

REGULATIONS FOR ACADEMIC PROMOTION AND RETENTION

The Alexandria City School Board recognizes that decisions affecting a student's grade-level assignment (especially the decision to retain a student) may have long-lasting effects on the student's future success in school and life. The promotion of a student from one grade level to the next shall be based primarily on the successful completion of work required at the specific grade level of the student. Research indicates that students who have been retained two or more times are more likely to drop out of high school than are students who have never been retained. Therefore, Alexandria City Public Schools expects that any decision to retain a student be made following considerable deliberation and consultation. ACPS will not retain a student more than once. When retention is recommended, it should occur at the earliest possible time in the student's school career. All personnel involved with this decision-making process should understand and address the following processes and procedures.

A. Promotion

The primary consideration for grade assignment shall be successful achievement in academic areas. Other factors such as the student's ability to learn, social and emotional maturity and attendance shall also be considered. Determinations regarding student acceleration shall be made in accordance with Policy IKEB.

1. Elementary Students:

Promotion will be made through grade five (K-5) based on an evaluation of the student's acquisition of required standards and other evidence of growth as determined by the student's teacher(s) and principal and as evidenced by the following factors:

- Academic performance
- Attendance
- Physical size
- Reading level
- Work habits
- Intellectual ability
- Parental support
- Age
- School/family history
- Prior retention
- Special needs, circumstances or disability
- SOL assessment results at the end of grades three through five (3-5); however, the use of SOL scores as the sole criterion in awarding credit is prohibited.

2. **Middle School Students:**

Students in grades six through eight (6-8) are promoted to the next grade on the basis of earning passing final grades in the core subjects of language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies; and a passing final grade in one of the following program areas: health/physical education or the equivalent of a full-year elective course together with consideration of the following factors:

- Academic performance
- Ability level
- Attendance in conjunction with poor classroom performance
- Chronological age in relation to the normal grade/age group
- Delayed/advanced physical development
- Work and study skills
- Student and parent attitude
- Parental support
- Prior retention
- SOL assessment results at the end of grades six through eight (6-8); however, the use of SOL scores as the sole criterion in awarding credit is prohibited.

3. **High School Students:** For high school students, promotion refers to a student advancing from one class designation to the next (i.e., from ninth to tenth grade, etc.) after having satisfied all requirements for advancement. The designation of a student as a ninth grader, tenth grader, or eleventh grader is based solely on the number of standard and/or verified units of credits earned. However, for a student to be designated as a twelfth grader (i.e., a senior preparing for graduation), that designation involves a combination of the following factors: (a) requisite number of credits earned; (b) the types of credits earned; and (c) other graduation requirements (i.e., fulfillment of state mandates and requirements for courses and program completion to receive the type of diploma for which the student is preparing). Accordingly, a high school student shall be promoted to the next class designation only as follows:

Minimum Requirements for Students Earning a Standard Diploma

To be classified as a 9 th grader:	A student must have been promoted from middle school.
To be classified as a 10 th grader:	A student must have accrued at least 5 standard high school units of credit by the start of an academic year. One of the units of credit must be for 9 th grade English.
To be classified as a 11 th grader:	A student must have accrued at least 10 standard high school units of credit by the start of the academic year. One of the units of credit must be for 10 th grade English.
To be classified as a 12 th grader:	A student must have accrued at least 15 standard high school units of credit by the start of the academic year. One of the units of credit must be for 11 th grade English. A student's transcript and schedule must include all units of credit and/or courses necessary to complete graduation requirements in June of that school year.

Note: The use of SOL assessment scores as the sole criterion in awarding credit is prohibited.

B. Intervention to Minimize Retention

Alexandria City Public Schools is committed to maximizing student promotion and providing a system of K-12 interventions to maximize student success. For those students whose educational performance is not commensurate with their peers and/or are suspected of having a disability, a written referral to the School Support Team or Child Study shall be made by the student's classroom teacher.

1. When a student in kindergarten through fifth grade (K-5) is not making progress toward mastery of content standards, school staff shall use interventions associated with ACPS system of support guidelines to make a determination of which supports and interventions are necessary to address the student's lack of academic growth. In addition, an Individual Achievement Plan (IAP) or other systematic classroom and support interventions shall be developed to address the areas of deficiency and be implemented with fidelity. The prescribed interventions will be designed to monitor and document the student's progress toward mastery of content standards.
2. At the elementary level (grades K-5), parents/guardians and (when appropriate) students should be included in the development of the IAP, or other intervention plan. The principal will monitor the implementation of this plan and guide the team in making the necessary adjustments. These adjustments should be based upon a

systematic progress monitoring that includes a collection of evidence and thorough analysis of student data.

