

Louisiana students are just as capable as any other group of students across our country or in the world. We are raising expectations, so our students can compete for jobs. During this transition, our state will not denigrate schools, humiliate teachers, or punish students, including when making decisions about whether to promote individual students. As a result, the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) approved transition policies for fourth grade promotion for the next two years that will allow students time to learn the new expectations and will allow educators and administrators greater discretion in the decision to promote or retain a child. BESE also approved a policy to establish transitional ninth grade, and a document that offers promotion policy guidance for transitional ninth grade is forthcoming along with a sample template to amend district pupil progression plans.

Over the past five years, an average of 10 percent of 4th graders did not pass ELA component of the LEAP and 13 percent did not pass the Math portion, which contributed to a statewide 4th grade retention rate of 11 percent. Figure 1 indicates that 4th grade math and ELA proficiency have increased since the state instituted a promotion standard. However, Figure 2 demonstrates that over-aged students are far less likely to graduate high school.

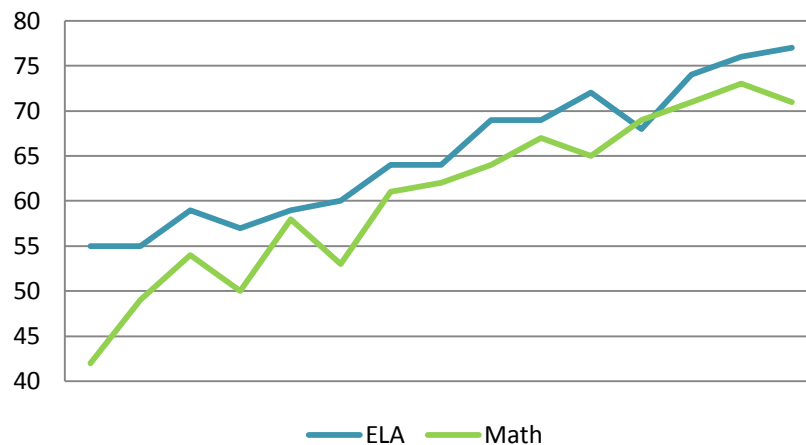


Figure 1. 4th grade proficiency rates in ELA and Math (1999-2013)

Age at Grade 9	Percent Graduated
14	86%
15	51%
16	18%
17	6%

Figure 2. 2011 graduation rates decrease as age at grade 9 increases

In this time of increased discretion, educators will need to weigh the benefits and detriments for struggling students in determining whether to promote or retain. This Grade 4 Promotion Policy Guidance is intended to assist educators as they seek to answer, “Based on what I know about the student, will advancing to the next grade further his growth? Or will he benefit from having re-exposure to materials and content he has not yet mastered?”

POLICY OVERVIEW

The current fourth grade promotion policies contained in [Bulletin 1566](#) remain in effect. However, for the 2013-14 and 2014-15 school years in which educators are making promotion decisions about student placement in 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 respectively, BESE has authorized local school systems to issue waivers for first-time fourth grade students who do not achieve the passing standard on LEAP, but who demonstrate readiness to progress to fifth grade. Passing standard is defined as a score at or above the *Basic* achievement level on the English Language Arts or Mathematics components of the LEAP and at or above the *Approaching Basic* achievement level on the other portion of the LEAP. If this waiver is issued, the district should indicate what criteria will be used to determine readiness for fifth grade.

CONSIDERATIONS FOR MAKING DECISIONS IN 2013-14 ABOUT STUDENT PLACEMENT IN 2014-2015

Changes in Assessments	What this means for districts
<p>Students in grades 3-8 will take the LEAP and iLEAP. The ELA and Math components of the LEAP and iLEAP have been revised to more closely align to the Common Core State Standards. Results will be available in May 2014.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> LEAs electing to use fourth grade promotion waivers must update their pupil progression plans. If the waivers are issued, the LEA must outline what criteria will be used in place of the LEAP to determine if students are prepared for fifth grade. Such guidance shall include the evidence of student learning that will be considered. <input type="checkbox"/> Pupil progression plans should be updated no later than 30 days following the BESE policy becoming rule. The promotion policies are scheduled to become rule on April 20th. <input type="checkbox"/> Local school boards must approve these changes to the pupil progression plan. Upon approval, the revised pupil progression plan should be submitted to Susannah Craig at Susannah.Craig@LA.GOV. <input type="checkbox"/> Students who do not earn the passing standard on the LEAP must attend summer remediation and retest before being placed in fifth grade via the waiver.

