

**SERIES 300
INSTRUCTION**

Administrative Rule 345.4

GRADE ADVANCEMENT GUIDELINES –THRU GRADE 8

The following procedures apply to end-of-year, grade-to-grade promotion and retention decisions that are made at any point prior to a student's attendance in any high school program, excluding grade acceleration decisions.

A. Pre-retention Screening and Pre-Decision Meeting

1. A screening process, which shall also permit direct teacher referrals, shall be applied to initially identify students in grades 1-8 who are at risk of possible retention.
 - a) The screening process, at a minimum, will take into account the student's proficiency in the areas of reading comprehension/language arts and mathematics
 - b) The screening process shall generally be completed prior to the first parent-teacher conferences that occur after January 1st of each school year.
2. Following the completion of the screening process and prior to making any final decision to retain a student who is determined to be at risk of retention, the District shall:
 - a) Inform the student's parent/guardian that the District has identified the student as being at risk of retention. Reasonable efforts shall be made to provide this information to the parent/guardian prior to March 1st of the school year in which the decision will be made.
 - b) Use a team-based approach to review and/or define goals and interventions for the student that will be pursued during the remainder of the school year (which may include summer school if the student will be attending summer school); and
 - c) Hold a meeting involving District staff and, if reasonably available, the student's parent(s)/guardian(s), at which the following shall be discussed:
 - The student and his/her academic progress to date;
 - Interventions that have been implemented to date;
 - An intervention strategy that could be implemented in the following school year as a possible alternative to retention, as well as an intervention strategy that could be implemented if the student is retained;

- The criteria that apply to the promotion/retention decision, including, if applicable, the District's mandatory criteria for promotion from kindergarten, 4th grade, or 8th grade; and
- Other factors that tend to support either retention or promotion for the student in question (e.g. research-based findings, the relative viability of possible alternatives to retention, etc.)

B. Promotion and Retention Decisions and Criteria

1. A final decision regarding promotion or retention need not be made until after the end of the normal school term, or, if the student is participating in summer school in an effort to become eligible for promotion, until after the completion of the student's summer school program.
2. When a student has been enrolled in District schools for less than the entire school term prior to an applicable promotion decision for the next school term, the administration shall use its discretion to identify and apply relevant academic criteria that are reasonably available for the student in question and use decision-making procedures and timelines for promotion and retention decisions that are practical in light of the student's actual date of enrollment
3. Kindergarten promotion:
 - a) The District shall not retain a 4-year-old kindergarten student who will be 5 years old on or before September 1st of the next school year.
 - b) The District shall not involuntarily retain (i.e. retain without the voluntary support of the student's parent/guardian) any 5-year-old kindergarten student who has satisfied the statutory kindergarten completion requirement, or any exception made thereto under state law or District policy.
4. In the 4th and 8th grades, a student is not eligible for promotion and shall be retained if the District determines that ALL of the following apply (to the extent applicable to an individual student);
 - a) There is clear evidence that the student's current level of academic progress in the areas of both math and reading/language arts is in excess of a full grade level behind his/her current grade-level placement; or, in the alternative, there is clear evidence that the student is in excess of two full grade levels behind his/her current placement in either math and reading/language arts.
 - b) Provided that the student had a realistic opportunity to demonstrate such progress, the student has not made adequate progress on individualized academic goals that were established for the student after the student was first identified as being at risk of retention.
 - c) The building principal or his/her administrative-level designee, using his/her informed professional judgment and upon consultation with the instructional staff who participated on the retention evaluation team, has concluded that:
 - There are no exceptional academic circumstances present in the individual situation which lead the administrator to conclude that the

student, if promoted, is likely to have a realistic opportunity to participate in the curriculum of the next grade in a meaningful manner and make more than negligible progress in reducing the gap(s) that exist between the student's present-level of academic achievement and the applicable grade-level standards; and

- For a student who is currently in the 8th grade, it is unlikely that the District would be able to provide the student with a realistic opportunity to earn credit toward high school graduation in the core academic areas of English/language arts, math, science, and social studies while the student is in the 9th grade.

5. A student which is in 1st grade through 3rd grade or in 5th grade through 7th grade may be involuntarily retained without the support of the student's parent/guardian if:
 - a) The student does not meet any of the academic criteria listed above for 4th and 8th grade promotion (as adjusted to the appropriate grade level); and
 - b) No other exceptional circumstances are present which cause the building principal or his/her administrative-level designee to conclude, upon consultation with the instructional staff who participated on the retention evaluation team, that the student's overall academic and other developmental interests would be better served by promotion than by retention.

C. Retention with the Voluntary Support of the Student's Parent(s)/Guardian(s).

1. In any situation in which there may be mutual District and family agreement to retain a student in grade 1 through 8, the [responsible party], in consultation with classroom teachers and other relevant staff, must conclude on behalf of the District that the weight of the relevant and available information suggests that the student's overall welfare is likely to be at least as equally well-served by retention as compared to promotion. With respect to any staff recommendation to voluntarily retain a 5-year-old kindergarten student, the administrator acting on behalf of the District must conclude that exceptional circumstances exist which overcome a very strong presumption in favor of promotion from kindergarten with a student's same-age cohort such that the administrator concludes that retention is a better option for the student than promotion.
2. For students in the 1st grade through 8th grade, the District Administrator must personally approve any staff recommendation to consider retaining a student (with family support for the decision) who the District has not otherwise identified as being at risk of retention.
3. The District's independent support for any retention decision that is also supported by the student's parent(s)/guardian(s) shall be based primarily on academic factors, although non-academic factors may also be considered. The administrator acting on behalf of the District shall not simply defer to a parent's/guardian's stated preference.
4. Even where the administrator acting on behalf of the District agrees that the District would be willing to support the student's retention, the administrator shall verify that

the student's parents/guardians have been presented with information about (a) the available alternatives to retention (e.g., promotion with monitoring and interventions); and (b) the possible disadvantages of retention.

D. Parent Notification and Appeals of Promotion/Retention Decisions

1. If the District decides to involuntarily retain a student, a District staff member will promptly notify the student's parent/guardian of the decision.
2. If a parent/guardian believes that the District has not followed its policies or procedures related to promotion and retention decisions, or that the District has made an incorrect decision in regard to the promotion or retention of a student, the student's parent/guardian may appeal the decision to the District Administrator. Such appeals should be submitted in writing to the Office of the District Administrator as soon as reasonably possible after the parent/guardian is informed of the District's decision, but no more than 30 days prior to the beginning of the school term to which the decision applies.

Legal References: Sections 118.33 (6)(a) Wisconsin Statutes

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