

HB2686

Certain advanced or accelerated mathematics opportunities; policies and criteria for enrollment.



Bill Patron: Delegate Katrina Callsen (54th House District)

What the Bill Does:

Requires each school board to develop and adopt a policy in the 2025-2026 school year that sets forth the criteria for students in grades five through eight to be eligible to enroll in advanced or accelerated mathematics. The new law requires each school board policy to provide for:

- the automatic enrollment of certain students in advanced or accelerated mathematics based on Standards of Learning assessment scores, subject to course offerings and availability and the opportunity for parental opt-out,
- multiple additional pathways to student enrollment in advanced or accelerated mathematics, and
- an annual parental notification relating to mathematics coursework.

The bill also requires each school board to report certain data relating to advanced or accelerated mathematics participation and performance. The Virginia Department of Education must post this data on its website annually.

Why Does This Matter?

This bill is a step toward restoring merit-based advancement in education by requiring public schools to automatically enroll high-achieving students in advanced or accelerated math courses in grades 5-8. This new legislation emphasizes academic excellence, transparency, and ensures parents can make informed decisions early in the math pipeline about course options. This bill requires schools to notify parents about their child's eligibility, course options, and the long-term benefits of advanced math. This new legislation helps to preserve parental choice by allowing parents to opt their child out or request advanced placement, ensuring flexibility and rigorous options are widely known.

How Does This Impact Students?

This bill promotes academic advancement by automatically placing top-performing students into advanced and accelerated math classes ensuring they're challenged and not held back. Students will have additional opportunities to enroll in advanced level math courses early, ensuring they have the opportunity to take college-level math courses in high school.

How Does This Impact School Divisions?

Local school boards are to develop and adopt policies for student acceleration in middle school mathematics. Included in the criteria for acceleration is performance on SOL assessments with automatic enrollment for students scoring in the top quartile of the state in Grade 5-8 mathematics. Divisions which currently have acceleration pathways and policies in place may choose to begin the auto-enrollment process beginning with the 2025-2026 school year. If divisions currently do not have acceleration pathways or policies in place, then the division can leverage the released state upper quartile 2025 Mathematics

Standards of Learning (SOL) assessment data and the resources linked below to inform policy development for full implementation in the 2026-2027 school year.

The Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) will annually communicate the top quartile cut score to school divisions during the summer. This information is intended for local school boards to utilize in their decisions regarding student acceleration and inform auto-acceleration of advanced mathematics students. For students not included in the top quartile, additional pathways to advanced math coursework should be developed through use of multiple criteria. The legislation requires that parents are informed of the importance of advanced math coursework in middle school and all available options, as well as the eligibility process. The top quartile for each grade level is determined by grouping the SOL assessment scores by test, ordering them from highest to lowest. The scaled score for each grade level test was assigned a percent rank. The scaled score annually provided by VDOE will be the rank at 25 (upper quartile) by test grade level.

Divisions must notify the parents of each student in Grades five through eight annually of the criteria and process for enrollment in advanced or accelerated mathematics, including automatic enrollment and parental opt-out, the importance of middle school mathematics coursework, the impact of middle school coursework on the high school mathematics sequence, and the mathematics courses available within the school division.

School boards will collect data on the number of students enrolled in accelerated mathematics coursework based on division criteria or parent request, the number of students auto-enrolled in the advanced mathematics course due to prior year SOL performance, their SOL score in the current accelerated course, and the number of students that opted out of the auto-enrollment. The data submitted to VDOE will also include the course, grade levels of each student enrolled in the course, and student demographics. VDOE will post on its website all data collected from the school division as outlined in the bill.

What Resources Are Available?

- [Approved Courses To Satisfy Graduation Requirements for Standard and Advanced Diplomas](#) - Includes a list of math courses that can be taken for Standard and Advanced Diplomas that school divisions may want to use when determining local advanced math pathways.
- [Release of Statewide Upper Quartile Scores on Mathematics Standards of Learning Assessments for Grades 5-8](#) - Virginia Education Update Newsletter article indicating the upper quartile scores of students taking the Grades 5-8 Mathematics Standards of Learning assessments.
- [Accelerated Mathematics Pathways-Technical Resource Document](#) - provides background information on acceleration and considerations for divisions as they evaluate, revise or adopt a policy that sets forth criteria for students in grades five through eight to be eligible to enroll in advanced or accelerated mathematics for the following school year.
- [Acceleration Mathematics Pathways Parent Resource](#)- provides background information about acceleration for families as well as suggestions for questions and conversations that could assist families in understanding the accelerated pathways offered and benefits of participation in accelerated coursework.
- [Technical Assistance for the Use of SCED with Compacted Middle School Curriculum](#)- provides guidance on the use of SCED codes to identify accelerated or advanced courses that compact more than one traditional one year of curriculum into a course in the middle grades.

