



**Early Literacy Support and Student Retention Policy
Kindergarten to 6th Grade**

Policy Series: 4000 Curriculum, Instruction, Assessment

Policy No. TBD

Purpose

Provo City School District is committed to ensuring every student becomes a proficient reader by the end of third grade through early identification, evidence-based instruction, targeted intervention, and strong family partnerships.

The district will proactively identify students at risk for reading difficulties and provide timely support before retention is considered. Retention is a significant educational intervention and shall be used only after multiple layers of support have been implemented, monitored, and documented.

This policy and subsequent procedures establish a systematic process for early identification, Individual Reading Plans (IRPs), and retention decisions for students in Kindergarten through Grade 4.

Definitions

Individual Reading Plan: A written plan developed collaboratively by school personnel and a student's parent/guardian that identifies a student's specific literacy needs and outlines the evidence-based interventions, supports, progress-monitoring measures, and family partnership activities that will be implemented to help the student achieve grade-level reading proficiency. The plan shall be reviewed and revised after each benchmark assessment.

Retention: the decision for a student to remain in the same grade for an additional school year after careful consideration of the student's literacy achievement,

intervention history, and educational needs. Provo City School District prioritizes prevention over retention through early identification, timely intervention, and strong family partnerships to ensure students become proficient readers by the end of third grade. Retention is a rare and carefully considered educational intervention used only after multiple supports have been provided to give students additional time, instruction, and targeted support to build the foundational literacy skills needed for future success.

Benchmark assessment: a state and district-approved assessment administered at the beginning, middle, and end of the school year to measure students' literacy development and identify students who may need additional support. Benchmark reading assessments measure key literacy skills, including phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and reading comprehension, to determine whether a student is reading on grade level and progressing toward literacy goals.

Typical academic progress: a student demonstrates the expected amount of reading growth over time when compared to peers who began at a similar level of reading performance, as measured by Pathways of Progress on Acadience Reading Benchmark Assessment

Grade-level reading proficiency: A student's ability to demonstrate the foundational reading skills expected for their grade level, as measured by Acadience Reading benchmark assessments. Students who score At Benchmark or Above Benchmark are considered proficient and are on track to meet end-of-year reading expectations with effective core instruction.

Reading interventions: Targeted, evidence-based instructional supports provided in addition to core classroom instruction to help students develop specific reading skills and close identified learning gaps. Interventions are based on student data, focused on individual needs, and monitored regularly to evaluate progress.

Intensive reading interventions: A more frequent, explicit, and individualized level of support provided to students with significant reading difficulties or those who are substantially below grade-level expectations. Examples may include extended time (i.e. before or after school), smaller grouping, greater opportunities for response, more frequent progress monitoring.

Policy Structure

Section I: Early Identification and Parent/Guardian Partnership (K-3)

Section II: Individual Reading Plan (IRP)

Section III: Student Retention

SECTION I: Early Identification and Parent/Guardian Partnership (K-6)

The purpose of early identification is to recognize reading difficulties as soon as possible and provide immediate support. Schools shall use district-approved benchmark assessments to identify students needing additional support, notify parents/guardians, provide interventions, and monitor progress regularly. Schools will keep record of all benchmark parent notifications, IRP records, and progress monitoring reports in the student information system.

Kindergarten

Retention in Kindergarten may only be considered after extensive intervention and IRP team review.

Kindergarten Readiness Assessment

To support a successful transition to kindergarten and promote early literacy development, schools will administer a district-approved kindergarten readiness assessment to students prior to the beginning of kindergarten enrollment.

The assessment shall be offered early enough before the start of the school year to allow parents or guardians sufficient time to support the development of identified readiness skills before their child begins kindergarten.

After administration of the assessment, schools shall provide parents or guardians with:

1. Information regarding their child's performance and identified areas of strength and need;
2. Appropriate resource materials and strategies to support the development of kindergarten readiness and early literacy skills at home;
3. Information regarding available district and community supports and services; and
4. Information regarding the Individual Reading Plan (IRP) process and how early intervention and ongoing progress monitoring support student literacy development.

Assessment results shall be used to inform instructional planning and family support and shall not be used as the sole criterion for kindergarten enrollment, placement, or retention decisions.

Beginning of Year (BOY) Benchmark Assessment

Fall (October-November)

Schools shall conduct parent conferences for students who are below or well below benchmark.

Students scoring Below Benchmark or Well Below Benchmark at BOY shall:

- Receive immediate intervention support.
- Have parents notified within 45 days of the benchmark administration
- Participate in ongoing progress monitoring.
- Receive progress updates every 4-6 weeks.

Middle of Year (MOY) Benchmark Assessment

Winter (January-February)

Schools shall conduct parent conferences for students who remain below or well below benchmark.

