

This DCPS Student Promotion Policy rescinds and supersedes all previous policy, memoranda, and/or guidance promulgated by DCPS on this subject matter.

Chancellor Approval: 

Effective: August 13, 2018

DCPS Student Promotion Policy

I. Purpose

The District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) is committed to ensuring every student feels loved, challenged, and prepared to positively influence society and thrive in life by providing rigorous and inclusive learning environments for all students. DCPS is focused on accelerating growth for students of all identities and abilities by ensuring equitable access to opportunity and removing barriers to learning. This policy conveys DCPS requirements for student promotion and retention.

II. Authority¹

| Source | Citation |
|--|---|
| Code of the District of Columbia | D.C. Code §§ 38-781.01 - 38-781.06 |
| District of Columbia Municipal Regulations (District of Columbia Public Schools) | 5-E DCMR §§ 2200 — Reporting 5-E DCMR § 2201 — Promotion |

III. Key Terms and Definitions

- A. **Chancellor:** The chief executive officer of DCPS, as established by DC Code § 38-174.²
- B. **Core Subject Areas:** Reading/language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies.³
- C. **Passing Grade:** For pre-kindergarten (pre-K) through 5th grade, achieving proficient or advanced grades in a subject or content area. For 6th through 12th grade, receiving credit for a course.⁴
- D. **Promotion:** Advancement to the next grade level for students in pre-K through 11th grade.⁵
- E. **Retention:** Repetition of a student's current school grade level due to the student's failure to meet promotion criteria.⁶
- F. **School Year:** The school term beginning in August of one year and ending in the following year. The term "school year" does not include summer school.⁷
- G. **Subject and Content Area:** A particular course of study, such as mathematics, English language arts, writing, or literature.⁸

IV. Required Activities

A. General Criteria

Students in all grades are considered for promotion to the next grade level at the end of each school year.⁹

¹ Nothing in this policy shall supersede federal, state, or local law.

² DC Code § 38-781.01.1.

³ 5-E DCMR § 2201.6 (a).

⁴ DC Code § 38-781.01.5 (A) (B).

⁵ DC Code § 38-781.01.8.

⁶ DC Code § 38-781.01.10.

⁷ DC Code § 38-781.01.11.

⁸ DC Code § 38-781.01.12.

⁹ 5-E DCMR § 2201.2.

To be promoted, students must **pass** all **core subject areas**. DCPS students with more than 30 unexcused absences in a school year will not be promoted unless the principal submits a written explanation justifying the decision to the Chancellor before the promotion is made.¹⁰

B. Promotion and Retention of Pre-K – 8th Grade Students

Per DC Code § 38-781.02, decisions regarding the promotion and retention of DCPS students enrolled in pre-kindergarten through 8th grade are made by the student's principal based upon the recommendation of the student's teacher and in accordance with the promotion requirements set forth in the DCMR. A principal may retain any student who does not meet the promotion requirements in the DCMR. However, a principal may promote a student who otherwise failed to meet such promotion requirements provided that the principal submits a written explanation for the promotion to the Chancellor before the promotion is made.

Per 5-E DCMR § 2201.6, in order to be promoted to the next level, students in pre-K through 8th grade must meet the following criteria:

- Receive proficient or advanced marks in the core subjects of reading/language arts, mathematics, science, and social studies, and achieve the goals of the intervention learning plan where applicable; and
- Comply with the requirements of the system's attendance policy.

Note: If a student in pre-K or kindergarten has met the proficiency requirements in the core subject areas but is not deemed ready for promotion to kindergarten or 1st grade by a teacher or a parent due to functional skill level in the areas of physical, social, or emotional development, an option to repeat pre-K or kindergarten may be considered without being designated as a retention.

C. Promotion and Retention of 9th – 11th Grade Students

Per DC Code § 38- 781.02, DCPS students enrolled in 9th grade through 11th grade shall be promoted if the student meets the promotion requirements set forth in 5-E DCMR § 2201.8 (provided below). A principal may retain any student who does not meet the promotion requirements in the DCMR. However, a principal may promote a student who otherwise failed to meet such promotion requirements provided that the principal submits a written explanation justifying the promotion to the Chancellor before the promotion is made.

Per 5-E DCMR § 2201.8, students may complete the high school graduation requirements over a three-, four-, or five-year period, depending upon the time and support they need to complete graduation requirements as stated in their individualized graduation plan signed and verified by their counselor. The following guidelines apply for testing purposes where a grade definition is required:

- Any student who earns six Carnegie Units by completing content standards¹¹ of the required courses, including units in 9th grade English, shall be eligible to be classified as a 10th grade student.¹²
- Any student who earns 12 Carnegie Units by completing content standards of the required courses, including 10th grade English and Algebra I, shall be eligible to be classified as an 11th grade student.

