

**RULES
OF
THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION**

**CHAPTER 0520-01-03
ACADEMIC AND INSTRUCTIONAL REQUIREMENTS**

0520-01-03-.16 PROMOTION AND RETENTION.

- (1) The academic program implemented in each public school shall be designed to help students achieve the expectations of the grade-level State Board approved Tennessee Academic Standards and meet the requirements for promotion to the next grade.
- (2) Promotion to the next grade level shall be based on the successful completion of required academic work or demonstration of satisfactory progress in each of the relevant academic areas.
- (3) Each LEA and public charter school governing body shall develop and implement promotion and retention policies for students in grades Kindergarten through eight (K-8) in accordance with T.C.A. § 49-6-3115, this Rule, and the State Board's Promotion and Retention Policy 3.300. The LEA or public charter school's promotion and retention policy shall include a right for the parent or legal guardian to appeal a decision to retain a student.
- (4) Schools shall identify students who demonstrate difficulty in achieving the requirements for promotion to the next grade level and therefore may be at risk for retention by February 1. However, a student may be identified as at risk for retention after February 1 if reasons for identifying a student as at risk for retention are identified in a lawfully adopted local board policy that identifies limited situations in which students may be identified as at risk for retention. Schools shall notify the parent or legal guardian of any student who is identified as at risk for retention within fifteen (15) calendar days of identification.
- (5) Factors used to identify students who are at risk for retention shall, at a minimum, include:
 - (a) The student's ability to perform at the expectations of the current grade-level standards;
 - (b) The results of local assessments, screening, or monitoring tools;
 - (c) State assessments, as applicable;
 - (d) Home Literacy Reports provided in accordance with T.C.A. § 49-1-905;
 - (e) The overall academic achievement of the student;
 - (f) The student's likelihood of success with more difficult material if promoted to the next grade;
 - (g) The student's attendance record; and
 - (h) The student's maturity.
- (6) A parent or guardian of a student enrolled in any of the grades kindergarten through two (K-2) may elect to retain the parent's or guardian's student in the student's current grade

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level if the student has a documented academic or behavioral delay and the parent or guardian believes that retention may benefit the student. If a parent or guardian elects to retain the parent's or guardian's student, the parent or guardian shall notify the student's school, in writing, within thirty (30) calendar days of the conclusion of the current school year.

(a) For the purposes of this Rule, a documented academic delay is defined as:

1. Receiving Tier III academic intervention(s) through the Tennessee's Response to Instruction and Intervention (RTI²) Framework; and
2. Having a current student intervention plan in the area(s) of reading or math or an Individual Learning Plan - Characteristics of Dyslexia (ILP-D) in accordance with State Board Rule 0520-01-22.

(b) For the purposes of this Rule, a documented behavioral delay is defined as:

1. Receiving Tier III behavior intervention(s) through the Tennessee's Response to Instruction and Intervention (RTI²) Framework; and
2. Having a current student intervention plan for behavior.

(c) If a parent or guardian elects to retain the parent's or guardian's student in the student's current grade level pursuant to paragraph (6) of this Rule, then the LEA or public charter school in which the student is enrolled shall retain the student in the student's current grade level at the parent's or guardian's request subject to the requirements in paragraph (7)(g) of this Rule. Following a timely request made in accordance with paragraph (6) this Rule by of the parent or guardian of a student determined by the LEA or public charter school to have an academic or behavioral delay, the LEA or public charter school shall notify the parent or guardian in writing that the student will be retained for the upcoming school year in accordance with the parent or guardian's request. The LEA or public charter school shall notify the parent or guardian who submits a timely request to the LEA or public charter school, in writing if the student does not qualify for retention under paragraph (6) of this Rule due to the student not having an academic or behavioral delay as defined in paragraph (6) of this Rule.

(7) Schools shall develop and implement an individualized promotion plan for any student identified as at risk for retention to help the student avoid retention.

(a) The individualized promotion plan shall be developed in coordination with the student's teachers, IEP or 504 team, if applicable, and may also include input from the student's parents, school counselor, or other appropriate school personnel. All promotion plans shall include evidence-based promotion strategies and shall be tailored to the student's learning needs. Each promotion plan shall also include expectations and measurements that can be used to verify that a student has made sufficient progress to be promoted to the next grade level. Promotion plans for students in grades three (3) and four (4) shall include the additional requirements for promotion set forth in paragraph (8) of this Rule.

