

Retention for Students**

The general expectation for student progress within the K-12 program is promotion to the next grade level with their same-age peers. The decision to retain a student has long-term effects that go beyond academic impact.

Research overwhelmingly supports the position that retaining students does not have an academic or social-emotional benefit. Student retention in the early/elementary grades can result in increased social adjustment challenges and frustrations with no related increase in academic achievement or growth in skills for the retained student at the middle and high school level. Although retention has sometimes been seen as a deterrent strategy to motivate a student to achieve, studies indicate early retention is “one of the most powerful predictors” for dropping out of school.

When a student demonstrates achievement and performance at levels that consistently do not meet grade-level expectations, there are a variety of intervention responses to support increasing the student’s exposure to content and practice of skills to close the achievement gap between grade-level expectations and performance.

For these reasons, any discussion of student retention will be conducted after documented grade-level achievement intervention strategies with same-age peers. Deliberation and decisions concerning satisfactory student progress and retention will occur in partnership with appropriate school personnel, the student and the parent/guardian.

Retention Review Process

Decisions to retain a student are made on a case-by-case basis. Concerns and/or needs regarding an individual student’s performance may be initiated as appropriate by staff, by the student and/or by the student’s parent/guardian. The retention review process will consider all dimensions of student development. The parent/guardian will first discuss concerns with the classroom teacher, who will then discuss the concerns with the principal. A teacher shall not initiate discussion of potential retention with a parent/legal guardian until authorized to do so by the principal.

1. Process for considering retention of a student:
 - a. The teacher considering retention of a student must complete a Student Information Sheet for Retention and meet with the principal by February 1 of the school year.
 - b. If there is agreement that further review is appropriate, the teacher will inform the parents of the concerns.
 - c. The teacher will complete the Light’s Retention Scale as an aid in deciding whether or not a student should be retained. The results of this scale shall be used as a data source for further action.

- d. The principal and teacher will discuss the results of the retention scale review.
- e. If the process continues and retention is a consideration, the teacher will refer the student to the Student Assistance Team (SAT), using the SAT referral process.

2. The process for consideration of the retention of a student shall include a review of the following:

a. Academic Achievement

Student academic progress will be evaluated with respect to the following measures:

- (1) Teacher observations;
- (2) Established and reliable measures of academic performance;
- (3) Scores from state assessments;
- (4) Diagnostic testing;
- (5) Informal assessments or inventories;
- (6) Other measures considered reliable by the site team (may include the principal, school psychologist, nurse, learning specialists, counselor, classroom teacher(s), etc.).

b. Personal Growth and Maturity

In addition to academic achievement measures and results from the Light's Retention Scale, decisions regarding retention will be based on social, psychological, behavioral, emotional, language and physical development. Teacher observation, professional judgment and informal or formal assessment instruments may be used to gauge development.

c. Attendance and Productivity:

Students need to attend school regularly and produce according to grade-level expectations and assignments in order to be successful. A student's attendance record and in-school productivity (e.g., on-task behaviors, quality work submitted on time, etc.) will be considered in any decision regarding retention.

3. Team Recommendation and Timetable for Decision

a. Review pertinent information: Working as a school team, appropriate staff members, the student and the parent/guardian will review all pertinent information to determine the student's needs and the most appropriate structure or placement to support the learning. In the event retention would involve personnel from a different school, appropriate staff members will be included in all discussions and deliberations.

b. Timetable for retention recommendation: By May 15, a conference will be conducted so members of the school team can meet directly with the student and the parent/guardian. The purpose of the conference is as follows:

- (1) To review all data to define key concerns;
- (2) To determine the process and timetable for making a final recommendation and a decision whether or not to retain the student.

- c. Recommendation and final decision: Working with the recommendation of the school team, the final decision to retain a student is made by the principal or designee. Parents will receive written notification of the decision and appropriate documentation will be included in the student's permanent file. If retention moves a student to another school or prevents the student from moving to another school, the principals of each site must be in agreement for student placement to occur.

If the parent disputes the recommendation, he/she may appeal to the superintendent or designee.