3. At the secondary level (grades 6-12), the ICAP (Individualized Career and Academic Plan) is used to guide this process (incorporating a focus upon both student academic achievement as well as career development). Additionally, when a student is experiencing academic problems or challenges, appropriate options for intervention, coaching, and tutorial assistance should be used to support this process (and should be incorporated into the ICAP).
4. When a secondary student is experiencing academic difficulty, the parents/guardians shall be notified in writing as soon as possible. In addition to the Report Card, parents/guardians of students who are failing any high school course shall be notified in writing at the end of the second quarter. In addition, teachers are encouraged to arrange conferences with parents/guardians of these students.

If a student continues to fail through the end of the third quarter, the parents/guardians shall again be notified in writing.

C. Retention

Retention shall be used as a last resort. It will be considered only after ongoing, sustained, and intensive intervention efforts have been unsuccessful. The final responsibility for retention should be based upon a collaborative team decision involving:

- The principal
- Parents or guardians
- The classroom teacher
- The school counselor
- A special education teacher (if appropriate)
- An English Learner (EL) teacher (if appropriate)

After a careful and systematic review of documentation of the interventions administered over time, the following factors shall be deliberated for a student being considered for retention:

- Standards-based performance in academic areas
- Performance on Division-level assessments
- Performance on curriculum-based assessments
- Quarterly Progress Reports
- Consideration of the factors listed above in section A. (Promotion) of this regulation.

1. **Initial Notification:** As soon as retention is being considered, the teacher shall notify in writing and schedule a meeting with the parents/guardians. If, at the end of the third quarter, the student is still at risk of being retained, the information must be stated in the narrative portion of the progress report. The teacher shall also submit a cumulative folder of the student's work to the retention team.
2. **Final Determination:** The decision to retain shall be made during the fourth quarter, with plans for summer school or other interventions shared with the parent. Written permission from the parents for retention is not required; however, parents must be notified of the specific reasons for retention. Final notification must be made in writing and a meeting will be scheduled with the student's parents/guardians at least 30 working days prior to the close of school. In addition, the process for appeals must be included in the retention determination letter.

When a student is retained, a retention plan must be developed by the student's teacher. This retention plan will build upon the intervention plan, including areas not yet mastered. The receiving teacher may modify or add to the retention plan as the retention year proceeds based on student progress. The principal must review the retention plan and monitor the student's progress during the retention year. A copy of the retention plan shall be attached to the progress report and placed in the student's cumulative folder.

The final responsibility for promotion and retention decisions resides with the principal. However, the principal is responsible for ensuring that this decision is made within the context of the interventions and processes articulated below.

3. **Students with Disabilities:** For students with disabilities, promotion and retention shall be determined with consideration of the student's progress on annual goals in accordance with accommodations, and the impact of the disability as defined in the student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP).
4. **LEP Students:** For Limited English Proficient (LEP) students, promotion and retention decisions will involve the same factors that must be considered for all students. However, LEP students with English proficiency levels of 3 or below will not generally be considered for retention.

Retentions at Initial Placement

Sometimes, in order to place a student in the most appropriate academic setting, the equivalent of a retention is made at the English Learner Office at the time of entry. Initial retentions shall consider the same factors as all other retentions, contributing to a holistic determination of what is in the best educational interest of the student.

Notice to Parents of LEP Students

If neither parent/guardian of a student being considered for retention speaks English, all retention-related written and oral communications will be provided in the parents'/guardians' native language. Non-English speaking parents/guardians should have the same opportunity for input, and receive the same level of communication from the school regarding the student's progress as English speaking parents/guardians.

D. Final Authority and Appeals

Promotion and retention decisions which require further review or are contested by parents/guardians must be submitted in writing to the Elementary or Secondary Executive Director of Instruction. The process for appeals must be included in the retention determination letter from the school.

Established: November 17, 2003

Revised: June 23, 2016

Cross Refs.:	IKC	Grading
	IKC-R	Regulations Governing the Grading Policy
	IKE	Academic Promotion and Retention
	IKEB	Acceleration

Appendix I**RETENTION INFORMATION GATHERING**Information Gathering: Educators

1. Classroom performance
2. Ability to work independently
3. Frequency and accuracy of responses
4. Quality and accuracy of class work
5. Knowledge and skill depth and breadth
6. Time and work management skills
7. Study skills
8. Problem-solving, decision-making skills in comparison with age peers
9. Self-evaluation skills
10. Choices in independent activities
11. Relationship to age peers and adults

Information Gathering: Parents

1. Perceived academic strengths and limitations
2. Past patterns of achievement or underachievement
3. Motivation for learning
4. Study skills and habits
5. Work and management skills
6. Ability to work independently
7. Attitudes toward school and learning
8. Level of maturity and emotional stability
9. Interest areas of the child
10. Relationships with peers and adults