

3rd GRADE TO 4th GRADE PROMOTION AND RETENTION

Waunakee Community School District

Policy 345.41

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Effective Date of Policy; Initial Applicability

The effective date of this policy is July 1, 2025

The District will first apply the promotion criteria specified in this policy to 3rd grade students on *September 1, 2027*. Beginning on such date, (1) the District will not promote a 3rd grade pupil to the 4th grade unless promotion is indicated by the criteria and process defined in this policy, and (2) this policy replaces any other promotion/retention criteria and procedures that were in place for 3rd grade students in prior District policies or guidelines.

Criteria for Promotion

Students who are completing 3rd grade will be eligible for **promotion** to 4th grade for the next school year, with any interventions, supports, and services that the student may be entitled to receive, if **any** of the following criteria are met:

1. The student is **not** identified for further individualized evaluation for possible retention using the screening process identified below **and** is also **not** a student with a disability whose individualized education program (IEP) includes the use of materially modified academic content and achievement standards in reading, math, or both.
2. Although screened and further evaluated for possible retention using the process and decision-making criteria identified below, the result of the individualized evaluation is a decision in favor of promotion to 4th grade.
3. The student has already been retained for at least one previous academic year in 5K or in any later grade **or** retaining the student would place the student in a grade/class that is two or more age cohorts younger than the age cohort applicable to the student's birthdate (using September 1 as the start of annual grade-level age cohorts).
4. Regarding students with disabilities under the IDEA:
 - a. If the student's IEP includes the use of materially modified academic content and achievement standards in reading, math, or both, then:
 - i. The student shall be eligible for promotion if either the student's IEP team or, if no such express decision is made by the IEP team, the District's Special Education Director upon a review of the student's IEP determines that **promotion** to 4th grade will be the appropriate setting for the student in the following year, considering relevant academic and non-academic factors, evidence-based practices, and the educational best interests of the student. Such students are **not** subject to the screening procedure or further evaluation and decision-making processes described in the next two sections of this policy unless the student's IEP so directs.
 - ii. Any decision to **retain** such a student shall be made by, or at least confirmed as being appropriate and consistent with the IEP by, the student's IEP team.

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- b. Except as otherwise required to comply with state or federal law, students with disabilities who do **not** have such modified content and achievement standards are subject to the same promotion criteria and the same screening and evaluation processes for possible retention as students without disabilities.

Identifying Students for Further Individualized Evaluation for Possible Retention

No later than promptly after the date of the school's second administration of the universal reading screener each school year, assigned staff shall identify 3rd grade students for further evaluation for possible retention if **one or more** of the following criteria apply to the student:

1. A licensed staff member involved in providing math or reading instruction to a student has made a direct referral due to a concern that the student may not be able to meet the promotion criteria established in this policy; **or**
2. The outcome of any universal screening reading assessment or diagnostic reading assessment taken during 3rd grade showed the student to be "at high risk."

Post-Screening Evaluation and Decision

For each student screened for further individualized evaluation for possible retention **and** who is **not** determined to be eligible for promotion under any of the other promotion criteria defined above, the District will further evaluate the student and make a promotion or retention decision.

1. **Process.** The Director of Elementary Curriculum & Instruction, shall establish procedures for the further evaluation of such students.
2. **Criteria for the Promotion/Retention Decision.** As determined under administrative procedures, a designated administrator or an assigned group/team of staff members will consider all relevant information about the student that is reasonably available and make a determination regarding promotion or retention. Such information includes applicable academic factors, relevant non-academic factors, evidence-based practices, and parent/guardian input. A 3rd grade student who is not otherwise eligible for promotion under this policy and who has been screened and individually evaluated for possible retention reaches eligibility for promotion if the assigned person (or group/team) concludes that **both** of the following apply:
 - a. The District **would** be able to provide the student with at least a realistic opportunity to (1) participate in the 4th grade general curriculum in a meaningful manner and (2) make more than negligible progress in reducing the gap(s) that exist between the student's present level of academic progress and grade-level standards (i.e., with a "realistic opportunity" meaning that it is reasonable to think that those academic outcomes would be possible, not that those outcomes are assured or even highly likely); **and**
 - b. The review of the student's overall circumstances did **not** clearly and convincingly demonstrate that **retention** with interventions would be **substantially more likely** to be

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in the student's educational best interests (e.g., it is the District's intent that a student will be deemed eligible for promotion in any reasonably close case).