¹⁰ DC Code § 38-781.02(c)(2).

¹¹ Achievement of content standards is based on a receipt of passing mark/grade in accordance with 5-E DCMR § 2200.7.

¹² Note, 5-A DCMR § 2203.3(d) states that all students must enroll in Algebra I no later than tenth (10th) grade commencing with the 2016-2017 school year, unless the school is approved for a waiver pursuant to Subsection 2203.7.

- Any student who earns 18 Carnegie Units by completing content standards of the required courses, including 11th grade English, shall be eligible to be classified as a 12th grade student.

D. Promotion and Retention: All DCPS Students

Per DC Code § 38-781.02(c)(2), no student with more than 30 unexcused absences in a school year shall be promoted unless the principal submits a written explanation justifying the decision to the Chancellor before the promotion is made.

Per 5-E DCMR § 2201.4(a), a student cannot be retained more than once during the student’s enrollment in DCPS unless there is a comprehensive review by multiple school personnel and approval from the Instructional Superintendent whose jurisdiction encompasses the school the student attends.

If a student does not meet all requirements for promotion but moves on to middle or high school because the student has been previously retained, the principal must submit a report to the receiving school detailing all unmet requirements.¹³¹³ This report must be received by June 30 and updated at the close of summer school. For students who move prior to the end of the school year, the report must be provided to the receiving school within 30 calendar days of the student’s enrollment in the school. Students in this situation will be enrolled in support services at the receiving school.

E. Appeals Process

Per DC Code § 38-781.04, if a student or parent disagrees with a retention decision, they have the right to appeal the decision by submitting a written explanation to the Instructional Superintendent.

Appeals due to grades must follow the appeals process and timelines set forth in the DCPS Grading Policy and 5-E DCMR § 2602. Appeals due to unexcused absences must follow the process and timelines set forth in DCPS guidelines and 5-E DCMR §§ 2103.7 through 2103.19; however, the Instructional Superintendent will convene the review panel required by 5-E DCMR § 2103.9.

F. Documentation of Retention and Promotion Decisions

1. Retention of Students Who Fail to Meet DCMR Promotion Criteria

When a principal makes the decision to retain a student, this decision should be documented in the student’s electronic record in the Student Information system (SIS). The underlying rationale for the decision, including a clear explanation of the DCMR promotion requirements the student failed to meet, should be maintained in the student’s cumulative file.

2. Promotion of Students Who Fail to Meet DCMR Promotion Criteria

When a principal makes the decision to promote a student and/or a parent wins an appeal of a retention decision, a written justification that includes the underlying rationale must be submitted to the school’s Instructional Superintendent. Before the promotion is made, a copy of the justification must be provided to the Office of the Chancellor and included in the student’s cumulative file.

G. Required Summer School Attendance

Per DC Code § 38- 781.05, students who are retained for failure to meet the promotion criteria specified in

¹³ Reporting should include pertinent factors that would have qualified the student for retention, including academic standing related to proficiency and/or credit attainment in required content areas and compliance with attendance requirements, where applicable.

the DCMR shall attend the summer school session immediately following the school year in which they were retained, unless specifically excused by the principal or the Chancellor.

A student who attends summer school due to retention shall be reevaluated for promotion if the student meets the following criteria:

- Does not have more than three unexcused absences from summer school; and
- Receives a passing grade in each subject or content area for which the student did not achieve a passing grade during the school year.

A student who meets the promotion criteria set forth in the DCMR after the completion of summer school shall be promoted.

In addition to those students identified to attend summer school pursuant to the above guidance, each principal shall provide to the Chancellor, before the summer school registration deadline, a list of the names of students who the principal believes could benefit from summer school.

H. Special Considerations

Students with disabilities, identified through the Individuals with Disabilities in Education Act (IDEA) 2004, are eligible for promotion as determined in accordance with the goals, objectives, accommodations and modifications as they relate to the content standards developed and agreed upon by the IEP Team. For English Learners, any decision on retention must be made in conjunction with the bilingual/English Second Learner (ESL) teacher.¹⁴

V. Requirements for Policy Implementation

All DCPS employees are required to comply with the requirements set forth in this policy. In order to support its implementation, principals are expected to make all staff aware of required activities and timelines on an annual basis.

Implementation of this policy will be reinforced through a central oversight process which includes regular data reviews, record sampling, reviews of underlying documentation, and, as needed, site visits.

This framework will ensure that together we build a system of continuous improvement and prevent noncompliance. For key guidance and support with questions, training, or implementation, please visit dcps.dc.gov.

DCPS is committed to serving every student with equity, excellence, transparency, and accountability. For any concerns about or violations of this directive, contact the Chief Integrity Officer either by completing the [Online Referral Form](#) or send an email to dcps.cio@dc.gov.

¹⁴ 5-E DCMR § 2201.3.