

SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PITTSVILLE BOARD POLICY

INSTRUCTION

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

3RD GRADE TO 4TH GRADE PROMOTION AND RETENTION

345.41

Effective Dates and Initial Applicability of this Policy

The Board establishes the following as effective dates and dates of initial applicability for this Policy:

1. All sections of this Policy other than the final section take effect and first apply on July 1, 2025. Beginning on such date, (1) the District will not promote a 3rd grade pupil to the 4th grade unless promotion is indicated by the criteria and process defined in this policy; and (2) this policy replaces any other promotion/retention criteria and procedures that were in place for 3rd grade students in prior District policies or guidelines.
2. The effective date of the final section of this Policy is July 1, 2025. For eligible students who have been promoted to 4th grade without having successfully completed a state-mandated personal reading plan that was in place for the student during 3rd grade, this means the District will:
 - a. Provide intensive instructional supports and services in reading beginning in the 2025-2026 school year
 - b. Offer an intensive summer reading program to eligible students beginning in the summer of 2026.

Criteria for Promotion

Students who are completing 3rd grade will be **eligible for promotion** to 4th grade for the next school year, with any interventions, supports, and services that the student may be entitled to receive, if **any** of the following criteria are met:

1. The student is **not** identified for further individualized evaluation for possible retention using the screening process identified below **and** is also **not** a student with a disability whose individualized education program (IEP) includes the use of materially modified academic content and achievement standards in reading, math, or both.
2. Although screened and further evaluated for possible retention using the process and decision criteria identified below, the result of the individualized evaluation is a decision in favor of promotion to 4th grade.
3. The student has already been retained for at least one previous academic year in 5K or in any later grade **or** retaining the student would place the student in a grade/class that is two or more

age cohorts younger than the age cohort applicable to the student's birthdate (using September 1 as the start of annual grade-level age cohorts).

4. Regarding students with disabilities under the IDEA:

- a. If the student's IEP includes the use of materially modified academic content and achievement standards in reading, math, or both, then:
 - i. The student shall be eligible for promotion if either the student's IEP team or, if no such express decision is made by the IEP team, the District's Special Education Director upon a review of the student's IEP determines that **promotion** to 4th grade will be the appropriate setting for the student in the following year, considering relevant academic and non-academic factors, evidence-based practices, and the educational best interests of the student. Such students are **not** subject to the screening procedure or further evaluation and decision-making processes described in the next two sections of this policy unless the student's IEP so directs.
 - ii. Any decision to **retain** such a student shall be made by, or at least confirmed as being appropriate and consistent with the IEP by, the student's IEP team.
- b. Except as otherwise required to comply with state or federal law, students with disabilities who do **not** have such modified content and achievement standards are subject to the same promotion criteria and the same screening and evaluation processes for possible retention as students without disabilities.

Identifying Students for Further Individualized Evaluation for Possible Retention

No later than promptly after the date of the school's final administration of the universal reading screener each school year, assigned staff shall identify 3rd grade students for further evaluation for possible retention if one or more of the following criteria apply to the student:

1. The outcome of any universal screening reading assessment or diagnostic reading assessment that the student has taken **during 3rd grade** showed the student to be "at risk" under the state's definition of "at risk," **unless** a teacher or administrator determines, based on other objective evidence of the student's reading and reading comprehension skills, that the student's current skills are clearly materially higher than skills that are at or near the "at risk" level. (Note: For transfer students, the relevant assessment could have occurred at a non-District school.)
2. A teacher or reading specialist involved in providing math or reading instruction to a student has made a direct referral for further evaluation for possible retention based on the teacher's determination that there is information about the student's learning and academic progress that raises a concern that the student may not be able to meaningfully participate in the 4th grade curriculum, even with available interventions, services, and supports. Examples of situations in which a direct staff referral might occur include the following:
 - a. The student has significant learning gaps in reading and/or math that were not reduced during the 3rd grade year in spite of interventions, services, or supports.
 - b. The student was a late enrollee for whom only limited academic assessment data is available, but the information that is available indicates that the student may be similarly situated to other students who would be screened for further evaluation for possible retention.

