

Math Placement Policy in California

November 17, 2016

Niu Gao, Sara Adan

Supported with funding from the Applied Materials Foundation
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Math placement policies are central to student success

- Expanding access to rigorous high school math classes
 - Improves college readiness
 - Increases access to selective colleges
 - Closes the achievement gap
- District placement policies affect student participation
- Recent legislative efforts highlight need for improvement

California Mathematics Placement Act (SB 359) addresses equity, measurement issues

- New law intends to create a fair, transparent, and objective math placement process
- Districts must
 - Consider multiple objective measures
 - Remove teacher recommendations, unless they advance students
 - Use student data to ensure equity and efficacy
 - Address consistency between elementary and high school districts

Our report looks at several key issues

- Common measures used to place students
- Awareness of and compliance with the new law
- Evaluation metrics for district placement policies
- Challenges and concerns districts raised
- Policy recommendations

Overview

- Our survey
- Student performance measures
- District awareness, evaluations, concerns
- Recommendations

Our findings are based on a statewide survey

- We asked about placement protocols, evaluation metrics, other challenges
 - Survey took place April–June 2016
- We targeted unified and high school districts
 - 47% response rate
- Our sample is representative of the state population

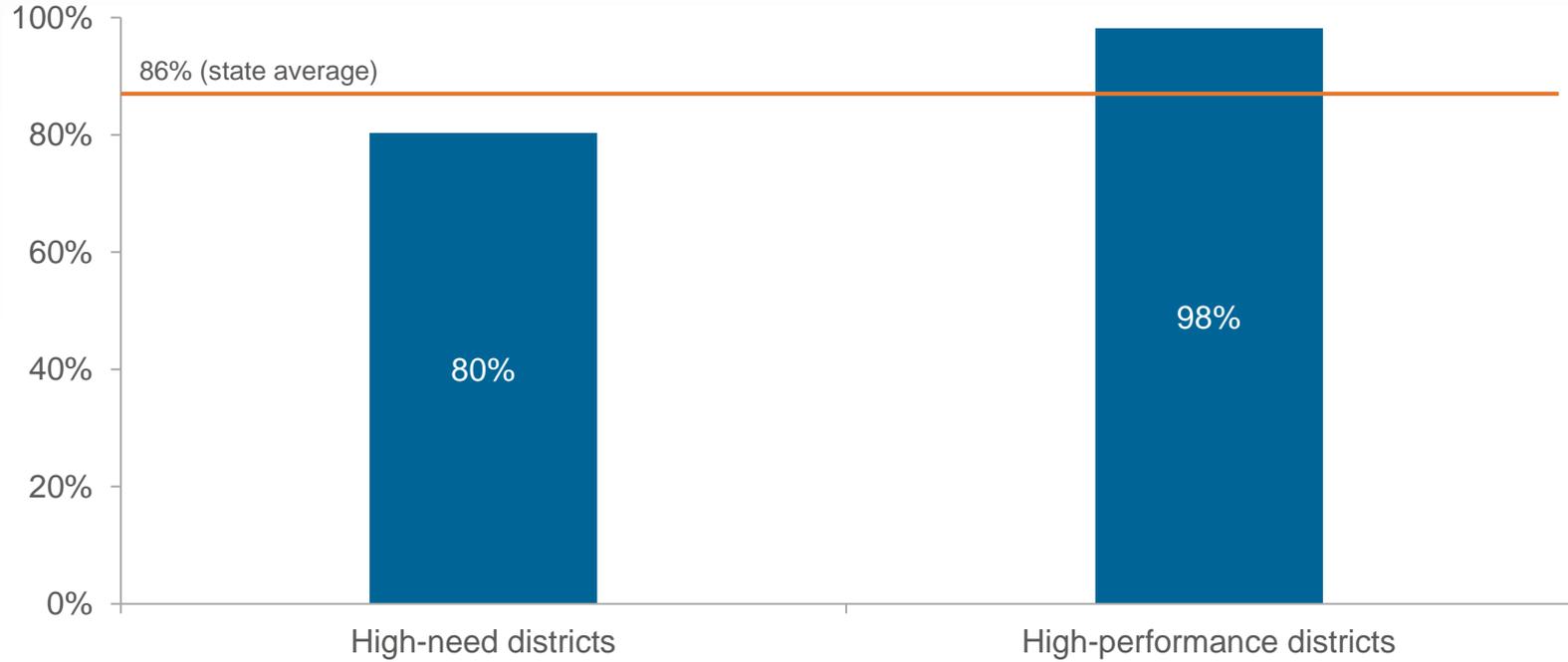
We divided districts into categories

- High need districts: 55% of students are disadvantaged
- High performance districts: largest gains in a-g completion
- Rural and urban districts
- Small (less than 3,000) and large (more than 20,000) districts

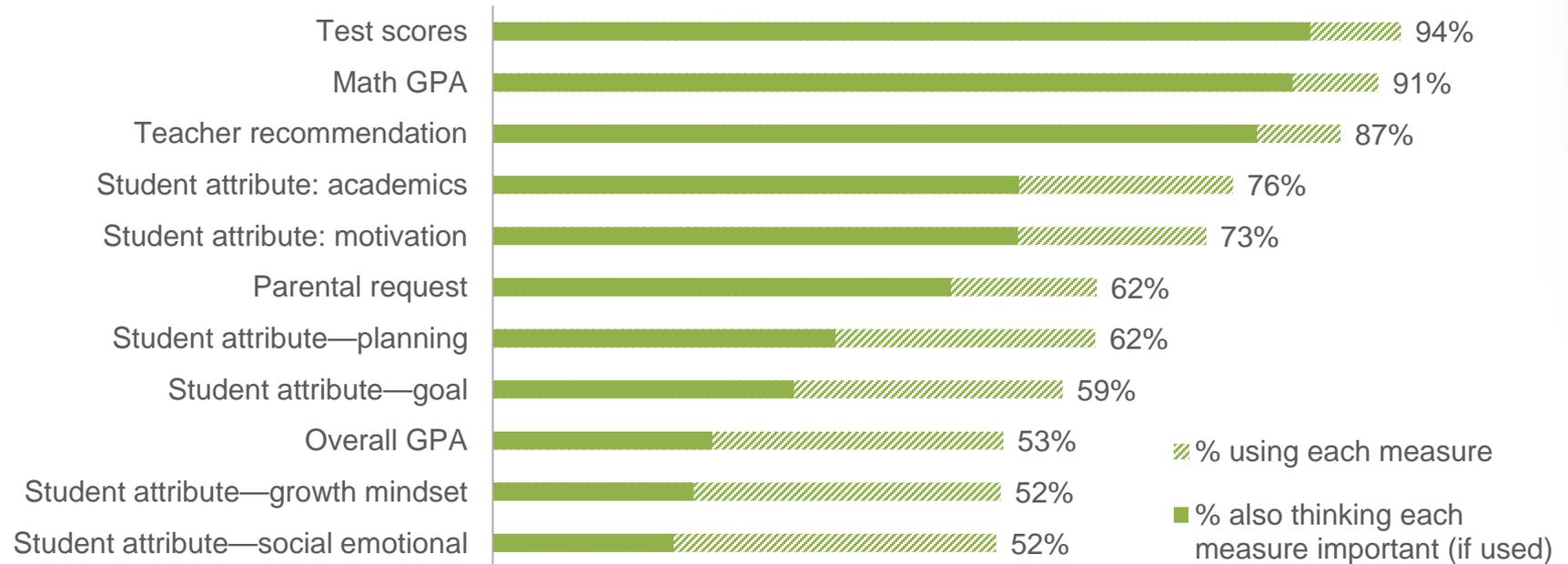
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More high performance districts had a policy

