

Out of Level Math Meeting 3/15/07

In today's meeting, the math committee used quality tools to see where the committee's consensus lay on issues concerning the matrix to be used for out-of-level-math placement, the types of materials to be used for out-of-level-math instruction and the need for accelerated math accommodation of some kind at various grade levels. Each participant in the committee placed their "vote" in a series of charts, with the results summarized below:

Main Issue: Accelerated Math Accommodation

| Grade | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|-------|-------------------|----------|-------|----------------|
| K | 1* | 6* | 3 | 12 |
| 1 | | 4* | 4 | 12 |
| 2 | | 3* | 4 | 14 |
| 3 | | | 4 | 19 |
| 4 | | | 3 | 19 |
| 5 | | | 3 | 19 |
| 6 | | | 2 | 17 |
| 7 | | | 2 | 18 |
| 8 | | | 2 | 19 |

*attendees later said they agreed accommodation had to be made but were concerned about taking kids out of the classroom

Summary: The attendees agreed strongly that some kind of accelerated math accommodation needed to occur at all grade levels. The method of delivery for instruction was addressed separately, and attendees that indicated that they disagreed with math accommodation later said they agree accommodation had to be made but were concerned about the type of delivery instruction.

Main Issue: Materials

| | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|--|-------------------|----------|-------|----------------|
| Teach grade level 1 year above | 1 | 1 | 6 | 16 |
| Math Invest. That enriched or further developed grade level concepts | 16 | 4 | 1 | |
| District alignment vs. building decision on materials/curriculum | | | 9 | 15 |
| Individual student placement for extreme cases (rare 2yr+ accel needs) | | | 13 | 11 |

Summary: Attendees agreed/strongly agreed that out-of-level math materials should be taught 1 year above grade level, as opposed to only doing “Math Investigations” enrichment at grade level (it was noted that enrichment would still be appropriate for students that did not place into the out-of-level math program). Attendees agreed/strongly agreed that out-of-level math materials should be aligned across the district, so that students in 3rd grade out-of-level math in one school would be working from the same materials as students in another school, rather than varying from school to school. Attendees agreed/strongly agreed that exceptions should be made for student placement when acceleration needs of 2+ years were required, according to assessments.

Main Issue: Matrix

| | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|---|-------------------|----------|-------|----------------|
| Matrix should be consistent in all D15 schools | | | 1 | 23 |
| Cognitive abilities need to be considered when matrix developed | | | 2 | 20 |
| Verbal scores should not be weighted in matrix (ELL students, etc.) | | | 4 | 18 |
| Matrix needs to be comprehensive and should be weighted | | | | 21 |
| Gather cognitive scores every 2 years/Criteria Data | 1 | | 1 | 21 |
| Components: CogAT, other assessments (many) | | | 3 | 20 |
| Teacher input | 10 | 7 | 5 | 1 |

Summary: Attendees agreed/strongly agreed that the out-of-level math placement matrix and criteria should be consistent across the district, that cognitive abilities need to be included in the matrix, that verbal scores should not be weighted in the matrix in order to not exclude 2nd language learners, and that the matrix needs to be comprehensive, and weighted. Attendees agreed/strongly agreed that cognitive scores need to be gathered every 2 years, and Mary Zarr indicated that this was already being planned, with cognitive assessments already scheduled for next year for grades 2, 4 and 6. Attendees strongly disagreed/disagreed with teacher input being included formally on the matrix. There was discussion about informally including teacher input for kids that were on the edge of placing into the out-of-level program, but attendees mostly felt strongly that all criteria should be objective.

Delivery Options

Attendees brainstormed delivery option ideas in order to provide a “cafeteria menu” that buildings could work from as options for delivering instruction to out-of-level math students. The following options were discussed:

1. Out of level class for 1 hour/day, grades 3-6
2. Out of level class for 1 hour/day, grades 2-6
3. Math Specialist in building to support flex grouping in classroom, grades K-6
4. One teacher takes a small number of kids – “cluster” push-in, when whole class can’t be formed. There was some discussion about how additional program assistant time would be helpful, but that the amount of assistant time was set by the teacher’s contract and could not be changed without opening the contract.

- Mary Zarr emphasized that instruction would not primarily come from a program assistant, in any case.
5. Move kids to next grade level – could possibly jump to Jr. High, when appropriate. All schools now have out-of-level 6th grade, so this could be a possibility.
 6. Classroom delivery by teacher – grade K, using out-of-level math materials

Mary Zarr mentioned she is working on a grant to get SkillsTutor district wide as another math material option. There was considerable discussion about having different materials for out-of-level math instruction than the regular education instruction, because students may move in or out of the program and did not want them to have the possibility of repeating the same textbook. There was also discussion about how difficult it was to have two very different styles of instructional text (Everyday math vs. Houghton Mifflin). It was pointed out that the Gifted math instruction would also fall into “out-of-level” math instruction, rather than being separate from it as it is in some cases now.

The next meeting has not yet been scheduled.