

RETENTION OF ELEMENTARY AND MIDDLE YEARS STUDENTS

Background

The Division is aware of the complexities that surround the issue of promotion/retention. The Division is also aware of the efficacy of the Ministry of Education's Core Curriculum thrust and research findings that support Core Curriculum.

The Division is committed to the education of students in settings appropriate to their chronological age, realizing that adjustments often need to be made to best meet the needs of students as individuals.

Principals and teachers are cautioned to avoid subscribing to the outdated "factory model" of schools, leading to sorting and labelling students into "other" groups, with the proliferation of modified and alternate courses for groups of students who have been arbitrarily labelled as not being "up to standard".

Procedures

In the event that a student is having difficulty, the following steps shall be taken, after considering the following rationale and alternatives to retention.

1. Rationale

- 1.1 The practice of retention has been questioned since the 1930's. Longitudinal research, states that:

"Retention is, for the most part, of questionable educational benefit and is likely to have deleterious effects on achievement, self-concept, attitudes toward school and school dropout rates," (Dawson and Raforth, 1991).
- 1.2 There is considerable research evidence that children who are held back a year or more are more likely to drop out eventually, and that unsuccessful students who are promoted with their age group ultimately do somewhat better in school than similar students who are retained (Madak, 1994).
- 1.3 Longitudinal studies on grade retention suggest that the apparent improvement is not sustained; in effect, any positive benefits disappear over time (Dawson and Raforth, 1991).

2. Alternatives to Retention

- 2.1 One alternative is remediation. Remediation implies that a student's learning deficiencies are identified and a plan for the remediation of the deficiencies is prepared and implemented. This strategy is to lead schools into a discussion of the current delivery practices of classroom and resource and methods services.

- 2.2 Another alternative strategy is tutorials, which are either provided by a peer or a teacher. Cross-age peer tutoring has demonstrated achievement gains for both the targeted students and the tutors (Schultz, 1990).
 - 2.3 A third alternative to retention is to modify the present curriculum and to engage the student in a relevant program.
 - 2.4 A fourth alternative is the practice of multi-age groupings. This practice permits students to move into the next grade with their friends while remaining in an instructional environment that meets their needs. This approach recognizes that children "develop at different rates, and many of them don't neatly fit into our current grouping of children by chronological age" (Dawson & Raforth, 1991, p.4).
 - 2.5 A fifth alternative is to provide a multimodal process approach to instruction. This process recognizes developmental differences among children.
 - 2.6 This list of alternatives certainly is not exhaustive. The list invites discussion on the strategies which are the most appropriate to meet the needs of the students.
3. Teachers, administrators and parents or guardians shall identify and assist those students who need help.
 4. Once a student is identified, the following steps shall take place:
 - 4.1 The initiation of the parents' involvement;
 - 4.2 The Teacher Assistant Team (TAT) reviews the student's case, generates recommendations and prioritizes the recommendations;
 - 4.3 Inform the parents of their child's difficulties, the school's assessment of the student's learning profile and the school's attempts to increase achievement. Consult the parents about the learning requirements for success in the current grade;
 - 4.4 School staff and parents develop an appropriate program. The program includes instructional strategies to enable the student to achieve the essential skills. The plan designates areas of responsibility;
 - 4.5 Teachers, principals and parents monitor the program.
 5. On the rare occasions when retention of a student may be considered necessary, factors such as social development/ interaction, birthdates, academic success, self-concept, independence, learning ability or disability, etc. shall be discussed. The decision to retain a student is to be made by a team consisting of an administrator, teacher(s), resource teacher, counselor and parents.
 6. Documentation of the program plan must be available at the school for the Superintendent of Education's perusal.

Reference: Sections 85, 87, 108, 109, 175, 231 Education Ac