

SAN DIEGO CITY SCHOOLS

**Date:**

**To:** Elementary School Principals; Division and Department Heads

**Subject:** PROMOTION/RETENTION AND PLACEMENT DECISIONS  
FOR AT-RISK STUDENTS

**Department and/or  
Persons Concerned:**

Principals, Vice Principals, Teachers, and Counselors

**Due Date:**

Complete required documentation by the end of the academic year.

**Reference:**

District Procedure No. 4755, Promotion/Retention and Placement/  
Articulation, K-6 (Elementary)

Administrative Circular No. 38, Learning Contract for At-risk Students  
(September 26, 2002)

**Action Requested:**

Review and comply with the decision and documentation process relating  
to at-risk students.

**Brief Explanation:**

*The primary purpose of this circular is to call your attention to the actions that must be taken for students identified as at-risk of not meeting grade level standards.*

This circular and accompanying attachments contain important information related to student promotion/retention and placement/articulation. It is essential that site administrators, teachers, and counselors carefully review all of the attached materials to ensure that the promotion/retention and student placement processes outlined in the *Blueprint for Student Success* are followed consistently throughout the district. *Please discard all related materials from previous years.*

Attachment	Document(s)
1	Administrative Circular and Administrative Procedure #4755
2	Forms: <i>Teacher Decision to Promote or Retain</i> , Grades K-4/5 and 5/6
3	Literacy Performance Matrix and Placement Guidelines
4	Mathematics Performance Matrix and Placement Guidelines
5	Learning Contracts for At Risk Students

*Description of Attachments*

**1. Procedure No. 4755: Promotion/Retention and Placement/Articulation, K-6 (Elementary)**

Attachment 1 provides a copy of the district procedure outlining steps related to identification, monitoring, and promotion/retention/placement decisions for at-risk students in elementary grades (K-6).

- Grade 1 is the district-established retention grade at the elementary level. District guidelines **strongly discourage retention at other elementary grades**, although retention may be considered at any grade if the student has not met the criteria and has not participated in the required support and intervention opportunities. Under state law, the classroom teacher makes the decision concerning student promotion/retention at Grades 1-6, following consultation with the principal and parent/guardian. The principal makes the decision concerning student promotion/retention in Kindergarten following consultation with the teacher and parent/guardian. (Note: Retention at Kindergarten can only occur with parent/guardian permission.)
- Parents/guardians must be notified about the promotion/retention/placement decision. It is the school's responsibility to communicate with parents/guardians.

**2. Teacher Decision to Promote or Retain Forms**

Attachment 2 provides copies of the *Teacher Decision to Promote or Retain Forms* for 2002-03. **A form must be completed for each at-risk student** (each student with a Learning Contract), even if the student is not being considered for retention. The form can be produced electronically at the school site, with all student demographic and assessment information pre-printed on the document (directions included in this section). NCR forms are also available.

- There are separate forms for Grades K-4/5 and Grade 5/6 (exit grade).
- For Grade 1 students who are candidates for retention, the promotion/retention/placement decision should be discussed with the parent/guardian during a conference. There is an appeal process for parents/guardians who disagree with the teacher's decision to promote or retain. (See Attachment 1, Procedure No. 4755, for a description of the appeal process.)
- For students who attend summer school, a new *Teacher Decision to Promote or Retain Form* must be completed at the end of the summer session.

This attachment also includes a copy of the Parent/Guardian Cover Letter and Conference Request Form that should be distributed with each *Teacher Decision to Promote or Retain Form*.

**3-4. Performance Matrix and Placement Guidelines: Literacy and Mathematics**

Attachments 3 (literacy) and 4 (mathematics) provide the performance expectations and retention criteria for each grade level. Please note that the **retention** cut-points for Grade 1 students were **revised in September 2002** as follows:

- Fluent English Students: Cycle 3 DRA at Level 8 or below.
- English Learners: Cycle 3 DRA at Level 8 or below **AND** SOLOM score of 15 or below.

