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**Mackay North Primary  
State School**

## **MACKAY NORTH STATE SCHOOL STUDENT RETENTION (Repeating) POLICY**

All students attending Queensland State Schools from 2008 and who begin at Year 1 before the student turns 7½ years has the basic allocation of 24 semesters. This is irrespective of prior enrolment in the Prep Year (as it is not compulsory) or a Special Education Program.

Please refer to **SMS-PR-013: Allocation of State Education** for more details.

A student enrolled who is approved by the Principal to repeat a year of education for which the student has already been enrolled must be given written information about their remaining allocation of State Education.

The Principal reserves the right (through Education Queensland) to negotiate the repeating of students at Mackay North State School and the final decision lies with this authority.

### **Applications for extension / repeating of students**

Of key importance is that the extension or repeating of students must be based on educational reasons. The retention of students in a year level is taken very seriously due to the educational research findings – including those identified below.

The following personnel will be involved in any discussions related to the retention of any students at Mackay North State School:

- ⇒ Parents or caregivers
- ⇒ Support personnel: classroom teacher, STLD, SEU teachers and HOSES (if appropriate), Guidance Officer and/ or any Teacher Aide who work with that student individually,
- ⇒ Social Justice committee
- ⇒ At least one member of the school leadership team + the Principal.

If the request comes from the parent/carer, it must be provided to the Principal (one) 1 full school term prior to the start of the next semester. The parent / carer may need to be advised that the decision can only be made after the results of any relevant assessments have been provided.

Our school policy is to consider repeating children only in Prep, Year 1 and Year 2 as a general rule. A formal process of identification of students 'at risk' occurs at Mackay North State School from Prep to Year 2. Teachers should discuss with the Leadership Team any individual cases being considered for repeat. On-going discussion of student progress with parents should have preceded this.

**Factors to be considered**

Many factors are considered to ascertain the likely success of the retention of any student at Mackay North State School. These factors include:

<b>Child related factors</b>	
<b>Factor</b>	<b>Considerations</b>
Physical disabilities	This may mean that the child has delays in skill areas and they require an individual support plan over the years of schooling.
Physical size	Being small or large for age could be a mitigating factor.
Academic potential	Consider learning rate – chronic underachievement or permanent slow learning may be a factor 'against', underachievement which may be temporary in nature may be a factor 'for'.
Psychosocial maturity	Immaturity in comparison to grade peers may be a factor 'for'. (look at attention span, distractability, level, overactivity, establishment or laterality etc.)
Self concept	If the child has a good self concept, will repetition work against this? If the child has a poor self concept, will repetition reinforce this sense of failure? If the child has a low self concept, is it the result of low achievement and will repetition foster his/her achievement which will, in turn, enhance self concept?
Ability to function independently	Higher grades demand greater independence. Key word here is 'ability', not 'willingness'.

<b>Factor</b>	<b>Considerations</b>
Grade placement	Repetition may be useful in the developmental years (Prep – Year 2), but inappropriate for higher grades, as damage to self esteem is more likely.
Age	Is the child significantly younger than the majority of the students in the class i.e. Oct – Dec birthday?
Previous repeat	Has the child repeated an earlier year of schooling?
Nature of problem	Is the problem learning related, behaviour related or related to immaturity? Identify the concerns, goals and where these goals can best be met.
Sex	Research indicates that boys are at greater risk for experiencing learning difficulties than girls.
Chronic absenteeism	Repetition may fill in the gaps in instruction.
Basic skill competencies	Basic skills in Literacy and Numeracy (taken from Internal Monitoring data)
Peer factors	How susceptible to peer pressure is the child? What might be the effects on self concept? Does the child have very close friends and how will repetition affect these relationships? Does the child live in close proximity to classmates and will repetition be a continuing source of embarrassment for him / her?
Child's attitude	Child should be consulted, even though the child may be too young to realise what is in his/her best interest.

<b>Family related factors</b>	
Geographical moves	Family transiency may be a deciding factor, particularly if moves occur over holidays and repetition is undertaken in a new environment.
ESL	May be a factor with young children, who can often pick up a new language quickly, providing a crucial base for future learning.
Attitude towards repetition	Personal history of parents, cultural considerations, pressure from social context e.g. family, friends. If parents are in favour, do they have a realistic expectation about the outcome of repeat.
Age of siblings and sibling pressure	Can be a significant factor against repetition, particularly if younger sibling will be in the same grade. This may be mitigated if it is highly likely that they younger sibling will be advised to repeat in the following year. Is the child a twin, triplet, etc? Latrobe Twin Study has recommendations strongly advising against separating twins by grade.
Involvement of family physician, other therapists	Families are often given advice about repetition from doctors or therapists, which may be based solely on their area of interest. It must be assured that the parents have a full picture.
<b>School related factors</b>	
School system's attitude	What are the current departmental policies?
Principal's attitude	What is the policy of the school?
Teacher's attitude	How does the teacher feel about the best course of action for the child?
Availability of support	What support is available for the child in each of the considered placements? E.g. Year 2 may be a better option than repeat of Year 1, because of available support linked to Year 2 Diagnostic Net.
Availability of other program options	What are the viable alternatives to repetition? E.g. SEU programs, Learning Support etc.
Availability of personnel	Is another teacher available, to enable repeat to be as 'different' as possible?

### **Research related to student retention**

Below is an excerpt from "To Repeat or Not To Repeat" Published in WORDS: Journal of the association of Western Australian Primary Principals (July 2006) and released as a media release by Dr H McGrath, Faculty of education, Deakin University on 30/08/06.

75 years of research shows children gain no benefit from repeating a year.

Student who repeat a year at school gain no benefit, according to a review of 75 years of research by Deakin academic Dr Helen McGrath.

Dr McGrath, from Deakin's Faculty of Education, said research studies carried out over the past 75 years failed to support the popular assumption among teachers and parents that repeating a year at school helped a student's academic performance.

"In fact repeating a year confirms to a student that they have failed. They experience stress from being taller, larger and more physically mature than their younger classmates. They miss their friends who have moved on to the next year level. They also experience boredom from repeating similar tasks and assignments. Their self esteem drops. All of these factors ultimately lead many to drop out.

"Students who repeat at any age level have a 20 to 50% higher likelihood of dropping out of secondary school compared to students with similar levels of achievement or difficulty who don't repeat. Those who don't drop out are less likely to continue on to post-secondary schooling."

Repeating does not address the needs of students who are not achieving in school or who have social or behavioural difficulties.

Simply promoting the student to the next year along with their peers without some form of structured plan of support in place is not the answer either.

Dr McGrath said alternative options to repeating included the use of more effective teaching strategies, identifying problems at pre-school level and developing appropriate programs to address them [for example Early Intervention and Learning Connections programs at Mackay North State School], creating individual education plans [for SEU children], providing specialist support [such as Behaviour Management AVT, Guidance Officer] and adapting the curriculum to the needs of the student [as addressed through Learning Support intervention at Mackay North State School].