



POUDRE SCHOOL DISTRICT

Retention Guidelines

Rationale: Poudre School District is committed to the academic success of every student. To that end, the professionals responsible for instruction are obligated to examine their instructional practices and students' responses to instruction within a professional learning community framework. When a student's academic progress is of concern, the school and instructional teams must first analyze the effectiveness of tier one/universal instruction that the student is receiving. This must occur prior to the implementation of tier two interventions.

When a student's academic progress continues to be a concern, the school has an obligation to ensure that effective interventions at the tier two and/or three levels are systematically implemented to support student success with grade level standards. Additionally, the school is required to ensure fidelity of the intervention plan using the Problem Solving Process within a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) framework. Prior to retention being considered, every intervention needs to be documented and exhausted outlining the academic/behavior plan to address the specific needs of the student at the tier one/universal level, tier two and three levels of intervention and academic/behavior supports, while maintaining strong parent communication and partnerships.

Research studies have consistently shown that grade-level retention is not an effective intervention for students who are struggling academically and/or behaviorally. Furthermore, longitudinal studies have revealed negative outcomes in a variety of areas for students who have been retained related to academic and/or behavioral difficulties. Multiple studies have shown negative outcomes including: short-term academic gains that are not maintained over time; higher drop-out rates; poor social adjustment; negative attitudes toward school; more problem behaviors than grade-level peers; and lower academic achievement than grade-level peers. Therefore, it is the belief of Poudre School District that retention should be used sparingly and only in situations in which there is a clearly defined plan, including specific interventions and support related to the area(s) of concern.

Purpose: The student retention guidelines and procedures are to assist the student's educational team in making an evidence-based, well-informed decision related to retaining or promoting a student with academic and/or behavioral concerns.

Each referral for retention will be considered on an individual basis and documented through the MTSS process. Please refer to PSD MTSS/Problem Solving Process Flowchart.

Professional Learning Community

1. Prior to a request to meet with the school MTSS, the student's teacher should meet with the grade-level/content area Professional Learning Community (PLC) to ensure effectiveness of Tier One/Universal level instruction via the following:
 - Analyze individual student data
 - Define the problem/area(s) of concern
 - Identify universal level instructional changes, supports and/or accommodations to address the area(s) of concern in order for the student to meet grade level standards
 - Document and collect data related to student's progress as a result of universal instructional changes, supports and/or accommodations
 - **Continually update and gather feedback from parents. Document communications. Ensure this is done in the family's primary language.**
 - Continually review and refine universal level instruction, support and/or accommodations based on the student's response to tier one universal instruction.

2. If concerns persist, the student's teacher and PLC will do the following:
 - Review student's work/data in relation to the goal(s) established
 - **Request consultation/support from the district ELD Program Specialist if the student is an English Language Learner**
 - Adjust universal plan accommodations and academic supports for student success relative to grade level standards
 - Continue to document and collect data
 - Continually update and gather feedback from parents. Document communications. Ensure this is done in the family's primary language.
 - Continually review and refine universal instruction, supports and/or accommodations based on student's response to instruction

Student Success Team Meetings

3. If concerns persist following adjustments to universal instruction, accommodations, and academic supports as identified through the grade-level/content area PLC meetings, the student will be referred to the MTSS team. The following will be included in the MTSS meeting:
 - Identify student's strengths and area(s) of concern based on data collection (standardized assessments, formative assessments, classroom performance, behavioral documentation, linguistic & cultural information)
 - Data collected on the efficacy of academic/behavioral accommodations and supports implemented at the universal level which address area(s) of concern and support the student in meeting grade level standards
 - Data collected on the efficacy of targeted intervention(s) at the tier two level related to the area(s) of concern
 - Health-related and/or attendance issues
 - Benchmarks and progress monitoring data related to academic and/or behavioral functioning
 - Parent feedback/observations

4. If additional interventions and/or supports are implemented as a result of the MTSS meeting, the student's progress will continue to be monitored and a follow-up MTSS meeting will be scheduled. In addition, the MTSS will continually monitor the student's response to the intervention(s) and adjust the intervention(s) by intensity, frequency, and/or duration relative to how the student is responding based on academic/behavioral growth.
5. The student's educational team will request a follow-up meeting with the MTSS by January 15th to review the body of evidence for any child being considered for retention. This is considered a "check in date" to determine the efficacy of current intervention(s) relative to supporting the student in meeting grade level standards. Parents are to be informed and invited to attend MTSS meetings.
6. If the team is considering retention after multiple interventions and accommodations have been implemented with fidelity with the student's progress monitored over time, a standardized instrument such as the Light's Retention Scale (LRS) will be used to obtain additional information.
7. The student's educational team (teachers, parents, and relevant staff) will review the body of evidence related to the area(s) of concern as well as research related to retention. The team will make a recommendation to either retain or promote the student.
8. If the student's educational team recommends retaining the student, they will provide a rationale for the retention and how the retention addresses the area(s) of concern. If there is a disagreement among the student's educational team regarding retaining the student, the results of the LRS will be used as a guide in reaching an agreement.
9. The student's educational team will discuss the programming associated with the retention and an academic/behavior plan will be revised and updated to support the student's needs for the remainder of the current school year as well as the following school year. The plan must include what will be different for the student versus a repeat of the current curriculum.
10. Retention of a student receiving special education must go through the student's Individual Education Plan (IEP) Team.
11. **The retention process for a student who is an English Language Learner must include the district ELD Program Specialist. Any retention of an EL must be approved by the Director of Language, Culture & Equity.** Federal law is clear that no child who is an English Learner should be retained where one or more of the four domains of language is the reason for the retention. Every EL must be provided access to grade level content through thoughtful differentiation. If this is not provided or provided adequately, it could impact the retention process or the triggers towards retention.
 - *Lau vs Nichols: Equity of Educational Opportunity is not achieved by merely providing all students with "the same facilities, textbooks, teachers and curriculum; (because) students who do not understand English are effectively foreclosed from any meaningful education." All English Language Learners are entitled to equal access to the core curriculum and the curriculum must be made comprehensible to ELLs.*

- **1983 Office of Civil Rights:** *“It is our policy to find a violation of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 if Limited English Proficient students are retained grade for failure to demonstrate basic skills in English.”*

12. The principal shall review each individual case and take into account parents’ desires related to retention. The principal shall ensure compliance with the above procedures before approving retention. If the principal approves retention, the student’s educational plan will be signed by the educational team (including parents) and placed in the student’s cumulative school file.

As stated in CRS 22-33-104(1) (d), a parent of a child who began attending preschool or kindergarten at age five or six years of age may notify the child’s school of the parent’s wish that the child not advance to first grade in the following school year, and a school that receives such a notice shall not advance the child to first grade in the following school year.

In cases when parents request retention and the request is contrary to the recommendation of the student’s educational team, the parents shall sign a memo indicating their desire/request.

A follow-up MTSS meeting will be scheduled on the student by October 1st of the following school year to review the educational plan and the student’s progress. Specific plans will be made at that time to continue to monitor the student’s academic/behavioral growth.

COVID-19 Response to Retention

1. Our PSD stance is that we do not believe grade retention is necessary due to COVID. For the following reasons:
 - a. All children experienced an interruption in learning.
 - b. Our current systems are designed to address our students’ academic and social/emotional needs.
 - c. Current research points to negative effects of grade level retention.

If necessary, we will follow the retention processes outlined above for individual cases. The timeline above will be adjusted for the 2020-21 school year to be responsive to data collection throughout the spring.