Families shall receive written notification if students are at risk for possible retention.

Students scoring Below Benchmark or Well Below Benchmark at MOY shall:

- **Receive immediate intervention support.**
- **Have parents notified within 45 days of the benchmark administration**
- **Participate in ongoing progress monitoring.**
- **Receive progress updates every 4-6 weeks.**
- **Participate in an Individual Reading Plan (IRP).**

End of Year (EOY) Benchmark Assessment

Spring (March-April)

IRP teams (which include parent/guardian) shall review student progress and determine whether additional interventions or retention consideration are necessary.

Schools shall provide parents or guardians of students performing Below Benchmark or Well Below Benchmark with information regarding available summer learning opportunities and resources to support continued literacy development. Information may include district summer school programs, community resources, recommended reading activities, and strategies families can use at home to help students maintain and strengthen foundational reading skills.

Grades 1 & 2

Retention in 1st and 2nd grade may only be considered after extensive intervention and IRP team review.

Beginning of Year (BOY) Benchmark Assessment

Fall (October-November)

Schools shall conduct parent conferences for students who are below or well below benchmark. Students scoring Below Benchmark or Well Below Benchmark at BOY shall:

- Receive targeted literacy interventions.
- Participate in ongoing progress monitoring.
- Receive progress updates every 4-6 weeks.
- Continue participation or begin participating in an Individual Reading Plan (IRP) if already established in prior year

Middle of Year (MOY) Benchmark Assessment

Winter (January-February)

Schools shall conduct parent conferences for students who are below or well below benchmark. Students scoring Below Benchmark or Well Below Benchmark at MOY shall:

- Receive targeted literacy interventions.
- Participate in ongoing progress monitoring.
- Receive progress updates every 4-6 weeks.
- Continue participation or begin participating in an Individual Reading Plan (IRP) if already established in prior year

End of Year (EOY) Benchmark Assessment

Spring (March-April)

IRP teams (which include parent/guardian) shall review student progress and determine whether additional interventions or retention consideration are necessary.

Schools shall provide parents or guardians of students performing Below Benchmark or Well Below Benchmark with information regarding available summer learning opportunities and resources to support continued literacy development. Information may include district summer school programs, community resources, recommended reading activities, and strategies families can use at home to help students maintain and strengthen foundational reading skills.

Grade 3

Retention in 3rd grade may only be considered after extensive intervention and IRP team review. Beginning in 2030, students who are well below benchmark at EOY in 3rd grade shall be retained.

Beginning of Year (BOY) Benchmark Assessment

Fall (October-November)

Schools shall conduct parent conferences for students who are below or well below benchmark. Students scoring Below Benchmark or Well Below Benchmark at BOY shall:

- Receive targeted literacy interventions.
- Participate in ongoing progress monitoring.
- Receive progress updates every 4-6 weeks.
- Continue participation or begin participating in an Individual Reading Plan (IRP) if already established in prior year

Middle of Year (MOY) Benchmark Assessment

Winter (January-February)

Schools shall conduct parent conferences for students who are below or well below benchmark. Students scoring Below Benchmark or Well Below Benchmark at MOY shall:

- Receive targeted literacy interventions.
- Participate in ongoing progress monitoring.
- Receive progress updates every 4-6 weeks.
- Continue participation or begin participating in an Individual Reading Plan (IRP) if already established in prior year

End of Year (EOY) Benchmark Assessment

Spring (March-April)

IRP teams (which include parent/guardian) shall review student progress and determine whether retention is necessary. A third-grade student who is well below benchmark at the end of year shall be retained.

A third-grade student who does not meet the required end-of-year reading benchmark may be promoted to fourth grade if the student meets one of the good cause exemptions established in Utah Code and adopted by the Utah State Board of Education. Schools shall apply the exemptions as written in state law.

Good Cause Promotion Exemptions

1. The student scores below benchmark, but not well below benchmark, on the benchmark reading assessment and makes typical academic progress on the benchmark reading assessment;
2. The school provides intensive reading interventions during the summer between grade 3 and grade 4, and the student improves to at benchmark or above benchmark on a benchmark reading assessment that the school administers during the summer;

3. The student is an English learner with limited English proficiency and fewer than three years of instruction in an English language learner program;
4. The student has an IEP or Section 504 accommodation plan and if the student's IEP or Section 504 accommodation plan indicates that participation in the benchmark reading assessment is not appropriate, if the student has received intensive reading interventions for two or more years, or if the student has been retained in any of kindergarten or grades 1 through 3;
5. The student demonstrates an acceptable level of reading proficiency on an alternative standardized assessment that the LEA superintendent approves or by making above typical academic progress for multiple years on the benchmark reading assessment;
6. The student demonstrates through a student portfolio that the student is performing at an equivalent standard of proficiency based on other measures that the individualized reading plan determines;
7. The student still demonstrates a reading deficiency after receiving intensive reading interventions for two or more years and after having been retained in any of kindergarten or grades 1 through 3; or
8. The student moved to a school for or during grade 3 and had not previously received an individualized reading plan or received intensive reading interventions previously.