(b) A copy of a student's promotion plan shall be provided to his or her parent or legal guardian, and the school shall offer to parents or legal guardians the opportunity for a parent-teacher conference to discuss the promotion plan.

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- (c) If a student is not making progress on his or her promotion plan, then the promotion strategies shall be modified to support the student in the goal of promotion to the next grade level. A student who demonstrates sufficient academic progress with the strategies included in his or her promotion plan during the school year shall be promoted to the next grade level unless retention is required, as set forth in paragraph (8) of this Rule.
- (d) If a student has not demonstrated sufficient academic progress as defined in his or her promotion plan by the end of the school year, the student shall be eligible to enroll in a summer reading or learning program if such program is available. For a student in grade three (3) who is identified for retention in accordance with paragraph (8) of this Rule and attends a summer reading or learning program, the program must be conducted in accordance with T.C.A. § 49-6-3115 and T.C.A. §§ 49-6-1501–1511.
- (e) If the student was enrolled in a summer reading or learning program, a decision for retention shall be made and communicated to the parent or legal guardian in writing at least ten (10) calendar days prior to the start of the next school year, or, if the student was not enrolled in a summer reading or learning program, a decision for retention shall be made and communicated to the parent or legal guardian in writing at least thirty (30) calendar days prior to the start of the next school year. The notification to the student's parent or legal guardian of the retention decision shall be in writing and sent electronically and shall include information regarding the parent or legal guardian's right to appeal the retention decision in alignment with the LEA or public charter school's promotion and retention policy.
- (f) Retention shall be considered only when it is in the best interests of the student, or if retention is required by paragraph (8) for students in grades three (3) and four (4). Retention decisions affecting a student receiving special education services shall be made in consultation with the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) or 504 team and in accordance with the provisions of the IEP or 504 plan.
- (g) If a retention decision has been made, then the school shall develop an individualized academic remediation plan for the retained student within thirty (30) calendar days after the beginning of the next school year. A copy of the academic remediation plan shall be provided to the student's parent or legal guardian within ten (10) calendar days of development of such plan.
 - 1. The academic remediation plan shall be developed in coordination with the student's teachers, IEP or 504 team, if applicable, and may also include input from the student's parents, school counselor, or other appropriate school personnel.
 - 2. The academic remediation plan shall be implemented to help the retained student attain and demonstrate learning proficiency and shall include at least one (1) of the following strategies:
 - (i) Adjustment to the current instructional strategies or high-quality instructional materials;
 - (ii) Additional instructional time;
 - (iii) Individual tutoring;

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- (iv) Modification to the student's classroom assignment to ensure the student receives instruction from a teacher with a level of overall effectiveness of above expectations (level 4) or significantly above expectations (level 5); or
 - (v) Attendance or truancy interventions.
 - (h) A student shall not be retained more than one (1) time in any given grade level.
 - (i) Retention shall not:
 - 1. Be used without an academic remediation plan;
 - 2. Be used as a punitive or disciplinary measure;
 - 3. Be based solely on English language proficiency, for students who are identified as English learners;
 - 4. Be based on the student's disability or suspected disability; or
 - 5. Be based solely on a student's maturity.
 - (j) This Rule does not supersede an LEA's or public charter school's obligation to comply with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C. §§ 1400 et seq.), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (29 U.S.C. § 794), Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 (42 U.S.C. § 2000d), the Equal Education Opportunities Act of 1974 (20 U.S.C. § 1701 et seq.), or any other federal or state law related to students with disabilities and English learners.
 - (k) The progress of a retained student shall be closely monitored and reported to the student's parent or legal guardian a minimum of three (3) times during the school year in which the student is retained.
 - (l) Beginning with the 2023-2024 school year, a student who is retained in any of the grades kindergarten through three (K-3) shall be assigned a tutor to provide the student with tutoring services for the entirety of the upcoming school year based on tutoring requirements established by the Department.
- (8) Each LEA and public charter school shall comply with the following additional requirements for promotion and retention of students in grade three (3) and four (4), in accordance with T.C.A. § 49-6-3115. Each LEA and public charter school shall notify parents or legal guardians of all students in grade three (3) and grade four (4) of the following promotion and retention requirements at the beginning of each school year:
 - (a) A student in grade three (3) shall not be promoted to the next grade level unless the student is determined to be proficient in English language arts (ELA) based on the student's achieving a performance level rating of "on track" or "mastered" (otherwise known as "met expectations" or "exceeded expectations") on the ELA portion of the student's most recent Tennessee comprehensive assessment program (TCAP) test.
 - (b) Notwithstanding paragraph (8)(a):