Post-Screening Evaluation and Decision

For each student screened for further individualized evaluation for possible retention **and** who is **not** determined to be eligible for promotion under any of the other promotion criteria defined above, the District will further evaluate the student and make a promotion or retention decision.

1. Process.

- a. A staff member shall be responsible for promptly informing the student's parent or guardian that the District has identified the student as being at risk of possible retention.
- b. A designated administrator who has curricular responsibilities and knowledge of the District's approach to interventions and supports for students who are experiencing significant academic struggles shall make a decision regarding promotion and retention. A District reading specialist may serve as a designated administrator for this purpose.
- c. The designated administrator shall make the decision (1) in direct consultation with at least one staff member responsible for instruction and assessment of the student in reading and/or math, as relevant to the student learning gaps in those core subjects; (2) in consultation, as needed, with any other staff who the administrator identifies as having important information about academic and/or non-academic factors affecting the student; and (3) with reasonable attempts by the administrator or a designee to obtain and consider input from the student's parent(s) or guardian(s).
- d. The evaluation process may occur at one or more group meetings and/or through a series of communications.
- e. The evaluation and final decision should identify and consider at least all of the following, to the extent reasonably available:
 - i. The student's academic progress to date, with no single test or assessment result serving as the sole measure of the student's progress;
 - ii. Interventions that have been implemented for the student to date, the extent to which the student was able to fully participate in those interventions, and the student's response to those interventions, including especially whether the student's learning gaps relative to applicable grade-level academic standards were materially narrowed, grew wider, or stayed about the same;
 - iii. At least a tentative identification of available interventions (e.g., instructional modifications, services, and supports) that the District would be likely to provide to the student under both a retention outcome and a under a promotion outcome;
 - iv. Relevant non-academic factors affecting the student, such as potential impacts of the decision on a student's social relationships, social development, and self-perception, which should be identified and evaluated with input from relevant staff and, if available and willing to provide such information, the student's parent(s), guardian(s), or other caregiver(s); and
 - v. The decision-making criteria stated below.
- f. The administrator responsible for making the promotion or retention decision, or the administrator's designee, shall promptly inform the student's parent or guardian of the decision.

2. **Timing for the Decision.** For students who have been screened and further evaluated for possible retention, a decision regarding retention or promotion (which may include one or more conditions that require later evaluation) will normally be reached at some point after the District receives the individual student results of the Forward Exam and by the end of the school year. Specific timelines and procedures may need to be adjusted for individual students, including in situations where the student first enrolls in a District school late in the school year, where the student is participating in a summer school program, etc.
3. **Criteria for a Promotion Decision.** The designated administrator will consider all relevant information about the student that is reasonably available and make a determination regarding promotion or retention. Such a student shall be eligible for promotion, or for promotion pending satisfaction of one or more express conditions, if **at least one** of the following applies:
- a. The evaluation of the student's academic progress demonstrates that the student is **neither** (1) clearly in excess of a full grade level behind expected 3rd grade basic proficiency in both math and reading/language arts; **nor** (2) clearly in excess of two full grade levels behind expected 3rd grade basic proficiency in either math or reading/language arts; **or**
 - b. The administrator concludes that promotion with interventions would be at least equally likely (compared to retention with interventions) to be in the overall best educational interests of the student, considering academic factors, relevant non-academic factors (e.g., social, developmental, etc.), and evidence-based practices; **or**
 - c. All three of the following apply: (1) the administrator concludes that, if promoted with available services and supports (i.e., interventions), the student **would** have a realistic opportunity to participate in the 4th grade general curriculum in a meaningful manner and make more than negligible progress in reducing the gap(s) that exist between the student's present level of academic progress and grade-level standards (i.e., with a "realistic opportunity" meaning that it is reasonable to think that those academic outcomes would be possible, not that those outcomes are assured or even highly likely); (2) the administrator concludes and advises the student's parent(s) or guardian(s) that, in the administrator's professional judgment, retention is likely to be in the overall best educational interests of the student, considering academic factors, relevant non-academic factors, and evidence-based practices; **and** (3) the student's parent(s) or guardian(s) select promotion for their child notwithstanding the administrator's recommendation.
 - i. To help parents and guardians make informed decisions under this "best interests" criterion, the administrator making a recommendation in favor of retention shall make a reasonable attempt to provide the student's parent(s) or guardian(s) with information about (1) the available alternatives to retention (e.g., promotion with interventions and monitoring); and (2) possible disadvantages of retention.
 - ii. If the student's parent(s) or guardian(s) do not select promotion under this "best interests" criterion, the student would be retained in 3rd grade.
 - iii. If parents or guardians who have equal legal decision-making authority disagree on retention versus promotion under this criterion and are unable to provide a joint decision selecting promotion, then the student will be retained.
4. **Retention by District Decision.** A 3rd grade student who has been individually evaluated for possible retention and found not eligible for promotion under this policy will be retained without the agreement/support of the student's parent(s) or guardian(s) if, upon consideration of all

