

MEDFORD AREA PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT

DATE ADOPTED: February 16, 1989
DATE REVISED: December 21, 2000
DATE REVISED: February 15, 2001
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DATE REVISED: May 18, 2006
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DATE REVISED: April 28, 2025

FILE SECTOR: INSTRUCTION
**POLICY TITLE: DISTRICT PROMOTION/
RETENTION CRITERIA K-12**

The initial responsibility for deciding retention or advancement of a student shall rest with the student's primary teachers, the building administrator and the parent(s)/guardian(s) of the student. In making this decision, these persons shall consider the opinion of other trained personnel, the student's educational background, classroom performance, age, emotional and social well-being.

Before a decision to retain a student is made, the building administrator and classroom teacher(s) shall ensure that timely communication regarding the student's educational or related difficulties has taken place between the district and the parent(s)/guardian(s).

If the parent(s)/guardian(s) of a student requests retention in grades K-8, the building administrator will follow essentially the same steps as if the classroom teacher generated the request.

These guidelines are designed to encourage early identification and interventions for those students who have academic, behavioral, and/or emotional difficulties. Written confirmation will be sent to the parent(s)/guardian(s) and placed in the students cumulative file regarding the final decision at the end of the school year.

The district administrator, or his/her designee, shall be responsible for the general supervision and management of the promotion of students under this policy. The district administrator or his/her designee, shall determine whether a student has satisfied the criteria in these guidelines. Building level retention decisions may be appealed to the district administrator. In the event that there is a disagreement regarding promotion/retention that cannot be resolved, the district administrator or his/her designee will make the determination. If the parties involved disagree with the district administrator's decision they may appeal it to the board of education for a final determination.

CROSS REFERENCE: IGBH, IGBA, IKA, IKF & [2023 Wisconsin Act 20](#)
LEGAL REFERENCE: Wisconsin Statute 118.30

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STUDENT PROMOTION/RETENTION GUIDELINES K-8

PROMOTION/RETENTION

- Students who have met the promotion criteria established by the district shall be promoted to the next grade unless a parent/guardian presents prevailing information that this promotion will be detrimental to the student's educational well-being.
- A student who has not exited their personal reading plan by the end of the student's 3rd grade year, the district/school will engage in a process to determine whether to promote that student to the 4th grade. This process will carefully consider all relevant factors that contributed to the student not completing their personal reading plan and alternatives to retention that can help support the student to achieve reading proficiency.
- A student in grade 8 must not fail three or more core courses or two core courses and two non-core courses. If this occurs in Grade 8, there is access to alternative criteria to secure promotion to Grade 9.
- Retention consideration must include the understanding that in those rare cases when retention is effective (short term and long term) they usually occurred in the kindergarten and early primary grades. Retention in intermediate grades may be considered under certain instances.
- A student may not repeat a grade more than once (unless there are exceptional circumstances).
- Success in summer education experiences, an intensive summer reading program or tutoring do not necessarily guarantee promotion but should be considered as alternative criteria.

RETENTION PROCEDURES

- Parent-teacher conferences should be held when necessary throughout the year to explore all avenues of preventive action and remedial assistance.
- If reading is the primary area of concern, follow the process for making a 3rd-grade reading promotion determination below.
- If a child is being considered for retention, teachers/school counselors must discuss retention possibilities with the building administrator by March 1 and complete a Referral for Retention Form (copy attached).
- Students in 3rd grade should be considered for retention if the student has not satisfied the grade 3 district promotion criteria or has failed to meet the exit criteria for their personal reading plan.
- Students in 8th grade should be considered for retention if the student has not satisfied the district promotion criteria.
- Parent(s)/guardian(s) of students in grades K-8 should be notified by the teachers/school counselors of retention possibilities by the end of the third quarter. A conference should be scheduled at that time in which educational strategies for assisting the student and planned interventions should be reviewed with the parent(s)/guardian(s).

