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Grace Valley Academy Placement/Promotion/Retention Policy

PLACEMENT:

At GVA, we recognize that children are not “one size fits all.” There are many factors that should be considered when assigning a student to a classroom. In the public school system, a child is entered into the *grade level* that matches their date of birth. At GVA we prefer to look at the *whole child* when determining where he/she will experience their best academic success:

- their age
- their physical stature
- their social development/maturity
- do they have a learning difficulty?
- their present level of age-appropriate skill mastery

Part of our registration process is to have each incoming student attend GVA for a day so that our staff can make some observational assessments (excludes PreK). These informal assessments will help us decide which room, and more precisely, which small group to assign the child to.

At GVA we are trying to limit our use of the word *grade* as it applies to what the Department of Education describes as an “average” child. This will take some unlearning for all of us.

PROMOTION:

At the end of every academic year, students who have successfully mastered their age-appropriate skills will move onto a new set of skills to learn. Based on our total registration, staffing, and if classes are multi-age or not, this could be in the same room or in a different one. Being in school, having an appropriate bedtime routine, completing any missing work, and having a positive attitude all contribute to mastering age-appropriate skills within the academic year. *Room placement for the following academic year may not be finalized until over the summer break.



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RETENTION:

In some instances, a child does not master their age-appropriate skills before the end of the academic year. This could be for several reasons, but consistent and clear communication between the school and the parents will help determine how best to move forward. GVA has three parent conference days scheduled each academic year. By conference #2 (February) the teacher should have an idea if a child may not master their age-appropriate skills by the end of the year. If it is looking like they won't, the teacher will communicate this with the parents. At that point, there are a few things that can be done to try to close the gap, such as using an after-school tutor or assigning nightly homework to reinforce what was learned during the day. If by conference #3 (April), the mastery of skills is at a level where the GVA staff feel that the child will struggle if promoted, the child will remain in their current placement to continue working on those age-appropriate skills.

At GVA, we will not push a child ahead if they are not ready. Education is a race, not a sprint, and there is no rush or deadline to finish. We would rather err on the side of caution now so that the mastery of skills becomes firm and rooted before new knowledge is added.

When determining whether to retain a student, GVA staff assess the following criteria:

- age of the child (do they have an early birthdate?)
- physical size of the child (are they on the smaller size for their age?)
- social emotional concerns (how do they interact with their peers?)
- sex (boys mature at a later rate than girls)
- truancy (how many days of school has the child missed?)
- parent involvement (how often and how effectively does the parent communicate with the school; does the parent assist the child with missing classwork or homework?)
- child's attitude towards school/learning (how motivated are they to master their age-appropriate skills; what is their effort level?)
- present level of mastery (how far behind are they? Is the learning gap able to be closed before the start of the next academic year?)