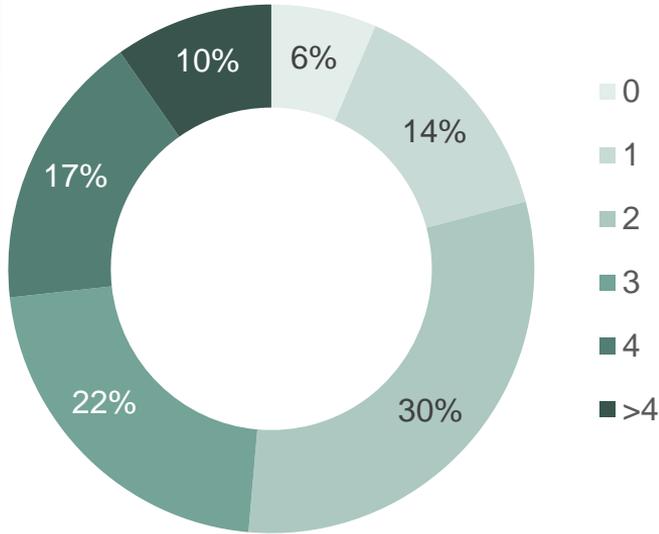


Districts rely heavily on three measures of student performance

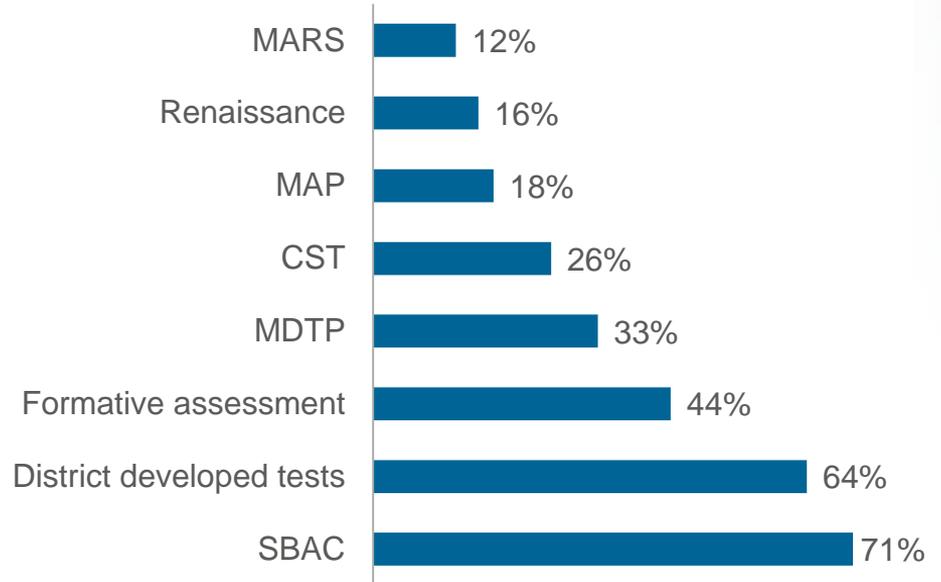


Districts use a variety of test score measures