3. **Parent Requests for Reconsideration.** If the student's parent(s) or guardian(s) disagree with a District decision reached under this section of this policy and believe that the applicable promotion and retention criteria have been incorrectly applied to their child, then the student's parent(s) or guardian(s) may request reconsideration. The final decision on reconsideration shall be made by the District Administrator and Director of Elementary Curriculum & Instruction. The initial decision will be modified only if, upon a review of all relevant and reasonably available information, the District concludes that the policy was applied incorrectly.

Eligibility for Promotion

Where this policy refers to a student reaching **eligibility for promotion**, it means that the student will be promoted **unless**, under extraordinary circumstances, the District and the pupil's parent(s) or guardian(s) mutually agree, notwithstanding the student being eligible for promotion, that retention (with appropriate and available interventions) is more likely to be in the overall best educational interests of the student, considering academic factors, non-academic factors, and evidence-based practices. The District Administrator and Director of Elementary Curriculum & Instruction may give final District approval to any retention decision that is based on such extraordinary circumstances **after** confirming that the parent(s) or guardian(s) are reasonably aware of (1) the available alternatives to retention (e.g., promotion with interventions and monitoring); and (2) the possible disadvantages of retention.

3rd Grade Students Promoted to 4th Grade without Completing Their Personal Reading Plan

If the District promotes a student from 3rd grade to 4th grade, but the student had a legally-mandated personal reading plan in place during 3rd grade that the student did not successfully complete (as completion is defined in state law), then, subject to limited exceptions, state law requires the District to do all of the following for the student:

1. Notify the student's parent or guardian, in writing, that the student did not complete the personal reading plan and include a description of the intensive instructional services and supports that will be provided to the student to remediate the identified areas of reading deficiency.
2. Provide the student with the applicable intensive instructional services and supports during 4th grade.
3. Monitor the student's progress with respect to the student's development of reading skills and the effectiveness of the services and supports.
4. As a further service/support, provide the student with an intensive summer reading program each summer until the student scores at grade-level in reading on a summative assessment. The student's parent(s) or guardian(s) may decline to have their child participate in any such summer reading program that is offered by the District.

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State law (in section 118.33(5m)(b)) allows, but does not require, the District to apply a “good cause” exception to providing the parent notification, services, supports, and progress monitoring listed above to the following students who would otherwise be eligible:

1. Students who are English Learners (defined for this purpose as a student whose “ability to use the English language is limited because of the use of a non-English language in his or her family or in his or her daily, non-school surroundings, and who has difficulty ... in performing ordinary classwork in English as a result of such limited English language proficiency”).
2. A student who has an individualized education plan (IEP) that indicates that neither taking the statewide 3rd grade standardized reading assessment nor taking the universal reading screening assessment or diagnostic reading assessments administered under state law is appropriate for the student.
3. A student who scores as proficient in reading on an alternative standardized assessment approved by Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction.
4. A student who has an IEP or a plan to provide accommodations or services under section 504 of the federal Rehabilitation Act that indicates that the pupil has received intensive intervention in reading for more than 2 years if the student continues to demonstrate a deficiency in reading **and** was previously retained in kindergarten, 1st, 2nd, or 3rd grade.
5. A student who has received intensive intervention in reading for 2 or more school years, continues to demonstrate a deficiency in reading, **and** was previously retained in kindergarten, 1st, 2nd, or 3rd grade for a total of 2 years.

A statutory exception will be applied to a student only when the District determines that doing so would be nondiscriminatory and educationally appropriate

Legal References:

Wisconsin Statutes

[Section 118.016\(1\)\(a\)](#)

[definition of “at risk” with respect to reading readiness assessments]

[Section 118.016\(5\)\(d\)](#)

[completion of a personal reading plan by a 3rd grade pupil]

[Section 118.15\(1\)\(d\)](#)

[parent requests for program and curriculum modifications]

[Section 118.24\(2\)\(a\)](#)

[district administrator authority to manage the promotion of students]

[Section 118.33\(5m\)](#)

[post-promotion service and support mandates for certain students promoted to 4th grade; good cause exceptions]

[Section 118.33\(6\)\(a\)](#)

[policy requirements for 3rd, 4th, and 8th grade promotion criteria]

[Section 118.33\(6\)\(cm\)](#)

[policy requirement for kindergarten to 1st grade promotion criteria]

Wisconsin Administrative Code

[Section PI 13.09\(1\)](#)

[limitations on using test results and test exemptions to make promotion and retention decisions for students with limited English proficiency]

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Cross References:

Policy #345.4 Promotion/Retention of Students

Policy # 345.4 Exhibit 1

Adoption Date: XXXX, 2025