These attachments also include the course placement options for students articulating to middle/junior high school. These charts will assist exit grade teachers in completing the *Interventions and Supports* section of the *Teacher Decision to Promote or Retain Form*.

Elementary teachers or site administrators should respond to parental questions regarding student promotion/retention at the exit grade level. Parental questions regarding student coursework at the middle-level entry grade should be referred to the middle/junior high school.

**5. Learning Contract for At-Risk Students**

Attachment 5 provides a copy of the Learning Contract, for your reference. **A *Teacher Decision to Promote or Retain Form* must be completed for each student that received a Learning Contract during the 2002-2003 school year.**

*Action Time Line*

Action Dates	Responsible Party	Actions to be Taken
<i>Within last 6 weeks of instruction</i>	Teacher	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evaluate student’s academic performance based on designated performance measures and, if needed and appropriate, additional evidence of student academic achievement, participation in support and intervention opportunities, readiness for next grade level, etc.</li> <li>• Consult with the principal and the student’s parent/guardian.</li> <li>• Make promotion/retention decision (Grades 1-6).</li> <li>• Indicate decision on <i>Teacher Decision to Promote or Retain Form</i> and submit to principal for signature.</li> <li>• Indicate decision on Elementary Progress Report Collection form (report card scan sheet).</li> </ul>
<i>At least 3 weeks prior to end of school year</i>	Principal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make promotion/retention decision for Kindergarten students (retention requires parent/guardian approval).</li> <li>• Sign all <i>Teacher Decision to Promote or Retain Forms</i>; notify parents/guardians of decision and the opportunity to request a meeting to discuss student’s academic program in the coming year and/or appeal the decision.</li> </ul>

Action Dates	Responsible Party	Actions to be Taken
<i>Prior to end of school year</i>	Teacher Principal Teacher Principal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Convene meeting with parent/guardian upon request to discuss student’s academic program for the coming year.</li> <li>• Conduct appeal process upon request by parent/guardian.                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Make the final promotion/retention decision following the proceedings.</li> <li>– Contact the parent/guardian regarding disposition of the appeal; provide a written notice shortly thereafter.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<i>End of school year</i>	Principal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• File all original documents in the student’s cumulative folder.</li> <li>• Distribute copies as indicated to parent, teacher, principal, and, at exit grade only, the middle-level school.</li> <li>• Notify receiving middle-level school of students promoted with recommended interventions.</li> </ul>
<i>End of summer school</i>	Teacher, Principal Principal Principal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Review student progress and assessment results. Confirm or revise promotion/retention decision.</li> <li>• Mail copy of new <i>Teacher Decision to Promote or Retain Form</i> to parent/guardian.</li> <li>• File original document in student’s cumulative folder.</li> </ul>

Questions may be directed to the Standards, Assessment, and Accountability Division at 619-725-7166 or via e-mail to [SAA@mail.sandi.net](mailto:SAA@mail.sandi.net).

Sally J. Bennett  
 Assistant Director  
 Standards, Assessment, and Accountability

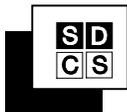
APPROVED:

Mary Hopper  
 Chief Academic Officer

SB:me

Attachments (5)

Distribution: Lists A and D



# ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE

SAN DIEGO UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

NO: 4755

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CATEGORY: Instruction, Academic Achievement

EFFECTIVE: 1-29-62

SUBJECT: Promotion/Retention and Placement/Articulation, K-6 (Elementary)

REVISED: 6-29-2001

## A. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

1. To outline administrative procedures governing implementation of policies concerning at-risk placement and promotion/retention criteria at the current grade.

