

Standards set for grade promotions in C'ville

By Ariene Funke
special writer

Clarenceville students in grades K-9 will have to clearly show they know their subjects before being promoted.

New, uniform guidelines have been set up to measure more precisely whether students are mastering their basic studies and are ready for the next grade. A committee of 18 teachers and two administrators formulated the guidelines, which were approved by the Clarenceville School Board in May.

The new policy will take effect in September. The guidelines will focus on reading, math, social studies, science and language arts.

"This isn't developed because of any problems, but because we want to make sure the students will achieve at all levels," said Dave Kamish, principal of Granview Elementary School and chairman of the committee.

The number of students held back each year is small — an estimated 2 or 3 percent, according to Kamish.

The guidelines may result in more students being held back initially, Kamish said. But he expects those figures to drop back to normal later. And Kamish predicted it will result in high-

er achievement and assessment tests for Clarenceville students.

THIS PROGRAM is one of the several steps being taken by the school district to set curriculum and program goals. There will be a period of evaluation, with possible adjustments, Kamish said.

The approximately 2,100-student Clarenceville district covers parts of Livonia, Farmington and Redford Township. In the past, there were no specific rules on when a student would be retained and not promoted into the next grade.

"It was never spelled out before because there were no guidelines, only a policy," Kamish said. "Now it will be very consistent."

According to the policy, students in the elementary and junior-high grades must pass their courses with 80 percent proficiency in at least 80 percent of the class objectives, based on teacher observation and tests. Students also must fulfill classroom assignments.

Teachers are to monitor the pupils closely, making sure material has been mastered before advance work is assigned, Kamish said. Parent-teacher conferences will be encouraged.

"At the beginning of the school year, parents will receive a list of study objectives which students must master before being promoted," Kamish said. "Now we are going to go by those standards carefully and expect students to master them."

Pupils who don't understand and cannot keep up will be grouped together and given help, Kamish said. Those who don't pass the objectives will be "retained and retested," Kamish said.

NO STUDENT will be kept back more than twice, Kamish said. He cited cases in which students who repeatedly failed eventually quit school.

Some borderline students, especially those who "might be devastated to be retained," will be allowed to go on to the next grade, with special tutoring to help keep up with the class work.

Kamish said he expects few re-epicussions. Other guidelines are being established to help ensure the success of this program. They include:

• Operating one school bus on a later schedule to transport students who

stay after school for tutoring, enrichment or detention.

"We will be able to give those youngsters help and teach them there are consequences for lack of responsibility," according to Kamish.

• A new homework policy will set forth guidelines on how outside studies will be assigned (see related story).

• A new summer-school program at the elementary-grade levels is designed to give an extra boost to children who are doing marginal work, particularly in reading, Kamish said. Some students would attend classes for as long as it takes them to catch up with their classmates and be promoted, according to Kamish.

• Report cards will be revamped to reflect the new system. Emphasis will be placed on nipping potential problems early in the school year.

THE POLICY manual outlines procedures for double-promotion. Special students do not fall under the new guidelines.

The promotion-retention plan is patterned after a program started seven years ago in the Lawton School District, a small district near Kalamazoo. The committee polled several nearby districts, and none had guidelines.

In Lawton, the retention rate rose from its normal 3 percent to 12 percent during the first year of the policy, Kamish said.

"Now the retention rate (in Lawton) is back down to where it normally was," Kamish said. "They increased their test scores tremendously."

Success of the program depends on a "good job of communicating," Kamish said. At first, the policy will affect all

K-8 grade levels, he added. Later, problems are likely to be noticed in lower grades or among students who transfer into the Clarenceville district.

"It will place a greater responsibility on all of us — teachers, parents and students," Kamish said. "It should be for the benefit of all youngsters and parents."

Superintendent Michael Shihler praised the work of the promotion-retention committee and other task forces working on such issues as homework, gifted and talented and competency testing at the high school level.

"At times, education is going to be hard work," Shihler said. "It takes hard work to be successful. A good place to learn that is in school. In the long run, the students will be better off because they will have mastered the skills."

Homework's a must

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feedback on assignments," Kelly said. In an effort to meet individual needs, varying types of homework may be assigned.

The idea of homework is effective when it complements student (class) learning," Kelly said. "Not every student needs the same kind of homework every day."

A parents' guide will be distributed in the fall, Kelly said. At the same time, a training program will be given to teachers. And homework will be promoted among elementary-school-age pupils.

Plans call for the program to be monitored and evaluated closely during the first year of implementation.

Work begins on new police facility

Continued from Page 1

the complex, purchasing furniture, new telephone and police dispatch equipment, plus moving will be borne by the city, Costick added.

ALTHOUGH CITY officials were at first proceeding with a construction management approach for the construction project, that idea was laid to rest in May because architects Luckenbach & Ziegelman of Birmingham "were so far along" with the architectural plans, Blasell said.

Instead, council in March agreed, on the recommendation of the Building Authority, that competitive construction bids from contractors be accepted.

Under the construction management approach, invitations would have been

mailed out to a selected number of qualified construction management firms.

These firms would have been interviewed by a selection committee. The firm chosen would have then submitted a "not to exceed" cost proposal, based on the available architectural plans and specifications and the cost estimates.

City officials wanted to get the construction contracts out as soon as possible to avoid expected cost increases in the summer, Blasell said.

Despite an extensive review of the architect's plans by an ad hoc committee of builders, developers and other architects, Luckenbach & Ziegelman's designs have had only minor revisions, Blasell said.

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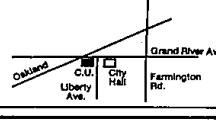
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