



Acceleration and Retention Policy

The Cottonwood School ("TCS" or the "Charter School") is committed to the success of each student. TCS follows Student Success Team ("SST") procedures to establish and implement student achievement and intervention strategies in a timely manner. Despite the implementation of such strategies, it may be necessary to retain a student in the prior grade level or accelerate a student above their grade level for the following school year. In implementing this policy, the TCS Board of Directors ("Board") is guided by the following principles:

- a. Retention and acceleration criteria will be objectively based on a student's ability or inability to meet the grade-level standards of expected student achievement in language arts, mathematics, science, or social science, for students in grades transitional kindergarten (TK) through twelve (12), as determined by the TCS staff and articulated in its California standards-based report card or the student's performance on the California Assessment of Student Performance and Progress ("CAASPP"). A more detailed criteria for retention or acceleration are outlined below.
- b. For English Learners, retention cannot be based on the student's lack of English fluency as related to meeting English standards.
- c. Decisions about retention or acceleration will not be based on requests for a student to be placed with or avoid a specific teacher or other students.

The Academic Team, composed of the Director, Intervention Coordinator, and the student's Home School Teacher ("HST"), will review retention or acceleration requests, consistent with the procedures outlined below.

1. Acceleration:

The Cottonwood School is committed to making individual decisions on grade level acceleration based on the long-term, best interest of the individual student. The staff is committed to helping all students realize their fullest potential. When high academic achievement is evident, the HST and/or parent/guardian may request a student for acceleration into a higher grade level.

Required Steps Preceding Acceleration Decision:

In order for TCS to make sound academic decisions regarding mid-year grade level acceleration, the following process will be followed:

- The parent/guardian or teacher may request in writing a grade acceleration for the student before the end of the 1st semester.
 - Exception: Requests to promote a student from 8th to 9th grade shall only be

considered before the fall semester's high school add/drop date.

- The request for acceleration shall be submitted in writing to gradelevelhelp@cottonwoodk12.org.
- The Academic Team shall review the acceleration request. As part of the review, the Academic Team shall consider grade-level specific criteria, which include, but are not limited to the following:
 - Evidence that the student's assessment results show that the student is working at the requested grade level.
 - Evidence that the student is on track to complete all courses at the grade level in which the student is currently placed.
 - Review of Student Assessment Records, which include, but are not limited to:
 - Bader Reading Assessment indicating the student is performing above current grade level;
 - Writing Sample showing proficiency above grade-level standards;
 - Benchmark Data indicating the student has mastered current grade-level content/state standards;
 - Benchmark results in Mathematics and ELA indicating the student is advanced at current grade-level content/state standards;
 - SBAC results (if available) indicating the student has met or exceeded standards; and
 - Student work samples, demonstrating proficiency above current grade-level standards.
- The Academic Team shall make the final determination regarding grade placement and inform the parent/guardian in writing. Determinations regarding mid-year accelerations shall be provided before the end of the first semester.
- If a student is promoted at the end of the first semester, the student should be on target to complete all courses at their promoted grade level by the end of the school year.

2. Retention:

The Charter School is committed to making individual decisions on grade-level retention based on the long-term best interest of the individual student. Staff is committed to helping all students realize their fullest potential, including intervention opportunities for students experiencing difficulty. To that end, retention may be appropriate for a student experiencing extreme academic difficulty. Typically, retention is only considered after various other remediation steps have been employed by the student's teacher(s) and the Academic Team with insufficient success. Special consideration will be given to students with limited English proficiency and those with a special education IEP or Section 504 Plan. Students may be retained only once in their K-8 school career. After careful review and analysis of a student's academic performance and the implementation of evidence-based instruction and intervention, retention may be considered for the following school year, in accordance with the procedures below.

Grades 9-12 Retention Criteria:

The state does not require school districts to have student retention criteria beyond the last year of middle school to the first year of high school. Progress toward high school graduation shall

be based on the student's ability to pass the subjects and electives necessary to earn the required number of credits.

Retention Criteria

If a student is identified as performing below the minimum standard for acceleration based on their progress for the applicable grade level, the student may be retained in their current grade level. Teacher recommendations for retention and the Academic Team's decisions for retention shall consider the grade-level specific criteria for retention, which include grade-appropriate factors, including, but not limited to:

- Teacher Recommendations
- Grades/Report Cards
- Test Data (Benchmark, SBAC, local assessments)
- Cumulative Academic Record
- Meeting grade-level State Standards

(See Specific Grade Level Criteria for Retention or Acceleration, attached as Exhibit A.)

Required Steps Preceding Retention Decision

Before retaining a student, TCS will follow the following steps and timeline:

Step	Timeline
1. Teacher recommends or Parent requests retention of the student. a. Teacher recommendations for retention may be preceded by an SST meeting and/or interventions or other attempts to provide support for the student. b. Parent requests for retention shall be submitted in writing to the student's teacher.	Teacher recommendations and parent requests for retention shall be submitted by the last day of the fall semester.
2. TCS shall engage in remediation steps to identify and provide interventions and supports for the student to address the areas of academic concerns, including but not limited to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SST Meeting(s) – The parent/guardian will be invited to attend to discuss concerns and proposed interventions for the student. • Academic screenings • Multi-Tiered Systems of Supports includes Tier 1, Tier 2, Tier 3 • Curriculum intervention 	The Teacher shall work with the Student Success Team and/or other TCS staff and the parent/guardian during the school year, between August-April 15, to identify concerns and provide interventions.
3. The Academic Team ¹ shall meet to make the final determination regarding the student's grade placement	The Academic Team shall meet in May to make a final

¹ For students with an IEP/Section 504 Plan, TCS shall ensure that a retention decision is consistent with the student's IEP or Section 504 Plan.

<p>for the next school year. The Academic Team shall consider the grade-level specific criteria, which include grade-appropriate factors, including, but not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher Recommendations • Grades/Report Cards • Test Data (Benchmark, SBAC, local assessments) • Cumulative Academic Record • Meeting grade-level State Standards 	<p>determination regarding grade placement.</p>
<p>4. The Academic Team makes the final determination regarding grade placement and informs the parent/guardian in writing.</p>	<p>The final determination is provided to the parent/guardian in writing before the school year has ended.</p>

3. Right to Appeal Acceleration or Retention Decision:

If the Parent/Guardian disagrees with the decision of the Charter School to accelerate or retain their student, they have the right to appeal the decision made by the Academic Team through the following steps:

- The Parent/Guardian choosing to appeal a decision to accelerate or retain a student shall submit a completed Acceleration or Retention Appeal Request Form (attached as Exhibit B) to the Executive Director specifying why the decision should be overturned. The submission of the Retention Appeal Request Form must occur no later than ten (10) school days following the Parent(s)/Guardian(s) receipt of the determination of acceleration/retention.
- The Executive Director shall review the appeal as well as the student's academic performance records on which the Academic Team relied. The Academic Team shall be provided an opportunity to state orally and/or in writing the criteria on which the Academic Team's decision was based. The Parent(s)/Guardian(s) will also be given an opportunity to state their reason for appeal orally and/or in writing.
- The Executive Director shall notify the Parent(s)/Guardian(s) of its decision in writing within ten (10) school days of the Appeal via registered mail at the address provided by Parent(s)/Guardian(s) to the Charter School unless otherwise agreed in writing. The Executive Director's decision is final.