2. **Related Procedures:**

Matriculation guidelines, programs for students with severe handicaps .....	4233
Classroom grouping practices and counseling procedures .....	6020
Preregistration and registration, K-6 .....	6120
Admission of kindergarten students to first grade .....	6121
Attendance accounting, K-6 .....	6165
Cumulative recordkeeping, elementary .....	6505

## B. LEGAL AND POLICY BASIS

1. **Reference:** Board policy: A-4000, F-2000, F-7000, F-7030, F-7100, F-7400, F-8400; Education Code Section 48070.

2. **District Policy**

a. The policy of San Diego Unified School District is to ensure the academic success of every student. Students are expected to meet grade-level standards and shall receive the necessary instructional support to enable them to be successful. The decision to promote or retain shall be based on consistently applied criteria for standards-based academic performance.<sup>1</sup>

b. Students shall be assigned to classes in such a manner that, in gender and ethnicity, each class is representative of the total population of students meeting the criteria for placement in each grade level or class (Procedure 6020).

## C. GENERAL

1. **Originating Office.** Suggestions or questions concerning this procedure should be directed to the Standards, Assessment, Accountability, and Compliance Department, Institute for Learning.

<sup>1</sup> This policy and this administrative procedure does not apply to students with a curriculum designation of alternative standards (nondiploma-bound students). Achievement of the Individualized Education Program (IEP) goals and objectives should be used to report progress as per state and district requirements. See Administrative Procedure 4233.

## 2. **Definitions**

- a. **Accelerated program:** An intensive program of study designed to accelerate the pace of student learning.
- b. **At-risk student:** Students identified as at risk of not meeting grade-level standards, either through district-designated assessments or teacher judgment.<sup>2</sup>
- c. **Home/School Compact:** Documentation that delineates the roles and responsibilities of each stakeholder in the learning process (teacher, principal, school board, parent/guardian and student).
- d. **Individualized Education Program (IEP):** A written statement developed by a team that delineates and ensures appropriate instruction and services for students with disabilities.
- e. **Individual Service Plan (ISP):** A written statement developed by a team that delineates the aids, accommodations and services to be provided to children with disabilities who qualify under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.
- f. **Learning Contract:** Documentation that serves as an agreement among classroom teacher(s), parent(s)/guardian(s), and student outlining the responsibilities of each stakeholder in the intervention process. Documentation includes student academic performance, required interventions, and potential consequences. Contract attests to the school site's provision of, and the student's participation in, the identified interventions.
- g. **Monitoring:** Ongoing evaluation of student's academic progress as outlined in the student's Learning Contract.
- h. **Promotion:** Placement in the next higher grade at the end of a school year.
- i. **Retention in grade:** Placing a student in the same grade as the prior school year.
- j. **Placement:** Assignment of a student to a specific grade and class.
- k. **Promotion criteria:** Performance levels required for entering the next academic grade.

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<sup>2</sup>Grade 1 students who do not meet promotion criteria will be retained. Grades 2-6 students who do not meet promotion criteria and do not participate in required supports and interventions may be retained.

3. **Identification and Monitoring of At-risk Students<sup>3</sup>**

- a. **Identification/notification.** Identification of at-risk students is based on student academic performance as demonstrated by reading/language arts and mathematics assessment results or teacher judgment. Parent(s)/guardian(s) of at-risk students must receive written notification as early as possible, and no later than the tenth week of enrollment for grades 1-6 students, or the twentieth week of enrollment for kindergarten students. (The report card or Learning Contract may serve as the written notification if completed by the tenth week, or twentieth week for kindergarten.)
- b. **Learning Contract.** A Learning Contract must be developed for each at-risk student.<sup>4</sup> The teacher will convene and conduct a conference with the parent/guardian to document student's at-risk status and develop the Learning Contract. The contract will include the intervention programs and strategies that the teacher(s) and school will provide to help the student succeed, what the child and parent/guardian will work on at home, and how the teacher will keep the parent/guardian informed about the child's progress. The parent/guardian, student and teacher(s) shall sign the contract, indicating their understanding of each party's responsibilities and potential outcomes.
  - (1) **Timeline for grades 1-6.** The Learning Contract will be developed no later than four (4) weeks following the end of the first grading cycle or within four (4) weeks following identification for students who enroll after the first grading period.
  - (2) **Timeline for grade K.** The Learning Contract will be developed no later than four (4) weeks following the end of the second grading cycle, or within four (4) weeks following identification for students who enroll following the second grading period.
- c. **School site monitoring of at-risk students**
  - (1) **Principal or designee**
    - (a) Monitor development of Learning Contracts and communication with parents/guardians.
    - (b) Monitor student participation in intervention programs.

