

Board Policy Adopted: August 18, 2026

Revised:

Laura Jeffrey Academy
INITIAL GRADE PLACEMENT UPON ENROLLMENT POLICY

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish a fair, individualized, and educationally appropriate process for responding to a parent or guardian who requests that a scholar enter Laura Jeffrey Academy (“LJA”) in a grade lower than the grade the scholar would ordinarily enter based on the scholar’s previous enrollment, completed grade level, age, or educational records.

LJA recognizes that families may request a lower entry-grade placement because of concerns related to academic progress, interrupted schooling, developmental readiness, emotional or social needs, disability-related needs, or other significant circumstances. LJA will thoughtfully review each request while prioritizing the scholar’s long-term academic progress, dignity, belonging, access to appropriate supports, and opportunity to participate with age-appropriate peers.

This policy applies only to requests made when a scholar is initially entering or re-entering LJA. LJA does not use grade retention as a routine intervention for scholars already enrolled at LJA.

II. POLICY STATEMENT

A scholar enrolling at LJA will ordinarily be placed in the next sequential grade based on the scholar’s most recently completed grade, prior school records, age, and educational history.

A parent or guardian may submit a written request asking that the scholar enter LJA one grade lower than the grade the scholar would otherwise attend. Approval of such a request is not automatic and will be based on an individualized review of the scholar’s educational needs and the totality of the available information.

A lower entry-grade placement will be considered only when the available evidence demonstrates that repeating the grade is reasonably likely to provide a meaningful educational benefit that could not be achieved as effectively through grade-level placement with appropriate instruction, interventions, accommodations, special education services, or other supports.

The decision will not be based solely on:

1. A parent or guardian’s preference;
2. A single grade, test score, assessment, or evaluation;
3. The scholar’s disability or special education status;
4. English learner status;
5. Previous disciplinary history;
6. School attendance considered without examining the reasons for the absences;
7. Perceived maturity alone;
8. The availability or unavailability of space within a particular grade; or

9. A desire to improve athletic, extracurricular, or competitive advantage.

III. SEPARATION OF ENROLLMENT AND GRADE PLACEMENT

A request for a lower entry-grade placement will be reviewed separately from LJA's enrollment and admissions process.

A scholar's academic performance, disability, need for special education services, behavior history, English proficiency, or requested grade placement will not be used to deny the scholar admission when the scholar is otherwise eligible to enroll and a seat is available under LJA's enrollment policy.

When enrollment must be determined through an admissions lottery, the lottery and enrollment process will be completed. A grade-placement determination will be made only after the scholar has been offered enrollment, consistent with applicable law and LJA's enrollment procedures. After being offered enrollment, a parent or guardian may request to enter their scholar one grade lower.

IV. PARENT OR GUARDIAN REQUEST

A parent or guardian requesting that a scholar enter LJA one grade lower must submit a written request to the Leadership Team or designee.

The request should include a parent or guardian statement addressing:

1. The reasons the family believes a lower grade placement is in the scholar's best educational interest;
2. The academic, developmental, social, emotional, behavioral, attendance, health, or other concerns supporting the request;
3. The progress the scholar has made during the previous school year and the areas in which the scholar has demonstrated limited or insufficient progress;
4. What the family believes an additional year in the requested grade would provide that grade-level advancement with additional supports would not;
5. The risks the family sees in advancing the scholar and the risks associated with repeating a grade;
6. The family's desired outcomes for the scholar during the coming school year;
7. How the request relates to any existing IEP, Section 504 plan, intervention plan, health plan, or other support plan; and
8. Any information about the scholar that may not be reflected in grades, assessments, or formal school records.

Families are encouraged, but not required, to provide a statement or recommendation from a current or former:

- General education teacher;
- Special education teacher;
- Case manager;
- School psychologist;
- School social worker;
- Counselor;
- Interventionist;
- Licensed medical or mental health provider;

- Tutor; or
- Other professionals familiar with the scholar's educational needs.

The absence of a professional recommendation will not prevent LJA from reviewing the request.

V. INFORMATION LJA MAY REVIEW

LJA may request and review relevant information, including:

1. Report cards, transcripts, and cumulative educational records;
2. Evidence of academic progress or lack of progress over time;
3. State, district, classroom, curriculum-based, and diagnostic assessments;
4. Work samples;
5. Attendance records and information explaining significant absences or interrupted instruction;
6. Records of interventions, specialized instruction, accommodations, tutoring, summer programming, or other supports previously provided;
7. Progress-monitoring data;
8. Teacher, case manager, interventionist, or provider observations;
9. Current and previous IEPs, evaluations, progress reports, prior written notices, or Section 504 plans;
10. Relevant medical, developmental, psychological, or neuropsychological information voluntarily provided by the family;
11. The scholar's educational history, including school changes or interruptions;
12. The scholar's age in relation to the requested grade and the potential impact of the proposed placement;
13. The scholar's perspective, when developmentally appropriate; and
14. Any other information the family or LJA believes is relevant to determining the scholar's educational needs.

A family will not be required to provide private medical or psychological information that is not necessary to the determination. Records received by LJA will be maintained in accordance with applicable student-data privacy requirements.

