

Grade 6 Math Placement

Frequently Asked Questions

What are the math options in 6th grade?

The majority of incoming 6th graders are placed into the “grade-level” math course. Some students will be placed in Accelerated Grade 6; this course compacts the 6th and 7th grade curriculum into one year. The math placement test is one tool used by parents and administrators to determine the best placement for a student in 6th grade. Regardless of the placement, enVisions math (our curricular resource) has proven to be challenging for students so a rigorous program is experienced by all.

How is the placement of my child determined?

The process of placing students into our different math programs is a very serious one. A strong math experience in 6th grade math will help a student be more successful in high school mathematics than a mediocre experience in accelerated math. Multiple pieces of data are reviewed to determine which 6th grade option is best for a student. A student’s score on the math placement test is one of the data points. Students with a math placement test score that is right at the border between the accelerated grade 6 math program and the “grade-level” math program are recommended to take the “grade-level” math. However, parents of these district-identified students are provided the opportunity to make the final decision.

What is the math placement test?

The math placement test has historically been given to all 6th grade students in the spring. This test serves as one data point of a few that assists administration with the placement of students into the appropriate math course. This year, the optional math placement test will be administered to grade 5 for placement into the appropriate grade 6 math course.

Is this year’s test the same as used in past years?

No. The old test focused on the ability to recall or replicate discrete skills. The new test places more emphasis on reasoning and logic. The new test addresses a concern that there were students who might be successful in the advanced math course; yet, it was not indicated by their performance on the old assessment.

How is this year’s testing different?

Beginning in the Spring of 2018, the placement test is OPTIONAL. Only those students wishing to be considered for Accelerated Grade 6 Math will take the test. Testing information will be provided to all 5th grade parents. Parents will be asked to sign a permission slip allowing their child to be tested. Teachers can make recommendations to students to encourage them to take the test. However, students are no longer required to take it.

What is the difficulty level of the questions?

Some of the questions are quite difficult. This is deliberate. A secondary purpose of the test is to determine if a student possesses the depth of understanding at this point in time and is willing to try multiple strategies to find an answer.

Can I help my child study for the math placement test?

There is no need to study for the 2018 math placement test. It has been redesigned for this year. It is NO LONGER based on memorized facts or specific skills. The placement test consists of five sections:

1. Quantitative Reasoning

2. Number Sense & Equation Building
3. Spatial Reasoning
4. Problem Solving
5. Reasoning with Venn Diagrams

The assessment is intended to examine “math maturity” through problem solving and abstract reasoning. A balanced breakfast after a good night’s sleep is the best recommendation!

How will the test be administered?

Students will be given one section at a time. Each section will have a time limit of 15 minutes. There will be a 10 minute break after section #3. All students will be given the 5 sections in the same order.

Will the test be administered differently for students with test-taking accommodations?

Yes. Case managers will identify those students who have test-taking accommodations and the test will be administered according to the student’s plan.

Is the test multiple choice?

Yes and No. Four sections of the test are multiple choice: Quantitative Reasoning, Number Sense & Equation Building, Spatial Reasoning, and Reasoning with Venn Diagrams. The Problem Solving section asks students to provide the correct answer. All of the questions will be marked correct or incorrect.

How will the Math Placement test be scored?

Students will receive a Pass/Fail score on each of the sections as well as the overall test. A passing score is one that is at least one standard deviation above the mean. For selection into Accelerated Grade 6 Math, students must pass 3 of the 5 subtests and pass the overall test.

All students who are interested in taking the placement test are given the opportunity to do so. To be eligible for the accelerated grade 6 program, students must score a minimum threshold score in each of the five categories. These scores are then compared to a predetermined standard for placement. This standard is reviewed annually in an effort to make the student’s grade 6 math experience both positive and challenging.

How many students will be accepted into the Accelerated Grade 6 Math Program?

Every student who meets the selection criteria will be placed in the Accelerated Grade 6 Math Program.

How will my child’s math choices in high school be impacted if my child does not take Accelerated Grade 6 Math?

Your child’s placement in grade 6 will not dictate his/her pathway through our rigorous grades 7-12 math curriculum. The 6th grade placement decision does not finalize a student’s 12th grade placement. We offer many different pathways to best meet the learning needs of our students. Students mature at different ages and stages, and they are ready for a more rigorous program at different times. As a result, there are multiple opportunities for students to accelerate throughout their math career at Hollis Brookline Cooperative schools. Please review the mathematics course progression through grade 12 to best understand the bigger picture.

Can a parent override the placement decision?

Placement data is analyzed very carefully with the intention of selecting a placement that is best for the student. If your child is recommended for the accelerated program, but you feel the grade-level program is best, we will honor requests to place your child in the standard “grade-level” program. We cannot honor requests to place a child above his/her eligibility level.