- At this conference, progress and concerns relating to the past nine weeks should be discussed. In addition, specific goals for the remaining nine weeks should be identified. By April 15, a staffing team will be formed to gather data and investigate retention. Normally this team will include a classroom teacher, school counselor, school psychologist and building administrator.
- The staffing team will develop a recommendation. Adjustments may be made by the building administrator based on written justification. The justification will include at least the teachers' and parent(s)/guardian(s) recommendations.
- The building administrator will provide written confirmation of the staffing team recommendation to the parent(s) /guardian(s) and to the students cumulative file prior to June 15th.
- Parent(s)/guardian(s) will be asked to sign the appropriate section of the Retention Conference Form (attached). If the parent(s)/guardian(s) do not agree with the retention, they will be asked to specify their reasons. These comments will become part of the student's cumulative folder.
- Each retention should be noted in the student's cumulative file. A summary of the staffing team's recommendation shall be placed in the student's cumulative progress record.
- During the next school year, previous and present teachers, along with other resource personnel involved, will meet to ensure appropriate placement and follow-up with the retained student.
- Building level retention decisions may be appealed to the district administrator. In the event that there is a disagreement regarding promotion/retention that cannot be resolved, the district administrator or his/her designee will make the determination. If the parties involved disagree with the district administrator's decision they may appeal it to the board of education for a final determination.

RETENTION CONSIDERATIONS

In making a retention decision, the following factors shall be considered. It is important that all points be weighed and that retention not be tied to a single factor. Objective evaluation data should be utilized to determine the potential degree of success for retainees.

- Academic Achievement: A student's progress in various curriculum areas (reading, arithmetic, language, etc.) should be considered in relation to district expectations. The report card grades should be a signal to the parent(s)/guardian(s) of possible retention.
- Academic Ability: Consideration should be given to each student's ability to achieve.
- Attendance: Consideration should be given to each student's attendance pattern during the previous and present school years. Excessive absences due to serious illness or injury without appropriate tutorial assistance may be a contributing cause for retention.
- Self-Image: A student's perception of self should be considered. Such factors as age, physical size, and a sibling in the same grade should be weighed.
- Attitude: The student's overall feelings about school and the student's feelings about repeating the grade should be carefully considered. In addition, consideration should be given to parent(s)/guardian(s) receptivity toward retention.
- Experiential Background: A student coming from a limited background and having little knowledge of common objects, verbal expression, and/or a broad spectrum of information gathered through his/her own experience, may benefit by repeating a grade and thus obtaining additional time to absorb instructional material. If a student is unable to communicate in English and is not acquiring new language skills, retention may not solve the student's educational problems.
- Social/Emotional Maturity: Consideration should be given to each student's ability to emotionally cope with retention and promotion. If a student is socially immature they may benefit from additional growth time.
- Assessment Scores: State, local and other.
- Personal Reading Plan: Each student promoted from 3rd grade to 4th grade who had a personal reading plan during the 3rd grade and did not complete that personal reading plan will be considered for retention

- Definition: Personal Reading Plan means a reading plan provided for five (5) year-old-kindergarten to third grade students that are identified as at risk based on a universal screening assessment or diagnostic assessment, in accordance with 118.016(5), Wis. Stats.
- Definition: Completed means a student who has “completed” their personal reading plan if the student's parent(s) and the District agree that the student has met the goals outlined in the personal reading plan and the student scores at grade-level in reading on a summative assessment.

Process for Making a 3rd Grade Reading Promotion (Effective September 1, 2026)

