

**A. PURPOSE**

The board believes that students should progress to the next level of study only after they are proficient in their knowledge and application of the current curriculum level. To the extent reasonably possible, students should be given as much time or as little time as they need to be proficient at a particular level of study. Students will be promoted to the next level of study as described in this policy.

**B. STUDENT PROMOTION STANDARDS**

The superintendent shall develop (1) proposed promotion standards and (2) a process to be used in determining a student's readiness to progress to the next level of study and shall submit the standards and process to the board for approval. The standards will be based, in part, upon proficiency in reading. The standards and process must provide multiple criteria for assessing a student's readiness to progress to the next level of study, such as standardized test scores, formative and diagnostic assessments, grades, a portfolio or anthology of the student's work, and, when appropriate, accepted standards for assessing developmental growth. The standards and process will incorporate all state law and State Board of Education policy requirements, including those for the assessment and promotion of third grade students as described in G.S. 115C-83.6 *et seq.* and State Board of Education Policies KNEC-002 and -003.

Principals shall ensure that the promotion standards are used by teachers and school administrators in assessing each student's readiness to progress to the next level of study. Principals have the authority to promote or retain students based upon the standards approved by the board and any applicable standards set by the State Board of Education.

To reduce the number of students who do not meet promotion standards, the board directs school administrators and teachers to use personal education plans as required in policy 3405, Students at Risk of Academic Failure, to address the needs of students who are not making adequate academic progress.

**Promotion Requirements**

Students in grades K-12 must meet local Board of Education requirements in order to be promoted to the next grade. Promotion requirements as set by the Gaston County Board of Education are:

**K-5 Promotion Guidelines**

- The goal is to identify as early as possible students who are unlikely to meet the standards for progression to the next level of study so the school can provide appropriate interventions.
- Schools are responsible for the early identification of any student considered at risk of being retained in the current grade.
- By or before the end of the second grading period, students who are falling behind should be identified for possible retention and referred to the Multi-Tiered System of Support (MTSS) Team. Parents will be notified in writing at the time of the referral of the possibility of retention.
- Grade placement is the responsibility of the principal. Local decisions in grades K-5 shall be made by the principal with input from the MTSS Team, the student's teachers and parent/legal guardian.

**Promotion Requirements for Grades K-5**

In making retention and promotion decisions in grades K-5, the Gaston County Board of Education Requirements for Grades K-2 are:

- Student Reading Level
- General Report Card Performance
- Previous Retentions
- MTSS
- Available Standardized Test Data Including K-2 Assessment Data
- Ongoing Quarterly and Summative Assessments

In making retention and promotion decisions in grades K-5, the Gaston County Board of Education Requirements for Grades 3-5 are:

- Student Reading Level
- General Report Card Performance
- Previous Retentions
- MTSS
- Available Standardized Test Data
- Ongoing Quarterly and Summative Assessments
- Performance on State End-of-Grade (EOG) test(s): 3rd grade

In making retention and promotion decisions in grades K-5, the Gaston County Board of Education Requirements for Grade 3 are:

- Meet the requirements of Read to Achieve (RtA)
  - Proficient on the 3rd Grade Reading EOG
  - Proficient on the 3rd Grade Reading BOG
  - Achieve a Scale Score 725 on the i-Ready Diagnostic Assessment
  - mClass TRC Reading Level Q
  - Proficient on the Retest administration of the 3rd Grade Reading EOG
  - Good Cause Exemptions

**Promotion Requirements for Grades 6-8 are:**

- A student must pass 3 of 4 core academic subjects which must include math and language arts.
- Students should maintain a passing average in the combined yearly average of elective courses.
- A passing yearly elective course average qualifies as a core academic subject.
- A passing average in the elective classes may be substituted for a core academic subject other than math and language arts.

**Promotion Requirements for Grades 9-12 are:**

- To be a Sophomore- 6 units
  - To be a Junior- 13 units
  - To be a Senior- 20 units
  - To Graduate With a High School Diploma- 28 units\*
- \* A student must meet State and Local Graduation Requirements that are in place when he/she enters high school.

**C. APPEALS OF PROMOTION DECISIONS****1. Appeal to the Superintendent**

Within five workdays of receiving the principal's written decision to promote or retain a student, the student's parents may appeal the decision to the superintendent. The superintendent may overturn the principal's decision only upon a finding that the principal's decision was arbitrary and capricious (i.e., without a rational basis) or was otherwise an abuse of discretion.

The superintendent must render a decision within 10 workdays of receiving the appeal. The superintendent may support the principal's decision, remand it back to the principal for consideration of additional issues, or reverse the decision.

The superintendent's findings must be in writing and must be provided to the parents.

2. Appeal to the Board of Education

The superintendent's decision to promote or retain a student may be appealed to the board in accordance with the procedures set forth in subsection E.5 of policy 4030, Student and Parent Grievance Procedure.

**D. READING CAMPS**

The board will provide reading camp opportunities as required by law at no fee for students who have not yet demonstrated reading proficiency on a third grade level at the end of the student's third grade year. To the extent resources permit, the board will also offer reading camp opportunities to students who have successfully demonstrated reading proficiency appropriate for a third grade student. Annually, the board will establish criteria for priority enrollment in its reading camps. The superintendent shall notify interested parents of the application procedure for the reading camps.

**E. PROMOTION STANDARDS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

To the extent possible, students with disabilities must be held to the same promotion standards as all other students. However, for students who take alternative assessments in lieu of the end-of-grade (EOG) or end-of-course (EOC) tests, promotion decisions must be based on criteria recommended by the IEP team.

All intervention strategies and other opportunities, benefits, and resources that are made available to students without disabilities must be made available to those students with disabilities who are subject to the student promotion standards. Such opportunities must be in addition to the special education services provided to the student.