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<sup>3</sup> This administrative procedure applies only to diploma-bound students.

<sup>4</sup> IEP will serve as the Learning Contract for special education students in special day classes.

- (c) Monitor students' academic progress by reviewing student achievement results and meeting with teachers during the year to discuss specific plans for instruction.
    - (d) Coordinate compliance with the guidelines and timelines outlined in this procedure.
  - (2) **Classroom teachers** will monitor the academic progress of students throughout the school year, base their instruction on student needs, implement appropriate interventions, and communicate student progress to parent(s)/guardian(s).
  - (3) **Instructional leader.** During school visits, the instructional leader will discuss with the principal the progress of at-risk students and monitor the overall improvement of achievement at the school site.
- 4. **Performance Criteria and Guidelines.** Student performance criteria have been defined based on common, districtwide assessment measures in literacy and mathematics. Cut-points have been set which identify student performance as above/at/close to, below, or significantly below grade level. An annual circular will be distributed to school sites delineating the performance cut-points to identify students for support/intervention and promotion/retention.<sup>5</sup>
- 5. **Promotion/Retention Guidelines**
  - a. **Established retention grade.** The established retention grade for students significantly below grade level is grade 1 at the elementary level. Students retained at this grade level will be placed in an accelerated instructional program.
  - b. **Retention at other grade levels.** Retention may be considered at any grade, 1-6, if the student has not met the criteria and has not participated in required support and intervention opportunities.<sup>6</sup>
    - (1) Retention should occur early in a school level, rather than at an exit grade.
    - (2) Students ordinarily will be retained only once in kindergarten through grade 8.

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<sup>5</sup> Refer to annual circular for specific criteria for fluent English-speaking students and for English learners.

<sup>6</sup> Retention at kindergarten can only occur with parent/guardian permission.

6. **Promotion/Retention Decision.** As specified by Education Code Section 48070.5, the assigned classroom teacher makes the final decision concerning promotion/retention of grade 1-6 students.
- a. **Year-end reevaluation.** During the last six (6) weeks of instruction, each student identified at risk must be reevaluated by the assigned classroom teacher to determine if the student meets the specified Promotion Criteria (as provided in the annual circular).
  - b. **Discussion with parent/guardian.** As specified by Education Code Section 48070.5, the teacher's evaluation concerning the student's progress shall be discussed with the parent/guardian before the teacher makes the final determination of pupil retention or promotion. The discussion may occur via a teacher/parent/student conference (preferred), telephone call, a general parent/guardian meeting, or home visitation. When possible, the discussion is to be conducted in the primary language of the parent/guardian. Parents/guardians of students at the exit grade (5/6) who have questions regarding course placement decisions for the ensuing year should be referred to the receiving middle level school.
  - c. **Decision and placement<sup>7</sup>**
    - (1) The teacher may determine that the student is:
      - (a) **Above/at/close to grade level**, and promote the student to the next grade.
      - (b) **Below grade level**, and promote the student to the next grade level with recommended interventions as specified by the teacher.
      - (c) **Significantly below grade level**, and retain the student in the current grade with promotion contingent upon successful completion of summer school. If sufficient progress has been made and the student meets the promotion criteria at the end of summer school, the student will be promoted with recommended interventions as specified by the teacher.

