A.3.1 Mastery and Promotion

Criteria for Promotion and Process for Retention

The Rising School will have the following multi-step process for promotion/retention:

- Teachers will assess of a student's "mastery" of each relevant standard from the College and Career Readiness Standards (Common Core Standards + 2010 Arizona Additions) and AP-based standards for some high-school courses, with "mastery" defined as scoring 80% or higher on an assessment of that standard;
- Teachers will use student mastery of standards plus student performance on other relevant academic factors (homework, projects, in-class participation, etc.) to compute for each student a percentage score for the course; this percentage score will result in the Interim Course Grade;
- This Interim Course Grade is the Final Course Grade for courses that do *not* have an aligned state standardized assessment (AIMS currently; PARCC or other assessment in the future);
- For courses (math, Humanities, English Composition, and science) with an aligned state standardized assessment (Math, Reading, Writing, and Science), the student's Interim Course Grade is combined with the student's performance on the state standardized assessment to result in the Final Course Grade;
- The Final Course Grade must be D- or higher to earn promotion (for grades 6-8) or credit (for high school).

Mastery of Standards

The Rising School criteria for promotion/retention begin with standards: the College and Career Readiness Standards (Common Core Standards + 2010 Arizona Additions) and AP-based standards for some high-school courses. Students will be assessed on each relevant standard. To demonstrate "mastery" of a single standard, a student must score 80% or higher on an assessment of that single standard.

Interim Course Grade

Teachers will use student mastery of standards (see above) plus student performance on other relevant academic factors (homework, projects, in-class participation, etc.) to compute for each student a percentage score for the course; this percentage score will result in the Interim Course Grade, which will be available at the end of the school year. The following shows the conversion of percentage of total standards mastered into Interim Course Grade: 97-100 (A+), 93-96 (A), 90-92 (A-), 87-89 (B+), 83-86 (B), 80-82 (B-), 77-79 (C+), 73-76 (C), 70-72 (C-), 67-69 (D+), 63-66 (D), 60-62 (D-), below 60 (F).

Final Course Grade

In courses that do *not* have an aligned state-standardized assessment, the Interim Course Grade is the Final Course Grade. In these courses, consequently, students will know their Final Course Grade at the end of the school year.

For courses (math, Humanities, English Composition, and science) with an aligned state standardized assessment (Math, Reading, Writing, and Science), the student's Interim Course Grade is combined with the student's performance on the state standardized assessment to result in the Final Course Grade (see table below for a description of how this is done). For 6th and 7th grades, the student's performance on the state Math assessment will be incorporated into the student's Final Course Grade for his/her math class, the student's performance on the state Reading assessment will be incorporated into the student's Final Course Grade for his/her Humanities class, and the student's performance on the state Writing assessment will incorporated into the student's Final Course Grade for his/her English Composition class. For 8th grade, the student's performance on the state Math assessment will be incorporated into the student's Final Course Grade for his/her math class, the student's performance on the state Reading assessment will be incorporated into the student's Final Course Grade for his/her Humanities class, and the student's performance on the state Science assessment will incorporated into the student's Final Course Grade for his/her Science class. For 10th grade, the student's performance on the state Math assessment will be incorporated into the student's Final Course Grade for his/her math class, the student's performance on the state Reading assessment will be incorporated into the student's Final Course Grade for his/her English class, and the student's performance on the state Science assessment will incorporated into the student's Final Course Grade for his/her Science class.

In these courses, a student's individual state standardized assessment scores will be incorporated into the student's final grade through the following grade-conversion matrix:

Interim Course Grade	**Exceeds**	**Meets**	**Approaches**	**Falling Far Below**
A+	A+	A+	B+	C+
A	A+	A	B	C
A-	A+	A-	B-	C-
B+	A	A-	C+	D+
B	A	B+	C	D
B-	A-	B+	C-	D-
C+	A-	B	D+	F
C	B+	B	D	F
C-	B+	B-	D-	F
D+	B	C+	F	F
D	B	C	F	F
D-	B-	C-	F	F
F	C	D	F	F

This grade-conversion matrix will typically raise a student's grades. Students who "exceed" on the state standardized assessment will almost always raise their grade, up to two letter grades. Students who "meet" will have their grade stay the same or raise it by up to one letter grade. Students who "approach" will lose one letter grade. And students who "fall far below the standard" will lose two letter grades. For example, a student who earns an Interim Course Grade of B will have one of the following Final Course Grades: A (if he/she scores an

“exceeds” on the state assessment), B+ (“meets”), C (“approaches”), or D (“falls far below standard”).

Incorporating state standardized assessment scores into students’ Final Course Grade will incentivize teachers and students to focus throughout the entire school year on student mastery of the standards from the College and Career Readiness Standards (Common Core Standards + 2010 Arizona Additions) and AP-based standards for some high-school courses. Moreover, comparing a student’s teacher-given grades with that students’ performance on the state assessment will give the school valuable insight and data on possible gaps (and strengths) in the curriculum and/or in the teacher’s instructional performance. Additionally, incorporating state standardized assessment scores into a student’s Final Course Grade will also encourage all students to take seriously the state standardized assessment; currently, only a few students—those in high school--have any concrete incentive to perform well on state assessments.

Incorporating into the Final Course Grade a state standardized score (whose results are not released until the summer) is unusual, but it is not unprecedented among Arizona charter schools. The BASIS group of schools incorporates AP scores, which are not released until July, into its final course grades. In addition, The Rising School believes that state assessments will soon be conducted online, allowing earlier release of results—hopefully, this will happen prior to the end of the school year. Incorporating state standardized assessment scores into every student’s Final Course Grade might seem unusual now, but we predict that as the benefits of the system become obvious, it will become a commonplace practice for many schools within the next decade or two.

Criteria for Promotion or Retention

Promotion/retention will depend on the student’s Final Course Grade (see above). Students must score D- or higher to pass a course. In grades 6-8, a student will earn promotion to the next grade level only if he/she passes *all* core subjects—Math, English Composition, Humanities (which includes social studies), and Science. Any student who fails *any* of these core courses will be retained in his/her current grade. In grades 9-12, a student who fails a course that is required for graduation must retake and pass that course (or its equivalent) to graduate. Equivalent courses include, but are not limited to, summer-school, community-college, or university courses.

Consequently, some students in courses aligned to a standardized state assessment will not know their grade in these courses—and, therefore, whether they passed—until the state has released the scores. As a result, these students may not know whether they passed until July. While this late notification is unusual, it is not unprecedented. As mentioned above, the BASIS group of charter schools incorporates AP scores, which are not released until July, into its final course grades.