

Transitional Grades FAQ

Placed between two traditional grades, a transitional class is an alternative pathway for retention. These classes are most often found in the early grade levels, and typically have a lower student to teacher ratio than a traditional grade. If the transitional grade were between kindergarten and first grade, it is usually called T-1 (between first and second would be T-2, etc.). The questions and answers below are meant to provide context for your school or district to reflect on if considering implementing a transitional grade.

Frequently Asked Questions

Is there a difference between a student attending a transitional grade versus being retained?

For the purposes of promotion and retention under the Reading Sufficiency Act (RSA), there is no difference between a student being in a transitional grade and being retained. Instructionally, though, there are differences. While retention serves as a full repeat of all content for a grade where students are placed alongside students completing that grade for the first time, transitional grade classes are focused on specific, prioritized content from the previous grade level with other students who are not ready to transition to the next grade.

How does a transitional grade impact promotion/retention decision in 3rd grade under the Reading Sufficiency Act (RSA)?

A year in a transitional grade is considered a year of retention under RSA, so a student who spent a school year in a transitional class is automatically eligible for good cause exemption 6 in 3rd grade. The only exception to this rule is if students attend a transitional class as a replacement for a grade level. For example, if a student attended T-1 **instead** of kindergarten, rather than in addition to it, that would **not** count as a retention.

Who should be considered for placement in a transitional grade/class?

Only students who would otherwise be retained in the previous grade level should be considered for placement in a transitional class. Retention or transitional grade placement may be considered as an option if student data indicates that the student has not progressed on essential foundational skills **despite** receiving intervention. If data is not available for a student suspected of benefitting from retention or a transitional class, give screening or formative assessments. As a general rule, students in this class should be at or below the 25th percentile on screening assessments.

Who should teach a transitional grade/class?

Because transitional grades should serve as a form of intensive intervention, it is important that any teacher assigned to teach this class should be highly experienced and adept at adjusting instruction based on data. This teacher should also be proficient in classroom management, particularly in managing several simultaneously operating small groups. Consider having a classroom aide available to assist the teacher in providing targeted instruction. The same certification requirements as a typical grade exist for transitional grade teachers. Transitional first grade can be taught by an Early Childhood Education or Elementary Education certified teacher.



What type of curriculum should be used in a transitional class? Which standards should be used to plan instruction?

The teacher of the transitional class will need access to the curriculum materials for both the grade before and after the transitional class. At the beginning of the school year, materials from the lower grade will be more heavily used as students work to master those standards. As students demonstrate readiness and mastery, the teacher can begin to introduce content from the upper grade. However, the primary goal of the transitional class is to ensure full mastery of the lower grade skills.

What happens after the student attends a transitional grade? Should students be promoted mid-year?

After a transitional grade, the student will attend the next grade. For example, if a student attended T-1, the following year they would move on to first grade. Students should **not** be promoted to the next grade mid-year while in a transitional grade. This would cause them to miss grade level content during the time that they had been in the transitional class. If data points to a student with significant academic challenges at the end of a transitional grade, the school team should meet and discuss the best course of action for that student, which may include additional evaluation by a trained specialist.

How do we decide if a transitional grade is the right fit for my school?

If you are considering the use of a transitional grade, it may be helpful to gather information from stakeholders to answer these questions:

- Do we have a large enough student population who **would otherwise be retained and repeat the previous grade** level to warrant the creation of this class?
- Would the creation of this class place undue pressure on teachers or families to retain students who would not normally qualify for a retention?
- Do we have the physical space and staff capacity to support the creation of this class?
- Are there shifts we can make in our instruction to better support all students, including the ones who may be academically or socially behind when starting a new grade level?

What other things should we think about if implementing a transitional grade?

What policy will you put in place for disagreements with families on placement? What is the protocol for a family that does not want their student placed in this class despite teacher recommendation, and vice versa?

What subject codes do we use for a transitional class?

See the 2021-2022 Subject Codes Guidance [here](#) for information on codes.

