## ALGEBRA 1 POLICY SELF-ASSESSMENT: ALIGNING TO THE EVIDENCE

District and school leaders can use this tool to evaluate how well their current Algebra I placement, access, and support policies align with research-based practices. It draws directly from the EdResearch for Action brief, "Evidence-Based Practices for Algebra I Access, Placement, and Success."

For each category, rate your current practice on a scale from 1 (weak alignment) to 5 (strong alignment), using the 'look fors' to guide your reflection.

**ACCESS AND ENROLLMENT:** When should students take Algebra I, and how should readiness be assessed?

Evidence-aligned	Weak alignment looks	Partial alignment	Strong alignment
practice	like	looks like	looks like
The district or school uses multiple objective measures to determine Algebra I readiness and enrollment.	Placement is based primarily on teacher recommendation or parent advocacy OR all students in one grade are placed in Algebra I regardless of readiness.	A single test score is used for placement decisions.	Placement relies on multiple test scores or predictive models, with clear, consistent criteria.
Students who meet	Enrollment is opt-in and	Some automatic	All academically ready
readiness thresholds are	depends on students and	enrollment policies exist,	students are
automatically enrolled	families navigating the	but are inconsistently	automatically placed,
in Algebra I.	placement system.	applied.	with an opt-out option.
All Algebra-ready students are offered the option to take Algebra in 8th grade or before.	No clear process exists for identifying Algebra-ready students before 9th grade; 8th-grade Algebra is not offered.	Some students have the option to take Algebra 1.	The district uses objective and consistent criteria to identify readiness, and all qualifying students are offered Algebra I in 8th grade.



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GROUPING: How should schools group students in Algebra I classrooms given differences in preparation and learning needs?

Evidence-aligned practice	Weak alignment looks like	Partial alignment looks like	Strong alignment looks like
The district or school has a clear, communicated policy on how it assigns students to math courses.	Course placement practices vary widely across schools and are often based on informal norms or historical precedent.	The policy is not consistently communicated or implemented Some schools may follow different practices.	There is a clearly defined and well-communicated course assignment policy that is applied consistently.
Course placement decisions are reviewed regularly and adjusted based on updated student performance data.	Placement decisions are made once and rarely revisited, even when new data suggest a student's needs have changed.	Placement is revisited occasionally, but adjustments are ad hoc or only happen for certain students or schools.	The district has a routine process (e.g., each semester or year) for reviewing Algebra I placements using updated performance data.
Course placement decisions are made separately by subject, and students placed in different math levels have access to rigorous coursework in other subjects.	Students placed in lower-level math are also automatically assigned to lower-level ELA, science, or electives, limiting access to rigorous content and diverse peer groups.	Scheduling practices often result in students in lower-level math being grouped together in multiple core classes. Some variation exists, but patterns of academic clustering remain.	Math placement is determined independently of ELA, science, and electives. The district actively monitors and adjusts scheduling practices to ensure diverse peer groupings and access to rigorous coursework.
In classrooms with a wide range of academic proficiency levels, teachers receive dedicated planning time and coaching on differentiation.	Teachers are expected to differentiate without additional support, planning time, or professional development.	Some teachers receive limited professional development, coaching, or planning time for differentiation.	All teachers in mixed-proficiency classrooms are given regular, dedicated time for co-planning and receive professional development focused on effective differentiation.
The district or school provides students with on-ramps to accelerated math after initial placement.	Placement decisions are largely fixed with few opportunities for students to advance.	Students can sometimes move between tracks, but options are limited.	Students can access accelerated pathways (e.g., concurrent Geometry + Algebra II or summer courses) and adjust as needed.



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SUPPORTS: What supports help students succeed in Algebra 1, especially those who start behind?

Evidence-aligned practice	Weak alignment looks like	Partial alignment looks like	Strong alignment looks like
Students who enter Algebra I with academic gaps receive intensive, research-aligned support such as extended or double-dose Algebra or high-impact tutoring during the school day.	Struggling students are placed in standard Algebra I classes without additional time or support. If tutoring is offered, it is voluntary, after school, or inconsistently available.	Support programs may exist but are not targeted consistently based on data or embedded in the school day.	All underprepared students are identified using multiple data points and enrolled in structured support programs during the school day. These supports are evidence- aligned, and monitored for effectiveness.
Support strategies (e.g., tutoring, double-dose) maintain a focus on grade-level standards, not just remediation.	Support programs primarily review below-grade-level content or foundational skills, with little to no connection to current grade-level standards or Algebra I curriculum.	Some tutors or interventionists incorporate current classwork, but there is limited coordination between support and core instruction.	Tutors, interventionists, and classroom teachers collaborate to align instruction. Students receive "just-in-time" supports that bridge foundational gaps while engaging with course content.

## **Discussion Questions for District and School Teams:**

- Where are we most aligned with the evidence, and how can we build on that?

   → For which evidence-aligned practices do we have strong aligment? What structures, mindsets, or resources have enabled that success? How might we extend or replicate those practices elsewhere?
- 2. Where are we least aligned with the evidence, and why? → For areas where we have weak alignment, what barriers (e.g., capacity, policy, scheduling, beliefs) are currently preventing stronger alignment? Which of those could we realistically address in the short term?
- What trade-offs are we currently making in placement and support decisions?
   → Are our current policies prioritizing access, readiness, or support, and are we unintentionally sacrificing one for the other? What would it take to better balance these priorities?
- 4. What is one policy or practice we could change this year to improve Algebra I success for more students?

 $\rightarrow$  Based on the checklist and this conversation, what's one concrete action, big or small, that could move us closer to research-aligned placement and support?

