Retention of English Learners

Quick Links

Key Considerations Before Retaining an English Learner (EL) Student

Before considering retention of an ELL, the following should be addressed in consultation with the student's ELD teacher:

- Has the student been enrolled in a TN school for more than one full academic year? ○ If not, the child may have spent more than one-half of the year in a "silent period." Two to nine months may be inadequate for meeting educational goals.
- Are classroom accommodations being made in the following areas?
  - Classroom
  - Assignments
  - Homework
  - Assessments
- Are all instructional accommodations documented in the student's ILP? Are those accommodations on the DLD?
  - Are the accommodations and instructional scaffolds being used in every classroom with assignments and assessments?
- Has there been a discussion with the EL IM?
- Has the LEAD Planning with Diverse Learners in Mind been referred to?
- Has the student been considered as an individual and received differentiated instruction? Have instructional accommodations and differentiation been documented?
- Is a beginning to intermediate student receiving an hour of ESL daily? Is a more advanced student receiving enough ESL for instruction to be meaningful?
  - If the student qualifies for individualized services and is not receiving services daily has the student's schedule been changed to offer more support?
- Do all teachers modify grading through a rubric or contract?
- Has the parent/guardian been contact about their child's lack of progress?

If the above points have not occurred sufficiently, retention is **not** appropriate. Retention policies should **not** be based on one specific piece of data or any sole criterion, especially for ELs. In most cases, retention does not help the child with academic achievement. Every effort should be made to move the child to the next level of academic work and allow the child to continue in the age-appropriate grade or class.

Adapted from MNPS and TPCSC's policy of Retention of ELs

Alternatives to Retention

The following are alternatives to retention that research has found to be effective. These measures are neither exhaustive nor mandatory and, if used, should be adapted to the context of the school's and its students' specific needs.

- Parental involvement in their children's school and education (e.g., frequent contact with teachers, supervision of homework, etc.),
- Age-appropriate and culturally sensitive instructional strategies to accelerate progress in the classroom,
- Early developmental programs and preschool programs to enhance language and social skills, ● Systematic assessment strategies (e.g., continuous progress monitoring, formative evaluation) to enable ongoing accommodation of instructional efforts,
- Early reading programs,
- School-based mental health programs to promote the social and emotional adjustment of children,
- Behavior management and cognitive behavior accommodation strategies to reduce classroom behavior problems,
- Student support teams with appropriate professionals to assess and identify specific learning or behavior problems, design interventions to address those problems, and evaluate the efficacy of those interventions.
- Tutoring and mentoring programs focusing on promoting specific academic or social skills, and ● Comprehensive school-wide programs to promote the psychological and academic skills of all students.

Effective Strategies for Supporting English Learners Academically and Linguistically Here are some strategies that teachers can implement to provide targeted support and address both academic and linguistic needs:

- Differentiated instruction: Tailoring instruction to meet the diverse needs of ELs ensures that students can access the curriculum at their level of language proficiency and academic readiness.
    - Provide multiple levels of reading materials on the same subject so students can engage with the content at the appropriate language level.
        - Differentiate assignments by giving EL students tasks matching their language skills while challenging them academically, such as simplified texts, visual aids, or scaffolded writing prompts.
        - Flexible groupings where EL students can collaborate with peers of varying language levels to receive peer support and gain exposure to both language and content.
- Small-Group or One-on-One Instruction: Providing focused, small-group, or individualized instruction allows teachers to address specific linguistic or academic gaps in a supportive environment.
    - Leveled groups: Teachers can create small groups based on students' language proficiency levels to offer more targeted instruction, whether it's reading, writing, or speaking practice. ● Targeted Language Development Support: Explicitly teaching language skills students need to access the curriculum is essential for ELs.
        - Direct vocabulary instruction: Focus on teaching both academic vocabulary (terms essential for understanding content) and functional vocabulary (everyday words and phrases necessary for communication in class).

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- Oral language practice: Provide opportunities for EL students to practice speaking in pairs or groups, such as through structured dialogue, presentations, or debates.
- Reading comprehension strategies: Teach EL students strategies like predicting, summarizing, and asking questions while reading to improve their ability to understand complex texts.
- Culturally Responsive Teaching: Acknowledge and integrate students' cultural backgrounds and experiences into lessons to make learning more relevant and engaging.
  - Use culturally relevant materials: Include literature, examples, and resources that reflect the students' cultural backgrounds, helping them feel more connected to the content. ○ Incorporate students' prior knowledge: Activate ELs' background knowledge by linking lessons to their experiences or things familiar from their home cultures.
- Peer Support and Collaborative Learning: Encourage collaborative learning by using peer support systems where EL students can learn from more proficient peers or classmates.
  - Peer tutoring: Pair EL students with more advanced peers who can support them in both language and academic content.
    - Cooperative learning groups: Use structured group activities where ELs can participate meaningfully while also developing language skills through interaction with classmates. ● For more information, please reference LEAD Planning with Diverse Learners in Mind .