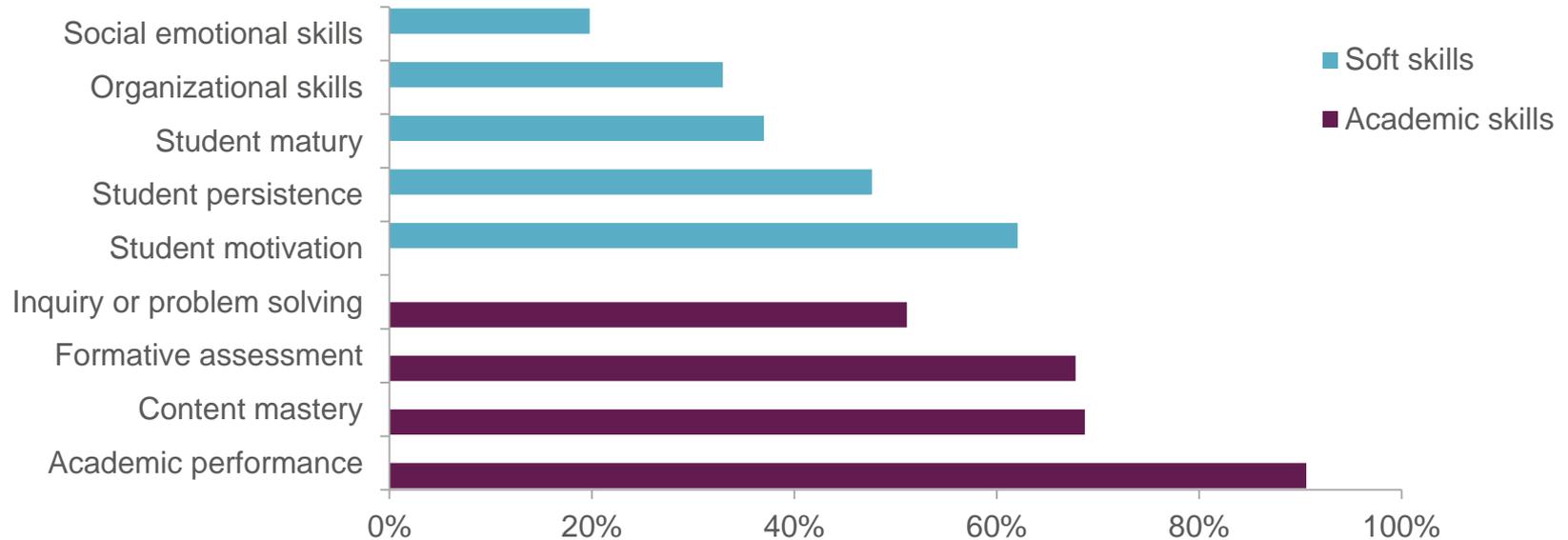
test scores used



% using each test score



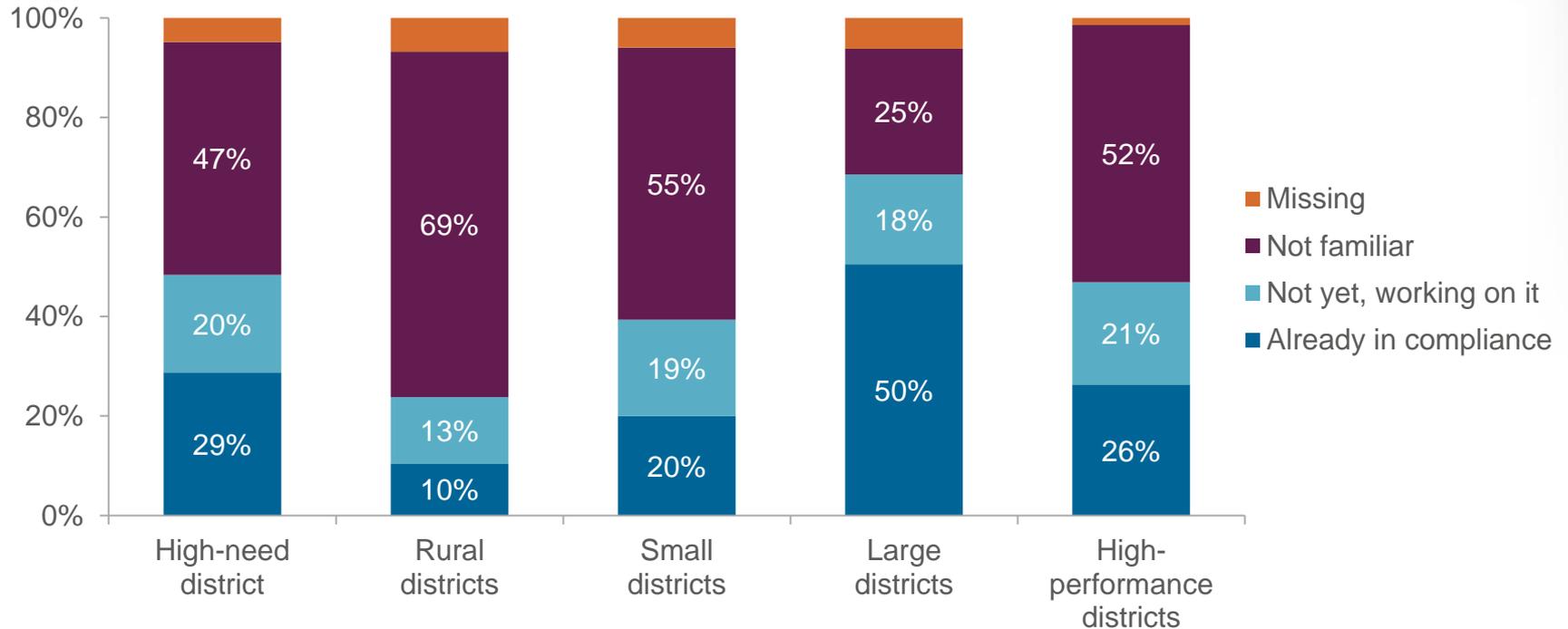
Teacher recommendations rely on both academic and soft skills