VI. REVIEW TEAM

The Leadership Team or designee will convene an Initial Grade Placement Review Team. Depending on the scholar's needs, the team may include:

1. The Leadership Team or administrative designee;
2. A general education teacher from the requested or expected grade;
3. A special education administrator or teacher;
4. An interventionist or instructional specialist;
5. A school social worker, counselor, psychologist, or other student-support professional;
6. The scholar's parent or guardian;
7. The scholar, when developmentally appropriate; and
8. Other individuals with knowledge of the scholar or the meaning of the available data.

For a scholar with an IEP, LJA will ensure that appropriate special education staff participate in the review. The grade-placement process will not replace any evaluation, IEP-team, prior-written-notice, or parent-participation requirement under state or federal special education law.

VII. DECISION-MAKING CRITERIA

The Review Team will consider the totality of the available information. No single factor will determine the outcome.

Factors supporting consideration of a lower entry-grade placement may include:

1. **Limited academic progress:** The scholar has demonstrated minimal or insufficient progress across multiple measures and over a meaningful period of time, despite access to instruction and appropriate supports.
2. **Readiness for grade-level work:** Available evidence indicates that the scholar has substantial unfinished learning across multiple foundational skill areas that significantly limits meaningful access to the next grade's curriculum.
3. **Intervention history:** The scholar has received documented, targeted, and sustained interventions or specialized instruction, but progress has remained significantly below expected levels.
4. **Interrupted educational access:** The scholar has experienced substantial disruption in access to instruction because of mobility, prolonged absence, health circumstances, displacement, interrupted schooling, or other significant factors.
5. **Developmental and functional needs:** Reliable information indicates that the scholar's independence, executive functioning, communication, self-regulation, or adaptive skills may materially affect access to the next grade's expectations.
6. **Social and emotional considerations:** The scholar's social, emotional, and psychological needs have been considered, including the possible effect of separation from age peers, stigma, belonging, confidence, and the age difference that would result from the requested placement.
7. **Scholar and family perspective:** The scholar's and family's understanding of the proposed placement, expected benefits, possible risks, and desired outcomes.
8. **Availability of alternatives:** Whether grade-level placement with strengthened Tier 1 instruction, intervention, tutoring, special education services, accommodations, mentoring, summer programming, or other supports could reasonably address the identified needs.
9. **Likelihood of benefit:** Whether there is a clear and reasonable basis to believe that repeating the grade would result in educational benefit rather than simply repeating substantially the same instruction and experience.
10. **Long-term impact:** The possible effect on the scholar's future grade progression, age at graduation, peer relationships, access to activities, motivation, and long-term educational planning.

VIII. ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR SCHOLARS WITH DISABILITIES

A scholar will not be placed in a lower grade solely because the scholar has a disability, has an IEP or Section 504 plan, has not met one or more IEP goals, or requires significant educational support.

For a scholar with an IEP:

1. LJA will review the scholar's current evaluation, IEP, services, accommodations, progress, and educational placement information;
2. The family will be included in decisions requiring IEP-team participation;
3. LJA will determine whether the scholar can access the age-appropriate grade through specially designed instruction, related services, supplementary aids and services, accommodations, assistive technology, or program modifications;
4. A lower grade assignment will not be used as a substitute for providing a free appropriate public education;
5. LJA will not require a family to waive IEP services, procedural safeguards, or disability-related rights as a condition of approving the request; and
6. Any necessary changes to the scholar's IEP, services, or educational placement will be addressed through the legally required IEP process.

For a scholar with a Section 504 plan or a suspected disability, LJA will comply with applicable evaluation, nondiscrimination, and accommodation requirements.

IX. DECISION

The Leadership Team or designee will make the final administrative determination after reviewing the recommendation of the Review Team.

The decision will ordinarily be provided to the parent or guardian in writing and will include:

1. The grade in which the scholar will be enrolled;
2. The information reviewed;
3. The primary reasons for the decision;
4. The alternatives considered;
5. The supports LJA proposes to provide;
6. Any conditions, monitoring plan, or follow-up review associated with the placement; and
7. Information about how the family may request reconsideration.

Whenever reasonably possible, the decision will be issued before the scholar's first day of attendance. When records are incomplete or unavailable, LJA may make a temporary grade placement while additional information is gathered.

X. POSSIBLE OUTCOMES

Following review, LJA may:

1. Approve entry into the requested lower grade;
2. Place the scholar in the next sequential grade with an individualized support and progress-monitoring plan;
3. Make a temporary placement while gathering additional records or completing assessments;
4. Propose additional interventions, accommodations, special education actions, transition supports, or summer programming; or
5. Deny the lower-grade request when the evidence does not demonstrate that repeating the grade is likely to provide greater educational benefit than advancement with appropriate support.

XI. FOLLOWING APPROVAL

Approval does not guarantee that the scholar will repeat any future grade. LJA will continue to support advancement based on the scholar's individual needs, progress, and access to appropriate programming.

XII. RECONSIDERATION AND APPEAL PROCESS

A parent or guardian may submit a written request for reconsideration to the Leadership Team within ten school days after receiving the decision.

The request should identify:

1. Information the family believes was not adequately considered;
2. New or additional documentation;
3. A concern that the policy was not followed; or
4. A concern that the decision was based on inaccurate information.

The Leadership Team will review the request and issue a written response. When the Leadership Team made the original determination, the Board Chair may designate another staff or an appropriate Board committee to review whether the policy and process were followed.

Reconsideration of a general education grade assignment does not replace or limit any dispute-resolution rights available under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Section 504, or other applicable law.

XIII. EQUITY AND NONDISCRIMINATION

LJA will administer this policy consistently and without discrimination.

Decisions will not be based on race, color, creed, religion, national origin, immigration status, sex, marital status, familial status, socioeconomic status, disability, public-assistance status, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, English proficiency, or any other protected status.

LJA will provide interpretation, translation, accessible documents, and reasonable accommodations when needed so families can participate meaningfully in the process.

LJA will periodically review requests and decisions under this policy for consistency and potential disproportionality.

XIV. CONFIDENTIALITY AND RECORDKEEPING

All records related to a grade-placement request will be maintained as educational records in accordance with applicable federal and Minnesota student-data privacy laws.

The scholar's file should contain:

1. The parent or guardian's written request;
2. Supporting records and recommendations;
3. Documentation of the Review Team meeting;
4. The factors and alternatives considered;
5. The written decision;

6. Any reconsideration request and response; and
7. The scholar's support and monitoring plan.

XV. POLICY LIMITATIONS

Nothing in this policy:

1. Guarantees approval of a lower entry-grade placement;
2. Permits LJA to deny an otherwise eligible scholar admission because of academic performance or disability;
3. Allows grade placement to replace appropriate intervention, evaluation, special education, or accommodation;
4. Requires LJA to offer a grade not included in its authorized grade configuration;
5. Limits a parent's procedural rights under special education or disability law; or
6. Prevents LJA from revising a temporary placement after receiving additional information and consulting with the family.

XVI. LEGAL REFERENCES

- Minnesota Statutes, section 120A.20 — Admission to public school and age requirements
- Minnesota Statutes, section 120A.22 — Compulsory instruction
- Minnesota Statutes, chapter 120B — Academic standards, assessment, and student achievement
- Minnesota Statutes, chapter 124E — Charter schools
- Minnesota Statutes, section 124E.11 — Charter school admission and enrollment
- Minnesota Statutes, chapter 125A — Special education
- Minnesota Statutes, chapter 363A — Minnesota Human Rights Act
- Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, 20 U.S.C. § 1232g
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, 20 U.S.C. § 1400 et seq.
- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, 29 U.S.C. § 794
- 34 C.F.R. Part 300
- 34 C.F.R. Part 104

Addendum A: INITIAL GRADE PLACEMENT REQUEST FORM

Scholar Information

Scholar name: _____

Date of birth: _____

Current or most recently completed grade: _____

Grade requested at LJA: _____

Current or previous school: _____

Parent/guardian: _____

Date of request: _____

Parent or Guardian Statement

Please explain why you believe entering LJA in the requested lower grade would be the best educational next step for your scholar. You do not need to answer every question below. The questions are intended to help LJA understand your scholar's needs and the outcome you are seeking.

- What is leading you to believe that entering LJA in a lower grade is the best next step?
- What would an additional year in the requested grade provide that moving forward with additional supports would not?
- What would you hope to be different for your scholar one year from now?
- What progress has your scholar made, and where has progress been limited?
- In which subjects, assignments, routines, or expectations does your scholar need additional preparation?
- What concerns do you have regarding confidence, maturity, independence, emotional readiness, or social development?
- What supports have been most helpful?
- Which supports or interventions have not been sufficient?
- What makes a lower grade placement more appropriate than advancing with additional supports?
- What risks do you see if your scholar advances?
- What risks do you see if your scholar enters a lower grade?
- What would need to be true for you to feel comfortable with advancement?
- How does the request relate to your scholar's IEP, Section 504 plan, accommodations, services, or other support plan?
- Are there evaluations, provider reports, tutoring information, work samples, or other records you would like LJA to review?
- What would success look like during the next school year?
- What should LJA understand about your scholar that may not appear in grades, assessments, or school records?

Parent/guardian signature: _____

Date: _____

Supporting Documentation

Please check any documents included with the request:

- ☐ Report cards or transcripts
- ☐ Assessment information
- ☐ Work samples
- ☐ Attendance information
- ☐ Intervention or progress-monitoring data
- ☐ IEP and evaluation
- ☐ Section 504 plan
- ☐ Teacher or case manager statement
- ☐ Provider or specialist statement
- ☐ Medical or psychological information voluntarily provided
- ☐ Other: _____

Addendum B: LJA Review

Date request received: _____

Date Review Team met: _____

Information reviewed: _____

Alternatives considered: _____

Review Team recommendation:

- ☐ Approve requested grade
- ☐ Place in next sequential grade with supports
- ☐ Temporary placement pending additional information
- ☐ Other: _____

Final determination: _____

Leadership Team Member/designee: _____

Date: _____