**F. CREDIT BY DEMONSTRATED MASTERY**

Beginning with the 2014-15 school year, the superintendent shall provide opportunities for students in grades 9 through 12 to earn course credit by demonstrating mastery of course material without first completing the regular period of classroom instruction in the course. Students in grades 6 through 8 may earn credit by demonstrated mastery for high school courses offered in middle school. To earn credit by demonstrated mastery, students must demonstrate a deep understanding of the content standards and application of knowledge through a multi-phase assessment, in accordance with standards established by the State Board of Education and any additional standards established by the superintendent.

**G. CREDIT RECOVERY**

Students who fail a high school course may retake parts of the course through credit recovery to earn credit for the course. Credit recovery delivers a subset of the blueprint of the original course in order to specifically address deficiencies in a student's mastery of the course and target specific components of a course necessary for completion. A pre-

assessment of the student's understanding of the course material will be administered at the beginning of the course and the credit recovery will be tailored to meet the needs of the individual student. The length of a credit recovery course is dictated by the skills and knowledge the student needs to recover and not a fixed length of seat time.

Any EOC exam associated with the credit recovery course will be administered no later than 30 days upon completion of the credit recovery course. The credit recovery will be graded as pass or fail and will not impact the student's grade point average. The original grade for the course will remain on the student's transcript.

The superintendent shall develop procedures addressing the implementation of credit recovery opportunities across the school system.

#### **H. ACCELERATION**

Some students may need less time to learn the curriculum. Teachers are encouraged to challenge these students by expanding the curriculum, providing opportunities to explore subjects in greater detail or providing different types of educational experiences.

The principal, after consulting with the professional staff and the student's parents, may determine that skipping a grade level is appropriate.

#### **I. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS**

##### **1. Superintendent's Report to the Board**

At least on an annual basis, the superintendent shall provide the board with the following information for each school:

- a. aggregate student performance scores on state-mandated tests and any other standardized tests used by a school or the school system;
- b. the number and percentage of students retained and/or not meeting the standards for their grade level;
- c. the number and percentage of third grade students exempt from mandatory third grade retention by category of exemption as listed in state law; and
- d. remedial or additional educational opportunities provided by the school system and the success of these efforts in helping students meet promotion standards.

##### **2. Report to the North Carolina State Board of Education and Department of Public Instruction**

Pursuant to statutory requirements and standards established by the Department of Public Instruction, all required information regarding student performance will be provided annually to the State Board of Education and the Department of Public Instruction.

3. Publication on the School System Website

Information about the reading performance of third grade students will be posted on the school system website in accordance with state law.

**J. RESOURCES**

Consistent with the objective of improving student performance, the board will provide schools with maximum flexibility in the allocation of state funds. School personnel are expected to budget financial resources in a manner that will meet the standards established in this policy. The board will consider requests to transfer funds from other funding allotment categories to intervention strategies as part of the school improvement plan submitted by school officials. All funds will be used in a fiscally sound manner in accordance with policy 8300, Fiscal Management Standards.

**K. NOTIFICATION TO PARENTS**

The superintendent or designee shall provide information regarding promotion standards to all students and parents. In addition, if a kindergarten, first grade, second grade, or third grade student (1) is demonstrating difficulty with reading development; (2) is not reading at grade level; or (3) has a personal education plan under G.S. 115C-105.41, the student's teacher shall provide the student's parents timely written notice advising that if the student is not demonstrating reading proficiency by the end of third grade, the student will be retained, unless exempt from mandatory retention for good cause. Parents are encouraged to help their children meet the promotion standards and will have opportunities to discuss the promotion standards and procedures with teachers and the principal. Information provided to parents should be in the parents' native language when appropriate foreign language resources are readily available.

The teacher of a student who does not meet promotion standards must notify the student's parents that the student has failed to meet the standards for progression to the next level of study and must provide the parents with information concerning retesting, intervention, review, and appeal opportunities. When a student is to be retained, the principal shall provide the student's parents written notice of the retention and, if the student will be retained in accordance with G.S. 115C-83.7(a) for failure to demonstrate reading proficiency, (1) written notice of the reason the student is not eligible for a good cause exemption as provided in G.S. 115C-83.7(b) and (2) a description of proposed reading interventions that will be provided to the student to remediate identified areas of reading deficiency. Teachers shall provide parents of students retained under G.S. 115C-83.7(a) at least monthly written reports on student progress toward reading proficiency. The evaluation of a student's progress will be based upon the student's classroom work,

observations, tests, assessments, and other relevant information.

**L. CHILDREN OF MILITARY FAMILIES**

As required by the Interstate Compact on Educational Opportunity for Military Children (G.S. 115C-407.5) and policy 4180, Assignment to Classes, school administrators have the authority to exercise flexibility in waiving course or program prerequisites or other preconditions for the placement of children of military families in courses or programs offered by the school system.

Legal References: G.S. 115C-36, -45(c), -47, -81, -83.2, -83.7, -83.8, -83.9, -83.10, -83.11, -105.21, -174.11, -288(a), -407.5; State Board of Education Policies GCS-J-002, GCS-J-003, GCS-M-001

Other Resources: *Guidelines for Testing Students Identified as Limited English Proficient*, (N.C. Department of Public Instruction), available at <http://www.dpi.state.nc.us/docs/accountability/policyoperations/lep/testinglep1314.pdf>; *North Carolina Read to Achieve: A Guide to Implementing House Bill 950/S.L. 2012-143 Section 7A* (N.C. Department of Public Instruction), available at <http://www.dpi.state.nc.us/docs/k-3literacy/resources/guidebook.pdf>

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