

VAL VERDE UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT



Promotion, Retention & Acceleration Guide Book

Social Promotion and Grade Retention: A guide to understanding California laws affecting student promotion.

For the past several years the Governor of California and the California Department of Education have been addressing the issues of school and student accountability. One of the problems that have been evident is that some students have been promoted from one grade to the next without basic reading, math and language arts skills needed to be successful in middle and high school classes. Moreover, these students have then graduated from high school unable to complete the basic requirements of the work setting and adult life. The social promotion of unprepared students from one grade level to the next often occurred because research indicated that retention in the same grade level did not help children catch up and in many cases had negative consequences on retained attitudes and self-esteem of students.

Neither social promotion nor retention is appropriate by itself for students who are not meeting high academic standards. Students who are promoted without regard to their achievement tend to fall even further behind their classmates as they move through school. At the same time, holding students back to repeat a grade without changing instructional strategies is ineffective. The achievement of retained students after repeating a grade still lags behind the achievement of their peers, and retention also greatly increases the likelihood that a student will drop out of school.

Beginning with the class of 2006, high school students must pass the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE). In addition, national and state leaders have called for an end to social promotion, emphasizing that passing a student along in school when they are unprepared denies the student access to opportunities at the next grade level of school, and sends a message to students that little is expected from them and that they have little worth. In California laws were passed requiring school districts to address the serious problem of non-achieving students by developing a promotion/retention policy, including appropriate academic intervention.

New Laws & District Policy

Before leaving office, Governor Wilson signed into law AB 1639, Pupil Promotion and Retention, which requires all school districts to establish a promotion and retention policy that is based on the student's achievement of grade-level standards for students at the elementary level as well as between elementary and middle school and middle school and high school. The Val Verde Unified School District Board of Education has passed a policy regarding the promotion and retention of students in compliance with the requirements of this law. The purpose of the law and the policy is to establish minimal levels of proficiency in reading, language arts and mathematics for promotion into the next grade and to establish supplemental instructional opportunities for students who might be retained or who have been retained so that a student can learn the required grade-level skills and meet grade level standards.

Briefly, the new law and our Board Policy require that the annual promotion of a student from one

grade level to the next be based upon teacher-documented student achievement in specific subject areas. For example, the promotion of a student from grades 1, 2, and 3 will be based on their achievement level primarily in reading. The promotion of students from 4th grade and 5th grade, from elementary school to middle school, and from middle school to high school must be based upon achievement in reading, language arts and mathematics. The district has selected several measures of student achievement to make the decision to promote or retain a student. Interventions will be provided for students at risk for retention.

The policy also requires that students in grades 1 through 8 who are not meeting grade level standards and who are at risk of retention, or who have been retained, be provided with programs of supplementary instruction. Before and after school tutoring programs are available.* Summer school attendance is mandatory.*

Strategies for Ending Social Promotion

Educators recognize that ending social promotion and retaining students will only be successful through a district wide comprehensive effort to address the academic needs of its students. Below are strategies recommended by the United States Department of Education to successfully implement a promotion policy and action that the VVUSD has taken.

Federal Strategies	District Action
Set clear objectives for students to meet performance standards.	Adopted State Academic Standards and communicated standards to staff, parents and students. Backward mapping of California High School Exit Exam.
Identify student needs early in order to apply appropriate strategies.	Developed assessments at each grade level with ongoing monitoring of progress.
Emphasize early childhood literacy.	Trained teachers on early intervention and supplemental instructional programs through staff development.
Focus on providing high-quality curriculum and instruction.	Aligned courses to state content standards; developed comprehensive textbook adoption process.
Improve teacher knowledge through a program of professional development.	Provided teacher training in reading methods and math strategies.
Set out explicit expectations for all stakeholders, including families and community.	Developed parent brochures on State Standards in core content areas.
Provide summer school for low achieving students.*	Developed intervention curriculum in reading/math for summer school.*
Extend learning time through before and after-school programs, tutoring and other strategies.*	Provided after-school program with standards based materials at school sites.*
Hold schools accountable by publicly reporting school performance, rewarding school improvement and intervening in low-performing schools.	Reported STAR and API scores in newspapers, Board meetings, newsletters and School Accountability Report Cards.

