

SAN DIEGO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT
Office of the Deputy Superintendent

DISTRICT PROMOTION/RETENTION PLAN:
A SYSTEM OF INTERVENTIONS TO SUPPORT STUDENT LEARNING

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY
May 13, 2008

As requested by the Board of Education, this report brings forward recommendations for establishing a promotion/retention policy and associated plan that will ensure that all students receive appropriate interventions before decisions are made to promote or retain K-8, with a particular focus on grades 1, 3, and 8.

To implement the policy, the following critical steps will be taken:

- Every school will be responsible for monitoring student performance using a combination of classroom, District and state assessments so that struggling students are identified early on and appropriate support can be provided as needed.
- Each school will design and implement a three-tiered “system of interventions” as part of their annual Single Plan for Student Achievement (SPSA) to ensure that all students receive appropriate interventions. For Tiers II and III, staff has identified recommended implementation models and materials by grade level.
- These interventions will be documented in a Student Intervention and Monitoring Plan and communicated to parents/guardians.

The decision to promote or retain will be made in the best interest of the child, focusing on those students who are the most at risk and who would most benefit from retention.

Grades 1 & 3- Students who are not making adequate progress towards meeting grade-level standards in literacy and mathematics **will be required to attend summer school for targeted interventions**. At the conclusion of summer school, students who are making adequate progress in at least one content area will be promoted with support. Those **students who are not making progress in both literacy and mathematics will be retained and offered targeted, accelerated support in areas of need**.

Grade 8- Any student with 2 or more Fs in core **subjects will be required to attend summer school for targeted intervention**. Students who do not attend summer school will be retained unless exempted by CST scores of Basic or above. At the conclusion of summer school, students who have passed English/Language Arts (ELA) or Mathematics or who score Basic or above on the CST in ELA and Mathematics are promoted and recommended for 9th grade intervention. **Students who do not pass ELA and Mathematics and who score Below Basic or Far Below Basic on the CST will be retained and placed in an accelerated program for grade retained students**.

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Introductory Statement

On November 13, 2007, the Board of Education discussed the need for a promotion/retention plan that would eliminate social promotion, establish consistent standards for student achievement, identify early interventions for students who are falling behind, and establish retention grades at the elementary level, in addition to 8th grade. On December 11th, the Board reviewed a preliminary revised Promotion/Retention Plan. This report brings forward final staff recommendations for the District Promotion/Retention Plan to begin implementation in the 2008-2009 school year.

Proposed Promotion/Retention Policy

F-7400 The policy of the San Diego Unified School District is to ensure the academic success of every student. Students are expected to meet grade-level standards and receive the early intervention and necessary instructional support to enable them to be successful. Students who are not making adequate progress towards meeting grade-level standards, after receiving appropriate instructional support and interventions, will be recommended for retention at designated grades 1, 3, and 8. It is District policy that students will not be retained more than twice. The decision to promote or retain shall be based on consistently applied expectations for student achievement.

Guiding Principles

The content of the following implementation plan was developed based on a set of guiding principles, consistent with Board expectations:

- All decisions are made in the best interest of the child.
- We hold high expectations for all.
- All students receive strong core instruction.
- Student progress is closely monitored.
- Early intervention is essential.
- Students are given every opportunity to succeed.
- Parents are vital partners.
- The retention year is substantially different.

District Promotion/Retention Plan: A System of Interventions to Support Student Learning

The plan includes the following components:

- 1) Written District-Wide Expectations for Student Performance at Each Grade Level
- 2) The District Assessment System
- 3) Interventions (Tiers 1, 2, and 3)
- 4) The Student Intervention and Monitoring Plan
- 5) Promotion/Retention Guidelines: The Establishment of Grades 1, 3, and 8 as Retention Grades
- 6) Parent Communication Plan

1) District-Wide Expectations for Student Performance at Each Grade Level

Consistent with district-established goals for student performance, the expectation is that all students have acquired the skills and knowledge to be successful in the next grade level. Student progress towards the achievement of grade-level standards will be measured by state and District assessments in literacy and mathematics as well as report card grades (upon Board approval of proposed assessment system, staff will determine cutpoints for proficiency).