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<sup>7</sup> For special education students who are being considered for retention, an IEP meeting must be held to discuss decisions affecting student placement. For students with Individual Service (504) Plans, the SST/504 Team must be reconvened.

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(d) **Significantly below grade level** and retain the student with recommended support as specified by the teacher.

d. **Documentation and communication of the final decision**

- (1) Within the last six (6) weeks of instruction, the teacher will indicate the final decision regarding student placement on the "Teacher Decision to Promote or Retain: Grades K-6" form, and submit the form to the principal for signature. The teacher will indicate the decision on the Elementary Progress Report Collection Form (report card scan sheet).
- (2) The principal will sign the "Teacher Decision to Promote or Retain: Grades K-6" form and provide the parent/guardian a copy at least three (3) weeks prior to the last day of instruction. For students recommended for retention, the form should be discussed with the parent/guardian during a conference. Copies of the form are distributed among the student's cumulative file; the parent/guardian; the principal; and the Standards, Assessment, Accountability, and Compliance Department.
- (3) The notification will inform the parent/guardian that he/she may request a conference regarding the child's academic program in the coming school year. Should the parent/guardian wish a conference, the assigned classroom teacher will coordinate and convene the meeting.
- (4) The notification will inform the parent/guardian of the appeal process.

e. **Parent/guardian appeal process.** School sites shall provide parent(s)/guardian(s) an opportunity to appeal the decision of the assigned classroom teacher.

- (1) The appeal shall occur prior to the end of the school year.
- (2) Upon receipt of the appeal, the principal or designee shall review all related evidence and convene a hearing with the assigned classroom teacher, parent/guardian, and student (if appropriate).
- (3) The hearing discussion will include the student's progress, assessment results, participation in prescribed intervention programs, and overall readiness for promotion. When possible, the proceedings are to be conducted in the primary language of the parent/guardian.

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- (4) Following the proceedings, the teacher will make the final promotion/retention decision.
  - (5) The principal or designee shall contact the parent/guardian regarding the disposition of the appeal; a written notification using a second "Teacher Decision to Promote or Retain: Grades K-6" form shall be provided shortly thereafter.
  - (6) **A decision by the assigned classroom teacher to promote or retain a student cannot be overturned unless "determined to be a direct result of clerical or mechanical mistake, fraud, bad faith or incompetency."**
- f. **Placement modification due to summer school results.** Following completion of summer school, the teacher and principal will review student assessment results and modify the promotion/retention decision if necessary. The teacher will complete, and the principal will sign, a new "Teacher Decision to Promote or Retain: Grades K-6" form and mail a copy to the parent/guardian at the end of summer school.
6. **Articulation Between Elementary and Middle-Level Schools.** At the end of each academic year, the elementary school principal will notify the receiving middle-level school of students promoted with recommended interventions. This notification will include student academic achievement results and the interventions specified by the elementary teacher on the "Teacher Decision to Promote or Retain: Grades K-6" form. The principal will ensure that the student's "Teacher's Decision to Promote or Retain: Grades K-6" form is filed in the student's cumulative record.

**D. IMPLEMENTATION**

**1. At-Risk/Placement and Promotion/Retention Timeline**

<b>Action Date</b>	<b>Action Taken</b>	<b>Responsible Party</b>
a. First four (4) weeks of student enrollment	Provide information to parent(s)/ guardian(s) about district promotion/retention policy (e.g., <i>Facts for Parents</i> , School Handbook). Distribute/collect Home/School Compact.	Principal
b. No later than tenth week of enrollment (Grades 1-6)	Formally identify students at risk based on assessment information and teacher judgment; ensure that students who were promoted last year “with interventions” are included in the identification process.	Assigned Classroom Teacher(s)
	Notify parent/guardian of student at-risk status.	Teacher(s)
	Initiate placement of student in appropriate interventions available at school site.	Teacher(s)
c. No later than four (4) weeks following the end of the first grading period (2 <sup>nd</sup> grading period for K) or within (4) four weeks of identification	Convene and conduct conference with parent/guardian to document student’s at-risk status; develop Learning Contract; and obtain signatures on contract by teacher, student and parent/guardian.	Teacher(s)