Schools shall provide parents or guardians of students performing Below Benchmark or Well Below Benchmark with information regarding available summer learning opportunities and resources to support continued literacy development. Information may include district summer school programs, community resources, recommended reading activities, and strategies families can use at home to help students maintain and strengthen foundational reading skills.

Grade 4th, 5th, 6th

Retention in 4th-6th grade is not recommended.

An IRP remains in place until a student meets benchmark or above benchmark while in elementary school

Beginning of Year (BOY) Benchmark Assessment

Fall (October-November)

Schools shall conduct parent conferences for students who are below or well below benchmark. Students scoring Below Benchmark or Well Below Benchmark at BOY shall:

- Receive targeted literacy interventions.
- Participate in ongoing progress monitoring.
- Receive progress updates every 4-6 weeks.

- Continue participation in an Individual Reading Plan (IRP) if already established in prior year

Middle of Year (MOY) Benchmark Assessment

Winter (January-February)

Schools shall conduct parent conferences for students who are below or well below benchmark. Students scoring Below Benchmark or Well Below Benchmark at MOY shall:

- Receive targeted literacy interventions.
- Participate in ongoing progress monitoring.
- Receive progress updates every 4-6 weeks.
- Continue participation in an Individual Reading Plan (IRP) if already established in prior year

End of Year (EOY) Benchmark Assessment

Spring (March-April)

IRP teams (which includes parent/guardian) shall provide parents or guardians of students performing Below Benchmark or Well Below Benchmark with information regarding available summer learning opportunities and resources to support continued literacy development. Information may include district summer school programs, community resources, recommended reading activities, and strategies families can use at home to help students maintain and strengthen foundational reading skills.

SECTION II: Individual Reading Plan (IRP)

The purpose of the IRP is to create a structured plan that identifies student needs, outlines interventions, and establishes shared accountability among school staff, families, and students. The IRP is created by a team of individuals with interest in student success and expertise in literacy.

IRP team members shall include classroom teacher, Local Education Agency (LEA) Representative with foundational knowledge in Science of Reading and district supported resources, parent, student (by parent requests), other teachers as appropriate (i.e. Special Education Teacher, Speech and Language Pathologist). If a student is being recommended for retention, the school team shall include the building principal.

IRP Eligibility

An IRP shall be developed for:

- Kindergarten students scoring Well Below Benchmark at MOY.

- Grade 1 students scoring Below Benchmark or Well Below Benchmark at BOY or MOY.
- Grade 2 students scoring Below Benchmark or Well Below Benchmark at BOY or MOY.
- Grade 3 students scoring Below Benchmark or Well Below Benchmark at any benchmark assessment.
- Any student in grades 4, 5 or 6 demonstrating significant reading deficiencies through multiple data sources.

Timeline

An IRP shall be developed within 45 school days of benchmark testing. Schools will keep record of all benchmark parent notifications, IRP records, and progress monitoring reports in the student information system.

Required Components

The IRP shall identify:

- Assessment results
- Specific literacy needs
- Literacy Goals for - Foundational reading skills, Fluency, Accuracy, and/or Reading comprehension
- Intervention Plan including:
 - Evidence-based instructional strategies
 - Frequency and duration of interventions
 - Personnel responsible for implementation
 - Progress-monitoring schedule

Family Partnership

Schools shall partner with families by providing:

- Home reading activities
- Progress updates
- Opportunities for collaboration

Progress Monitoring

Student progress shall be monitored every 4-6 weeks. The school team shall review student progress and adjust interventions as needed.

SECTION III: Student Retention Procedures

Retention is considered a significant intervention and shall be used only after documented evidence demonstrates that intensive supports have not produced adequate progress.

Retention shall never be based on a single assessment score and shall never come as a surprise to families. Schools will keep record of all benchmark parent notifications, IRP records, and progress monitoring reports in the student information system. Students may only be retained one time during their elementary school experience.

Step 1: Early Notification

Students demonstrating significant reading deficiencies shall be identified early and parents shall be notified.

Notification shall include:

- Student reading performance
- Areas of concern
- Interventions being provided
- Available supports

Step 2: Retention Watch List

Schools shall establish a retention watch list for students demonstrating persistent reading deficiencies.