2) The District Assessment System

The District assessment system is made up of a combination of classroom, District and state assessments that produce comprehensive, credible, timely information. Every school is responsible for monitoring student performance using these assessments so that struggling students are identified early on and appropriate support can be provided as needed.

The District comprehensive assessment system includes:

Long-term data: State Level

State-mandated, high stakes tests are summative in nature and, therefore, are not used to make daily instructional decisions. However, these data can be used in various ways to reliably understand *yearly and multi-yearly trends* in a school or district.

Examples:

- California Standards Test (CST)
- California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE)

Medium-term data: District Level

Benchmark assessments are used to monitor student progress towards meeting grade level standards across the District. Because these data are collected District-wide, teachers are able to compare how their students are progressing in comparison to others across the District. These benchmarks assess student progress at critical checkpoints throughout the academic year, so that teachers can make strategic adjustments to their instruction. These data are helpful for tracking student progress *within a single year*.

Examples:

- District Cumulative Benchmark assessments in mathematics and English language arts

The District also incorporates summative assessments that are tied to standards. These summative assessments help to measure to what extent a student has reached the expectations for a particular course and can be used for teacher planning. Teacher teams can also use the results of these exams (through item analysis, for example) to identify focus areas for instructional improvement.

Examples:

- End-of-course exams

Short-Term Data: School and Classroom Level

Most importantly, teachers use the results from frequent formative assessments at the classroom level to identify and address student needs *within a reporting period* to allow for early identification of student needs.

Examples:

- Screening assessments that determine whether or not students are at or below grade level in reading or math to inform initial placement and grouping
- Diagnostic assessments that ascertain the particular strengths and needs of students identified as struggling
- Formative assessments (sometimes called progress monitoring assessments) to be conducted at the teacher's discretion at least every 2-3 weeks

3) Interventions: Three Tiers of Support

In order to ensure that all students are receiving the targeted support they need to meet grade-level expectations for student performance, each school will be required to design and implement a three-tiered "system of interventions" as part of their annual Single Plan for Student Achievement (SPSA).

Tier I - Universal Access

All students must have access to a strong, common core instructional program that is engaging, rigorous and standards-based.

Tier II - Targeted Supports

For students who are not making expected progress towards grade-level standards, even with strong core instruction, additional, layered support shall be provided in the form of targeted, explicit instruction.

Tier III - Intensive Intervention

For students who continue to struggle, intensive support shall be provided that is more explicit and specifically designed for individual students.

For Tiers II and III, staff has identified recommended implementation models and materials by grade level. These recommendations will serve as guidelines to help schools begin the design and implementation of their own systems of intervention. In the end, school principals and staff members must identify strategies to ensure success, as no one-size-fits-all approach exists.

4) The Student Intervention and Monitoring Plan

Every school is responsible for keeping recording and monitoring the progress of students who are considered below grade level based on District-defined expectations through the Student Intervention and Monitoring Plan. The District is currently developing an on-line system to allow authorized teachers and administrators to easily access and modify student plans using district data bases.

The Student Intervention and Monitoring Plan will include student assessment results, the interventions students have received, and a record of the progress students have made as a result of each intervention. The Plan will be reviewed with parents/guardians in order to ensure their participation and awareness.

5) Establishment of Grades 1, 3, and 8 as Retention Grades and Promotion/Retention Guidelines

The District Promotion/Retention Plan establishes grades 1, 3 and 8 as retention grades. The basis for this decision is that Grades 1, 3, and 8 represent critical transition years. As such, the stakes are higher and the need for success even greater. It is important to note that retention is not prohibited at other grade levels as determined by the classroom teacher.¹

Grades 1 and 3- Students who are not making adequate progress towards meeting grade-level standards for literacy and mathematics according to performance on state/District assessments and report card grades, after receiving appropriate instruction and interventions, will be recommended for retention and required to attend summer school for targeted intervention.

¹ As specified by Education Code Section 48070.5, the assigned classroom teacher makes the final decision concerning promotion/retention of grade 1-8 students. Also specified within the law is that the teacher's evaluation concerning the student's progress shall be discussed with the parent/guardian before the teacher makes the final determination of pupil retention or promotion. It is important to note that District policy stipulates that students may be retained no more than twice.