relevant and reasonably available information, the designated administrator concludes that **both** of the following apply:

- a. If the student were to be promoted with available interventions, the District would **not** be able to provide the student with at least a realistic opportunity to (1) participate in the 4th grade general curriculum in a meaningful manner and (2) make more than negligible progress in reducing the gap(s) that exist between the student's present level of academic progress and grade-level standards (i.e., with a "realistic opportunity" meaning that it is reasonable to think that those academic outcomes would be possible, not that those outcomes are assured or even highly likely); **and**
- b. The available information clearly and convincingly indicates that retention with interventions (compared to promotion with interventions) is more likely to be in the overall best educational interests of the student, considering applicable academic factors, relevant non-academic factors, and evidence-based practices.

5. Parent Requests for Reconsideration.

- a. If the student's parent(s) or guardian(s) disagree with a District decision reached under this section of this policy and believe that the applicable promotion and retention criteria have been incorrectly applied to their child, then the student's parent(s) or guardian(s) may request reconsideration. The final decision on reconsideration shall be made District Administrator. The initial decision will be modified only if, upon a review of all relevant and reasonably available information, the District concludes that the policy was applied incorrectly.
- b. If a student's parent(s) or guardian(s) agree with a District determination that the student is eligible for promotion under any section of this policy but wish to request retention in spite of a District decision that promotion is the appropriate final disposition, then a parent or guardian may notify the District that they are requesting retention as a program and curriculum modification under section 118.15(1)(d) of the state statutes. The District reserves all lawful discretion to deny such requests.

Eligibility for Promotion

Where this policy refers to a student reaching eligibility for promotion, it means that the student will be promoted **unless**:

1. The student does not meet one or more conditions that expressly qualified an initial promotion eligibility determination, and the final evaluation of the student under this policy results in the student not being eligible for promotion; **or**
2. Under extraordinary circumstances, the District and the pupil's parent(s) or guardian(s) mutually agree, notwithstanding the student being eligible for promotion, that retention (with appropriate and available interventions) is more likely to be in the overall best educational interests of the student, considering academic factors, relevant non-academic factors, and evidence-based practices. The District Administrator may give final District approval to any retention decision that is based on such extraordinary circumstances **after** confirming that the parent(s) or guardian(s) are reasonably aware of (1) the available alternatives to retention (e.g., promotion with interventions and monitoring); and (2) the possible disadvantages of retention.

3rd Grade Students Promoted to 4th Grade without Completing Their Personal Reading Plan

If the District promotes a student from 3rd grade to 4th grade, but the student had a legally-mandated personal reading plan in place during 3rd grade that the student did not successfully complete (as completion is defined in state law), then, subject to limited exceptions, state law requires the District to do all of the following for the student:

1. Notify the student's parent or guardian, in writing, that the student did not complete the personal reading plan and include a description of the intensive instructional services and supports that will be provided to the student to remediate the identified areas of reading deficiency.
2. Provide the student with the applicable intensive instructional services and supports.
3. Monitor the student's progress with respect to the student's development of reading skills and the effectiveness of the services and supports.
4. As a further service/support, provide the student with an intensive summer reading program each summer until the student scores at grade-level in reading on a summative assessment. The student's parent(s) or guardian(s) may decline to have their child participate in any such summer reading program that is offered by the District.