Students may be placed on the watch list beginning:

- Kindergarten: MOY or EOY
- Grade 1: BOY or MOY or EOY
- Grade 2: BOY or MOY or EOY
- Grade 3: BOY or MOY or EOY

Placement on the watch list does not indicate retention will occur but signals a need for intensified support.

A student should be placed on the watchlist for the following reasons:

1. Student is below benchmark and not making at least typical progress
2. Student is well below benchmark and is not making above or well above typical progress

Step 3: Required Documentation Prior to Retention Consideration

Before retention may be considered, schools shall document:

- Benchmark assessment results
- Diagnostic assessment results, when applicable
- Progress-monitoring data
- Intervention history
- Individual Reading Plan implementation

- Parent communication
- Attendance patterns
- Student growth trends

Step 4: Retention Review Team

Schools shall convene a Retention Review Team before any retention recommendation is made.

The team shall include:

- Principal (chair)
- Classroom teacher
- Reading interventionist (i.e. Title I Coordinator or Instructional Coach)
- Parent or guardian
- Additional support personnel, as needed

The team shall review all available information and determine whether retention is an appropriate intervention, considering typical or better progress of students in reading skills.

Step 5: Retention Decision Factors

The team shall consider:

Academic Data

- Benchmark assessments
- Diagnostic assessments
- Progress-monitoring data
- Classroom performance

Intervention Data

- Frequency and duration of interventions
- Student response to intervention
- Fidelity of implementation

Student Factors

- Attendance
- Social-emotional development
- Developmental readiness
- Language acquisition needs
- Special education considerations

Family Input

Parents shall be active participants throughout the decision-making process.

Step 6: Parent Notification and Appeal

Schools shall provide written notification prior to any final retention decision.

The notice shall include:

- Reason retention is being recommended
- Data reviewed
- Interventions provided
- Available supports
- Appeal procedures

Parents may appeal a retention recommendation in writing to the principal within 10 school days.

Appeals shall be reviewed by a district-level team.

Step 7: Support Following Retention

Students retained shall receive an individualized Reading Success Plan that includes:

- Regular evidence-based literacy intervention (3-5 days a week)
- Monthly progress monitoring
- Family communication every 4-6 weeks
- Student goal setting
- Celebration of growth and progress

Retention alone is not an intervention. Students retained shall receive additional instructional supports beyond repeating the same instructional experience.

Step 6: Parent Appeal Procedure

Parents/guardians have the right to appeal a school recommendation to retain a student. The purpose of the appeal process is to ensure all available information has been considered and that retention decisions are made in the best educational interest of the student.

Timeline

Parents/guardians must submit a written appeal within 10 school days of receiving the school's written retention recommendation.

Appeals shall be submitted to the school principal.

The written appeal shall include:

- Student name and grade level
- Reason(s) for the appeal
- Any additional information or supporting documentation the family would like considered

Examples of supporting documentation may include:

- Outside evaluations
- Medical information
- Attendance circumstances
- Evidence of progress outside of school

- Other relevant information

District Retention Appeal Committee

Upon receiving an appeal, the principal shall forward all documentation to the District Retention Appeal Committee. The committee shall convene within 10 school days of receiving the appeal.

The committee may include:

- Assistant Superintendent of Elementary Education (or designee)
- Director of Continuous School Improvement (or designee)
- School principal
- Literacy specialist or instructional coach
- Additional district personnel, as appropriate

The student's classroom teacher may be consulted but shall not serve as the sole decision-maker.

Information Reviewed During the Appeal

The committee shall review all available information, including:

Student Performance Data

- Benchmark assessment results
- Diagnostic assessment results
- Progress-monitoring data
- Classroom performance

Intervention Data

- Individual Reading Plan (IRP)
- Intervention frequency, duration, and fidelity
- Student response to intervention

Student Factors

- Attendance
- Social-emotional development
- Developmental readiness
- English language acquisition needs
- Special education eligibility or services

Family Information

- Parent concerns
- Additional documentation submitted by the family
- Extenuating circumstances

Appeal Meeting

Parents/guardians shall be offered an opportunity to participate in an appeal meeting, either in person or virtually.

The meeting shall:

- Review the student's data and interventions.
- Provide parents an opportunity to share additional information.
- Discuss available support options.

- Determine whether retention remains the most appropriate educational decision.

Final Decision

Within five school days following the appeal meeting, the District Retention Appeal Committee shall provide written notification of its decision.

The decision shall include:

- The final determination
- The rationale for the decision
- Recommended supports for the upcoming school year

The decision of the District Retention Appeal Committee shall be final. Retention decisions shall prioritize student success, rely on multiple sources of evidence, and include meaningful family participation throughout the process.

Legal References

[SB241](#)

Board Approved: