

Loudoun County Public Schools

Promotion and Retention Guidelines For Elementary Students

September, 2008

The attached document provides elementary parents, teachers, and school administrators with guidance when making student placement decisions. When considering factors for promoting a student, the readers of this document are reminded that a lack of progress on one or more factors should not automatically result in a decision to retain a child.

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These guidelines are presented to help the local school staff assess students' readiness for the next grade. Although not intended to be rigid grade level competency requirements, the guidelines can provide a continuum for discussing each student's progress with grade level skills and concepts.

Several Cautions:

- (1) Students can be successful at the next grade level without all factors being present or without being highly proficient in each skill listed.
- (2) Special consideration should be given to students with disabilities and ESL students.
- (3) Students who demonstrate difficulty in achieving expected milestones during the first semester of the school year shall receive remedial instruction commencing no later than the beginning of the second semester.

Promotion Guidelines: Kindergarten

The student considered for promotion to first grade demonstrates:

Literacy development -

Knowledge of most letter names and many of their corresponding sounds

Ability to use their knowledge of sounds and letters to write some words phonetically and can read some words on their own

An understanding of phonemic awareness (ability to hear and say the separate sounds in words)

An understanding of the concepts of print (e.g., how to hold a book, how print is read from left to right and top to bottom of a page)

Consistency with a majority of the ENGLISH Standards of Learning for this grade level

Math -

Ability to count, recognize, and write numbers (as noted on *Kindergarten Report to Parents*)

Demonstrates understanding of number concepts using concrete objects

Consistency with a majority of the MATHEMATICS Standards of Learning for this grade level

Social, emotional, and physical maturity commensurate with age and grade, including –

Ability to communicate with others

Ability to follow one or two step directions

Promotion Guidelines: FIRST AND SECOND GRADE

The student considered for promotion in grades one and two demonstrates:

Reading -

on grade level as defined by the Loudoun County Public Schools READING GUIDE and as evidenced through satisfactory completion of a majority of the reading objectives contained in the ENGLISH Standards of Learning for that grade level. In addition, the student should have received a satisfactory score on at least one of the following indicators:

- End of level reading tests;
- Informal reading inventory administered by the classroom teacher, Title I teacher, or reading resource coordinator; or,
- Other reading assessments.

Math -

Performance on or above grade level in mathematics. “On or above grade level” is determined through satisfactory completion of most mathematics Standards of Learning objectives for that grade level and mastery of most grade level skills contained in the math series.

English -

Performance on or above grade level for most of the oral and written communication objectives contained in the English Standards of Learning and can

- Follow oral directions appropriate for the age of the child; and,
- Copy and compose sentences appropriate to grade level standards.

Social, emotional, and/or physical maturity commensurate with age/grade, including:

- Participates in group activities, displaying behavior appropriate for the age and grade;
- Works independently when given an appropriate task;
- Handles challenges and frustrations appropriately; and,
- Demonstrates age/grade appropriate eye-hand coordination and motor control.

Promotion Guidelines: THIRD through FIFTH GRADES

The student considered for promotion in grades three through five demonstrates:

Reading -

on or above grade level as defined by the Loudoun County Public School **READING GUIDE** and as evidenced through satisfactory completion of the majority of the reading objectives for the ENGLISH Standards of Learning.

Other indicators may include satisfactory scores on:

- Stanford9 language arts tests;
- End of Level reading scores;
- Informal reading inventories administered by the reading resource coordinator, Title I teacher, or classroom teacher; or,
- Other appropriate reading assessments.

Math –

Performance on or above grade level as determined through satisfactory completion of the majority of mathematics Standards of Learning and skills and concepts contained in the mathematics text for that grade level.

English –

Performance on or above grade level for the oral and written communication objectives for the English Standards of Learning and can

- Compose satisfactory expository writing scored with an appropriate grade-level rubric; and,
- Follow oral directions satisfactorily.

Social Sciences –

Comprehends concepts and information contained in the social sciences Standards of Learning for that grade level.

Social, emotional, and/or physical maturity commensurate with age/grade including:

- Work independently when given an appropriate task;
- Participate in group activities, displaying age/grade appropriate behavior;
- Handle challenges and frustrations appropriately; and,
- Demonstrate age/grade appropriate eye-hand coordination and motor control.

Students Considered for Retention

When a student is considered for retention, the classroom teacher, in consultation with appropriate school personnel, should determine specific remediation strategies or interventions to increase that student's academic performance. These activities and/or interventions should be in place by the beginning of the second semester of that school year. Remediation strategies for English and Mathematics should be noted on the student's *K-3 SOL Achievement Cards*.

Remediation strategies used at the elementary level may include, but are not limited to:

Modified/differentiated/accelerated instructional programs,
Tutorial sessions provided by the reading resource coordinator or Title I personnel,
Mentor program participation,
Alternative learning models,
Special tutoring or participation in an after-school "homework club,"
Smaller classes,
Extended day activities,
Saturday school,
Summer school, or
"Early Back" program.

Retention should be the last resort.

During the last decade, many educational groups have reassessed the wisdom of retention practices and have called for practical alternatives. At the school level, principals and their staffs have also considered the effects of retention, and have found that retention carries risks for both short-term and long-term student achievement. Further, retention can negatively impact a student's aspirations for success. Gains in student achievement through retaining a child appear to be non-existent in many cases and short-lived in some instances.

Retaining a student for all subjects for an entire year is a decision that impacts a student for the rest of his/her academic career. Often, a child merely needs additional assistance through specific remediation or intervention strategies to attain success. Retention decisions should never be made based on a single indicator, such as the child's reading level or a score that the child received on the Standards of Learning Test.

Consequently, an ad hoc Child Study Team or Student Assistance Committee will be formed at the school to review all data related to the teacher's recommendation for retaining a student. This committee can be comprised of the following members and will consider various factors listed below:

Principal; Classroom Teacher(s); Parent(s) and/or Guardian(s); and, Guidance Counselor and may include the Special Education Teacher; Social Worker; and, Psychologist.

The committee will review these factors when considering the placement of a child:

- Academic strengths and weaknesses from a variety of assessments
- Social maturity
- Emotional maturity
- Physical size and development
- Chronological Age
- Primary language
- Learning styles and modalities
- Gender
- Attendance
- Transiency
- Motivation to learn
- Parent support

Should a decision be made to retain the student, one option for this student's placement for the next school year is with his/her current classroom teacher. If this option is not utilized, the current classroom teacher will meet with the teacher who will next receive the child, specifying areas of the curriculum with which the child displays proficiency. The current classroom teacher will list specific skills or concepts for which the child displays weaknesses.

Both teachers, in consultation with the school's administration, will develop a written plan to address the student's academic strengths and weaknesses during the next school year. This plan should ensure that the student continues to be engaged with challenging work for areas displaying strength and is receiving specific, on-going assistance. Copies of the Plan will be given to the child's parent(s) or guardian(s).

Schools are encouraged to develop alternative approaches for instructional delivery methods rather than simply retaining the child. As an example, a retained first grader's individual plan could specify that the student receives mathematics and science instruction in the second grade because he/she exhibits proficiency in those areas.

The progress of the retained student should be carefully monitored during each nine weeks period, making adaptations to the Plan based on the student's academic improvement. A result could include a full advancement to the next grade during the year or advancing to the next grade for one or more subject areas.