

## Students

## Progress

## Retention

The Watertown Unified School District considers grade level retention only when sufficient evidence can be collected to support the long term benefit to the child of such action.

A child shall, under most circumstances, remain with his/her own age level peers. Changes in this standard shall be made only after formal consideration by District staff, along with parents/guardians. If a child is to be removed from his/her age level group, it shall be done according to procedures developed by the administration and faculty. The matter of retaining a student is recognized as an event of major significance to the child's educational future.

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 (ie. prior to the start of 9<sup>th</sup> grade or any program specific equivalent to 9<sup>th</sup> 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.
  - 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.
  - b. A decision to retain a student where both the administration and the student's parent(s) and 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 terms, 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 Superintendent asking that he/she reconsider the decision. Except as otherwise required by law, the decision of the Superintendent following such a request shall be final.

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