- For any student who has not exited their personal reading plan by the end of the student's 3rd grade year, the district/school will engage in a process to determine whether to promote that student to the 4th grade. This process will carefully consider all relevant factors that contributed to the student not completing their personal reading plan and alternatives to retention that can help support the student to achieve reading proficiency. This process is described in the [RTI Handbook](#).
 - A team of individuals will engage in the determination process, which shall include but is not limited to the student's parent(s) as defined by Wis. Stat. §.115.76(12) and school/district representatives who have knowledge of the reading instruction and interventions provided to the student, as well as how the student responded to both instruction and interventions. School representatives may include, but are not limited to: the teacher of record, the district/school reading specialist, a staff member who has provided additional reading support and conducted progress monitoring, and a student services professional with knowledge of the social and emotional implications of grade retention;
 - Representatives from the school/district will consider all available data demonstrating the student's response to reading instruction and intervention, and data demonstrating the student's progress towards meeting personal reading plan goals. This data may include, but is not limited to, the most recent and previous universal reading screener data, diagnostic reading assessment data, progress monitoring data, classroom data, and observations and data related to the student's social, emotional, and behavioral functioning;
 - Representatives from the school/district will determine whether the student is eligible for a good cause exception and communicate that to the parent or guardian;
 - **Good Cause Exemptions** - Any student who meets one or more of the following good exceptions may be exempt from the promotion policy, the intensive summer reading program, and/or the intensive reading intervention requirements.
 - The student is identified as a “Limited-English proficient pupil” as that term is defined under Wis. Stat. §115.955(7);
 - The student has an individualized education plan (IEP) that indicates that neither taking the universal reading screener nor the state summative assessment in reading is appropriate for the pupil;
 - The student scores as proficient in reading on the alternative statewide standardized summative assessment (i.e. Dynamic Learning Maps);
 - The student has an IEP or a plan to provide accommodations or services under section 504 of the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 that indicates that the student has received intensive intervention in reading for more than 2 years if the student continues to demonstrate a deficiency in reading and was previously retained in 5K, grades 1, 2, or 3; or
 - The student has received intensive intervention in reading for 2 or more school years, continues to demonstrate a deficiency in reading, and was previously retained in 5K, grades 1, 2, or 3 for a total of 2 years.

- If promoted to 4th grade and if a “good cause” exception applies to the student under Wis. Stat. §118.33(5m)(b), then the school district/school will provide adequate and necessary supports, including but not necessarily limited to the intensive instructional services, supports, progress monitoring, and parent notification referenced under Wis. Stat. §118.33(5m)(a).
- If the student has an individualized education program (IEP) in an area of reading or is an English learner with a language acquisition plan, the school/district representatives will review the student’s progress towards those goals and communicate that to the parent or guardian;
- The district/school will not deny any English learner advancement to 4th grade solely based on level of language proficiency (Wis. Admin. Code §13.09(1)(b));
- Representatives from the school/district will communicate long-term risks of retention to the student’s parent or guardian. Such risks may include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - Students who are retained are more likely to have adverse outcomes, including dropping out of school and obtaining lower paying jobs in the future (Cockx, B., Picchio, M., & Baert, S. 2018; Hughes, J.N., West, S.G., Kim, H., & Bauer, S.S. 2018);
 - Students who are retained are more likely to experience emotional distress (Buckmaster et. al. 2024; Carlton & Winsler 1999; Demanet & Van Houtte 2016; Goos et al. 2013b; Carlton, M. P., & Winsler, A. 1999; Jimerson & Ferguson 2007; Lavrijsen & Nicaise 2017; Martin 2009; Martin 2011);
 - Students who are retained are more likely to have lower socioeconomic status and more likely to be eligible for government assistance (Goos, M., Pipa, J., & Peixoto, F. 2021);
 - Students who are retained are at higher risk for future criminal behavior (Eren, O., Lovenheim, M., & Mocan, H. 2022); and
 - Students who are retained do not achieve increased academic achievement and make less progress compared to other students (Silbergliitt, B., Appleton, J., & Burns, M., & Jimerson, S. 2006);
- Representatives from the school/district will consider alternatives to retention available to the student in the district/school and communicate these alternatives to the student’s parent or guardian;
- The district/school will not deny any student advancement to 4th grade based solely on the student’s performance in reading on the 3rd grade state summative assessment or the universal reading screener;
- The team may conclude that promotion (with applicable services/supports) is in the best interest of a student even if the team also concludes, based on clear documentation, that the student was unable to complete their personal reading plan primarily due to the student’s lack of reading proficiency;

Based on the holistic evaluation described above, the entire team will make one of the following choices.

