

PROMOTION AND RETENTION OF STUDENTS THROUGH 8TH GRADE POLICY

This policy addresses 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 in the District (i.e., prior to the start of 9th grade or any program-specific equivalent to 9th grade). It does not address grade-level acceleration decisions or any decision to adjust the initial grade-level placement of a newly-enrolled student within the first school year that the student is attending a District school or program.

The following are the School Board's general expectations and parameters for end-of-year, grade-to-grade promotion and retention decisions:

1. An important goal of the District's academic programs, student services, and related student support mechanisms is that they are intended to work together to provide students with the knowledge, skills, and individualized interventions that they need to make progress in the curriculum such that retaining a student in the same grade from year-to-year should be an exceptional occurrence.
2. Before making the decision to retain a student, District staff shall utilize a team-based approach to identify and evaluate relevant information about (a) the student and his/her academic achievement to date; (b) interventions that have been implemented to date; and (c) possible alternatives to retention.
3. While the District retains ultimate discretion to make student promotion and retention decisions, school staff are expected to make reasonable efforts to involve the student's parent(s) or guardian(s) in the decision-making process in advance of making any final decision. To the extent appropriate for the age of the student, school staff may also work with the student's parent or guardian to help the student identify, articulate, and explore his/her own feelings about the possibility of retention.
4. The District's decision-making criteria and processes will differentiate between:
 - a. A District decision to involuntarily retain a student whose parent(s) or guardian(s) does not agree with the decision; and
 - b. A decision to retain a student where both the administration and the student's parent(s) or guardian(s) agree that the weight of the relevant and available information suggests that the student's overall welfare is likely to be better served by retention than by promotion.
5. 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.
6. The District shall not use retention as a punishment for misconduct, or as a substitute in lieu of services, programs, or accommodations which the student is entitled to receive or participate in under any applicable law.
7. In regard to any student who has been referred for a special education evaluation or who is receiving special education and/or related services under an individualized education program (IEP), nothing in this policy shall be interpreted to detract from the authority of the student's

IEP team or to interfere with the student's or parent's rights under relevant law, including but not limited to the right to file special education complaints or due process challenges.

8. If the student's parent or guardian disagrees with a District decision regarding promotion or retention, the parent or guardian may submit a request to the District Administrator asking that he/she reconsider the decision. Except as otherwise required by law, the decision of the District Administrator following such a request shall be final.

Kindergarten, 4th Grade and 8th Grade Promotion Criteria

As required by state law, the District has established the following specific criteria for promoting a student from 5-year-old kindergarten to the first grade, promoting a student from the 4th grade to the 5th grade, and promoting a student from the 8th grade to the 9th grade. A decision that a student is eligible for promotion under the minimum academic criteria specified below does not preclude the District and the student's parent(s) or guardian(s) from reaching a mutually-acceptable decision to voluntarily retain the student.

- **Kindergarten Promotion Criteria.** A student who has satisfied the 5-year-old kindergarten completion requirement while enrolled in the District shall not be involuntarily retained in 5-year-old kindergarten if, during 5-year-old kindergarten, the student has:
 - a. taken the state-mandated assessment of reading readiness and literacy fundamentals; and
 - b. completed any follow-up or alternate assessment of literacy fundamentals that the District has offered to the student.

If the parent or guardian of a student who is age-eligible for 1st grade seeks to enroll the student in 1st grade, but the student has not completed 5-year-old kindergarten or has not met the promotion criteria specified above, the District will determine the student's enrollment status under the separate criteria that exist for granting an exception to the kindergarten completion requirement.

- **4th Grade Promotion Criteria.** A 4th-grade student is eligible for promotion to the 5th grade if the District determines that there is evidence that the student's current mathematics skills and reading comprehension/language arts skills clearly meet or exceed the proficiency standards the District has established for a student who has successfully completed the 3rd grade (i.e., for a student completing 3rd grade who generally would not need remedial assistance in these areas).

In the alternative, if a 4th grade student does not meet the standard identified in the previous paragraph, the student shall not be promoted to the 5th grade unless he/she meets at least one of the four criteria listed below:

- a. The student has demonstrated his/her ability to independently read and substantially comprehend a multi-page text at least minimally proficient relative to third grade reading standards and making some progress relative to fourth grade standards; multiple measures of the student's progress in mathematics indicate that the student is at least minimally proficient relative to third grade math standards and making some progress relative to fourth grade standards and appropriate interventions have been identified that are intended to address gaps in the student's learning; OR
- b. Multiple assessments of the student's academic progress, including but not limited to the state-mandated assessments (if taken by the student), indicate that the student's present-level of academic achievement relative to applicable grade-level standards is within two grade levels of the student's current grade-level placement for both (1) reading

comprehension/language arts skills; and (2) mathematics, and both of the following are confirmed:

- (1) during a relevant measurement period that includes at least one-half of the student's 4th grade school term, the District concludes that the gap(s) between the student's present-level of academic achievement and the applicable grade-level standards for fourth grade did not increase; and
 - (2) an intervention plan has been established that is intended to monitor the student's learning and ensure that the student will have the opportunity to participate in the 5th grade curriculum in a meaningful manner and make progress in reducing the gap(s) that exist between the student's present-level of academic achievement and the applicable grade-level standards; OR
- c. The building principal or his/her designee determines that classroom teacher recommendations that objectively review the student's demonstrated learning and academic progress in the subject(s) in which the student was initially identified as being two or more grade-levels behind current placement do both of the following:
- (1) adequately refute the evidence that indicated that the student failed to satisfy the minimum academic progress standard identified in the second criteria (immediately above); and
 - (2) confirm that an intervention plan has been established that is intended to monitor the student's learning and ensure that the student will have the opportunity to participate in the 5th grade curriculum in a meaningful manner and make progress in reducing the gap(s) that exist between the student's present-level of academic achievement and the applicable grade-level standards; OR
- d. The building principal or his/her designee, upon consultation with the student's classroom teachers and any other relevant staff, determines that extraordinary academic circumstances are present which strongly suggest that (1) promotion to 5th grade would better serve the student's academic interests than retention in the 4th grade; and (2) the student, if promoted to 5th grade and provided with available interventions, will have a realistic opportunity to participate in the 5th grade curriculum in a meaningful manner and make progress in reducing the gap(s) that exist between the student's present-level of academic achievement and the applicable grade-level standards.
- **8th Grade Promotion Criteria.** A student who does not meet at least one of the following four criteria shall not be promoted from the 8th to the 9th grade:
 - a. Multiple assessments of the student's academic progress, including but not limited to the state-mandated assessments (if taken by the student), indicate that the student's present-level of academic achievement relative to applicable grade-level standards is approximately within one grade level of the student's current grade-level placement for both (1) reading comprehension/language arts skills; and (2) mathematics, and appropriate remedial interventions have been identified for the student if the District has determined that he/she has not met or exceeded the proficiency standards the District has established in these subject areas for a student who has successfully completed the 7th grade; OR
 - b. The student is not appreciably more than two grade levels behind applicable grade-level standards for either reading comprehension or mathematics, AND both of the following are confirmed:

- (1) during a relevant time period that includes at least one-half of the student's 8th grade school term, the District concludes that gaps between the student's present-level of academic achievement and the applicable grade-level standards have decreased more than a negligible amount; and
 - (2) an intervention plan has been established that is intended to monitor the student's learning and ensure that it is likely the student will have the opportunity to participate in the 9th grade curriculum in a meaningful manner, earn credit toward high school graduation while in 9th grade, and make progress in reducing the gap(s) that exist between the student's present-level of academic achievement and the applicable grade-level standards in reading/language arts and mathematics; OR
- c. The building principal or his/her designee determines that both of the following are true:
- (1) classroom teacher recommendations that objectively review the student's demonstrated learning and academic progress adequately refute the evidence that indicated that the student failed to satisfy the minimum academic achievement standard identified in either of the two previously-listed criteria; and
 - (2) an intervention plan has been established that is intended to monitor the student's learning and ensure that it is likely the student will have the opportunity to participate in the 9th grade curriculum in a meaningful manner, earn credit toward high school graduation while in 9th grade, and make progress in reducing the gap(s) that exist between the student's present-level of academic achievement and the applicable grade-level standards in reading/language arts and mathematics; OR
- d. The building principal or his/her designee, upon consultation with the student's classroom teachers and any other relevant staff, determines that extraordinary academic circumstances are present which strongly suggest that (1) promotion to 9th grade would better serve the student's academic interests than retention in the 8th grade; and (2) the student, if promoted to 9th grade and provided with available interventions, will have a realistic opportunity to participate in the 9th grade curriculum in a meaningful manner, earn credit toward high school graduation while in 9th grade, and make progress in reducing the gap(s) that exist between the student's present-level of academic achievement and the applicable grade-level standards in reading/language arts and mathematics.

Cross Ref.: 345.41 3rd Grade to 4th Grade Promotion and Retention

Legal References: WI Statutes
[Section 118.24\(2\)\(a\)](#)
[Section 118.33\(6\)\(a\)](#)
[Section 118.33\(6\)\(cm\)](#)

APPROVED: FEBRUARY 16, 2026