
Middle Grades Task Force, Rule

The Background:

The State Department of Education and the State Board of Education jointly formed a Middle Grades Task Force in the spring of 2008 to make recommendations to the Board, upgrade policies, and establish rules that better ensure students leave the middle grades ready for the rigors of the new high school curriculum and the Tennessee Diploma Project. The task force has met three times face to face and has shared documents for review and comment. The task force has reached agreement on several discussion points, has received comments from the field to improve the proposal, and has recommended this proposed rule for Board consideration.

Since presentation at the April SBE meeting a new section (f) with permissive language was added. This section allows LEAs to transition to this proposed rule without penalty.

Master Plan Connection:

This item supports the *Master Plan* by providing for effective teachers and rigorous curriculum.

The Recommendation:

SBE staff recommends adoption of this rule on final reading.

Middle Grades Policy Task Force Rule Proposal

Amend Rule 0520-1-3-.03(9) by deleting the paragraph in its entirety and substituting instead the following language so that as amended the paragraph reads:

- (9) Student Evaluation in Grades Kindergarten through grade 8.
- (a) The student evaluation program for grades kindergarten through grade 8 shall consist of the following:
1. A criterion-referenced test will be administered in subjects and grade levels in accordance with policy of the State Board of Education.
 2. Based on achievement data from the benchmark years 3, 5, and 8, there shall be a research-based intervention initiated by the local education agency for students scoring below proficient in reading, language, and mathematics on the criterion referenced portion of the state achievement test. The intervention shall occur during the year following the benchmark assessment data. The Department of Education shall assist systems in the identification of effective intervention programs. Evidence of compliance with this requirement shall become a component of the school improvement plan.
 3. An assessment of writing in grades 5 and 8.
- (b) Each student's test data and the student's answer documents, including the test booklets for students using the large-print or Braille editions, will be maintained for a period of one year following test administration. Following this one-year period, individual student test data will then be preserved on storage media.
- (c) State mandated student testing programs shall be undertaken in accordance with procedures published by the Department of Education. Local school systems shall develop local policies regarding security of test administration, consistent with Department of Education guidelines.
- (d) To assist the decision making process and to better inform policy, the State Department shall annually report to the Board of Education the number and percentage of students scoring Below Basic, but have been promoted to the next grade level by school system. This data shall be disaggregated by subgroups similar to those required for federal reporting.
- (e) Local education agencies are encouraged to intervene with struggling students as needed. However, once BEP 2.0 is fully funded or specific recurring funding is provided that at least doubles the at-risk funding

component for grades K-8 for the average percentage of students scoring Below Basic on TCAP assessments, local education agencies shall provide interventions prior to 1st grade, prior to 5th grade and prior to 9th Grade for students who are not ready for advancement in the education process. For students with identified special needs, the IEP Team shall continue to determine the education program. Evidence of compliance with this requirement shall become a component of the school improvement plan.

School systems are encouraged and empowered to transition from meeting the requirements of section (a) 2 of this rule to meeting the requirements of section (e) of this rule before BEP 2.0 is fully funded or specific funding is provided or specific recurring funding is provided that at least doubles the at-risk funding component for grades K-8 for the average percentage of students scoring Below Basic on TCAP assessments.

1. Once BEP 2.0 is fully funded or specific recurring funding is provided that at least doubles the at-risk funding component for grades K-8 for the average percentage of students scoring Below Basic on TCAP assessments, schools shall determine the academic and developmental readiness of students for first grade. Students who are found to be either academically or developmentally not ready for first grade shall be provided effective interventions to achieve academic and developmental readiness for the first grade.
2. Once BEP 2.0 is fully funded or specific recurring funding is provided that at least doubles the at-risk funding component for grades K-8 for the average percentage of students scoring Below Basic on TCAP assessments, fourth grade students will be provided multiple opportunities to demonstrate academic readiness in numeracy and literacy for the fifth grade through a formative assessment process. Students who score Below Basic in the Math or Reading / Language sections of the 4th grade TCAP shall be provided effective interventions to insure those students are ready for success in the middle grades.
3. Once BEP 2.0 is fully funded or specific recurring funding is provided that at least doubles the at-risk funding component for grades K-8 for the average percentage of students scoring Below Basic on TCAP assessments, eighth grade students who do not demonstrate readiness for the ninth grade by scoring below the Explore Readiness Benchmark Scores in English, Mathematics, Reading, or Science on the Explore examination and who also score Below Basic in corresponding sections on the Math, Reading, Language, or Science sections of the 8th grade TCAP shall be provided effective interventions to insure those students are ready for success in high school.

4. The determination of student readiness as a result of the interventions prior to the first grade, fifth grade, and ninth grade shall be based upon a formative process which should include a variety of data. The analysis of the data shall be made by a team developed by the local education agency that may consist of teachers across various grade levels and content areas, subject areas specialist, principals, and appropriate others. This team must have representatives that recognize and understand alternative measurements and interpretation for ELL students, especially those students who have been in the United States for three years or less. Following data analysis, the team's recommendation shall be provided to the school principal. The department of education will provide local education agencies with rubrics and other materials that describe performance at the four achievement levels.
5. Teaching strategies such as coaching, project learning, e-learning, and tutoring along with other best practices which emphasize real-world connections, teacher professional development, innovative scheduling, accelerated / individualized pacing, and technology are recommended to correct learning deficiencies. The State Department of Education shall assist systems in the identification of effective intervention programs and sharing of best practices. Students should be assessed frequently through a variety of measures to determine if the interventions are being successful or if different interventions are needed.
6. Existing data will be used diagnostically to analyze and determine individual student needs. Interventions shall be supportive and ensure students attain the knowledge and skills required to be successful. Interventions allow students to learn at different rates and continue to be successful in subsequent school years. Schools will monitor student progress regularly in years following the intervention to make sure students are advancing appropriately and will intervene with those students who are not.