What Additional Items Will Be Released?

- Parent Opt-out resource which provides consistent language for divisions to use with parents that details the benefits of participating in accelerated coursework (*coming soon*). All resources can be found on the [VDOE Mathematics Instruction](#) web page.
- Expanded endorsement opportunities for teaching Algebra I and Geometry in middle school.
- Instructional resources to determine gaps in mathematics conceptual understanding and provide best practice strategies to address these gaps in an accelerated classroom.

School Division Next Steps:

- School boards must develop and adopt a policy in the 2025-2026 school year that sets forth the criteria for students in grades five through eight to be eligible to enroll in advanced or accelerated mathematics that reflect components highlighted in the legislation. The policy must:
- Require any student in grades five through eight who earns a scale score on the end-of-year SOL mathematics assessment that is in the statewide, grade-level upper quartile to be automatically enrolled in advanced or accelerated mathematics during the following school year (starting in the 2026-2027 school year), provided that such class or course is offered and available;
- Require that parents be afforded the opportunity to opt their child out of any automatic enrollment;
- Establish multiple additional pathways to enrollment in advanced or accelerated mathematics such as teacher recommendations, parental recommendations, student preference, or student aptitude as demonstrated through other means of evaluation such as grades, other standardized testing, portfolios, or observation; and
- Require that the parents of each student in grades five through eight be annually notified of (i) the criteria and process for enrollment in advanced or accelerated mathematics, including automatic enrollment and parental opt-out, as set forth in the policy; (ii) the importance of middle school mathematics coursework; (iii) the impact of middle school mathematics coursework on the high school mathematics coursework sequence; and (iv) the mathematics courses available within the school division.
- Local schools will develop a process to “auto-enroll” any student in grades five through eight who earns a scale score on the end-of-year *Standards of Learning* mathematics assessment that is in the top quartile. Other criteria such as teacher recommendations, parental recommendations, student preference, or student aptitude as demonstrated through other means of evaluation such as grades, other standardized testing, portfolios, or observation may be considered when determining student eligibility for mathematics acceleration.
- School divisions should analyze student data to determine the number of students historically taking advanced mathematics coursework in their division, the enrollment numbers for the offered advanced level courses in each school, and teacher endorsement data to inform the development of middle and high school accelerated mathematics pathways.
- School boards will use data to inform the development of multiple additional pathways to enrollment in advanced or accelerated mathematics. These pathways should also reflect options or support for students that are struggling with accelerated coursework.
- Divisions should develop curriculum and teacher professional development to support the instruction of accelerated mathematics courses in middle school. Divisions may need to adjust curriculum in Grade 4 and 5 to prepare students for advanced coursework in middle school.
- Each local school division will be required to submit to VDOE on an annual basis division-wide data, data by school, and data by grade level on

- (i) the number and percentage of students in grades five through eight who earned a scale score in the upper quartile on the end-of-year Standards of Learning mathematics assessment and who enrolled in advanced or accelerated mathematics in the following school year,
- (ii) the number and percentage of students in grades five through eight who earned a scale score in the upper quartile on the end-of-year Standards of Learning mathematics assessment but whose parents exercised the option to exclude the student from advanced or accelerated mathematics in the following school year, and
- (iii) the number and percentage of students in grades five through eight who did not earn a scale score in the upper quartile on the end-of-year Standards of Learning mathematics assessment but who enrolled in advanced or accelerated mathematics in the following school year; and
- (iv) the end-of-year Standards of Learning mathematics assessment scale score earned in the following school year by each category of student described above. (For example, a student who in 5th grade (Year 1 of the advancement) meets the scaled score requirement for advancement and is enrolled in an advanced mathematics pathway in grade 6, the scaled score from the assessment in grade 6 will be reported in the subsequent school year (Year 2).

- Note: All divisions are required to submit a report to VDOE. In the first year the report, some divisions may focus on development or revision of a division-wide acceleration policy. Data such as auto-enrollment and opt out information may not be included in the 2025-2026 report depending on the division acceleration policy and implementation.

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