



# Peer Group Placement

## ‘Your Child, Your Voice’



Throughout the school year, each teacher reports on how students have progressed. By the end of the school year, if a student meets or exceeds the majority of grade level curricular expectations, they are **promoted** (“passed”) to the next grade. If a student has **not** met most of the grade level requirements, a decision must be made about whether the student will be **placed** in the next grade level or be **retained** (“repeat”) in the current grade.

The placement of a student in the next grade level is called **peer group placement**. This means the student remains with peers their own age and an education program plan outlines how the student’s needs will be met in the next grade level.

Every student’s situation and journey through education is unique. Regardless of the decision to place or retain a student, appropriate supports and programming must be in place to meet their specific strengths and needs.

### Peer group placement vs ‘Social Passing’

The term “social passing” is used to describe a practice that neither challenges nor supports students. It allows for the passing of students regardless of whether they meet the majority of grade level expectations, without appropriate programming or support, and without the option of consideration for retention in the current grade.

The NWT does **not** practice social passing and it is not an accurate reflection of current policy in the NWT. The Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) endorses peer group placement in NWT schools, which is not unique to the territory; it is reflected as a promising practice in a large body of research and is used in many jurisdictions across Canada and worldwide.

### Who makes the decision? ‘Your Child, Your Voice’

Whenever evidence shows a student is not meeting the majority of grade-level curricular expectations, the classroom teacher must communicate this to the student’s parent(s)/guardian(s). Then the classroom teacher involves the School-Based Support Team (SBST) to review the student’s evidence of learning, strengths, and needs. The SBST prepares a recommendation to present to the student’s parent(s)/guardian(s).

The classroom teacher as part of the SBST will then meet with parent(s)/guardian(s) and outline the pros and cons of each choice, discussing appropriate programming, supports, and interventions for the student. The team will provide their recommendation and reasoning, including supporting evidence.

Parent(s)/guardian(s) then use the information presented to make an informed decision on whether

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to place their child in the next grade or retain them in the current grade.

Decision-making considerations include, but are not limited to, a student’s social and psychological well-being, as well as the programming, supports and interventions required. Through careful collaboration between the school and the family, the best decision for the student can be made.

### Fostering Growth as an NWT Capable Person

A student’s placement in the next grade level with their peers does not imply that all or none of the expectations of the previous grade have been achieved. It continues to be the responsibility of the classroom teacher(s) to meet the curricular needs and support the abilities of each student.

Peer group placement does not prevent parent(s)/guardian(s), students, teachers, schools – and the education system as a whole – from holding appropriate expectations for students to continue growing as NWT capable people.

### Research-based practice

Retaining a student in their current grade can be, and has been, successful with the involvement and agreement of parent(s)/guardian(s), school staff, and, where appropriate, the student themselves.

However, the decision to retain a student is rarely made when parent(s)/guardian(s) understand the possible impacts of retention.

Research shows most students experience success in school if they stay with students their own age, with appropriate supports in place, rather than repeating a grade with a different group of younger students.

Repeating a grade also often results in higher rates of school dropouts than when students progress to the next grade with their age group.

However, every situation is unique, and some students may find success with retention if it is determined to be in their best interest.

### High School graduation requirements

Peer group placement is practiced in the NWT up to Grade 9; it is not utilized in High School.

Meeting or not meeting entrance requirements for post-secondary schooling is **not** related to peer group placement.

To graduate from the NWT with a high school diploma, a student [must meet the minimum diploma requirements](#). Progressing through grades 10 to 12 can take up to three or more years, depending on the student.

Even when a student meets the minimum requirements to achieve an NWT high school diploma, this does not guarantee admission into the post-secondary program of their choice.

Students must take the courses they need to be accepted into their preferred post-secondary programs and maintain the marks those programs require. [Career and Education Advisors](#) are available to help students plan their course selections throughout Grades 10 – 12.

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### More information

Department of Education, Culture and Employment  
[www.ece.gov.nt.ca](http://www.ece.gov.nt.ca)