Retention Approval Process for English Learners in MNPS Schools
ELs must **<u>not</u>** be retained in grade level or failed in a class because of their English language proficiency. These students should be even more carefully evaluated than their non-EL peers before retention is recommended to ensure that low English proficiency skills are not mistaken for poor achievement or behavior.

Retention Approval Process for English Learners in TPCSC Schools
An authorized charter school must have **approval** from the Commission to retain an EL student. In **January** of each year, the TPCSC EL Coordinator will confer with LEAD's Director of English Language Learners to discuss requirements for EL students who may be at risk for retention. Follow-up consultations shall be scheduled as needed to discuss the progress of students considered for retention. If the school thinks that a student is at risk for retention, the **principal needs to notify their Director of EL and Head of School before this January meeting takes place.**
- <u>Students in Grades K-8</u>
  - If an EL student in grades K-8 is considered for retention, the school must notify LEAD's Director of English Language Learners and the student's parent or guardian within fifteen (15) days of identification. The school shall develop an individualized promotion plan and offer to meet with the parent as required by TPCSC LEA Policy 4603. The school shall comply with all other requirements of TPCSC LEA Policy 4603 regarding promotion and retention. If the student has not demonstrated sufficient progress on his or her promotion plan by the end of the school year, consultation shall be made with LEAD's Director of English Language Learners and the TPCSC EL Coordinator to determine if retention is appropriate.
  - If the student is enrolled in a summer reading or learning program, the consultation may be had and a decision regarding retention may be made and communicated to the parent after completion of the summer program, but no later than ten (10) days prior to the start of the next school year.

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- If it is determined that a student will be retained, parents shall be notified of their right to appeal a retention decision pursuant to TPCSC LEA policy 4603 regarding promotion and retention.
- LEAD's TPCSC schools must submit to the TPCSC EL Coordinator the following [documentation](#) for any EL student being considered for retention. The Considerations for Retention of an EL Student required form can be found on pages 13-15 of this [document.](#) This documentation will be discussed during the retention consultation:
    1. School Plan for monitoring and limiting the retention of ELs
    2. The student's Individual Learning Plan (ILP) with evidence of progress towards goals and goal adjustment throughout the year
    3. The student's individualized promotion plan with evidence of progress on strategies identified in the plan (required for students in grades K-8)
    4. Documentation of multiple parental contacts regarding the student's progress
    5. Documentation of multiple opportunities to make up assignments
    6. Evidence of implementation of language supports integrated in classroom instruction
    7. Evidence of implementation of interventions in areas of deficit (academic/RTI2, behavior, attendance)
    8. Action plan to address problematic behavior, if applicable (academic, behavior, attendance)
    9. Student's schedule, attendance record, behavior history

The decision to retain an EL student **should not** be based on any sole criterion. A priority should be placed on allowing the child to remain in the grade level or class that is age-appropriate.

Research on the Impact of Grade Retention

Research Findings

- Grade retention is associated with adverse outcomes in all areas of an EL student's achievement (e.g., reading, math, and oral and written language) and social and emotional adjustment (e.g., peer relationships, self-esteem, problem behaviors, attendance). Retained English Learners are more likely to drop out of high school and less likely to graduate at an acceptable age. Retained ELs may appear to do better in the short term but are at a much greater risk for future failure than equally achieving, non-retained peers.
    - *Jimerson et al. (2002)* conducted a meta-analysis of the effects of grade retention and found that retained students did not perform better academically compared to promoted students with similar characteristics. The negative impact was powerful in reading and math, critical areas for ELs already at a linguistic disadvantage.
    - *Valencia & Villarreal (2005)* discussed how grade retention negatively affects EL students' academic performance, noting that retained students experience difficulties catching up in content knowledge and language acquisition.
    - *Martin (2011)* suggested that retained students are more likely to experience bullying or social exclusion, which can lead to long-term effects on their social-emotional development. ○ *Rumberger & Lim (2008)* supported this by noting that grade retention is one of the strongest predictors of dropout. For ELs, retention impacts their likelihood of completing high school and reduces their chances of graduating on time.

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○ *Shanahan and Beck (2006)* recommend specialized interventions for ELs, such as additional language support, scaffolding, and differentiated instruction. These interventions have been shown to be more effective than retention in helping students succeed academically and socially.