

# ROCKWELL CHARTER SCHOOL

## Student Acceleration and Retention Policy

### Board Policy

The Board of Directors of Rockwell Charter School has established this policy to give direction and authority to the Administration to make decisions regarding student retention or acceleration. In recognition that some students may need special consideration for grade placement, the policy includes guidelines and protocols to be followed by a student's academic and safety team in determining whether a student should be retained or accelerated.

### Philosophy

The Board of Directors recognizes that schools should offer students opportunities for the acquisition of specific skills for cognitive development and academic challenge, and a forum for social and emotional experiences. Ideally, differentiated instruction, personalized learning, targeted interventions, and competency-based learning will meet an individual student's needs while allowing a student to remain with that student's own age and grade level.

The Board also recognizes that student retention or acceleration may need to be considered to meet a specific student's needs. Per Utah Code §53G-6-803(2), the Board acknowledges the requirement to ensure that the school reasonably accommodate the written request of a parent or guardian to retain or accelerate a student based on the student's academic ability or the student's social, emotional, or physical maturity after evaluation by a school team. The Board directs the Administration to follow the guidelines of this policy in considering student retention or acceleration.

### Parental Right to Request Retention or Acceleration

Per Utah Code §53G-6-803, the school will honor a written parent request to retain a student in grades K-8 based on the student's academic, social, emotional, or physical maturity. This policy acknowledges that:

- A student's parent or guardian is the primary person responsible for the education of the student;
- That the school is in a secondary and supportive role to the parent or guardian;
- That as such, a student's parent or guardian has the right to reasonable academic accommodations from the student's school including accommodations on parental decisions regarding retention;
- That the school must reasonably accommodate a parent's or guardian's written request to retain a student in kindergarten through grade 8 on grade level based

on the student's academic ability or the student's social, emotional, or physical maturity.

### **Procedure for Requesting Retention or Acceleration**

Prior to granting a parental request for retention or acceleration, the administration must ensure that each retention or acceleration case follows the school team referral process:

- **Written Parental Request**: A parent or legal guardian must make a written request to the Executive Director for the retention or acceleration of their child;
- **Referral**: Parents or teachers may recommend a student for retention or acceleration on a case by case basis. A student referral for retention or acceleration should follow procedures similar to the school's Special Education referral process. Such a referral can be made by a teacher, a school administrator, or a student's parent(s) or legal guardian(s). Referrals must be written requests sent to the Executive Director;
- **Team Evaluation Process**: When considering retention or acceleration, each student shall be evaluated by a team composed of a school administrator, parent(s) or legal guardian(s), teacher(s), the school counselor, and others as deemed appropriate by the Administration. The team will follow the process below:
  - The team will gather appropriate information and assessments guided by the criteria listed below;
  - The team, including parent(s) or legal guardian(s), will meet to share and discuss evaluation results and to make recommendations.
  - Any reports, forms, and/or recommendations from this team shall become part of the student's cumulative record;
  - The team will seek to come to a consensus on the recommendation.
- **Criteria and Best Interest Focus**: When considering a student for acceleration or retention, the team shall review the student's level of maturity, academic and other assessment results, social and emotional behavior, grades, and general school performance. Retention or acceleration should only occur if the team agrees it is in the student's best interest and would not be an unreasonable accommodation.
- **Consideration of Alternatives to Acceleration or Retention**: The team will also consider alternatives to acceleration or retention that could meet a student's needs including, but not limited to:
  - School-supported independent study;
  - School-supported online courses;
  - Differentiated, accelerated instruction within the grade level;
  - Remediation and support within an RTI or MTSS structure;

- Technology-supported, personalized instruction;
- Credit recovery.
- **Team Re-Evaluation:** The team may review the decision of retention or acceleration at any time during the student's educational experience and determine that another or different recommendation is warranted.
- **Appeals Committee:** If a team denies a parent's request for retention or acceleration, parents have the right to appeal the decision to the Executive Director.

### **Decision and Appeal of Decision on Student Acceleration or Retention**

- A student's academic and safety team, including parents, will seek to reach a consensus in their recommendation about a student's acceleration or retention.
- If a consensus is reached on the team, the Executive Director will implement the recommendation of the student's team regarding acceleration or retention.
- When a consensus cannot be reached, the Executive Director will take all recommendations and data into consideration in making a final decision on a student's acceleration or retention.
- In the event that parents or guardians disagree with the decision of the Executive Director, a parent or guardian may appeal the decision in writing to the Executive Director. The Executive Director will then take the following steps:
  - A request for an appeal will convene an impartial group of staff members and at least one administrator not on the previous team to consider the decision reached by the original team or the Executive Director.
  - The appeal team may include a board member.
  - The appeal team will reconsider any data and evidence considered by the initial team, as well as the initial team's decision.
  - The appeal team will then provide a second recommendation to the Executive Director.
- The Executive Director will consider the appeal team's decision in conjunction with the recommendation of the initial team in order to make a final decision on the matter.
- The Executive Director is not bound by the recommendation of either team, unless a consensus has been reached by the initial team, but will weigh both recommendations equally in making a final decision after the process of appeal.