1. Promotion to 4th grade (with applicable services/supports) is more appropriate than retention in 3rd grade and the student is promoted.
2. The student’s noncompletion of the student’s personal reading plan was not primarily due to the student’s lack of reading proficiency and the student is promoted.
3. The parents or guardians and school/district representatives agree that retention (with applicable services/supports) is more appropriate than promotion to 4th grade and

the student's parent or guardian gives written consent to retention.

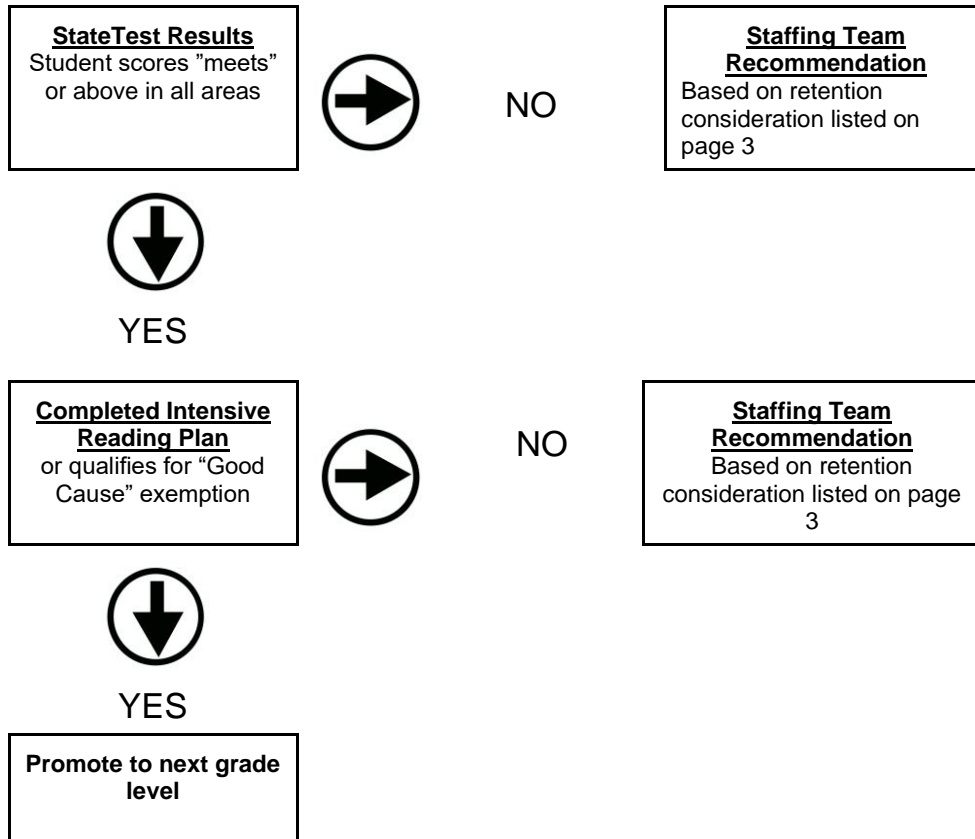
4. The school/district representatives recommend retention but the student's parent or guardian does not consent to retention. Regardless of any other facts, circumstances, or analysis, the student is promoted to 4th grade.

- After reviewing all data and considerations named above, representatives from the school/district will make a recommendation of promotion or retention to the student's parent or guardian;
 - Each student promoted from 3rd grade to 4th grade who had a personal reading will be provided the following:
 - Intensive instructional services, progress monitoring, and supports to remediate the identified areas of deficiency;
 - Notification to the student's parent or guardian, in writing, that the student did not complete the personal reading plan that includes a description of the intensive instructional services and supports that will be provided to the student to remediate the identified areas of reading deficiency; and
 - An intensive summer reading program each summer until the student scores at grade-level in reading on a summative assessment.
 - Each student retained, will have the following identified and communicated to the student's parent or guardian:
 - Supports that will be provided to the student that will mitigate the harm that is likely to occur as a result of retention, including social stigmatization, loss of friendships, damaged self-esteem, and other mental health impacts; and
 - The additional academic services and support that will be provided to the student as they repeat 3rd grade to ensure they reach grade level proficiency by the time they finish 3rd grade the second time.

