematics, these include: 1) the Smarter Balanced Assessment in Mathematics, 2) a grade-level skills diagnostic, and 3) classroom teacher feedback.

### **What are each of these criteria?**

- The Smarter Balanced Assessment is the standards-aligned, grade-level assessment given by the State to determine student performance in ELA. It is administered in the Spring in two subjects: Mathematics and English Language Arts.
- Fifth grade students will be using the Accelerated Reader STAR Diagnostic Test to determine their reading level. The reading level will be converted into a Lexile score, which helps educators determine the grade level where a student is reading. For sixth and seventh grade students, the assessment is called the Scholastic Reading Inventory, which also generates a Lexile score.
- The classroom reading grade (or Language Arts grade in CORE) is reported by the classroom teacher at the end of the second semester (middle school) or third trimester (elementary school).
- The grade-level skills diagnostic for mathematics is the Blue Summative Benchmark Assessment. Teachers have determined specific skills students need to be successful in advanced mathematics and questions on the Blue Assessment that are aligned to those skills will be analyzed for student performance.
- The classroom teacher feedback for mathematics is a survey determining the readiness of students for the accelerated pathway.

### **How and why were those specific criteria selected?**

A representative group of fifth, sixth, seventh, and eighth grade teachers came together on February 22<sup>nd</sup> to discuss the placement criteria. The group agreed to these specific items. For CORE, an emphasis is placed on reading comprehension because the Honors classes require students to comprehend literature (both fiction and non-fiction) quickly in order to “dive deeper” into the text. For Mathematics, students who have yet to master specific skills that are necessary for success have been found to struggle significantly in the accelerated pathway.



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### **Where can I get more information about how the criteria are being used?**

Please see the companion document "[2017-18 Middle School Course and Section Placement Criteria](#)" for more information about how points are assigned in the placement system based on student performance.

### **Does GATE identification determine placement?**

No. The GATE identification process is independent of the course placement process.

### **What are the "mean" and "standard deviations" referred to in the Placement Criteria?**

Standard deviations are a form of statistical analysis that allow for comparisons within a data set by determining the dispersal range of the data. After calculating an average for the data set ("the mean"), student scores will be compared with other HBCSD students at their grade level to gather information about how well students did in comparison to others in the group. Standard deviations above the mean create comparison lines – for example, a student who is one standard deviation above the mean would rank approximately in the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile of the data. A student who falls between the mean and the first standard deviation would rank between the 85<sup>th</sup> and 50<sup>th</sup> percentile and a student one standard deviation below the mean would rank between the 50<sup>th</sup> and 35<sup>th</sup> percentile.

### **When will the placement decision be communicated to parents?**

Students and families will be provided with a provisional placement letter prior to summer vacation. These placements are provisional because the SBAC scores will arrive during the summer months; that data will be factored in with the provisional placement to determine a final placement that will be reflected on the schedule students receive on Registration Day.

### **What if I don't agree with the decision?**

All placements are made on a provisional basis and review of a student's placement may be warranted on a case-by-case basis. Students can sign up to re-take local assessments one time after Registration Day, with the new score to be factored into their placement data. Please contact site administration to initiate the re-take and review of placement process.

### **Who can I talk to if I have questions about any of this?**

Please contact your site administration or Pree Bhattacharya at the District Office at 714-378-2034.