### **Transparency and Collaboration with Parents and Guardians**

The data and information gathered by the school administration for considering requests for retention or acceleration shall be shared with parents or legal guardians to assist in making an informed decision about retention or acceleration. Unless the school administration finds that the data and information indicate that the requested retention

or acceleration is an unreasonable accommodation, the request of the parent or guardian to retain or accelerate the student shall be granted.

### **Grades K-8 Guidelines for Retention or Acceleration**

In determining whether a student in grades K-8 should be retained or accelerated, the following must be considered:

- A student's physical, social, emotional, behavioral, cognitive, and academic development;
- Data gathered by the school counselor or psychologist under the direction of the school administrator and with parental consent including:
  - Official student reports/data such as curriculum-based measures, criterion-referenced tests, benchmark assessments, progress monitoring, report cards, responses to targeted instruction/interventions;
  - Notes from interviews with the student, parent, school counselor, teachers, administrators, or others as needed;
  - Completion of the Light's Retention Scale as part of the evaluation;
  - Other academic, social, behavioral, and psycho-educational assessments as needed including:
    - Cognitive development, as assessed by a standardized, norm-referenced intelligence test;
    - Academic achievement, as assessed by a standardized, norm-referenced academic achievement battery;
    - Social-emotional and behavioral assessments completed by parent, teacher, and, if appropriate, self-report;
    - Extenuating circumstances, such as health, mobility, attendance;
    -
- Data and information from the classroom teacher regarding the student's development in the class;
- Whether after gathering the initial data and information, there are serious concerns that the requested retention or acceleration could be an unreasonable accommodation;
- Any additional data and information relevant to the student's placement.

### **Grades 9-12 Guidelines for Retention or Acceleration**

Retention or acceleration of a student in any grade 9-12 should only be considered in extreme cases and is considered an unreasonable accommodation unless the parent or guardian provides clear evidence to the contrary.

- If circumstances warrant considering the retention or acceleration of a student in grades 9-12, procedures listed under the process above for students in grades 4-8 should be followed.

- Parents and guardians should be referred to the Utah High School Athletic Association for policies pertaining to high school athletic eligibility for students who have been retained or accelerated.
- If a student does not graduate with his/her graduating class and still desires to pursue additional education, subsequent education will be offered through the adult education program.
- In grades 9-12, the final decision to retain or accelerate a student is the responsibility of the evaluation team under the direction of the school administrator.
- In the event that agreement cannot be reached by the team, parent(s)/legal guardian(s) may request an appeals committee be formed as described above to review the local school decision.

### **Special Circumstances for Retaining 12th-Grade Students**

In accordance with Utah Admin. Rule R277-419, Pupil Accounting, the Board of Directors authorizes the administration to retain a senior beyond the general compulsory school age, or in other words, to allow a senior to remain enrolled as a high school senior in the year(s) after the student's cohort has graduated, if the student has experienced the following circumstances that would warrant such consideration:

- Sickness;
- Hospitalization;
- Pending court investigation or action; or,
- Other extenuating circumstances beyond the control of the student.

### **Retention or Acceleration of English Learners (EL)**

Retention regarding any English Learner (EL) student should occur through the team evaluation process described above.

- The administration will coordinate necessary evaluations to provide the parent/legal guardian with information on the linguistic and cultural elements of the request to retain.
- If during the consideration for retention or acceleration, the data and information indicate and the team suspects the student may be a student with a disability, the school must follow "Special Education Child Find Procedures" (USOE Special Education Rules, Section II).

### **Retention of Students Receiving Special Education Services**

Students who have been determined eligible for and are receiving Special Education services are considered for retention only if the retention is consistent with the student's IEP.

- IEP Team Decision: Retention must be determined by the IEP team, not solely by classroom teachers or administrators.
- Alternatives Focus: The school emphasizes interventions, supports, and specialized instruction to help students reach grade-level standards, with a goal to avoid retaining students.
- Documentation: If a student with a disability is considered for retention, the decision must align with the student's IEP and be carefully reviewed, as the need for retention can indicate an insufficient IEP.
- Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD): If a student with specialized instruction is not making progress, the school must review interventions and avoid using retention as a default solution.
- Legal Compliance: The school must comply with Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) rules, which prioritize providing a Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) over simple retention.
- Transition Services: Focusing on post-secondary education, vocational training, job preparation, and independent living skills, transition services allow students on an IEP to stay in school after 12th grade, or until they turn 22 or receive a regular high school diploma. Known as transition services, these programs focus on post-high school goals like job training and independent living rather than traditional academics. The student receiving such services must not have earned a regular high school diploma.
- Eligibility: If a student receives a regular diploma, their entitlement to special education services ends. If a student receives a certificate of completion, that student may still be eligible to continue services depending on the student's age.

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