

TENNESSEE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION	
GUIDELINES FOR PROMOTION AND RETENTION	3.300

Sound promotion policies help assure that students benefit from the instruction provided at each grade level and that they are ready when they move from one grade level to another. Local school systems shall develop and implement system-wide policies on promotion and retention.¹ The following guidelines shall be considered in LEA Promotion/Retention Policies:

1. Policies on retention should encourage the following steps be taken **before** a decision on retention is made:
 - a. ***Identify students with problems early in the school year.*** Early identification maximizes the opportunity to provide remediation and to avoid retaining a student.
Parents should be informed when problems are identified.
 - b. ***Enlist parental support.*** A student's parents should be involved in the discussion about retention. Before a student is retained, the parents should be informed at a conference at least six (6) weeks before the end of the school year.
2. Policies on retention should consider the following factors in making a decision on retention:
 - a. ***Mastery of essential competencies.*** Students should have mastered essential skills sufficiently to ensure a likelihood of success at the next grade level.
 - b. ***Special procedures or special students.*** Students who have been identified as having special problems, including high risk students, students with IEP's, and other students with special needs, should be given special consideration. Retention should not be a substitute for special education, counseling intervention, or social services.
 - c. ***Flexible placement.*** Educators should consider the use of conditional promotion, remedial summer programs, assignment to transitional classes, and other approaches to meeting the needs of students.

¹ Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-2-203(a)(12); SBE Rule 0520-1-3-.05(3).

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- d. **Attendance.** It is relevant to consider attendance when excessive absenteeism becomes an educational problem. Unusual cases involving medical, special education, or religious circumstances may call for special consideration.²
 - e. **Conduct.** Retention should not be used as a disciplinary measure.
 - f. **Previous retention.** In general, students should not be retained more than once in the same grade.
 - g. **Grade level.** Retention is most appropriate in the early grades.
 - h. **Teacher involvement.** The teacher's decision to promote or retain a student should not be reversed unless the teacher is consulted.
3. Policies on retention should encourage that the following steps be taken **after** a decision on retention is made:
- a. **Develop an appropriate instructional program.** The student should not start over in the grade and repeat material that has already been learned. Alternate materials, staffing, and instructional strategies should be explored.
 - b. **Follow the progress of students retained.** The LEA should keep in its central office a list of the students retained each year. This list should include a grade level, reasons for retention, and placement of each student. The LEA should monitor the progress of retained students for at least three (3) years.
 - c. **Appeals.** Policies shall include procedures for appeal to the local school board.
4. Local school systems may include other promotion requirements and remedial strategies not in conflict with the above guidelines.

² Tenn. Code Ann. § 49-6-3002.