

# ROCKWELL CHARTER SCHOOL

## Student Acceleration and Retention Policy

### Board Policy

The Board of Directors of Rockwell Charter School has established this policy in recognition that some students may need special consideration for grade placement. The board gives direction and authority to the administration to make decisions regarding student retention or acceleration after a consideration and assessment of the needs and abilities of a specific student has met criteria delineated by a student's academic and safety team.

### Philosophy

The Board of Directors and the school's Administration recognize 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, and competency-based interventions will meet an individual student's needs while allowing a student to remain with that student's own age group.

However, the board and administration also recognize that student retention or acceleration may need to be considered to meet a specific student's needs. Per 53G-6-803(2), the board is required to ensure that the school reasonably accommodates a parent's written request to retain a student in kindergarten through grade 8 based on the student's academic ability or the student's social, emotional or physical maturity. This code specifically applies to Rockwell's 7th and 8th grade students. In considering student retention or acceleration, the administration will follow the guidelines of this policy.

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

Per USBE 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 in enrollment 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.

## **Process for Consideration of Student Retention or Acceleration**

- **Referral**: Parents or teachers may recommend a student for retention or acceleration on a case by case basis. The 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)/legal guardian(s). Referrals must be written requests sent to the Executive Director.
- **Evaluation**: When considering retention or acceleration, each student shall be evaluated by a team composed of a school administrator, parent(s)/legal guardian(s), teacher(s), the school counselor, and others as deemed appropriate by the administration. The team will follow the criteria in this policy for evaluating the need for retention or acceleration.
- **Criteria**: 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.
- **Emphasis on Student's Best Interest**: A student should be retained or accelerated only if the Executive Director and team believe that a student's best interests in all or most areas are served by retention or acceleration.
- **Consideration of Alternatives to Acceleration or Retention**: The team will also consider alternatives to acceleration or retention that could meet a student's needs such as, 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.
- **Team Decision**: The team is charged with determining whether retention or acceleration criteria have been met according to these administrative guideline:
  - 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.
  - 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.

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

Ideally, a student's academic and safety team, including parents and school staff, will reach a consensus in their recommendation about a student's acceleration or retention.

When a consensus cannot be reached, the Executive Director will take all recommendations and data into consideration in making a decision on 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.

In the event that parents or guardians do not reach consensus with school staff members on the team or disagree with the decision of the Executive Director, parents or guardians may appeal the decision in writing to the Executive Director. The Executive Director will then take the following steps:

- An appeal will convene an impartial group of staff members and at least one administrator who were 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.

**Reviewed:** November 15, 2023