How will your child be affected?

If your child is at risk of being retained, you must be notified as early in the school year as possible. During the first eight weeks of the school year, your child's teacher and the principal will be reviewing each child's test performance, grades and measures of academic achievement from the previous year. From this information, students will be identified as at risk of retention, and parents will be notified by mail no later than the fall parent conference. At the parent conference, assessment information will be discussed and a Response to Intervention Pyramid Plan will be developed which will specify the additional instruction, materials and strategies that your child needs to improve on in reading, language arts and/or mathematics skills. The Plan will be reviewed during the school year and adjusted as needed. During the month of May, student progress will be reviewed, and parents will be notified of the teacher's recommendation to promote or retain. Students who are to be retained are expected to attend an intensive remedial summer instructional program.*

Criteria for acceleration, promotion, identification of at-risk or retention are described below by grade level. Students who meet the criteria for retention will be retained unless the child's teacher indicates in writing that retention is not an appropriate intervention for the student and recommends promotion to the next grade level.

Kindergarten

Consideration for retention in Kindergarten is based on a number of developmental and academic factors. No specific criteria for retention or promotion were mandated by the new law in our district policy for Kindergarten. Each Kindergarten student is assessed for progress throughout the school year. At the end of the year the student is given various assessments measuring skills in letter recognition, phonemic awareness, phonics, reading orientation and mathematics as well as in a number of other developmental areas. By the end of the year the student shall be basic, proficient or advanced in grade-level standards within the academic school year. If the student has received an F grade in Reading for Trimester 1 and 2 and demonstrates far below basic grade-level competency with grade level standards the student may continue in Kindergarten. State law still requires that whenever a student is to continue in Kindergarten for an additional year an agreement must be obtained and signed by the parent stating that the student shall continue in Kindergarten.

Grades 1-5

ACCELERATION

The Superintendent may recommend a student for acceleration based upon:

1. Academic achievement
 - a. Grades/GPA
 - b. CST/STAR results
2. Consideration of social and emotional growth

PROMOTION, IDENTIFICATION OF AT-RISK OR RETENTION

Criteria for promotion, identification of at-risk, and retention are based on teacher grades, proficiency level of standards, district criterion reference tests, and teacher recommendation.

Students in grades 1, 2 and 3 shall be identified primarily on the basis of their level of proficiency in reading. Students in grades 4, 5 and 8 shall be identified in their level of proficiency in language arts, reading and math. Students shall be identified on the basis of grades and district assessments established by the Board. Promotion/Retention for Special Education students will also be addressed through the IEP process.

Criteria

Grades 1, 2, 3

Promotion:

Receives A, B, C, grade in Reading.
Demonstrates competency with grade level standards.
Teacher recommendation of proper placement.

Designated at Risk: (Identified each trimester - Placed into intervention)

Receives D or F grade in Reading.
Demonstrates below basic competency in grade level standards.

Designated Retained: (Identified third trimester - Placed into intervention)

Receives an (F) grade in Reading.
Demonstrates far below basic competency in grade level standards.

Grades 4, 5

Promotion:

Receives A, B, C, grade in Reading
Receives A, B, C, grade in Math
Receives A, B, C, grade in Language
Demonstrates competency with grade level standards.

Designated at Risk: (Identified each trimester - Placed into intervention)

Receives D or F grade in Reading and/or
Receives D or F grade in Math and/or
Receives D or F grade in Language.
Demonstrates below basic competency in grade level standards.

Designated Retained: (Identified third trimester - Placed into intervention)

Receives F grade in Reading. and/or
Receives F grade in Math. and/or
Receives F grade in Language.
Demonstrates far below basic competency with grade level standards.

Grade 8

Promotion:

Demonstrates basic or above grade level competency of standards.
Receives, A, B, C, D, grade in Language Arts, and Pre-Algebra/Algebra.