DISTRICT PROMOTION/RETENTION PLAN:
A SYSTEM OF INTERVENTIONS TO SUPPORT STUDENT LEARNING
May 13th, 2008
Page 5

At the conclusion of summer school:

- Promoted with support- Students meeting grade-level expectations in at least one content area will be promoted and placed in a Transitional T-2 or T-4 program clustered within the classroom, and will be required to attend Extended Day for additional intervention.
- Retained- Students not making progress towards meeting grade-level expectations in both literacy and mathematics will be retained and offered targeted, accelerated support in areas of need, including Extended Day for additional intervention.

Grade 8- Any student with 2 or more Fs in core subjects is required to attend summer school for targeted intervention. Students who do not attend summer school will be retained unless exempted by CST scores of Basic or above.

At the conclusion of summer school:

- Promoted with support- Students who have successfully passed ELA or Mathematics, or who score Basic or above on the CST in ELA and Mathematics, will be promoted and placed in a grade 9 intervention program (T-9).
- Retained- Students who do not successfully pass both ELA and Mathematics and who score Below Basic or Far Below Basic on the CST in ELA and Mathematics will be retained and placed in a specialized accelerated program for grade 8 retained students

(Please see Attachment A for Promotion/Retention/Intervention flow chart.)

Parent Appeal Process

Schools will provide parents/guardians an opportunity to appeal the decision of the assigned classroom teacher. The appeal process will be outlined in newly developed District procedures to replace District Procedures 4755 (Promotion/Retention and Placement/Articulation, K-6, Elementary) and 4760 (Promotion/Retention and Placement/Articulation, 6-8, Middle). In accordance with the law, a decision by the assigned classroom teacher to promote or retain a student *cannot be overturned* unless “determined to be a direct result of clerical or mechanical mistake, fraud, bad faith or incompetency.”

Students with Disabilities

Students with disabilities as identified according to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) are expected to reach the same grade-level expectations as non-disabled students, unless these expectations have been modified as part of their Individual Education Program (IEP). Students with disabilities must be provided appropriate accommodations and modifications as outlined in their IEP to achieve grade level standards. The final decision on retention of a student receiving Special Education services will be made by the IEP team.

Students who are on a Section 504 plan are expected to reach the same expectations as non-disabled students, but should receive appropriate accommodations to ensure they can reach these expectations. Final decisions about the retention of students on a 504 plan will be made by the Student Study Team (SST).

English Learners

In addition to core subject-matter instruction, English learners must also receive a dedicated time for focused English Language Development (ELD). Progress in ELD is monitored and is a key consideration in determining whether or not students are making adequate academic gains.

First grade English learners who entered school at the Beginning or Early Intermediate level of English language proficiency should not be retained as they have not had adequate time to develop English language proficiency.

English learners with fewer than three years of English language instruction generally should not be retained. They may be recommended for retention if, 1) they are also not making adequate yearly progress in acquiring English, and 2) staff and parents jointly decide it is in the best interest of the child.

Parent Communication Plan

It is essential that parents are involved early on in the process. Once a student is identified as struggling based on District assessments, parents will be notified and involved in decisions about interventions, and ultimately, about the possibility of retention through the Student Intervention and Monitoring Plan (Ed Code Section 48070.5).

At the end of the school year, all parents at grades 1, 3, and 8 as appropriate will receive notice by mail if their students will be retained. They will also receive notice that their students must attend and successfully complete summer school to move on to the next grade level. Students who do not attend will be retained unless they score Basic or above on the CST. Schools will also set up end-of-year conferences with parents to finalize all recommendations, interventions, and possible outcomes, including retention.

Costs

Associated budget costs for the first year of implementation of the District comprehensive assessment system is approximately \$1.4 million. First-year costs for a specialized program for Grade 8 retained students is \$1.2 million. These student supports will be funded through Targeted Instructional Improvement Grant (TIIG) funds along with an allocation of general funds.

Recommendation

The Superintendent recommends that the Board of Education approve the District Promotion/Retention policy and plan, including the District Assessment System (with cutpoints on district assessments to be determined), as outlined in this report.

ATTACHMENT A

Promotion/Retention/Intervention Flow Chart

