

**Policy #: 345.4**

**SCHOOL DISTRICT OF WEBSTER**

**Date Adopted: May 17, 2011**

**Date Revised: January 18, 2021**

**Policy Title: Promotion and Retention (including Kindergarten Promotion)**

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). This policy does not address grade-level acceleration decisions or any decision to adjust the initial grade-level placement of a newly-enrolled student during the student's first school year of attendance in a District school or program.

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

1. The administration is expected to implement this policy and, in conjunction with other instructional staff members, make the promotion and retention decisions for individual students. Any recommendation to retain a student at the same grade level must be reviewed and approved by a building principal, and the Superintendent. If a student's parent or guardian disagrees with a District decision regarding promotion or retention, the parent or guardian may submit a written request for reconsideration to the Superintendent. Except as otherwise required by law, the decision of the Superintendent following such a request shall be final.
  2. 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 adequate progress in the curriculum such that retaining a student in the same grade from year-to-year should be an exceptional occurrence.
  3. Because a student's knowledge and skills related to math and reading/language arts are the foundation for learning in most other academic subjects, the District's criteria for promotion and retention decisions shall focus primarily on a student's performance in these areas.
  4. The District shall not use retention as a punishment for misconduct or as a substitute in lieu of services, programs, or accommodations that the student is entitled to receive or participate in under any applicable law. Further nothing in this policy shall be interpreted to interfere with or detract from a student's or parent's rights under any applicable state or federal law, including the laws applicable to students with disabilities and students identified as English language learners.
  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.
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1. In any situation where a student may be retained pursuant to the mutual agreement of the District and the student's parent or guardian, the decision must be preceded by a meeting that addresses possible alternatives to retention, and the potential advantages and disadvantages of retention. Further, the building principal, Superintendent, or another

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academic administrator serving as a designee must independently conclude that the weight of the relevant and available information suggests that the child's overall academic and developmental welfare is likely to be better served by retention than by promotion.

### **Promotion and Retention Decisions in Kindergarten, First Grade and Second Grade**

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.

The District will not involuntarily retain a student in 5-year-old kindergarten, first grade, or second grade against the wishes of the student's parent or guardian provided that the student was enrolled in and regularly attended school during the applicable school year, such that the District determines that the student was exposed to and actively participated in substantially all of the applicable grade-level curriculum.

For any kindergarten, first grade, or second grade student who meets the curriculum exposure and participation criteria identified above and who is promoted to the next grade level, the District will use an intervention-based and referral-based approach in any situation where the District determines that the student's academic or other developmental progress indicates that the student is at risk of reading or other substantial learning or academic difficulty.

If the District determines that a student in kindergarten, first grade, or second grade has **not** met the curriculum exposure and participation criteria identified above, then the following shall apply:

1. The District will attempt to meet with the student's parent or guardian to discuss the student's current academic and developmental progress, and its possible impact on future learning.
2. The student will generally be promoted to the next grade level, but the District shall implement an intervention plan for the student that, at a minimum, provides for the close monitoring of the student's general academic progress. If appropriate for the individual student, the plan shall also provide for specific additional interventions/services.
3. Such a student may be involuntarily retained at his/her current grade level only if the District determines at or near the conclusion of the relevant school term that the student's lack of exposure to substantial portions of the school's curriculum is so significant that an approach of combining grade-level promotion with an individualized monitoring and intervention plan would be developmentally inappropriate for the student. The building principal (or an administrative-level designee with instructional responsibilities), shall review and expressly approve any staff recommendation to involuntarily retain a student on this basis.

### **Identifying Students at Risk of Retention in Grades 3 through 8**

The administration shall implement a benchmark-based screening mechanism to annually identify students in grades 3 through 8 who are at risk of possible grade-level retention. The screening process shall:

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1. Give substantial weight to the student's demonstrated learning and progress in the areas of math and reading comprehension/language arts.
2. Minimally identify each student who, as of the date of the screening, would not meet the promotion criteria defined below relative to BOTH (1) reading comprehension level and current-year academic performance; AND (2) state assessment results (or results from an equivalent alternative), provided at least one such reliable result is available.
3. Be completed between January 1 and March 1 of each school year.

In addition to the benchmark-based screening process, a student's teacher may also make a referral for any student who the teacher feels should be evaluated as potentially being at risk of grade-level retention.

The District's instructional staff shall ensure that each student who is identified as being at risk of possible grade-level retention (whether ultimately retained or promoted) is provided with an individualized intervention plan intended to monitor the student's learning and provide the student with opportunities to make progress in reducing any gap(s) that exist between the student's present-level of academic achievement and target grade-level standards.

**Promotion and Retention Decisions in Grades 3 through 8**

A student in 4th grade or 8th grade shall be retained if the student does not meet at least one of the following five criteria:

1. The student was not identified as being at risk of possible grade-level retention during the current school year.
2. The student has attained at least the following minimum results on the most recent state assessment results available for the student, which shall not be older than an assessment performed within the current school year.

| Assessment Area       | Minimum Required Score/Result |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------|
| Reading/Language Arts | Basic or Equivalent           |
| Math                  | Basic or Equivalent           |

3. The building principal or his/her designee, upon consultation with relevant staff and a review of the student's comprehensive academic record, may determine that the student has satisfied the criteria set forth in this section through alternative evidence of the student's reading comprehension skills and current-year academic progress.

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4. The District determines that the student has made substantial and adequate progress on promotion-related goals that the District established for the student. The level of progress must reflect a more-than-negligible narrowing of observed gaps between the student's current academic progress and applicable grade-level standards in math and/or reading/language arts.

In addition, the building principal or his/her designee, upon consultation with the student's classroom teachers and any other relevant staff, determines that the available information about the student's current academic skills and progress suggests that the student, if promoted to the next grade, will have a realistic opportunity to participate in the curriculum in a meaningful manner and make progress in further reducing the gap(s) that exist between the student's present-level of academic achievement and the applicable grade-level standards.

5. The building principal or his/her designee, upon consultation with the student's classroom teachers and any other relevant staff, determines that exceptional academic circumstances are present which strongly suggest that (a) promotion to the next grade would better serve the student's academic interests than retention in the current grade, and (b) the student, if promoted to the next grade, will have a realistic opportunity to participate in the 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.

For a student in the 8th grade, the building principal or his/her designee must further conclude that, if promoted, the District can 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.

A student who is in 3rd grade or in 5th grade through 7th grade may be involuntarily retained if:

1. 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
2. No other exceptional circumstances are present which cause the building principal or his/her designee to conclude, upon consultation with other relevant staff, that the student's overall academic and other developmental interests would be better served by promotion than by retention.

**Cross Reference:**

**Legal Reference:**

**WISCONSIN STATUTES**

- [Section 118.24\(2\)\(a\)](#) [district administrator authority to manage the promotion of students]
- [Section 118.33\(6\)\(a\)](#) [policy requirement for 4th and 8th grade promotion criteria]
- [Section 118.33\(6\)\(cm\)](#) [policy requirement for kindergarten to 1st grade promotion criteria]