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513.1 PROCEDURES FOR PUPIL RETENTION AND ACCELERATION

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of these procedures is to ensure that all students are placed in a setting most appropriate for continuity and continuous progress in their learning.

II. GENERAL STATEMENT

The desire of the school district is to challenge all learners and by these procedures establish a method for students who are unable to engage in optimal learning within their current classroom placements. Many reasons may cause a student not to be engaged in learning in a classroom, including previous mastery of the material, missing prerequisite material, and a variety of other circumstances.

III. DEFINITIONS

“Retention” is defined as an educational practice that results in a student repeating a grade or a class or taking more than the allotted time to complete a grade or class.

“Acceleration” is defined as “an educational practice that results in a student completing a school program in less than the commonly allotted time.”

Grade acceleration is skipping one or more grades.

Split acceleration is placing talented students in a single content area into a higher-grade level for one or more subject areas.

In practice, the Mahtomedi School District only retains or accelerates students in exceptional circumstances. Reasons for retention could include age, injury, or any other factors that would indicate that retention would benefit the student.

IV. PROCESS FOR RECOMMENDATION OF ACCELERATION OR RETENTION

The process for considering a student for grade acceleration or retention may be initiated by the principal, a staff member, or a parent.

A preliminary data-gathering conference with the Building Assessment Team will be held to determine if the student is a strong candidate for retention or acceleration and to plan how to implement procedures.

The Building Assessment Team will include the following school personnel: principal; current year's classroom teacher; previous year's classroom teacher; the gifted coordinator (for acceleration only); psychologist; and other specialists as deemed necessary by the building principal.

Prior to a Building Assessment Team conference, the gifted coordinator and special education staff members (for acceleration) or special education teacher (for retention) will conduct interviews with the current year's classroom teacher, student, and parents.

The Building Assessment Team will determine if any additional information is needed. Parent permission is mandatory for any further testing.

A. Acceleration

Possible assessment and other considerations for acceleration will include the following:

- An intellectual ability evaluation by the school psychologist.
- An individual achievement test(s) by school personnel.
- Psychologist or other specialist should determine the social/emotional readiness of the student.
- The child should not show any serious social or emotional adjustment problems other than problems that can be attributed to a lack of academic challenge.
- The child should possess a high degree of persistence and motivation for acceleration.
- The students should not feel unduly pressured to advance a grade, but want to make the move themselves.
- The consideration for acceleration will be sensitive to underrepresented groups, including, but not limited to, low-income, minority, twice-exceptional, and English learners.

The following criteria should serve as a guideline for determining if a recommendation for grade acceleration is appropriate:

- A high level of achievement should be present in most areas of the curriculum with special emphasis placed upon reading, writing, and mathematics.

- An intellectual ability screening should indicate ability that is two standard deviations above the norm. An achievement test should indicate that the student is at the 98th percentile or above in more than one curriculum area.
- The social and emotional maturity of the student should be stable.
- The interest and motivation of the student to be accelerated must be present.

The following criteria should serve as a guideline for determining if a recommendation for acceleration in one or more courses is appropriate:

- The student is scoring at the 98th percentile on an achievement test in the particular subject.
- A high level of achievement in the subject as indicated by previous grades.
- The social and emotional maturity of the student must be considered.
- The interest and motivation of the student to be accelerated must be considered.

B. Retention

The committee should consider the following factors before retaining a child:

- The child is younger than his or her classmates.
- The child has missed a considerable amount of school due to illness or accident.
- The child would benefit from retention.
- The child's parents are in favor of retention.
- The child is not opposed to retention.

If acceleration or retention is determined to be an appropriate option, the following procedures should be followed:

- The receiving and sending teacher will be a part of all acceleration or retention planning.
- A support plan for the student, parent, and receiving teacher will be created which will include an opportunity to become familiar with the material that will be skipped or repeated and teachers receive instruction

in areas where a deficit has been determined. This plan will become part of the student's permanent record.

- A time line for transition will be established. The optimum time for retaining or accelerating a student is at the beginning of a new school year.
- The grade advancement or retention should be arranged on a trial basis, preferably six weeks after which the student or parent should have the right to request a return to the original grade or class.

If acceleration is not determined to be appropriate, an individual learning plan to provide for the student's talents within the current grade level will be written.

If retention is not determined to be appropriate, an individual educational plan to provide for the student's remediation needs within the current grade level will be written.

Parent permission for testing is mandatory. Possible assessments for retention will include:

- An individual ability test.
- An individual achievement test.
- A physician's report if appropriate.

Following the assessments and building conferences, the Building Assessment Team will recommend for or against acceleration or retention. The decision will be made by the Building Assessment Team and may be appealed to the Director of Teaching and Learning.

Legal References: Minn. Stat. § 120B.15 (Gifted and Talented Students Programs)