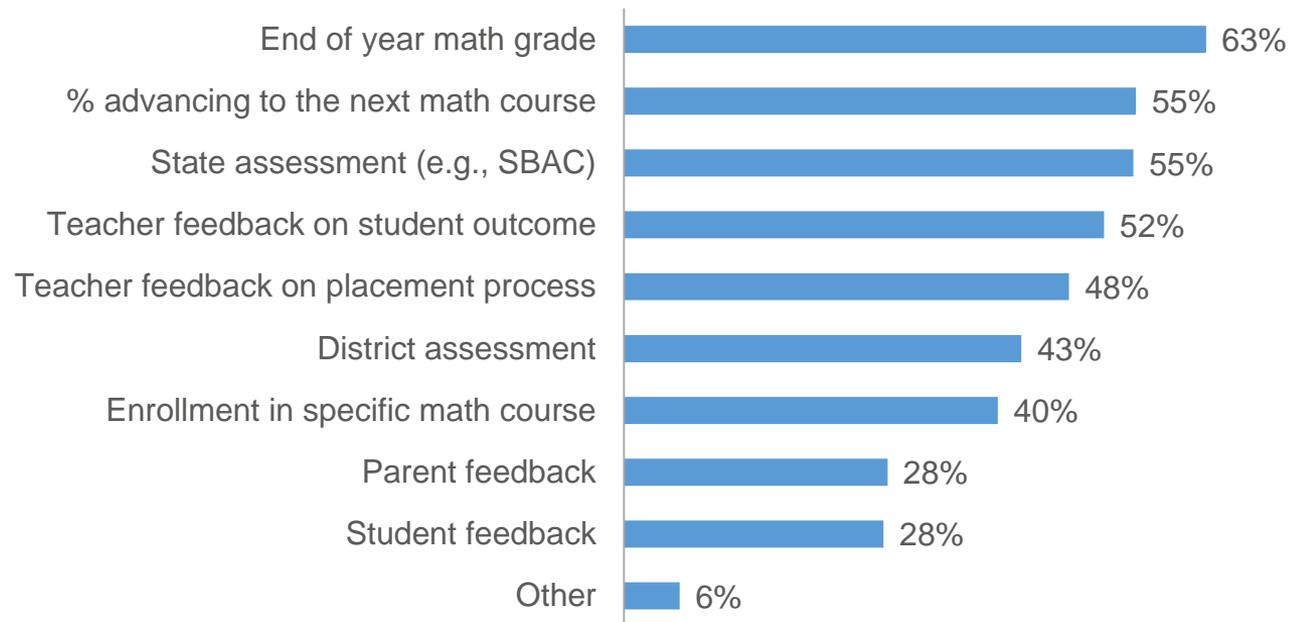
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Awareness and compliance vary across districts



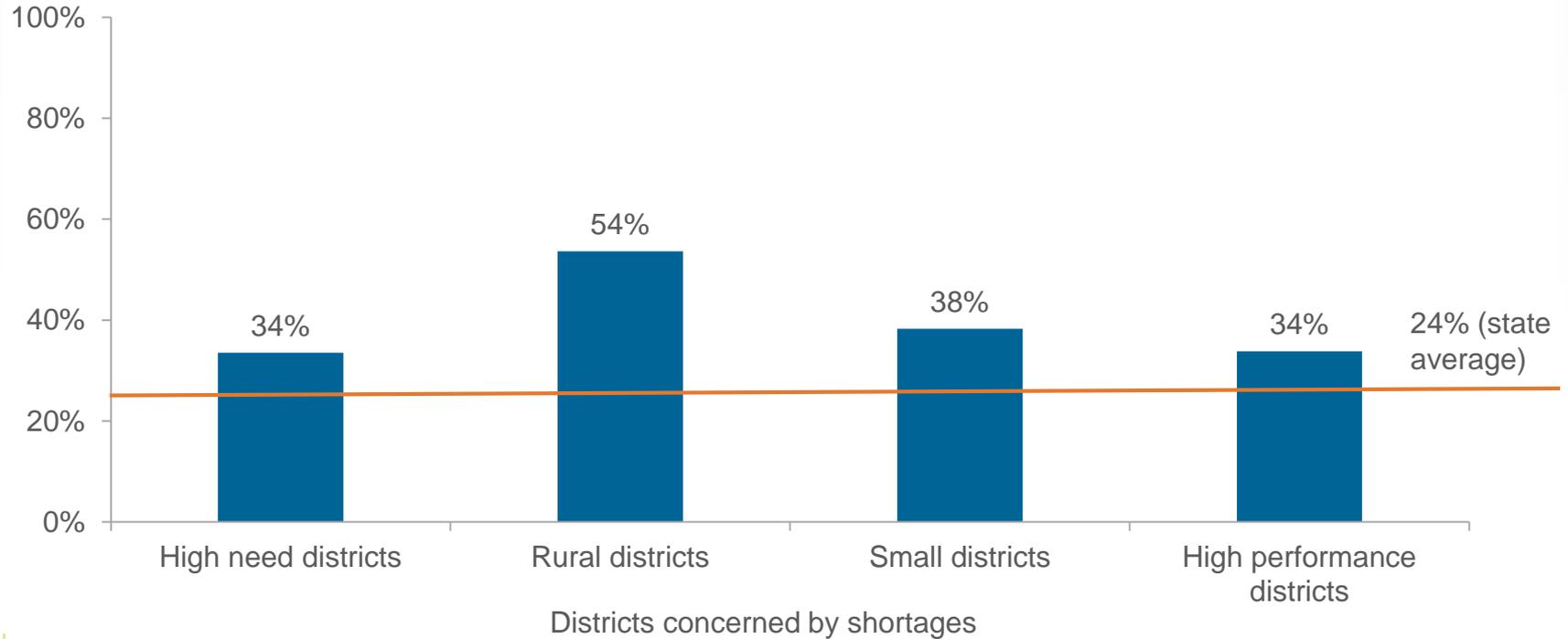
Grades and test scores are common evaluation metrics for district policies



Districts raised other concerns

- Unrealistic parental expectations
- Lack of evidence-based readiness measures
- Poor alignment and communication within and across schools
- Equity
- Teacher staffing

Rural districts most concerned by staffing shortages



Overview

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Policy recommendations

- Clarify the use of teacher recommendations
- Identify valid, objective, and reliable readiness measures
- Pinpoint measures that demonstrate district success
- Use student data to assess and revise placement guidelines
- Address capacity concerns

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Notes on the use of these slides

These slides were created to accompany a presentation. They do not include full documentation of sources, data samples, methods, and interpretations. To avoid misinterpretations, please contact:

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Thank you for your interest in this work.