Any student who enrolls as a 3rd grade student late in the school term without any accompanying record of a personal reading plan (i.e., after the final annual administration of the universal screening assessment and, potentially, also after the Wisconsin's 3rd grade universal assessment) shall be promoted to 4th grade under the criteria that the student did not have a personal reading plan in effect at the end of 3rd grade.

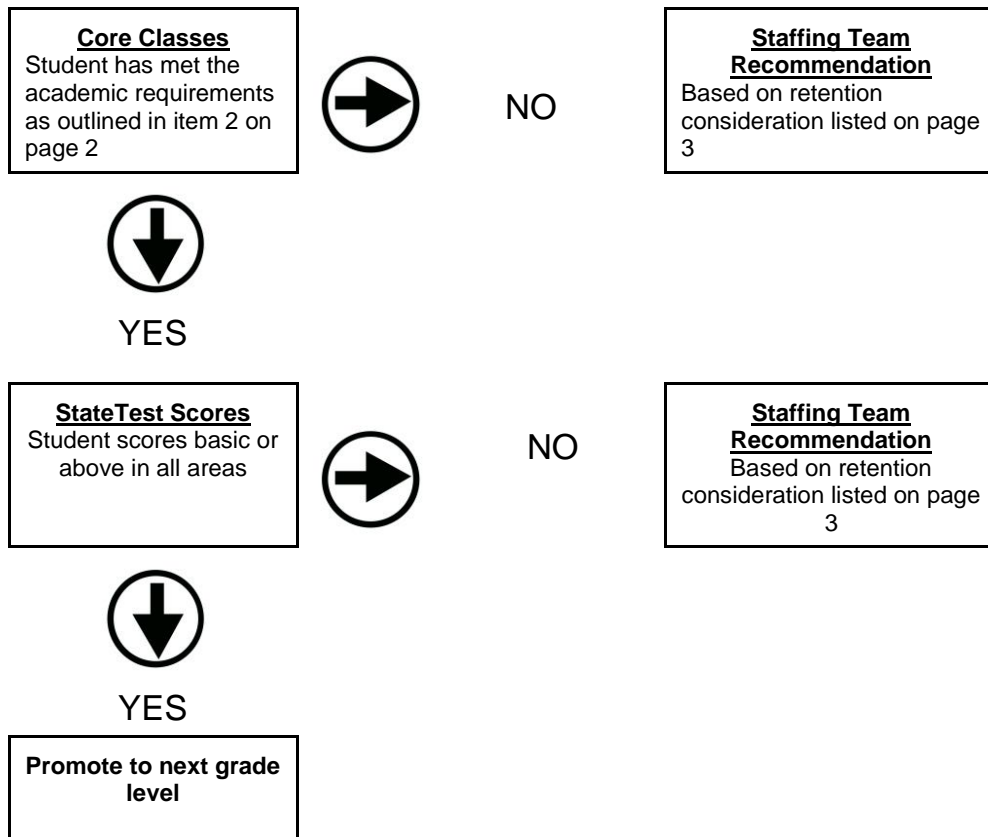
Grade Pre-K – 4

Flow Chart of Sequential Decision Process



Grade 5 - 8

Flow Chart of Sequential Decision Process



REFERRAL FOR RETENTION

Name of Student: _____ Grade: _____

Referring Teacher/School Counselor: _____ Date of Referral: _____

1. Recommendation

Please provide a written statement as to why this student should be retained in the present grade using the retention guidelines. Include the following factors in your recommendation: (1) academic progress this year, (2) academic ability, (3) description of actions taken so far this year to meet the student's needs, (4) description of student's social skills, (5) amount of parent(s)/guardian(s) contact to date.