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Action Date	Action Taken	Responsible Party
d. Ongoing	Implement student intervention strategies outlined in Learning Contract.	Teacher(s)
	Assess student progress on an ongoing basis.	Teacher(s)
	Communicate with parent/guardian concerning the student's progress and document communications.	Teacher(s)
e. End of second grading period	Inform parent/guardian of student progress through report cards.	Principal
f. March-April	Inform parents of student reading performance based on district-designated assessments.	District
g. Within last six (6) weeks of instruction	Evaluate student's academic performance based on designated performance measures and, if needed and appropriate, additional evidence of student academic achievement, participation in support and intervention opportunities, and readiness for the next grade level.	Teacher(s)
	Consult with the principal and the student's parent/guardian.	Teacher(s)
	Convene meeting with parent/guardian upon request to discuss student's academic program for the coming year.	Teacher(s)
	Indicate decision on "Teacher Decision to Promote or Retain: Grades K-6" form and submit to principal for signature; indicate decision on Elementary Progress Report Collection Form (report card scan sheet).	Teacher(s)

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Action Date	Action Taken	Responsible Party
h. At least three (3) weeks prior to end of school	Sign "Teacher Decision to Promote or Retain: Grades K-6" form. Notify parent/guardian of decision, and the opportunity to convene a meeting to discuss student's academic program in the coming year or appeal the decision.	Principal
i. Prior to end of school year	Conduct appeal process if requested by parent/guardian.	Principal
j. End of school year	Notify the receiving middle-level school of students promoted with required interventions.	Principal
k. End of summer school	File all original documents in the student's cumulative folder.	Principal
	Review student progress and assessment results. Confirm or revise promotion/retention decision. Inform parent/guardian of student performance and final promotion/retention decision.	Teacher, Principal
	File original document in the student's cumulative folder.	Principal

## **E. FORMS AND AUXILIARY REFERENCES**

1. Annual Circular Regarding Promotion Criteria
2. Home/School Compact
3. Learning Contract for Grades K-6 Students, Stock Item 41-T-8000 (Parent page available in Spanish, Stock Item 41-T-8001; Cambodian, Stock Item 41-T-8002; Vietnamese, Stock Item 41-T-8003; Lao, Stock Item 41-T-8004; Hmong, Stock Item 41-T-8005; for Somali and Tagalog, call the Standards, Assessment, Accountability, and Compliance Department)

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4. Teacher/Counselor Follow-Up Log: Student At-Risk of Not Meeting Grade-Level Standards, Stock Item 41-T-8008
5. Teacher Decision to Promote or Retain: Grades K-6, Stock Item 41-T-8009; English/Spanish, Stock Item 41-T-8010

**F. REPORTS AND RECORDS**

1. Home/School Compact
2. Learning Contract for Grades K-6 Students, Stock Item 41-T-8000  
(Parent page available in Spanish, Stock Item 41-T-8001;  
Cambodian, Stock Item 41-T-8002; Vietnamese, Stock Item 41-T-8003;  
Lao, Stock Item 41-T-8004; Hmong, Stock Item 41-T-8005; for Somali and  
Tagalog, call the Standards, Assessment, Accountability, and Compliance  
Department)
3. Teacher/Counselor Follow-Up Log: Student At-Risk of Not Meeting Grade-Level Standards, Stock Item 41-T-8008
4. Teacher Decision to Promote or Retain: Grades K-6, Stock Item 41-T-8009; English/Spanish, Stock Item 41-T-8010

**G. APPROVED BY**



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Chief of Staff, Terrance L. Smith  
For the Superintendent of Public Education