GUIDANCE FOR MAKING DECISIONS ABOUT INDIVIDUAL STUDENTS

When deciding if individual students will benefit more from progressing to the next grade or having exposure to content they have not yet mastered, districts can make informed decisions by answering three key questions:

1. How will you identify your non-proficient students?
2. Of the students who are identified as non-proficient, who will be promoted and who will be retained?
3. What supports will you provide to students who are promoted and retained to ensure they are on track for the next grade?

Question 1: How will you identify your non-proficient students?

If a student is identified as non-proficient in either ELA or Math, he/she must attend summer remediation.

Step 1: Identify all non-proficient students

A non-proficient student is a student who does not achieve the passing standard on the LEAP. Passing standard is defined as a score at or above the *Basic* achievement level on the English Language Arts or Mathematics components of the LEAP and at or above the *Approaching Basic* achievement level on the other portion of the LEAP. A student who does not achieve the passing standard on the LEAP must attend summer remediation to be considered for promotion.

Types of data for identifying non-proficient students could include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Student's reading level (e.g., [The Lexile® Framework for Reading](#))
- [Statewide assessments results](#) (if available)
- Results of Benchmark assessments rated as Tier 1 and Tier 2 through the [Instructional Materials Review](#)
- State-released ELA and Math [Practice Tests](#) results
- Performance results on classroom assessments aligned to the Common Core State Standards (e.g. teacher-made assessments in [EAGLE](#))
- Results of assessments aligned to the priority content outlined in the [Assessment Guidance](#)
- Growth from beginning of the year pre-test to end of the year post-test aligned to the Common Core State Standards
- [Student Growth Data](#)
- Course grades
- Attendance

The types of data should be selected and prioritized and requirements for the minimum expectations should be set. Utilizing more than one measure is recommended. The agreed upon criteria to be used should be included and updated in the district's Pupil Progression Plan.

In addition, the district may use additional criteria to identify students in need of summer remediation (e.g. students who failed a subject, were at risk of failing, or had excessive absences).

Step 2: Ensure that these identified students enroll in summer remediation.

Question 2: Of the students identified in Question 1, who will be promoted and who will be retained?**Step 1: Determine the criteria for successful completion of summer remediation.**

Students who attend summer remediation at the end of the 2013-14 school year will have the opportunity to retake the LEAP. Although not required, the district may choose to set a minimum score on the retest to determine if a student has successfully completed summer remediation. These results could be used for promotional purposes but are not required. If a district elects to do so, a student can still be promoted even if he does not pass the summer retest.

Types of measures to determine successful completion of summer remediation could include, but are not limited to, the following:

- State-released ELA and Math [Practice Tests](#) results
- Results from purchased assessments rated as Tier 1 and Tier 2 through the [Instructional Materials Review](#)
- Results from district developed assessments aligned to the Common Core State Standards (e.g., [EAGLE](#))
- Results from district developed assessments aligned to the priority content outlined in the [Assessment Guidance](#)
- Growth from pre-test to post-test aligned to the Common Core State Standards
- Grade assigned by teacher of record in summer remediation

Step 2: Determine what criteria will be utilized to make promotional decisions.

The decision to promote or retain should be made by the collaborative effort of parents, teachers, counselors and administrators after careful consideration of all of the available data. The final recommendation, however, lies with the school. If a waiver is granted, the district must outline criteria that will be used to determine readiness for fifth grade.

Types of data to consider when making the decision to promote or retain could include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Whether or not the student meets the passing standard on the LEAP (2013-14 only) or meets the expectations set for successfully completing summer remediation
- Growth from beginning of summer remediation to end of summer remediation
- Grade assigned by teacher of record in summer remediation
- Re-analysis of the data used to determine non-proficiency in ELA and/or Math (refer to types of data from Question 1)
- Number of subjects in which the student was identified as non-proficient
- Qualitative data from parents, teachers, counselors and administrators

Step 3: Convene the stakeholders to evaluate individual students based on the criteria set in Step 2 and make a recommendation.

Question 3: What supports will you provide to students who are promoted and retained?

Step 1: Determine the supports to be provided to students who are promoted and retained.

Supports must be in place to ensure retained and promoted students show adequate growth. Promoted and retained students identified as non-proficient in either ELA or Math should receive remediation in the fourth grade subject(s) where he/she was identified as non-proficient and pursue grade-level work in other subjects. There are several strategies a school can utilize to ensure the appropriate supports are in place.

Strategies could include, but are not limited, to the following:

- Place students in a class with a teacher whose overall [Compass Final Evaluation](#) rating is Effective: Proficient or Highly Effective.
- Schedule routine meetings with stakeholders to monitor the progress of individual students through the analysis of quantitative and qualitative data.
- Provide additional instructional minutes in the subject where the student was identified as non-proficient.
- Utilize individualized computer-based programs.
- Place students in classes with fewer students.
- Provide opportunities for teachers with common students to collaborate ([Focus Area #3 in District Planning Guide](#)) around improving student learning.
- Develop and implement a Response to Intervention (RtI) plan.
- Utilize the ELA and Math Guidebooks (e.g. specific guidance around math remediation).

Step 2: Develop a plan to reduce retention rates.

There are several strategies a district can employ to reduce retention rates. *Grade Retention is not an Intervention* was published by the Louisiana Department of Education and outlines a few of those strategies.

Strategies could include, but are not limited, to the following:

- Focus on literacy early** (e.g. ensure that teaching students to read by third grade is the number one instructional priority, ensure that the Common Core State Standards for [English Language Arts & Literacy in History/Social Studies, Science, and Technical Subjects](#) are incorporated in all content areas throughout the day, concentrate on components of [effective reading instruction](#), utilize flexible scheduling that provides “double dosing” of literacy instruction, have the strongest reading teachers work with readers who struggle the most).
- Ensure all at-risk four year olds are attending** a [high quality pre-kindergarten program](#).
- Develop and implement a Response to Intervention (RtI) plan** (i.e. a general education framework through which a school provides all students with high-quality, research based, differentiated core instruction, identifies specific students with academic or behavior needs, and provides interventions that are matched to those needs).
- Provide supplemental resources to meet academic, social, and emotional needs** (e.g. before/after school tutoring services).
- Monitor retention rates and practices** (e.g. monitor retention rates by school and grade-level and intervene based on data; require multiple, documented interventions prior to permitting retention).

LOOKING AHEAD TO 2014-15 SCHOOL YEAR AND MAKING DECISIONS ABOUT STUDENT PLACEMENT IN 2015-2016 SCHOOL YEAR

Changes in Assessments	What this means for districts
<p>Students in grades 3-8 will take PARCC in ELA and Math. PARCC is fully aligned to the Common Core State Standards. Test results will likely not be available until late summer 2015 since additional time is needed for the scoring and setting of achievement levels.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupil progression plans must include guidance outlining what evidence should be considered in the place of statewide assessment. • LEAs must continue to offer summer remediation to non-proficient students. However, no retest will be available during summer 2015.
<p>Identifying non-proficient students</p>	<p>Because statewide assessment data will not be available until late summer, districts should establish their own criteria for identifying non-proficient students. When establishing these criteria, multiple types of data should be considered. These non-proficient students should attend summer remediation.</p>
<p>Determining successful completion of summer remediation</p>	<p>Statewide assessment data will not be available until early fall. Because of this, districts should establish their own criteria for determining if a student has achieved adequate academic growth upon completion summer remediation.</p>