Designated at Risk: (Identified each Benchmark Period - Placed into intervention)

Receives D or F grade in Language Arts and/or Pre-Algebra/Algebra.
Demonstrates below basic competency in grade level standards.

Designated Retained: (Identified Benchmark 5 and/or 6 - Placed into intervention)

Receives a combination of 6 or more F semester grades in core academic areas of Math, Language Arts, Science, and Social Science.

Standards Proficiency Levels: Determined by standards based multiple assessments in grades 1-5 and 8.

Advanced (A) - Superior grade level knowledge and skills.

Proficient (B) - Grade level knowledge and skills.

Basic (C) - Minimal grade level knowledge and skills.

Below Basic (D) - Lacking grade level knowledge and skills.

Far Below Basic (F) - Extremely lacking grade level knowledge and skills.

HIGH SCHOOL COURSE REQUIREMENTS

Grades 9, 10, 11, 12

Progress toward high school graduation shall be based on the student's ability to pass required subjects and electives necessary to earn the required number of credits. The current course requirements necessary to receive a diploma in the Val Verde Unified School District are listed in Table A below:

Table A

REQUIREMENTS:	STATE (Ed.Code)	RVHS/CHHS (Comprehensive)	VVHS EOC-2011 (Continuation Success Academy Non Public Schools)	VVHS EOC-2012 (Continuation Success Academy Non Public Schools)	VVHS EOC-2013 (Continuation Success Academy Non Public Schools)	Virtual School (Independent Study) Non-Public Schools
ENGLISH	30	40 English I, II, III, IV	30 English I, II, III	30 English I, II, III	30 English I, II, III	40 English I, II, III, IV
MATH	20	20 Algebra I Geometry/Geometry Concepts	20 Algebra I Geometry Concepts	20 Algebra I Geometry Concepts	20 Algebra I Geometry Concepts	20 Algebra I Geometry Concepts
SCIENCE	20	30 Physical Life Elective	20 Life Earth	20 Life Earth	20 Life Earth	30 Life Earth Elective
SOCIAL SCIENCE	30	35 Geography World Cultures US History Econ/Government	30 World Cultures US History Econ/Government	30 World Cultures US History Econ/Government	30 World Cultures US History Econ/Government	35 World Cultures US History Econ/Government Geography
PHYSICAL ED.	20	20	20	20	20	20
HEALTH	5	5	5	5	5	5
ARTS/LANGUAGE ARTS	10	10	10	10	10	10
ELECTIVES Voc Ed. CAHSEE/Prep/STC		60	65	75	85	60
TOTAL	135	220	200	210	220	220
HIGH SCHOOL EXIT EXAM	PASS 2006	PASS 2006	PASS 2006	PASS 2006	PASS 2006	PASS 2006
COMMUNITY SERVICE		20 Hours 2013	10 Hours 2013	10 Hours 2013	10 Hours 2013	10 Hours 2013

Promotion to Grade 10:

Accumulation of 50 credits
Completion of English I
Progressing in Math
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Promotion to Grade 11:

Accumulation of 100 credits
Completion of English II
Progressing in Math

Promotion to Grade 12: (Diploma)

Accumulation of 170 credits
Completion of English III

Promotion to Grade 12: (Certificate)

Student may be awarded a Certificate of Completion in lieu of a diploma by fulfilling State requirements other than the HSEE and Completing 190 Credits

**** Retention in the 9th grade is limited to 1 year.**

Certificates of Graduation/Graduation

Students that successfully acquire 220 credits in subject areas as specified in Table A, but do not pass the California High School Exit Exam (CAHSEE), shall earn a Certificate of Graduation.

Students receiving a certificate of Graduation shall be allowed to participate in any and all graduation activities including the Graduation Ceremony. No distinction will be made between types of certificates awarded during the graduation ceremony.

