

Grade Retention and Social Promotion

Grade Retention: retaining a student at his/her current grade level due to poor achievement; and

Social Promotion: promoting a student to the next grade level despite poor achievement at his/her current grade level;

are practices intended to support students who struggle with academic and behavioral challenges that often yield limited success.

The Catholic Schools Office does not recommend the practice of grade retention.

Best practice for a student struggling with academic and behavioral challenges that interfere with his/her ability to learn is **early identification** of those challenges, so the student **receives assistance quickly** to experience **successful outcomes**.

Gather and analyze all information and data relevant to the struggling student to determine a systematic approach for addressing his/her challenges. Then design an action plan of interventions and supports to address his/her specific academic and behavioral challenges which includes but is not limited to:

- supportive classroom atmosphere
- positive relationship between student and teachers/school staff
- positive approach to the code of conduct and disciplinary infractions
- positive behavior interventions and supports
- core instruction targeting essential standards
- assessments (formative and summative) that identify what the student knows and can do in regard to the essential standards
- academic interventions that address the student's gaps with the essential standards
- progress monitoring to track progress and adjust instruction
- differentiated instruction
- best evidence-based practices
- interventions that utilize the student's strengths
- strategies to improve the 8 key executive functions of the brain* (self-regulating skills)
- consideration for negative impact caused by one or more of the 10 ACES** (Adverse Childhood Experiences)

Steps to follow when a student exhibits any academic and/or behavioral challenge:

1. Present as a case to the Building Level Support Team.
2. Meet with parents as soon as a challenge is identified and continue meeting in frequent, regular intervals (e.g., every two to four weeks).
3. Design and implement an action plan of interventions and supports designed to address the student's specific academic and behavioral challenges as soon as they are apparent.
4. Revisit action plan regularly and adjust regularly to address student needs.

Steps to follow when grade retention is being recommended for a student exhibiting significant academic and/or behavioral challenge(s):

1. If a school chooses to recommend grade retention, the recommendation must include a written plan that specifically delineates what will be offered to the student the second time in that grade level that will be different than what the student received the first time. In other words, what will make the repeat successful in a way the first time was not? To simply repeat what was not successful is a poor use of time for the student and school.
2. A recommendation for grade retention must be appropriate and timely. Neither the first month of school nor the last week of school would be appropriate, each for a different reason.
3. Official recommendation for grade retention must be provided to parents/legal guardians in writing citing the rationale for the recommendation (observable and measurable) and must include the detailed plan for the following year in writing.

References

***8 Key Executive Functions of the Brain:**

1. Impulse control
2. Emotional control
3. Flexible thinking
4. Working memory
5. Self-monitoring
6. Planning and prioritizing
7. Task initiation
8. Organization

These align with the *National Student Standards: Mindsets & Behaviors for Student Success* of the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) - 6 mindsets and 3 categories of behaviors (learning, self- management, and social skills)

**** The 10 ACEs measured in the research conducted by the *Center for Disease Control* are:**

1. Physical abuse
2. Sexual abuse
3. Verbal abuse
4. Physical neglect
5. Emotional neglect
6. A family member who is depressed or diagnosed with other mental illness
7. A family member who is addicted to alcohol or another substance
8. A family member who is in prison
9. Witnessing a mother being abused
10. Losing a parent to separation, divorce, or death

Many other types of traumas such as natural disasters and community violence may also have an impact.

Resources

ASCA <https://www.schoolcounselor.org/>

Center on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Support <https://www.pbis.org/>

Pennsylvania Positive Behavior Support <https://papbs.org/>

SAS Portal <https://www.pdesas.org/>