The intensive reading-related services and supports that the District provides to a promoted student who did not complete a 3rd grade personal reading plan:

1. May include services and supports that are identified, structured, and provided through some different state requirement, federal requirement, or District program (such as services and supports provided under an IEP), so long as they have the purpose of remediating the individual student's identified reading-related deficiencies.
2. At a minimum, must be coordinated with and must not cause a denial of any other educational services or supports that the student is legally entitled to receive under other state or federal laws.

State law (in section 118.33(5m)(b)) allows, but does not require, the District to apply a "good cause" exception to providing the parent notification, services, supports, and progress monitoring listed above to the following students who would otherwise be eligible:

1. Students who are English Learners (defined for this purpose as a student whose "ability to use the English language is limited because of the use of a non-English language in his or her family or in his or her daily, non-school surroundings, and who has difficulty ... in performing ordinary classwork in English as a result of such limited English language proficiency").
2. A student who has an individualized education plan (IEP) that indicates that neither taking the statewide 3rd grade standardized reading assessment nor taking the universal reading screening assessment or diagnostic reading assessments administered under state law is appropriate for the student.
3. A student who scores as proficient in reading on an alternative standardized assessment approved by Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction.
4. A student who has an IEP or a plan to provide accommodations or services under section 504 of the federal Rehabilitation Act that indicates that the pupil has received intensive intervention in reading for more than 2 years if the student continues to demonstrate a deficiency in reading **and** was previously retained in kindergarten, 1st, 2nd, or 3rd grade.

5. A student who has received intensive intervention in reading for 2 or more school years, continues to demonstrate a deficiency in reading, **and** was previously retained in kindergarten, 1st, 2nd, or 3rd grade for a total of 2 years.

Regarding the “good cause” exceptions permitted under section 118.33(5m)(b) of the state statutes:

1. The District acknowledges that:
 - a. The “good cause” exceptions cannot be applied in a manner that would unlawfully discriminate against a student (e.g., by denying a student’s access to services and supports—including a summer reading program option—that would otherwise be instructionally appropriate solely because the student, for example, has limited proficiency in English or because the student has an identified disability).
 - b. The “good cause” exceptions are potential exceptions only to the notification, service, support, and monitoring requirements established under section 118.33(5m)(a) of the state statutes and do **not** apply to interventions, services, and supports that the student may be separately eligible to receive under other state or federal laws or under other District policies. (For example, certain 4th grade students may be separately eligible to receive interventions or remedial reading services under section 121.02(1)(c) of the state statutes.)
2. The administration may apply a “good cause” exception to one or more of the requirements established under section 118.33(5m)(a) only in situations where doing so would not unlawfully discriminate against the affected student and when the Director of Students Services or District Administrator also determines:
 - a. That the exception in question is the exception for a student who has scored as proficient in reading on an alternative standardized assessment approved by Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction; **or**
 - b. That **both** of the following apply:
 - i. The student will be receiving individualized services and supports that address the student’s specific needs and learning goals relating to, as appropriate for and to the extent applicable to the student, reading/literacy and language development/communication; **and**
 - ii. The provision of any instructional services and supports that would be available (i.e., if the exception were not applied) and target a goal of achieving grade-level performance in reading either would be duplicative of services and supports the student will already be receiving or would not be educationally appropriate for the student.
3. The administration shall establish a procedure for promptly informing the student’s parent or guardian of any District decision to apply a “good cause” exception to one or more of the requirements established under section 118.33(5m)(a).

First Reading:

May 12, 2025

Second Reading/Approval:

June 9, 2025