Board Policy & A/R 5123

Students who have a disability pursuant to the Individuals with a Disability Educational Act (IDEA) will be considered for promotion or retention on a case-by-case basis through the IEP process. Nothing in the state law exempts the student with a disability from meeting district criteria for promotion and retention. It is important, however, for each IEP team to review the expected progress of a student toward the IEP goals and district standards in reading, language arts and mathematics in order to establish individualized criteria for promotion or retention.

Parental Appeal Rights

Parents have the right under state law and our district policy to appeal the decision to retain their child. To appeal the school's decision you need to do the following:

1. After you have been notified by the school that your child is to be retained, you may request in writing that the principal review the teacher's decision. This written appeal must be given to the principal within five (5) working days after you have received the school's notification and must contain specific reasons as to why your child should not be retained.
2. The site administrator will contact you and respond to your appeal within five (5) working days of receipt of the appeal. The administrator's response must also be in writing.
3. If the site administrator upholds the decision to retain or promote your child, you may request a second-level review of the site administrator's decision. You may forward your written appeal to the Assistant Superintendent of Educational Services specifying why the site administrator's decision should be overturned. You must initiate this appeal within ten (10) working days of the site administrator's decision.
4. Within thirty (30) working days, the Assistant Superintendent of Educational Services shall determine whether to uphold the site administrator's decision. The Assistant Superintendent or designee may meet with you and/or the site administrator to make the determination. The Assistant Superintendent may reverse the site administrator's decision to retain or promote if merit is found in your appeal.
5. You may also appeal the Assistant Superintendent's decision to the Board of Education by writing a letter to the Board of Education within fifteen (15) working days of the Assistant Superintendent's decision. Within thirty (30) working days of the receipt of your letter the Board will make a final determination regarding the decision to retain or promote your child. To make the determination, the Board may rely on written documentation prepared as part of the appeal process or, at the Board's discretion may meet with you, the principal and/or the Assistant Superintendent for further information.

The decision of the Board of Education shall be final. If the decision of the Board of Education is unfavorable, you may submit a written statement of objection that shall become a part of the student's permanent record.

WHAT PARENTS CAN DO

We know from experience and research that parental involvement in their child's education is critical to their academic success. Children whose parents are involved in their education earn higher grades, have higher test scores, attend school more regularly, complete more homework, demonstrate a better attitude and better behavior, graduate from high school at higher rates and are more likely to go on to higher education than do children whose parents are less involved. Clearly, parents can help students learn so that they are prepared for the next grade and for school success. Below are suggested activities for parents to be involved with their child's education.

1. Explain to your child that he/she needs to work hard to be successful in school.
2. Monitor your child's progress in reading and math and supervise the completion of all homework.
3. Read at home together and encourage your child to read at least 30 minutes a day.
4. Attend back-to-school events and teacher conferences.
5. Participate in school decisions by attending meetings and serving on advisory councils.
6. Ask your child's teacher to explain math, reading and language arts grade-level standards and how you can help with skills your child has not yet achieved.
7. Explain to your child how you will help at home and how the school will help to support your child in attaining grade-level success.
8. Make arrangements for your child to attend programs, tutoring and summer school designed to help students at risk of being retained.*
9. Keep "moves" to a minimum so that your child stays in the same school for the entire school year.
10. Make sure your child eats a nutritious breakfast every day and sleeps at least eight hours a night.
11. Make sure you send your child to school every day, on time and in a happy frame of mind.
12. Set regular times of the day and week to work with your child on the skills he/she needs to learn.

English Language Learners

All students classified as English Language Learners (EL) will be held to the same standards established by the Board of Education for promotion and retention. The retention or promotion of the EL students will be based upon their achievement within the curriculum provided to them in either English or in their primary language. The law states that if any student does not achieve at the established academic level due to the lack of English Language skills, he/she will not be retained. Students who do not make adequate progress throughout the year towards English language proficiency will be placed into one of the following intervention programs: before/during/after school programs, tutoring, and/or summer school.* Students enrolled in an Alternative Bilingual Program also will be expected to meet benchmarks in Spanish.

***When funding is available.**