

BURLINGTON SCHOOL DISTRICT PROCEDURE

PROCEDURE CODE G7PRAP: RETENTION AND ACCELERATION PROCEDURE

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Summary

Burlington School District will provide each student an opportunity to progress in a continuous growth pattern of academic achievement in harmony with normal chronological, intellectual, social, and emotional development. The District affirms academic excellence for students in our expectations for their learning, and that those expectations are defined by the curriculum standards adopted by the Vermont Agency of Education and the District in the core discipline areas of English/language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies.

Retention of students is generally an ineffective intervention, however, there are cases where it may allow students the necessary additional instructional time at a grade level to achieve the level of competency in skills that are essential for success at the next grade level. This [position statement from the National Association of School Psychologists](#) demonstrates the complexity of deciding whether or not a change of grade makes sense, and supports the reasons for which these changes are rare.

This procedure lays out the process for initiating a recommendation for Retention or Acceleration. Importantly, a student's teacher, parent/guardian, or principal can initiate the recommendation of Retention or Acceleration.

Definitions

Acceleration Refers to when a student completely bypasses an entire grade level, moving directly from one grade to two grades ahead (i.e., "skipping a grade").

Retention Refers to a student repeating an entire grade level, being enrolled in the same grade twice in two years.

Limit of Retention

A student should not be retained more than once in kindergarten through grade two, and never twice total in kindergarten through grade eight, unless approved by the superintendent or their designee.

Waiver of Retention/Acceleration Criteria under Special Circumstances

In the event of catastrophic illness, injury, or psychological trauma for a child, the school principal may waive promotion criteria for a child, provided that the incident has a demonstrated negative effect on the child's academic performance when compared to prior achievement. The school principal will notify the Superintendent or their designee of this action and the circumstances prompting the action.

Retention/Acceleration of Students Who are Disabled

Students with disabilities, as defined and identified by federal and state statutes and regulations, are subject to the promotion criteria appropriate to the student's age and grade placement unless the student's Individual Education Program (IEP), as developed by a duly assembled IEP committee, addresses and defines alternative learning goals and promotion standards.

Steps for Determining Retention or Acceleration

Step 1: Written notification to the principal

As early as possible, but no later than March 30, in writing, the teacher, school counselor, and/or case manager or parent/guardian makes the recommendation to the principal to consider a student for retention or acceleration. See below for the list of criteria for consideration. The principal then alerts the Director of Engagement (or the Coordinator of Enrollment).

Step 2: Convene a school-based planning meeting

Within 10 days of Step 1, the principal, assistant principal, or their designee convenes a planning meeting with the teacher, counselor, and case manager (if applicable). At that meeting, the team considers evidence for retention or acceleration. The team reviews the criteria for retention and determines whether or not the student meets the criteria. At the meeting, the meeting recorder takes meeting notes, using this [template](#), that respond to each criterion. This document is shared with all staff participating in the meeting. A member of the team will administer the [Light's Retention Scale \(retention only\)](#) and any other assessments to inform the process.

Step 3: Inform the parent/guardian of an upcoming meeting to consider retention or acceleration

After the school-based planning meeting (Step 2), the teachers or case manager should schedule a family meeting, informing the parent/guardian of the desire to discuss the possibility of retention or acceleration. This meeting should take place within two weeks of Step 2 and **no later than April 15th**. As part of this information:

- The parent/guardian is informed that assessments of their child may occur prior to the meeting to inform the process.
- The teacher asks the administrative assistant to schedule the meeting, which includes parent/guardian, teacher, principal, and case manager (if applicable).
- The administrative assistant calls the parent/guardian and mails home the principal's letter about retention/acceleration.
- For students potentially being retained in or skipping 5th or 8th grade, the receiving school must be invited to this meeting and involved in the decision-making.

Step 4: Meeting with parent/guardian

At the meeting, the team shares the reasoning for possible retention or acceleration, and listens to the parent/guardian's point of view. If consensus is reached, they make a decision. If no consensus is reached, they do not.

Step 5: Final decision

As early as possible, but no later than May 30, the principal makes the final decision, phones the parent/guardian, and sends a letter with the decision. They also inform the teacher and other staff involved, and the Superintendent or their designee.

Step 5a: Directors of Special Services or Multilingual Learners

For any student who receives services through special education or as a multilingual learner, the Director of the appropriate department must sign off on a decision of retention.

Step 6: Parent/guardian appeal process

Up to two weeks prior to the start of the next school year, the parent/guardian may, in writing, appeal the decision to the superintendent. The superintendent's decision is final.

Criteria for Determining Retention or Acceleration

There are multiple factors to consider:

- A. Academic success as determined by available test data and educational records, including past academic performance and behavior
- B. Social/emotional/physical needs of the child
- C. Student attitude and motivation
- D. Parent/guardian attitude toward retention/acceleration
- E. Long-term effect of single or multiple-year retention or advancement on a child's chance of success
- F. Attendance record
- G. Recommendations of the special educator when a student is receiving special education services
- H. Other relevant information as provided by teachers, parents/guardians, or specialists both within and outside of the District (as well as current research on the topic)
- I. Responses to and score on Light's Retention Scale (retention only; see Step 2)

The following principles will be applied:

- A. The use of retention will be focused on the early primary grades, at which time research indicates it is most effective.
- B. Acceleration may be considered in rare cases after all enrichment opportunities have been thoroughly explored.
- C. Students may be promoted, retained, placed, or accelerated if it is expected that the action will be beneficial to the student socially, emotionally, academically, and when there are no other ways to meet the student's needs.
- D. When considering retention, such options as remediation in class or out, tutoring in class or after school, collaborative efforts with families, or summer school should be evaluated.

Clerical Information

<i>BSD Version:</i>	<i>BSD G7 Procedure Retention and Acceleration</i>
<i>Date Adopted:</i>	<i>8/4/26</i>
<i>Legal Reference(s):</i>	<i>Use the same legal references linked in the POLICY (N/A if there are none)</i>
<i>Policy Reference:</i>	<i>G7 Curriculum Coordination</i>