

GRADE PLACEMENT IN SCHOOL DISTRICT 8

Making informed decisions about Grade Retention & Grade Promotion

Grade Retention = repeating a grade / Grade Promotion = advancing a grade ahead of same-aged peers

► Ministry of Education Philosophy

The BC Ministry of Education follows the philosophy of continuous achievement and believes that best practice is to allow all students, regardless of ability, to move from grade to grade with their peer group.

Reporting Student Progress: Policy and Practice

“In the primary years, students should not repeat a grade. In grades 4 to 12, the decision to advance or repeat a grade or a course will be made in the best interest of the student by the teachers, parents/guardians, and the school principal.”

– BC Ministry of Education, March 2005 (p. 41)



► School District 8 Decision Making Process

In the vast majority of cases, grade retention or promotion will not be necessary. However, it is important to allow for the consideration of individual factors and to allow input from parents, various members of the school and district teams, and where appropriate, the student. Information is carefully considered to ensure a fully informed decision that is in the best long-term interest of the student. If retention/promotion is still considered after exploring alternative ways to support the student, the following steps are followed:

- 1 Information is gathered on the students' education background, current strengths and needs, and the nature of the current concern.
- 2 The District School Psychologist reviews the information and completes the Lights Retention Scale.
- 3 The team, including the parent(s)/guardian(s), meets to review the information
- 4 According to the School Act, the final responsibility for deciding appropriate student placement (grade assignment and program) rests with the Principal.
- 5 A formal record of the decision is provided to all team members.

In the event that a parent disputes their child's grade placement, the parent shall have the right to appeal under Section 11 of the School Act.

Note:

This process is relevant for classrooms-based learning and not for individual courses. At the secondary level, progression through courses is based on earning passing grades.

► Literature on Grade Retention

Many researchers have investigated the impacts of grade retention. While this is a difficult topic to research and findings have at times been mixed, the practice of retaining students who fail to meet social or academic goals has not been shown to be effective. Some studies have indicated gains in academic success, although when looking at long-term results, any positive gains are no longer indicated four years after retention. Some studies show potential risk for social-emotional well-being in later years and potential increased risk for high school drop-out.

Implementing evidence-based individualized supports and programs has a greater empirical backing and can be implemented regardless of grade placement. Therefore, in the vast majority of cases, grade retention or promotion is not necessary for supporting unique needs and has no benefits independent of targeted supports.

*National Association of School Psychologists (2011)
Grade retention and social promotion (White Paper)
Bethesda, MD: Author
www.nasponline.org/research-and-policy/policy-priorities/position-statements*

► Alternatives to Retention or Promotion

School District 8 believes that there is a place in each classroom for students with diverse learning, developmental, and social needs. There are many ways to meet a student's needs alongside their same-age peers.

- In-class accommodations to emphasize student's strengths and allow them to show their learning in alternate ways
- Learning Plan or Individual Education Plan
- Intervention programs/groups to focus on academic skill-building
- Some students may have modified learning goals that are separate from those of their peers
- Students with developmental disabilities sometimes benefit from additional time during the transition to adulthood rather than earlier in their educational career
- Behavior Plan / Social Skills Training
- Enrichment goals for students requiring greater challenge
- Maintain home-school communication to collaboratively support the student

► Systems in Place to Support Diverse Learners

- Inclusive Education Philosophies – we expect diversity in our classrooms and celebrate the strengths, skills, and knowledge that each student brings. B.C. curriculum and classroom lessons can be implemented with diversity in mind, meeting students' needs for supports and/or stretches in their learning
- Problem-Solving focused School-Based-Teams
- Increasing use of technology in our classrooms, allowing multiple ways to access information and share one's learning
- District Specialists to support School-Based-Teams in developing inclusive plans for students with complex needs

► What should you do if you have concerns about your child's progress in school?

Start by speaking to your child's teacher. All schools have School-Based-Teams in place for collaborative support of students. Ask questions about what is currently being done to support your child and what the next steps could be.

HAVE MORE QUESTIONS?

Visit our website:

inclusiveeducation.sd8.bc.ca

Call the Inclusive Education Department:
250.352.6681