

**Cambridge Public Schools
Administrative Guidelines and Procedures**

PROMOTION AND RETENTION

Parents/guardians/caregivers, teachers, administrators, and other adults involved in the education of students of the Cambridge Public Schools (“CPS”) share responsibility for creating an atmosphere of success in student performance and achievement. CPS also requires that every student meet their responsibilities within the school community that include but are not limited to: daily attendance, punctuality, completion of assignments, cooperation with peers and adults, and demonstration of a good work ethic.

Promotion from one grade level to another is based upon a student's personal, social, educational, and physical development. Educational growth is measured against standards of academic achievement aligned with Massachusetts Curriculum Frameworks. Each student’s progress in relation to achievement standards will be measured, monitored, and regularly communicated to parents/guardians/caregivers.

In accordance with the Cambridge School Committee Promotion and Retention Policy, these guidelines and procedures utilize a variety of criteria to determine placement for students who do not meet grade level expectations. CPS is committed to:

- clear standards of achievement;
- ongoing review of student learning;
- intervention and support plans to create multiple opportunities for success; and
- discussions among the adults responsible for a student’s education.

All schools will use a consistent protocol when making promotion or retention recommendations. The School’s Student Support Team (“SST”) will develop an intervention and support plan for any student considered for retention. In the case of a student with disabilities, the student’s Individualized Educational Program (“IEP”) Team will be the decision-making group. The decision to promote or retain a student shall be made by the principal or designee, in consultation with the student’s family, teachers, SST and/or IEP Team.

At the elementary level, should the student’s parent/guardian/caregiver disagree with the school’s decision, the principal or designee will write a letter to be placed in the student’s cumulative record attesting to their recommendation while allowing the parent/guardian/caregiver to have the final decision. At the secondary level, the accrual of appropriate credits determines the student’s status of grade enrollment unless otherwise determined by their IEP Team’s findings.

Criteria for Promotion or Retention

Students are expected to fulfill certain requirements in order to be promoted to the next grade. To do so, student must:

- demonstrate social, emotional, and intellectual growth;
- meet grade-level standards of expected student achievement; and
- maintain good attendance.

CPS will establish, maintain, review, and revise standards against which a student's success is measured and monitored over time. These standards will include certain district benchmarks at each grade level cluster. Additional indicators that may be used when considering promotion or retention of a student include the student's:

- age;
- communication skills;
- physical size;
- previous grade retentions;
- transiency;
- record of school attendance;
- history of learning disabilities;
- present level of academic achievement;
- motivation to complete school tasks; and
- attitude about possible retention.

Supporting At-Risk Students

Research demonstrates that retention can have a negative effect on student achievement. Instead of debating the merits of retention, however, the emphasis should be on effective strategies to support at-risk students. In some cases, retention may be appropriate. It is the responsibility of educational leaders to understand the intervention strategies necessary to promote student success and implement them within their schools and community.

The guidelines set forth in this document require that CPS establish consistent criteria upon which to measure a student's progress. It also requires that certain procedures be put in place so that student achievement is reviewed in an ongoing manner, that intervention and support plans are put in place when needed, and that progress is monitored. Finally, the guidelines require that a student's parents/guardians/caregivers be informed about their progress early and often and that they are part of the planning process.

Teachers and school administrators work most directly with students, understand their needs, and are in the best position to make recommendations that will have the greatest impact on a student's success. With this responsibility comes accountability for monitoring support efforts for the student and communicating the results to the student, their parents/guardians/caregivers, and district administrators.

Student Support Teams

Student Support Teams (SST) provide support to teachers as they develop alternatives for students experiencing academic, behavioral, or social difficulties in the general education classroom. Each SST is school-based and uses a collaborative problem-solving approach to

ensure that the needs of students who are experiencing such difficulty in school are identified and that an array of solutions and intervention efforts shall be implemented. In addition, the support of curriculum specialists, counselors, administrators, and community agencies will provide peer assistance to their colleagues and offer suggestions for better utilization of resources and staff time.

Using a clear process, the SST gathers data on the student, the teacher requests a meeting, members gather information and make observations, and the SST generates intervention and support plans for the student. CPS will require a SST Intervention Plan for any student identified as at risk of not meeting grade-level standards and benchmarks. The plan describes the assistance and instruction that must be available to the student in order to support achievement. All of the following parties must be aware both of the criteria for promotion or retention and of the intervention options, and they must all take part in the discussion and decision-making process:

- the student's classroom teacher(s)
- the principal or designee;
- the parents/guardians/caregivers of the student;
- support staff; and
- the student, *if at the high school level.*

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education also requires an Individual Student Success Plan for any student who has scored below level two (2) on the English Language Arts or Mathematics assessments of the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System ("MCAS") to support the student's mastery of the skills and knowledge needed to meet state performance standards.

The manner in which support is delivered for individual students is flexible. The activities may be a part of a student's regular coursework during the school day, may include changes in the student's schedule, classes, or other support, and/or may include after-school or summer programs.

Plans will be developed in collaboration with the student's parents/guardians/caregivers. In the case of a student who is being considered for retention, the principal or designee, in consultation with the SST or IEP Team, may require the student's attendance in a support program as a condition of their promotion to the next grade.

Copies of SST Intervention Plans will be kept in a student's cumulative record. Oversight for the completion, implementation, and monitoring of SST Intervention Plans is the responsibility of the principal or designee.

Students with Individualized Education Programs

Students with IEPs or 504 Accommodation Plans should not be referred to a SST or discussed at any SST meetings. Concerns regarding the academic progress of special education students must be addressed through the IEP Team process. Teachers and parents/guardians, should contact the

student's IEP liaison, school psychologist, or Team Chairperson to reconvene the IEP Team or 504 Team, as applicable.

The IEP Team has a variety of options available to them, including but not limited to: amending the IEP with respect to goals, objectives/benchmarks, and/or service delivery, or requesting an IEP Team re-evaluation. As in the development of all IEPs, the review of any IEP should include a discussion of all relevant performance measures, including state and district-wide assessments, individualized test scores, classroom work samples, portfolios, and/or other performance measures as determined by the IEP Team.

Additionally, the IEP Team is charged with the responsibility of addressing the "transitional service needs" of students with disabilities. The concept of promotion is an integral component of the student's transitional plan. Special education laws mandate specific procedural safeguards concerning the documentation and notice of IEP Team meetings as well as the summary of the IEP Team's findings and recommendations. This document is maintained in the student's file with the Office of Special Education.

Similarly, the 504 Team has a variety of options available to them, including but not limited to, amending the 504 Plan or referring the student for an IEP evaluation, if appropriate. All documentation with respect to the 504 Team process are maintained in the student's file with the Office of Student Services.

Policy references: IKE

Last updated: July 12, 2023