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1. A student in grade three (3) who is not proficient in ELA, as determined by the student's achieving a performance level rating of "approaching" on the ELA portion of the student's most recent TCAP test, may be promoted to the fourth (4th) grade if:
 - (i) Pathway 1: The student is an English language learner and has received less than two (2) full school years of ELA instruction;
 - (ii) Pathway 2: The student was previously retained in any of the grades kindergarten through three (K-3);
 - (iii) Pathway 3: The student is retested in accordance with Department guidelines before the beginning of the next school year and scores proficient in ELA;
 - (iv) Pathway 4: The student attends a learning loss bridge camp before the beginning of the upcoming school year, maintains a ninety percent (90%) attendance rate at the camp, and the student's performance on the post- test administered to the student at the end of the learning loss bridge camp, as required under T.C.A. § 49-6-1502(4)(F), demonstrates adequate growth, as defined in the State Board's Promotion and Retention Policy 3.300;
 - (v) Pathway 5: The student receives high-dosage, low-ratio tutoring for the entirety of the upcoming school year from a Tennessee accelerating literacy and learning corps (TN ALL Corps) tutor. For the purposes of this Rule, "high-dosage, low-ratio tutoring" means a minimum of two (2) thirty (30) minute sessions per week with a one to three (1:3) teacher to student ratio. TN ALL Corps high-dosage, low-ratio tutoring may be provided through the following options, in accordance with T.C.A. § 49-6-1507:
 - (I) A tutor recruited and trained through the Department's TN ALL Corps grant program;
 - (II) A district recruited tutor who has completed the Department's TN ALL Corps training; or
 - (vi) Pathway 6: Beginning with third (3rd) grade students in the 2023-24 school year, the student demonstrates proficiency in ELA standards based on the student scoring at or above the fiftieth (50th) percentile on the most recently administered state-provided benchmark assessment, if the benchmark assessment is administered to the student in a test environment, in accordance with Department guidance, and the student's LEA or public charter school agrees to provide tutoring services to the student for the entirety of the student's fourth (4th) grade year.
 - (I) If a student is promoted to the fourth (4th) grade pursuant to this Pathway 6, then the student's LEA or public charter school shall notify the student's parent or guardian, in writing, of the benefits of enrolling their student in a

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- learning loss bridge camp and encouraging the parent or guardian to do so.
- (II) For the purposes of Pathway 6, “state-provided benchmark assessment” means the Tennessee Universal Reading Screener provided by the Department.
 - (III) The tutoring services provided to the student for the entirety of the student’s fourth (4th) grade year must be high-dosage, low-ratio tutoring. For the purposes of this Rule, “high-dosage, low-ratio tutoring” means a minimum of two (2) thirty (30) minute sessions per week with a one to three (1:3) teacher to student ratio. TN ALL Corps high-dosage, low-ratio tutoring may be provided through the following options, in accordance with T.C.A. § 49-6-1507:
 - I. A tutor recruited and trained through the Department’s TN ALL Corps grant program.
 - II. A district recruited tutor who has completed the Department’s TN ALL Corps training.
2. A student in grade three (3) who is not proficient in ELA, as determined by the student’s achieving a performance level rating of “below” on the ELA portion of the student’s most recent TCAP test may be promoted to the fourth (4th) grade if:
- (i) Pathway 1: The student is an English language learner and has received less than two (2) full school years of ELA instruction;
 - (ii) Pathway 2: The student was previously retained in any of the grades kindergarten through three (K-3);
 - (iii) Pathway 3: The student retested in accordance with Department guidelines before the beginning of the next school year and scores proficient in ELA; or
 - (iv) Pathway 4: The student attends a learning loss bridge camp before the beginning of the upcoming school year and maintains a ninety percent (90%) attendance rate at the camp, and receives high-dosage, low-ratio tutoring for the entirety of the upcoming school year from a Tennessee accelerating literacy and learning corps (TN ALL Corps) tutor. For the purposes of this Rule, “high-dosage, low-ratio tutoring” means a minimum of two (2) thirty (30) minute sessions per week with a one to three (1:3) teacher to student ratio. TN ALL Corps high-dosage, low-ratio tutoring may be provided through the following options, in accordance with T.C.A. § 49-6-1507:
 - I. A tutor recruited and trained through the Department’s TN ALL Corps grant program.
 - II. A district recruited tutor who has completed the Department’s TN ALL Corps training.

