

May 3, 2004

MEMORANDUM

TO: ESOL Coordinators and Contacts

FROM: Evelyne Barker
ESOL Program Specialist

SUBJECT: Guidance on Promotion, Placement, and Retention

As you know, both the Georgia Promotion, Placement and Retention law and the State Board Rule mandate that, beginning with the current 2003-04 school year, **all third (3rd) grade students** must perform at grade level on the Georgia Criterion Referenced Competency Test (CRCT) in reading in order to be promoted to the fourth grade for the 2004-2005 school year.

- By the end of the 2004-05 school year, **all fifth (5th) grade students** must also perform at grade level in reading and mathematics on the Georgia CRCT in order to be promoted to the sixth grade, and
- By the end of the 2005-06 school year, **all eighth grade students** must also perform at grade level in reading and mathematics on the Georgia CRCT in order to be promoted to the ninth grade.

Detailed guidance and resources (i.e. draft parent notification letters, district plans, and best practices) together with a flow chart for making promotion and placement determinations have been posted on the Department's website at <http://www.doe.k12.ga.us/doe/external/retention.asp>. See memorandum from Mr. Stuart Bennett, Chief Deputy Superintendent dated February 20, 2004.

If you have not already reviewed the guidance above, please do so without delay. In addition, review the following supplementary information which includes guidelines specific to limited English proficient (LEP) students:

Retention Appeals

Placement Committee

If the student is limited English proficient, the placement committee should include the ESOL coordinator/contact/teacher as a member.

Note: Depending on the English speaking level of the parents, and to the extent practicable, an interpreter should be invited to assist communication between school personnel and the student's parent/guardian.

Placement Committee Decisions: Key Considerations

We suggest systems have a process for using multiple sources of data beyond the CRCT.

Data sources may include rubrics, work samples, and teacher observations to provide:

1. **Evidence of progress made in English language acquisition since time of enrollment**
 - To what extent does the student demonstrate comprehension of spoken English?
 - To what extent is the student's oral communication understood by the teacher?
 - To what extent does the student read with comprehension? Consider various levels:
 - i. Word level
 - ii. Sentence level
 - iii. Paragraph level
 - iv. Passage level (more than 250 words or more)

2. Evidence of Critical Thinking

- In day-to-day classroom instruction, does the student demonstrate the ability to compare and contrast, categorize, enumerate, recall, restate?
- Does the student portfolio include graphic organizers, concept maps, drawings that transcend language difference and support presence of critical thinking?

3. Evidence of Prior Schooling and/or Experiential Knowledge

- Did the student attend school in his/her homeland?
If yes, was the schooling continuous?
What grades did the student receive?
- If the student did not attend school in his/her homeland or if schooling were not continuous, to what degree is the student's oral language comparable to that of other students from the same background? What life skills has the student acquired that could be transferred to an academic setting?
- Is the student's language a written language? If so, is the student literate? If not, are the student's parents literate? If not, what native language support is there in the home?
- Does the student have older siblings who are literate and/or have some command of English?
- To what extent does the student demonstrate computation skills? Word problems notwithstanding, are the student's computation skills commensurate with his/her grade level?

4. Evidence of Accommodations/Support in the Local School

- How long has the student attended school in the US?
- How long has the student attended the local school?
- How regular is the student's attendance?
- What kind of daily instructional accommodations are provided to the student?
- What kind of instructional support is the student receiving?
- Have parents been advised regularly of the student's progress or lack thereof? Do the parents understand their right to
- If placed in the next grade, what kind accommodations/support will be put in place to ensure the student's progress?
- If the student is retained in the current grade, what accommodations/support will be put in place to ensure that the student is accelerated?

5. Other (Emotional/Physical Maturity; Learning Style and Willingness to Ask Questions/Seek Assistance)

Summary

The foregoing guidelines are not intended to be a master checklist nor do they represent an exhaustive listing of considerations. However, as guidelines supported by principles of second language acquisition, they serve as a basis for making informed decisions on student promotion, placement and retention. And those decisions should be reached by examining the weight and source of the evidence.

Second language acquisition research identifies the following sources as critical: mother's educational level, child's prior schooling and literacy in the native tongue, and amount of time needed to become proficient in a second language. The greater the weight of the evidence and the more reliable and valid the source, the more likely the decision has been focused on what is in the student's best interest overall.