• Assessment and Staffing

(Check all that apply)

- | | | | |
|---|-----|----|------------|
| • Passed Universal Reading Assessment | YES | NO | |
| • Completed Personal Reading Plan | YES | NO | |
| • Enrolled in Intensive Summer Reading Course | YES | NO | |
| • Pre Referral for Special education | YES | NO | Date _____ |
| • Special Education Evaluation | YES | NO | Date _____ |
| • Non-Special Education Evaluation | YES | NO | Date _____ |
| • IEP/504 Team Recommendation Results | YES | NO | Date _____ |

-
- | | | | |
|---|-----|----|------------|
| • Parent(s)/guardian(s) notification of this referral | YES | NO | Date _____ |
|---|-----|----|------------|

• Plan of Action - (Attached)

Signature: _____

Date: _____

Medford Area Public Schools

Student Name: _____ Grade: _____

Referring Teacher: _____

School Counselor: _____

Date of Referral: _____

School: _____

After careful consideration of several factors, it is our opinion that it would be in the best educational interest to retain _____ in grade _____. Although it is believed that this action will be beneficial, it should be understood that they may continue to require special assistance at school and at home to assure a successful educational experience.

Agree

As the parent(s)/guardian(s), I/we agree with this recommendation. I/we understand the reasons for this decision and agree it is in the best interest of my/our child.

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ Date: _____

Date: _____Disagree

I do not want my child to be retained. My reasons are: _____

Parent(s)/Guardian(s) Signature: _____ Date: __________
Date: _____

Teacher or School Counselor's Signature: _____ Date: _____

Principal Signature: _____ Date: _____

Medford Area Public School District

Staffing Team Promotion / Retention Worksheet

Student Name: _____ School: SES MAES MAMS

Teacher: _____ Grade: _____

Grade Promotion Staffing Team Participants: _____

Date of Data Review: _____

Step 1: District Universal Screener/ State Test Criterion

1. Check the content area in which the student achieved below a score of "Meets Expectations".

☐ Reading

☐ Mathematics

☐ Science

☐ Social Studies

☐ Language Arts (*Student may compensate for a language arts score below 'basic' with a writing score of 3 or above.)

2. ☐ The student did not participate in the state test due to a parental opt-out decision.

If any of the above boxes are checked, proceed to Step 2.

Step 2: Academic Performance Criterion

1. Determine if the student qualifies for "**Good Cause**" Exemptions - Any student who meets one or more of the following good exceptions may be exempt from the promotion policy as it pertains to failing to meet the intensive reading plan requirements:

- The student is identified as a "Limited-English proficient pupil" as that term is defined under Wis. Stat. §115.955(7);
- The student has an individualized education plan (IEP) that indicates that neither taking the universal reading screener nor the state summative assessment in reading is appropriate for the pupil;
- The student has an IEP or a plan to provide accommodations or services under section 504 of the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 that indicates that the student has received intensive intervention in reading for more than 2 years if the student continues to demonstrate a deficiency in reading and was previously retained in 5K, grades 1, 2, or 3; or
- The student has received intensive intervention in reading for 2 or more school years, continues to demonstrate a deficiency in reading, and was previously retained in 5K, grades 1, 2, or 3 for a total of 2 years.

- If the student is identified as “Limited-English proficient pupil”, the staffing team will involve the ELL coordinator in making the determination to promote or retain.
- If the student is identified with a disability and has a current IEP or 504 plan, the staffing team will refer to the IEP or 504 Team for retention / promotion determination.
- If the student has not been identified with a disability yet has received intensive intervention in reading for 2 or more years and was previously retained, proceed to promotion recommendation.

Proceed to Step 3.

Step 3: Staffing Team Recommendation Criterion

Academic Achievement: _____

Intelligence: _____

Attendance: _____

Self-Image: _____

Attitude: _____

Experiential Background: _____

Social / Emotional Maturity: _____

State scores and other academic achievement data: _____

Personal Reading Plan: _____

Step 4: Promotion / Retention Recommendation

- ☐ Student has met the requirements, according to Policy IKE, necessary for promotion to grade _____.
- ☐ Student has not met the requirements necessary for promotion and will be retained in grade _____ for the _____ school year.