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- (c) A student who is promoted to the fourth (4th) grade pursuant to paragraph (8)(b)1.(v) or (8)(b)2.(iv) of this Rule may be promoted to the fifth (5th) grade by showing adequate growth on the fourth (4th) grade ELA portion of the TCAP test as further defined in State Board Promotion and Retention Policy 3.300.
- (d) Notwithstanding paragraph (8)(c):
 - 1. If a student who is promoted to the fourth (4th) grade pursuant to paragraph (8)(b)1.(v) or (8)(b)2.(iv) of this Rule does not demonstrate adequate growth on the fourth (4th) grade ELA portion of the TCAP test, the student's LEA or public charter school shall convene a conference that includes the following categories of participants: the student's parent or legal guardian, the student's ELA teacher, and student's principal. The recommendation made by a majority of the categories of participants in the conference shall determine whether the student is:
 - (i) Promoted to fifth (5th) grade and receives tutoring for the entirety of the upcoming school year. Fifth (5th) grade tutoring requirements shall be established by the Department; or
 - (ii) Retained in the fourth (4th) grade.
- (e) Notwithstanding paragraph (d)(1)(ii), a student shall not be retained in fourth (4th) grade more than once.
- (f) The requirements set forth in paragraphs (8)(a)–(d) do not supersede an LEA's or public charter school's obligation to comply with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C. §§ 1400 et seq.) or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act (29 U.S.C. § 794).
 - 1. In accordance with T.C.A. § 49-6-3115, an LEA or public charter school shall not retain a student with a disability or a suspected disability that impacts their ability to read.
 - 2. Retention and promotion decisions shall be made on a case-by-case basis and in consultation with the student's IEP and/or 504 team to determine whether the student's performance on the ELA TCAP was due to the student's disability. Such consultation includes, but is not limited to, a review of evaluation and eligibility data, input from the student's teachers and parents, benchmark assessments, and classroom performance.
- (g) Appeals to the Department.
 - 1. The parent or legal guardian of a student who is identified for retention in third (3rd) grade pursuant to paragraph (8)(a) based on the student's achieving a performance level rating of "approaching" on the ELA portion of the student's most recent TCAP test, may appeal directly to the Department. A parent or legal guardian may provide written consent, on a form provided by the Department to LEAs and public charter schools, for a school principal, guidance counselor, teacher, or other administrator of the student's school to file an appeal for the student on behalf of the parent or legal guardian. The LEA or public charter school shall fully inform the parent or legal guardian of the student's pathways to fourth (4th) grade promotion prior to the parent or legal guardian signing the consent form.

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Signed consent forms shall be collected by the LEA or public charter school either electronically or on paper and shall be maintained for monitoring purposes by the LEA or public charter school.

