



Catholic Education Office Diocese of Lismore

Student Retention (repeating a year level) Policy & Procedures

Status: New policy 2011

Replaces:

Date Issued: August 2011

Evaluation and Review: August 2013

Related Documentation:

Statement of policy

Research demonstrates that the potential for negative effects consistently outweighs the potential for positive outcomes with respect to year level or grade retention. Accordingly, educational practice has shifted to the almost exclusive use of promotion with intervention for those students who are at academic risk.

Year level retention in the Diocese of Lismore is only to be considered in exceptional circumstances where there is strong evidence that it is in the best interests of the student.

If student retention is being considered the following procedures must be implemented.

Scope

This policy and the related procedures applies to students enrolled in diocesan schools from Early Stage 1 to Stage 6.

Principles

- No child should repeat a year level unless there is sufficient evidence that he/she will profit scholastically and suffer no emotional strain
- Schools must have locally developed procedures detailed in the Staff Handbook that conform to this policy and procedures document
- The school decision making process for student retention must involve a school team with input from relevant Catholic Education Office staff
- When considering that a student should be retained in the same year/grade level, there should be consultation between the parent, teacher and principal, with any final decision being made by the parent
- This consultation process must take place within acceptable time lines to allow for a properly considered decision
- As a rule a child should progress with his/her class every year

Procedures

1. If the issue of retention is raised by the teacher his/her concerns must be discussed with the Principal and the Additional Needs Teacher and any other relevant school staff prior to approaching the parent. In secondary schools this may include KLA and Year Coordinators.
2. If the issue of retention is raised by the parent to the teacher, the teacher is not to promote a position but rather listen and inform the parent a process will be put in place to properly consider such matters.
3. If a teacher believes there is cause to consider retaining a student they should conduct relevant assessments to support the assertion. All current assessment information concerning the student's progress and

development should be reviewed by the teacher and be made available to the principal to assist in the decision making process.

4. The principal will determine which staff will assist in the decision making process. The review group must include the teacher. The review group will decide on a suitable process which includes consultation with the parent and the involvement of relevant Catholic Education Office staff.
5. The review group will examine all intervention strategies adopted to date, discuss additional interventions, alternatives to retention and other available options, consider the research and discuss the parent interview. The review group will adopt a position on the question (for or against retention).
6. A parent interview is to be conducted with the school participants decided by the principal. The class teacher is to avoid discussing retention questions with the parent without the presence of the principal. Following the exchange of information between parties and the explanation of the school's position on the matter the parents will be asked to consider their view. Parental decisions do not have to be made immediately. When communicated to the school principal the parental decision will be respected by the school.
7. The student's parents will be requested to confirm their decision in writing detailing their reasons for either agreeing with or dissenting from the school's position.

Appendix

Research base

John Hattie's research on interventions that have a negative effect on student growth - Note No 92

The disasters ...

Influence	Studies	Effects	ES
83 Perceptual-Motor programs	180	637	0.08
84 Distance Education	450	954	0.06
85 Inductive teaching	24	24	0.06
86 College halls of residence	10	23	0.05
87 Open vs Traditional	315	333	0.01
88 Multi-grade/age classes	67	45	-0.02
89 Summer vacation	39	62	-0.09
90 Welfare Policies	8	8	-0.12
91 Television	23	227	-0.12
92 Retention	207	2675	-0.16
93 Mobility	181	540	-0.34
94 Presence of disruptive students	122	390	-0.74

McGrath H

Below is an excerpt from "To Repeat or Not To Repeat" published in WORDS: Journal of the association of Western Australian Primary Principals (July 2006) and released as a media release by Dr H McGrath, Faculty of Education, Deakin University on 30/08/06. This article is available in full from Education Services.

Students who repeat a year at school gain no benefit, according to a review of 75 years of research by Deakin academic Dr Helen McGrath.

Dr McGrath, from Deakin's Faculty of Education, said research studies carried out over the past 75 years failed to support the popular assumption among teachers and parents that repeating a year at school helped a student's academic performance.

"In fact repeating a year confirms to a student that they have failed. They experience stress from being taller, larger and more physically mature than their younger classmates. They miss their friends who have moved on to the next year level. They also experience boredom from repeating similar tasks and assignments. Their self esteem drops. All of these factors ultimately lead many to drop out.

"Students who repeat at any age level have a 20 to 50% higher likelihood of dropping out of secondary school compared to students with similar levels of achievement or difficulty who don't repeat. Those who don't drop out are less likely to continue on to post-secondary schooling."

Repeating does not address the needs of students who are not achieving in school or who have social or behavioural difficulties.

Simply promoting the student to the next year along with their peers without some form of structured plan of support in place is not the answer either.

Dr McGrath said alternative options to repeating included the use of more effective teaching strategies, identifying problems at pre-school level and developing appropriate programs to address them creating individual education plans and providing specialist support.

In summary, the following conclusions can be stated from McGrath's research:

- Repeating does not improve academic outcomes
- Repeating contributes to poor mental health outcomes
- Repeating leads to poor long term social outcomes
- Repeating contributes to a negative attitude to school and learning
- Repeating results in students dropping out of school
- Repeating decreases the likelihood that a student will participate in post-secondary schooling
- Repeated students demonstrate higher rates of behavioural problems
- There is no advantage to students in delaying school entry for a year in order to increase 'school readiness'
- There are huge costs associated with students repeating a year of schooling.
- Some students are more likely to be recommended to repeat than others.

There may be an occasional student who is an exception, but, for most students, providing them with more of what didn't work for them the first time around is an exercise in futility. Moving forward on this key educational issue involves schools giving consideration to the following directions:

- Developing a school policy and school protocols about repeating a year level;
- Ensuring that teachers (and parents) have access to the relevant research in order to make informed decisions;
- Using a team of teachers to make decisions about an individual student's future in the following school year after considering questions such as: What does the school expect to achieve by repeating this student? What possible positive and negative effects might repeating have on this student's achievement, behaviour and wellbeing? What more effective alternatives might be implemented instead of repeating? What skills and resources will be needed to enable the school to do this?