



"Cohen, Mike" <Mike_Cohen@ed.gov>
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Promotion

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Subject: New Social promotion idea

I have a new idea for how we might bridge the remaining gap with the civil rights groups, while retaining our language requiring state policies to require kids to meet standards before being promoted. In our conversation, Bill and Jenell were convinced that our language would require retention of kids who didn't meet the standards, even after receiving all of the "continuing comprehensive interventions" that we now require. Bill in particular has consistently been concerned that we are leaving no choice but retention for kids who are still not making it after all this help.

What if we added something to our proposal, requiring local districts to have a procedure for determining the appropriate placement and instructional program that is reasonably calculated to best help the student meet standards and progress through school, for a student who does not meet promotion standards, even after receiving all of the comprehensive interventions we already require. This "last chance" approach would leave districts a range of options, from retention to promotion to anything in between, depending upon what it thinks will work best for the kid. I think this might satisfy Bill.

While this may create a giant loophole (though it shouldn't if we write it so it is clear it is a last resort), it's not without precedent. I've been reviewing descriptions of state and local social promotion policies that Judith Johnson's staff has assembled, and have found that a number of state/local policies have explicit escape hatches, permitting schools to decide to promote kids even if they haven't met the standards. For example:

California permits a student's teacher to recommend against retaining a student, with a written determination that specifies the reasons that retention is not appropriate and with recommendations for appropriate interventions.

Delaware requires kids who don't meet standards to attend summer school--and then requires an individual improvement plan for a kid who still doesn't meet standards after summer school.

Louisiana allows for a variety of options (retention, remediation, alternative placement, or anything else that will work) for kids who don't meet proficiency levels.