- (i) A decision to retain a student for any other reason, as set forth in paragraphs (1)–(6) of this Rule may be appealed at the local level only, pursuant to the LEA or public charter school's promotion and retention policy.
- 2. The appeal process for a student who is identified for retention in third (3rd) grade pursuant to paragraph (8)(a) based on the student's achieving a performance level rating of "approaching" on the ELA portion of the student's most recent TCAP test shall be administered by the Department. Information regarding the appeals process and timelines shall be posted on the Department's website. All appeals shall be submitted on the appeal forms provided by the Department and posted on its website. If an appeal is not submitted on the appropriate appeal form, the appeal shall be denied.
- 3. The Department shall open the appeals window no later than five (5) business days after the Department releases individual student results to LEAs and public charter schools for the ELA portion of the 3rd grade TCAP. All appeals shall be submitted within the appeals window determined by the Department. The Commissioner's designee(s) shall review all properly submitted appeals, make a determination, and issue an electronic notification of the decision to the parent or legal guardian within fourteen (14) calendar days of receiving the appeal. An extension of the fourteen (14) calendar day timeline is permitted if the Commissioner determines exceptional circumstances exist with respect to a particular appeal requiring the Department to request additional information necessary to make a determination.
- 4. The Commissioner's designee(s) may overturn the identification of a student as at risk for retention in third (3rd) grade pursuant to paragraph (8)(a) and allow the student to be promoted to the fourth (4th) grade if one (1) or more of the following grounds is met:
 - (i) Ground 1:
 - (I) The parent or legal guardian of the student agrees they were provided notice of all requirements of a Ground 1 appeal and agrees that their student will comply with all requirements of a Ground 1 appeal if the Commissioner's designee overturns the identification of the student as at risk for retention in 3rd grade;
 - (II) For the 2023-24 academic year, the student scores at or above the fortieth (40th) percentile on a State Board-approved universal reading screener identified in State Board Universal Reading Screener Policy 3.302 and administered by the LEA or public charter school;
 - (III) For the 2024-25 academic year and thereafter, the student scores at or above the fortieth (40th) percentile on

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the Tennessee Universal Reading Screener provided by the Department and administered by the LEA or public charter school;

- (IV) The principal of the student's school agrees to develop an academic remediation plan for the student. The academic remediation plan shall be developed in coordination with the student's teachers, IEP or 504 team, if applicable, and may also include input from the student's parents, school counselor, or other appropriate school personnel. The academic remediation plan shall include evidence-based strategies tailored to the student's learning needs. These evidence-based strategies shall include at least one (1) of the following:

- I. Adjustment to current instructional strategies or high-quality instructional materials;
- II. Additional instructional time;
- III. Modification to the student's classroom assignment to ensure the student receives instruction from a teacher with a level of overall effectiveness of above expectations (level 4) or significantly above expectations (level 5); or
- IV. Placement of the student in a classroom with a reduced class size.

- (V) The student's current ELA teacher and school principal provide a unanimous recommendation that the student be promoted to the 4th grade; and

- (VI) The student's LEA or public charter school agrees to provide high-dosage low-ratio tutoring services to the student for the entirety of the student's fourth (4th) grade year. "High-dosage, low-ratio tutoring" means a minimum of two (2) thirty (30) minute sessions per week with a one to three (1:3) teacher to student ratio. TN ALL Corps high-dosage, low-ratio tutoring may be provided through the following options, in accordance with T.C.A. § 49-6-1507:

- I. A tutor recruited and trained through the Department's TN ALL Corps grant program.
- II. A district recruited tutor who has completed the Department's TN ALL Corps training.

- (ii) Ground 2:

- (I) The parent or legal guardian of the student identified as at risk for retention in third (3rd) grade pursuant to paragraph (8)(a), or the school personnel authorized to file an appeal on behalf of the parent or legal guardian,

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documents that a catastrophic situation occurred on the third (3rd) grade ELA TCAP test date or within sixty (60) calendar days leading up to the third (3rd) grade ELA TCAP test administration (and any makeup opportunities) that impacted the student and impeded the student's ability to demonstrate the student's current level of knowledge on the test. Examples of a catastrophic situation include, but are not limited to, a death in the immediate family, loss of a family home, or significant medical diagnosis.

5. If the Commissioner overturns the identification of a student as at risk for retention in third (3rd) grade pursuant to a successful Ground 1 appeal under this subparagraph (g), the student may enroll in summer programming opportunities provided by the student's LEA or public charter school if the LEA or public charter school determines sufficient space is available.
6. If the Commissioner overturns the identification of a student as at risk for retention in third (3rd) grade pursuant to a successful Ground 2 appeal under this subparagraph (g), the student may enroll in summer programming and/or tutoring opportunities provided by the student's LEA or public charter school, if the LEA or public charter school determines sufficient space is available.

Authority: T.C.A. §§ 49-1-302; 49-6-311; 49-6-1501, et seq.; 49-6-3001; and 49-6-3115. **Administrative History:** New rule filed September 6, 2022; effective December 5, 2022. Amendments filed March 12, 2024; effective June 10, 2024.