

Details on Class Retention Policy- 7th / 8th Grade

At the end of the school year, I met with the 7th and 8th grade teachers as they presented a proposal to restructure our current policy of "Failure is Not an Option." As this current policy has been in place it left some gaps that were not being addressed, especially at the 7th and 8th grade level. Their proposal was very well thought out and addressed the issue head on as they are seeing a number of our students failing one or more classes thus either needing it to be made up in credit recovery and/or greatly reducing the student's chances of success at the high school level, 9-12, as the state requires the student to meet credit requirements. Along with this, students have been taking the attitude that they do not need to pass the class as they can just make it up in credit recovery.

Their proposal is this:

A class retention policy for the 7th and 8th grades where any student who fails a semester of a core academic class (including math, English, science and social studies) will be required to repeat the failed semester of the class in the subsequent academic year.

Credit recovery will no longer be offered to 7th or 8th grade students.

My building administration met so we could flesh out how this proposal would be implemented and to bring in some safety measures so we can be assured that we as a school are doing everything we can in order to help our students who find themselves in this situation. It is well understood that the state does not focus on 7th and 8th grade as the requirement for graduating from a high school is the completion of the required credits in the 9th through 12th grades. I am being honest as I did have a concern in two areas:

1. Can we handle a number of students failing in one year and then requiring them to complete it the following year.
2. Are we addressing the ELL student numbers and their abilities with language acquisition and use in the academic setting?
3. The State of Minnesota does not have a strong accountability setting for students and places most of that load upon the school district- in other words we are limited in what we can do as a school district to keep students accountable.

I believe we have a strong proposal with a set procedure in place. I believe that it will take three or four years before we start to see some positive progress as this is a new policy and students will need time to fully grasp the magnitude of the policy. We have limited the numbers of students that would qualify for this policy to be enacted as we do need to be concerned with scheduling the next year as we do not have the capacity to accommodate a large number of students who may qualify. We will also need to make adjustments as we move forward as we will need to address issues that may arise. The real focus initially will be the communication with parents as they will need to be made aware of this as the school year starts. We will also be keeping data in order to make adjustments to this policy as it progresses.

The details of the implementation are as follows:

1. The focus for this policy will be those students in English, Science, Math and Social Studies classes.
2. We will be limiting the number of students affected by the policy to 15 students in each grade- those being at the lowest grade level.
3. Protocols will need to be in place in order to identify, early on, those students who potentially could fail the semester and subsequently communicate with the parents as soon as possible, the concerns from the classroom teacher.
4. We will be creating a study hall for those students who are currently failing- opportunity for them to focus on bringing their grades up. We will be trying to focus on the 6th and 7th hour for the study hall period. The student will lose the exploratory class but this will also be dependent if the schedule will allow us to utilize the 6th or 7th hour.
5. This is how the policy will work:
 - a. 1st Semester - 1st Quarter Midterm
 - i. Classroom teacher will email parents/guardians and students that he/she is in danger of failing the class for the semester.
 1. Parents will be advised that their student should be enrolling in the after school program offered through the school as well as meeting with the teacher before and after school as needed.
 - ii. Mr. Guado Montanez will be available for translation assistance as needed.
 - iii. Teacher will notify the office that the parent/guardian has been notified.
 - b. 1st Semester- 1st Quarter- End of Quarter
 - i. Teacher will make a phone call to the parent/guardian regarding the status of their student, possibly failing the class for the semester.
 - ii. Parents will be advised again to have their student attend the after school program offered through the school as well as meeting with the teacher before or after school for help as needed.
 - iii. Mr. Guado Montanez will be available for translation assistance as needed.
 - iv. Office is notified that the parent/guardian was called.
 - v. Students that are failing a core class at the end of 1st quarter will be placed in a study hall. This will allow the student more time to work on getting caught up.

- c. 1st Semester- 2nd Quarter- Midterm
 - i. Additional emails and phone calls from the classroom teacher will go out to parents informing them of the progress of the student. Administration will schedule a student/parent meeting to address academic concerns.
 - ii. Parents will be advised again to have their student attend the after school program offered through the school as well as meeting with the teacher before or after school for help as needed.
 - iii. Mr. Guado Montanez will be available for translation assistance as needed.
 - d. 1st Semester- 2nd Quarter- End of Quarter
 - i. Parents notified again via email on how the student has progressed and if they will be referred to administration for retention of that specific class.
- 6. Those students who are referred to administration for retention and re-do of the class the next school year will be contacted in order to meet with their parents to discuss how this will work for their student the next school year.
- 7. As this will be a change in current policy, it will be dependent on its success to relay this information out to the parents of our students.
 - a. An informational letter, in both English and Spanish will be mailed out to families of 7th and 8th grade.
 - b. Open House will be utilized to hold an ongoing meeting in the auditorium to have this discussion with parents.
 - c. I will once again organize parent meetings in both English and Spanish a week following the Open House to discuss not only this policy but also the entire student handbook.
- 8. We will keep data regarding this policy specifically in order to determine its impact as well as find out what issues we will be finding as well as if there are any shortcomings that we need to address as well as positive changes we could make to be more helpful for the students.
- 9. The hope of this policy will be to decrease the numbers of students failing within the 7th and 8th grade, specifically with the conversations with families as well as decreasing the numbers of 9-12 grade students needing to enroll in credit recovery in order to graduate. We are always looking for our parents to work together with us concerning their students' education as we want them to be as successful as possible and to graduate on time with their cohort. We are placing more of a responsibility of education in the hands of the students and ultimately the families.