A formative evaluation of an alternative approach to grade retention and promotion decisions: justification and experiences

Master Thesis

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Enjoy reading!

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Summary

Grade retention has been used for many years and in many countries to enhance low achievers' academic performance. Nevertheless, it has been shown that it does not always have the intended effects on student achievement as well as well-being. The decisions for grade retention and promotion, which are made during allocation meetings, depend on whether students meet the school's promotion and retention criteria established at the school level. These decisions are usually based on different data but involve subjective judgments based on intuition, as teachers use intuition to base their decisions on and strengthen their choice for promotion or retention, which makes their advice and decisions subjective and probably biased instead of objective. As grade retention often does not have the intended effects, and decisions for grade retention and promotion are often biased due to subjectivity and the use of intuition during allocation meetings, evidence-based alternatives needed to be investigated. The current study was therefore aimed at evaluating a Toolkit developed by a Dutch secondary school, intended to let teachers take a broader perspective than just grades or academic performance in making promotion and retention decisions. This research aims to answer the following research question: *'What are the theoretical justification and experiences with regard to the content and use of the Promising Promotion Toolkit, and how could this be improved?.*

This study followed a qualitative formative evaluation using an alpha and light beta test. To this end, a document analysis, literature review and several interviews were done and conducted. The study population consisted of two developers of the Toolkit, one of whom was also a team coordinator, two internal supervisors, and three mentors. Subsequently, the interviews were transcribed, coded, and analysed.

The findings suggested that the developers of this alternative Promising Promotion Toolkit were inspired by ideas from the scientific literature. Nevertheless, no sources used for developing and designing the Toolkit were documented, which makes it difficult to draw substantiated conclusions about the theoretical justification. In addition, the results pointed out that the different elements of the designed Toolkit align with the theoretical justification as presented in this study. Nevertheless, the findings suggested that there was limited information regarding how grade retention and promotion decisions are made, and it should be noticed that the different criteria related to non-academic achievements are usually discussed in descriptive studies. That makes that these criteria still lack clear scientific evidence and explanation for their use in the grade retention and promotion decision-making process. Nevertheless, teachers could use the different elements of the Promising Promotion Toolkit as a basis for making better-informed grade retention and promotion decisions during allocation meetings based on more than just grades. However, they should be aware of the cautions that the different elements have when considering these elements

during this decision-making process. In addition, the findings suggest that the working process, as explained in the Promising Promotion Toolkit, partially corresponds to practice. At least the users experienced the intentions and the idea of the Toolkit positively. However, there are still some improvements to be made, as the Toolkit's implementation was not optimal. Due to this limited implementation, it was difficult to draw conclusions about the use of the Toolkit in practice and the experiences regarding it. Therefore, further research should investigate, evaluate, and review the implementation of this Toolkit. In addition, further research should investigate more evidence-based alternatives to grade retention and investigate which criteria and components could be used to make better-informed and justified grade retention and promotion decisions.

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1. Problem statement

Despite its widespread use, grade retention has been shown to have more negative than positive effects on both student achievement (Goos et al., 2013; Jimerson, 2001; Valbuena et al., 2020) as well as well-being (Jimerson, 2001; Peixoto et al., 2016). The current study is aimed at investigating the theoretical justification, experiences, benefits, and drawbacks of an initiative to reduce grade retention in a Dutch secondary school.

Secondary schools in most countries have carried out grade retention practices for years (Ahmad, 2021; Valbuena et al., 2020). It is even more used in the Netherlands than in other countries (Reezigt et al., 2013). Data from the Dutch Inspectorate of Education shows that retention rates of students have increased in the last few years (Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap, 2023 (a)). Despite the high percentage of grade retention in the Netherlands, there has not been conducted much research on this topic and the policy of grade retention (Reezigt et al., 2013).

Whether a student will be promoted or retained primarily depends on whether they meet the school's promotion and retention criteria, which are established at the school level (Sleenhof, 2023). The school management describes these criteria in their educational policy and explains them in their school plans. Usually, these criteria are based on students' grades on their final school report for the different courses to illustrate their competence in that course, i.e., summative assessment (Kennisrotonde, n.d.; Sleenhof, 2023). Decisions on students who do not meet these criteria are often made during a so-called allocation meeting, in which, next to a student's grades, their personal situation or exceptional circumstances can be considered (Sleenhof, 2023). These decisions are often based on different content and data, such as observations, test results, personal experiences, and intuition (Sleenhof, 2023). Teachers often use their intuition in these allocation meetings to base their decisions on and strengthen their choice for promotion or retention and the allocation of students (Bonvin, 2003; Santos & Monteiro, 2024; Sleenhof, 2023; Sleenhof et al., 2019). This could make their advice and decisions subjective and probably biased instead of objective, while objectivity is essential for creating qualitative allocation meetings (Santos & Monteiro, 2024; Sleenhof, 2023; Sleenhof et al., 2019). In addition, there are certain students with specific characteristics who are more in favour of being retained (e.g., boys, students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, and non-Western immigrant students), which can create inequality in the grade retention and promotion decisions (Reezigt et al., 2013).

The rationale for using grade retention is that it can provide underperforming students with extra time to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary to be successfully promoted to the next grade level (Goos et al., 2013; Paquin et al., 2022). Nevertheless, research has investigated that grade retention does often not have any or the intended effects on a student's learning process and

performance or the effects that have been found are unfavourable (Reezigt et al., 2013). It often does not lead to positive results in student's learning achievements and is, according to Goos et al. (2013), not the solution for students who are stuck in their learning process. In addition, grade retention has been shown to lead to adverse psychological effects among students, such as poor self-esteem and problematic behaviour (Lynch, 2013; Peixoto et al., 2016). This may impair their learning achievements (Al-Zoubi & Younes, 2015; Hattie, 2014; Kennisrotonde, 2017; Smith et al., 2022).

Since grade retention often does not have the intended effects, and decisions for grade retention and promotion are often biased due to subjectivity and the use of intuition during allocation meetings, Goos et al. (2013) recommended the use of evidence-based alternatives. Thus, alternative methods need to be investigated to avoid the adverse effects of grade retention and, if possible, lower the percentage of retained students. The current study is therefore aimed at evaluating a Toolkit developed by a Dutch secondary school, intended to let teachers take a broader perspective than just grades or academic performance in making promotion and retention decisions.

2. Theoretical framework

This section provides an overview of the concepts and definitions relevant to this study. It includes grade retention, effects of grade retention, procedures and criteria, and alternative approaches to grade retention.

2.1 Grade retention

Grade retention means that students must repeat a school year at the same or another educational level due to low grades, which is used as an indicator to represent their academic progress (Ahmad, 2021; Jimerson, 2001; Range et al., 2011). Grade retention is used to improve underachieving students' academic performance by giving them more time to develop academic skills and relearn the curriculum requirements needed to be competent in the following school year (Ahmad, 2021; Giano et al., 2022; Goos et al., 2013; Range et al., 2011; Smith et al., 2022; Valbuena et al., 2020). Another argument for the use of grade retention is that it could create more homogenous classes, which could lead to a higher educational level in class (Driessen et al., 2014).

However, the literature seems to suggest that grade retention is controversial, as there are several arguments for and against its use. The literature indicates that arguments against its use include its high costs, its inefficacy during the following years, and the fact that it demotivates students as they must relearn the whole curriculum (Driessen et al., 2014; Goos et al., 2013; Valbuena et al., 2020).

Nevertheless, there are arguments for and against the use of grade retention. According to the Dutch Inspectorate of Education, the retention rates of students in secondary education in the Netherlands have increased in the last few years (Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap, 2023 (a,b,)). Figure 1 shows the retention rates of Dutch students who need to repeat a school year on the same educational level from the school year 2017/2018 until the school year 2021/2022 (Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap, 2023 (a)). The figure confirms that retention rates have increased both before and after the COVID-19 pandemic. The retention rates even increased in an upward trend and were higher in 2021-2022 than before the COVID-19 pandemic. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the retention rates have temporarily decreased. A possible explanation for this could be that the criteria for promotion and retention were less strict during this period. This meant that students were promoted to the next year even when they had not obtained the desired results, as described in the curriculum. However, in the school year 2020-2021, the criteria for promotion and retention became stricter than during the COVID-19 pandemic, causing students to repeat a school year as they did not meet the desired results. Thus increasing the retention rates (Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap, 2023 (a)). Other possible

explanations for the increase in retention rates are the increased pressure on students to perform, the decreased well-being of students, and learning delays from students as a cause of the COVID-19 pandemic (Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap, 2023 (a)).

Figure 1

Percentage of repeaters by school type in the years 2017/2018-2021/2022 (Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap, 2023 (a)).

Figuur 3.1d Percentage zittenblijvers in de onderbouw en naar schoolsoort in de jaren 2017-2018 tot en met 2021-2022 (n 2021-2022=687.870)
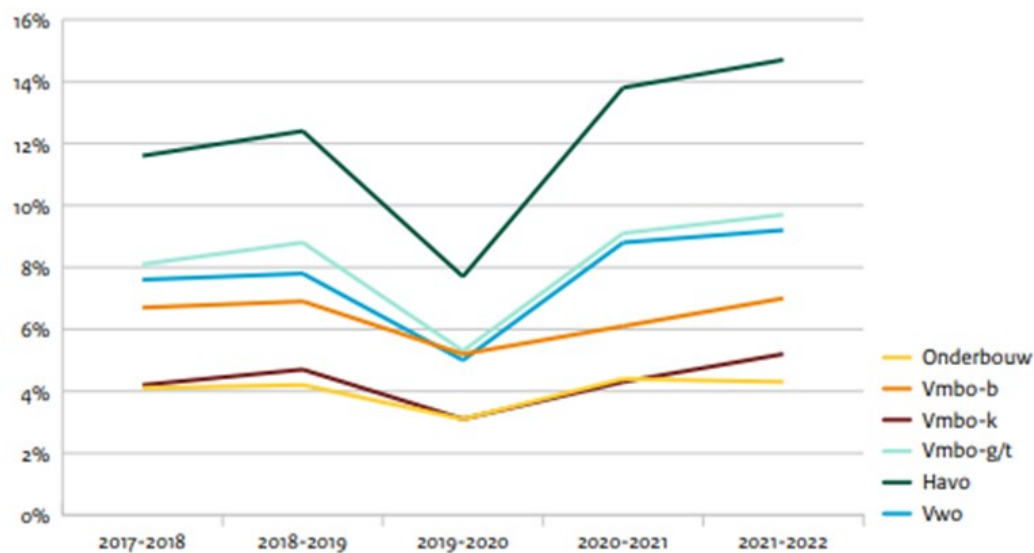
Bron: Inspectie van het Onderwijs (2023f)

2.2 Effects of grade retention

Much research has gone into the effects of grade retention on students. There are both positive and negative effects of grade retention.

2.2.1. Positive effects of grade retention

Grade retention can give grade repeaters a fresh start and a knowledge and skills advantage compared to their younger classmates (Smith et al., 2022). When students repeat a school year, they get more time to mature, which can help them manage the challenging content (Goos et al., 2013; Kretschmann et al., 2019; Smith et al., 2022). In addition, it can prevent students from losing confidence in their abilities, as the gap between their knowledge and skills may become so evident

that it cannot be hidden (Kretschmann et al., 2019; Smith et al., 2022). As it is easier for students to manage the challenging content, students can experience more successful results, and the feedback of having obtained positive results can increase their motivation (Rodríguez-Rodríguez, 2022). Furthermore, grade retention seems to have a slightly positive effect on student achievement in the year after the student has been retained. However, this positive effect disappears over time (Valbuena et al., 2020). Another possible effect of grade retention is that it can create classes that contain students of homogenous ability, which would help teachers intervene more effectively (Goos et al., 2021; Smith et al., 2022).

2.2.2 Negative effects of grade retention

Despite the advantages of grade retention, it does not always produce the expected positive effects, and it could even produce adverse effects (Jimerson, 2001). These adverse effects can be divided into three main categories: academic impact, socio-emotional impact, and dropping out of school.

2.2.2.1. Academic impact

Research reports relative advantages in academic achievement for retained students during the year immediately following retention (Jimerson, 2001; Klapproth et al., 2016). However, these initial gains often disappear and sometimes even reverse during later years when following the same sample, so they are temporary gains (Ahmad, 2021; Jimerson, 2001; Jimerson et al., 2004; Klapproth et al., 2016; Peixoto et al., 2016; Rodríguez-Rodríguez, 2022). Students who have been retained generally show poor achievement in school, as these children are mostly recycled and exposed to the same instructional approaches that did not support their achievement during the previous year (Lynch, 2013). As a result, retained children approach learning in the same way as during the last year, placing them at risk of being retained a second time (Lynch, 2013). According to Range et al. (2011), a student's retention year should differ vastly from the previous year regarding instruction and interventions. Otherwise, students are likely to lose interest and devalue learning experiences, which may impact their academic motivation (Range et al., 2011; Smith et al., 2022).

2.2.2.2. Socio-emotional impact

Besides the academic impact, grade retention does have a socio-emotional impact. As explained above, could the academic impact of the student himself be negatively affected by grade retention. In addition, other classmates' academic achievement could also be affected, as students who have been retained are more likely to distract other classmates (Lynch, 2013; Valbuena et al., 2020).

As explained above, when a retention year does not differ from the previous year regarding instruction and interventions, students are likely to lose interest, devalue learning experiences, and

be demotivated (Range et al., 2011; Smith et al., 2022). This means that students' affective components of learning, such as self-efficacy beliefs, self-esteem, self-concept, or motivation, could have been negatively affected (Lynch, 2013; Peixoto et al., 2016; Valbuena et al., 2020). These affective components influence learning achievements, which means that they may have academic impact, and are also predictors of being retained; and thus, the student will end up in a vicious cycle and will not improve their learning achievements (Peixoto et al., 2016). A student will be demotivated, and this demotivation likely manifests itself, for example, in negative attitudes toward school, in the development of behaviour problems in school, or in disruptive behaviour. Their aggression may increase, and they may become involved in bullying (Lynch, 2013; Peixoto et al., 2016). As a result, teachers have to spend more time correcting negative behaviour as opposed to instructing the classroom material. Therefore, grade retention may also negatively affect teachers. Students who have been retained will be treated differently by teachers, as, in general, they have severe negative perceptions and low expectations of these students (Goos et al., 2011). The different social treatments result in more reprimands, less reinforcement of positive actions, and less tolerance, for example (Goos et al., 2011).

At least, according to Goos et al. (2021) grade retention could also negatively affect peer relationships in the classroom (e.g., broken relationships). Research has shown that peer relations (e.g., a student's social network) are essential for a student's academic performance and, thus, a student's school success (Yang et al., 2018). Having friends at school supports involvement and engagement in school-related activities, and this engagement is positively related to academic performance (Driessen et al., 2014; Hattie, 2014; Lubbers et al., 2006; Strayhorn, 2018).

2.2.2.3. Dropping out of school

It has been identified that grade retention is the most single powerful predictor of dropping out of school (Ahmad, 2021; Jimerson, 2001; Jimerson et al., 2004; Lynch, 2013; Valbuena et al., 2020). "Being retained for one year almost doubled a student's likelihood of dropping out, while failing twice almost guaranteed it" (Hattie, 2009, p. 98). Students who have been retained show greater absenteeism (Peixoto et al., 2016). This absenteeism could probably lead to students dropping out of school (Jimerson, 2001; Peixoto et al., 2016). When students drop out of school, they are less likely to receive a diploma, which means no access to higher education. Having no higher education could lead to a lower income later in life or unemployment. This increases the chance of having to live on public assistance (Eurydice, 2020; Jimerson et al., 2004; Valbuena et al., 2020).

2.3. Procedures and criteria

As grade retention does not have the intended effects and could produce adverse effects, it is essential to limit the number of students that need to be retained for a school year. For this to happen, it is essential to know how grade retention and promotion decisions are made. The decision procedures for grade retention vary per country, as there is no universal policy. In the Netherlands, every school management can establish its own criteria and policy for grade promotion and retention. It is common practice that teachers decide on retention and promotion in allocation meetings by using these criteria. In these allocation meetings, teachers form an opinion about students based on observations, test results, personal experiences, and intuition, which could make these decisions probably biased, as these opinions are supported by subjective factors (Sleenhof, 2023).

There is limited information regarding how grade retention and promotion decisions are made (Santos & Monteiro, 2024; Schnurr et al., 2009). The decision procedures and criteria for promotion and retention vary between countries, sometimes even across states and regions within a given country. There is no universal promotion and retention policy, but these criteria are often based on grades (Goos et al., 2021; Valbuena et al., 2020). Different countries have varied approaches and examples to student grade retention and promotion: in Italy, all teachers must unanimously agree; in Cyprus, the final decision is up to the inspector; and in Denmark and Sweden, the opinion of parents is also considered during the decision-making process (Valbuena et al., 2020).

In the Netherlands, every school management can establish its own criteria for promotion and retention, and there are no nationally established criteria (Sleenhof et al., 2019). These criteria, which are used in allocation meetings by teachers, mentors, and team leaders to decide on students' grade retention or promotion, are described in the school's educational policy and explained in the school plans by the school management (Bonvin, 2003; Santos & Monteiro, 2024; Sleenhof, 2023). Allocation meetings are organized at the end of the school year, with all of the teachers, the mentor, and the team leader of a specific student to discuss the students who do not meet the school criteria for promotion to the following school year. The main aim of these meetings is to create a complete picture of each student's performance to allocate them to the educational level and school year that fits them best. The procedures and rules used in allocation meetings must be clear for the participants so that they know what is expected of them (Sleenhof, 2023).

The participants of allocation meetings have individually formed opinions and may have formed different views of one student's capacities during a school year (Sleenhof et al., 2019; Sneyers et al., 2017). These decisions in allocation meetings are often based on different content and data, such as observations, test results, personal experiences, and intuition (Sleenhof, 2023). These

personal experiences and intuition are based on several academic subjective factors (e.g., a student's prior performance and higher-order thinking skills) and non-academic subjective factors, (e.g., factors related to a student's background such as demographic factors and several personality traits) (Boone & van Houtte, 2012; Sleenhof, 2023; Südkamp et al., 2018). These non-academic subjective factors are usually discussed in descriptive studies (Santos & Monteiro, 2024; Sleenhof et al., 2019). The reason for teachers using these non-academic subjective factors was not apparent in these articles. Therefore, these factors still lack clear scientific evidence for use in the grade retention and promotion decision-making process. In addition, these non-academic subjective factors are often based on a teacher's perception or expectation, which is often based on their intuition. This makes their advice in allocation meetings subjective and probably biased instead of objective, while objectivity is essential for creating qualitative allocation meetings (Santos & Monteiro, 2024; Sleenhof, 2023; Sleenhof et al., 2019). As there is no evidence for using these non-academic subjective factors as a predictor for grade retention or promotion, teachers should be careful when considering these factors. Another reason to become careful by using these non-academic subjective factors is that it should be noticed that recent research has shown a lack of reliability when comparing the outcome of teacher judgment with the results of objective measures such as standardized tests (Vanlommel et al., 2018). A teacher's judgment of a student's achievement level and progress is far from reliable as it could include many non-achievement factors, such as interest (Vanlommel et al., 2018).

The most commonly used criteria in allocation meetings can be divided into two categories: criteria related to academic achievements and criteria related to non-academic achievement. In the following paragraphs, we will discuss both groups of criteria.

2.3.1. Criteria related to academic achievements

Student's grades reflect a student's academic achievement and are essential in the promotion and retention decision-making process, as this academic achievement is a significant criterion of students being more likely than others to be retained (Cachia et al., 2018; Sleenhof, 2023). It is suggested in the literature that students need to master specific knowledge and skills for a course to succeed in later school years, as the new knowledge and skills will build upon the previous knowledge and skills. So, if a student has not yet mastered the knowledge and skills, which is reflected in the student's insufficient grades, they are best off repeating a school year, as otherwise, the next school year's learning content would be too difficult for these students, leading to more failure and lower academic achievements (Goos et al., 2021).

It is indicated in the literature that a student's academic achievement is already lower in the year before retention (Peixoto et al., 2016). Students who have been retained perform less and obtain lower grades in the school year before they have been retained, and in the year they have been retained (Peixoto et al., 2016). So, a student's history, represented by their previous achievements (e.g., grades and performances), can predict a possible retention, as previous achievements can predict the current achievements of a student (Hattie, 2014). A reason for this is not mentioned. A student's history and prior performance also influence teacher's opinions. Teachers often expect students to continue to perform according to their previously established patterns (Sleenhof, 2023). They expect that students' performance corresponds to the capabilities they have shown earlier. That makes teachers have fixed expectations about students, which prevents them from developing a more accurate understanding of a student's educational development and needs. Teachers will consider these fixed expectations about a student's prior performance while deciding on a student's promotion or retention (Sleenhof, 2023).

Retention is usually seen as a consequence of low academic achievement, but this is not necessarily the case. For example, it does not explain when some low-achieving students get retained while similarly low-achieving classmates get promoted, a phenomenon that is regularly observed among students (Peixoto et al., 2016). This indicates that academic achievement, represented by grades, is not the sole predictor determining whether a student is retained or promoted. Thus, many other factors are taken into account when making a grade retention or promotion decision.

The assumed importance of grades and student's academic achievement is presented above. However, it should be noted and taken into account that the literature has also questioned the role of grades in the grade retention and promotion decision-making process (Sleenhof et al., 2019). According to Sleenhof et al. (2019) and Van der Lans et al. (2015), grades can be unreliable when deciding on a student's adequate level of competence, as, for example, not all teachers use the same standards and tests to grade their students. Therefore, the role these grades should play in allocating a student seems questionable, and probably, this should not be the only factor considered (Sleenhof et al., 2019).

Although there are no national rules and criteria in the Netherlands for promotion and retention, the criteria are usually based on a student's average grade, as reported in their last school report for the different subjects in the curriculum of the school (Sleenhof, 2023). The total number of grades that a student receives varies per school and could even vary between subjects. There is no established universal rule about the number of grades students receive in a year. The number of insufficient grades and the number of compensation points are essential factors in the decision process (Sleenhof, 2023). In addition, the grades obtained in the core courses (e.g., Dutch, English, and mathematics), weigh more heavily when considering whether a student is promoted or retained,

as they are considered to be very important during the exam year and are considered as an indication for future success. These grades are decisive for a student to pass the exam. In the Netherlands, students are only allowed to fail one of these core courses during the exam year, and this grade cannot be lower than a five (Inspectie van het Onderwijs, 2015; Sleenhof, 2023).

Therefore, it seems evident that the core courses (e.g., Dutch, English, and mathematics) are considered to be important. According to the literature, reading skills, for example, are essential as they influence all subsequent knowledge acquisition and the student's overall achievement (Jimerson et al., 2004). If a student's academic achievement is low, especially in reading or mathematics, these students are more likely to be retained (Jimerson & Kaufman, 2003; Range et al., 2011; Valbuena et al., 2020). Reading and mathematics skills can be tested with standardized tests, such as, Cito and Diataal. These tests can be used to monitor the development of students in these skills over time. Besides, these tests can give an objective understanding of the educational level on which a student is functioning for the Core Concepts of Dutch, English, and mathematics. This could give valuable information in deciding on a student's promotion or retention, as these Core Courses are considered as an indication of future success (Hacquebord, 2021; Scheerens et al., 2012; van der Marel, n.d.).

2.3.2. Criteria related to non-academic achievements

Several additional criteria to decide on a student's promotion or retention are unrelated to the students' academic achievements but strongly influences the perceptions of teachers. Examples of these non-academic achievement-related criteria are several personality traits and factors related to a student's motivation, several other personality traits and student characteristics, and several factors related to a student's background. These criteria will be discussed in this paragraph.

Several personality traits and factors related to a student's motivation have been shown to be taken into account when making decisions regarding grade retention. Examples of these factors are student motivational orientation, self-concept, and self-esteem. This is because they can influence student learning achievement and motivation. When these factors are low, they will negatively influence the student's learning achievement and motivation (Jimerson et al., 2004; Peixoto et al., 2016; Valbuena et al., 2020; Yang et al., 2018). Students with low self-esteem and less motivation devalue academic-related activities and show negative attitudes toward school (Peixoto et al., 2016). Motivation is a significant predictor of learning achievements and school success as it shows the willingness to learn and directly affects learning results (Sleenhof et al., 2019; Spinath et al., 2014; Steinmayr & Spinath, 2009). According to Sleenhof et al. (2019), motivation may vary depending on a student's attitudes toward and interest in a certain subject. However, it should be noted that retained students are more likely to be demotivated quickly (Rodríguez-Rodríguez, 2022). So, retaining unmotivated students would demotivate them even further, which may result in a

vicious circle. Therefore, it seems logical that motivation or factors that could influence motivation, such as self-concept and self-esteem, have been considered in the decision-making process for grade retention and promotion.

Nevertheless, one should be careful in considering motivation and factors related to motivation in the decision-making process for grade retention and promotion. The literature of Santos and Monteiro (2024) has clarified the opposite. It is explained that the use of motivation is in line with the Self-Determination Theory, which is central in justifying retention. According to this theory, grade retention works as an external regulator for unmotivated students and students act due to external pressures or consequences from others. Therefore, teachers may believe that grade retention could help students to try and work harder (Santos & Monteiro, 2024).

Furthermore, several personality traits or student characteristics can influence a teacher's perception of a student and a decision to retain or promote a student, as teachers often rely on the student's social-emotional characteristics and well-being to form their opinion (Peixoto et al., 2016; Sleenhof, 2023; Valbuena et al., 2020). These social and emotional skills often influence teachers' perceptions of students; for example, a teacher is more likely to be in favour of promoting a student to the next school year when this student works hard and is a nice person (Sleenhof, 2023). On the other hand, a student who has maladaptive behaviour can be more likely to be retained (Peixoto et al., 2016; Valbuena et al., 2020).

Also, several factors (e.g., demographic factors and socio-economic status) related to a student's background could influence a teacher's perception of a student during allocation meetings (Sleenhof, 2023). According to Sleenhof (2023) teachers base their opinions in allocation meetings on several demographic factors (e.g., gender, age, ethnicity). In descriptive articles, several demographic characteristics are explained to give a higher chance of being retained (Reezigt et al., 2013; Valbuena et al., 2020). For example, a student's age plays a role. Older students show better academic achievements, so younger students are more likely to be retained (Valbuena et al., 2020). A possible explanation for retaining younger students could be to prevent them from underachieving (Vandecandelaere et al., 2016). Moreover, the gender of a student appears to influence retention rates, with boys being more commonly retained than girls (Jimerson et al., 2004; Reezigt et al., 2013; Valbuena et al., 2020; van Vuuren & van der Wiel, 2015). A clear-cut reason for this was not mentioned; it could be attributed to misalignments between school behaviour expectations and the typical developmental trajectory of male students (Frey, 2005). Additionally, a student's ethnicity also plays a role, as students from minority ethnicities are more likely to be retained (Frey, 2005; Reezigt et al., 2013). Possible explanations for this can be, for example, related to these student's social, economic, and linguistic disadvantages (Tillman et al., 2006).

Besides, a student's socioeconomic status is indicated in the literature as a factor for being more likely to be retained (Jimerson et al., 2004). The reason for this is that parents with a low socioeconomic status have fewer educational resources and more stressors that may negatively affect the time and attention they can spend on their children's educational needs, and thus, they can be less involved in the education of their children and may be less supportive; the parental involvement is low (Hattie, 2014; Jimerson, 2001; Marzano, 2015; Peixoto et al., 2016; Yang et al., 2018). In addition, students from parents with a low socioeconomic status have fewer educational opportunities than those from parents with a high socioeconomic status, as their parents have fewer financial resources to pay for tutoring and have fewer stimulating books and games at home (Ros, 2018). Therefore, a student's socioeconomic status can unconsciously influence the teachers' perception. Nevertheless, it should be noted that considering a student's socioeconomic status when deciding whether a student should retain could increase the inequality of opportunities. For example, students with a high socioeconomic status already have more educational opportunities, and therefore, using a student's socioeconomic status when deciding on promotion and retention will enlarge the opportunity inequality even further.

In conclusion, two different categories of criteria have been considered when making grade retention or promotion decisions. These criteria have been presented in a framework, which can be found in Table 1. This framework is completed by a row with cautions, which the teacher should be aware of when making grade retention or promotion decisions. So, all these criteria and components could be taken into consideration when making grade retention or promotion decisions, but due to the cautions, that teachers should be aware of, teachers should be careful and critical when considering these criteria and components for making a grade retention or promotion decisions.

Table 1

Framework of decision criteria and components that could be considered for a retention or promotion decision.

Category	Components	Cautions
Criteria related to academic achievement(s)	Grades (averages) in combination with compensation points.	Grades can be unreliable when deciding on a student's adequate level of competence, as, for example, not all
	Failing three or more subjects generally leads to retention.	teachers use the same standards and tests to grade their students. Therefore, the

	Having a score of more than one five for the core courses (Dutch, English, and mathematics).	role these grades should play in the allocation of a student seems questionable.
	Having low academic achievements for reading or mathematics (tested by Cito or Diataal).	
	A student's history or prior performances.	
Criteria related to non-academic achievement(s)	Factors related to student's motivation (e.g., motivational orientation, self-concept, and self-esteem).	One should be careful by taking into account factors related to a student's motivation as retained students are more likely to be demotivated quickly (Rodríguez-Rodríguez, 2022). So, retaining unmotivated students would probably demotivate them even further, which may result in a vicious circle.
	Factors related to a student's background (e.g., demographic factors (gender, age, ethnicity), and socio-economic status).	
	Student's characteristics (working hard (work attitude), being a nice person, maladaptive behaviour, their well-being).	The subjective factors are often based on a teacher's perception or expectation, which is often based on their intuition. This makes advice based on subjective factors subjective and probably biased.

Considering several factors related to a student's background could increase the inequality of opportunities.

2.4. Alternative approaches to grade retention

As grade retention has various adverse effects, it is essential to search for alternative remedial strategies to facilitate students' academic success (Jimerson, 2001; Valbuena et al., 2020). Various alternatives are indicated in the literature. An alternative could be to extend teaching and learning time to allow students to catch up with their deficit skills. In practice, this could be achieved by offering summer schools, extending school days, tutoring, or upskilling courses for the skills not yet developed (Lynch, 2013; Range et al., 2011; Valbuena et al., 2020; van Vuuren & van der Wiel, 2015). Another method can be tutoring through one-to-one instruction by teachers or other students. This tutoring can be done during school and out-of-school time (Valbuena et al., 2020). However, this out-of-school tutoring is often expensive and cannot be paid for by everyone. Often, it is only accessible to well-earning, highly-educated parents. So, this is not an accessible alternative for everyone and could provoke the inequality of opportunity (Bisschop & de Geus, 2018).

To prevent the negative effects of grade retention and decrease bias in allocation meetings, Lynch (2013) recommends using multiple sources of information (e.g., grades, test scores, teacher evaluations) to make these decisions. This could probably also help make better-informed grade retention or promotion decisions in allocation meetings, as these decisions are often based on observations, test results, personal experiences, and intuition, which could make these decisions probably biased, as thy are often supported by subjective criteria or factors (Sleenhof, 2023).

3. The context and aim of this study

This section provides the context and aim of this study.

3.1. The context of this study

As grade retention does not always have the intended effect on students and even on teachers and classmates, alternatives to improve student achievement and avoid the adverse effects of grade retention need to be investigated. Therefore, a Dutch secondary school with two locations for the following educational levels: pre-vocational secondary education, senior general secondary education, and pre-university education, has developed an alternative method, instead of only considering grades, for deciding on a student's promotion or retention (to the same or a different education level). This alternative method is called 'Kansrijk Bevorderen', best translated as 'Promising Promotion'.

The school has developed a so-called 'Promising Promotion Toolkit' consisting of three elements (e.g., the four requirements, the six indicators, and optionally the individual action plan) and a timeline for the decision-making process of grade retention or promotion at their school during a school year, which can be found in Appendix 1. The content of the toolkit will be discussed in the following paragraph.

The Promising Promotion Toolkit was developed and introduced in the years before the COVID-19 pandemic. There was not one clear-cut reason for the development, but several reasons were mentioned. One of these reasons was that the Carmel Foundation, of which the school is part, embraces a more developing culture in terms of promotion and retention. Another reason was that the development of this toolkit was in line with the vision of the school, and the last reason was that this toolkit was developed due to a question by the Ministry of Education about whether schools would think about a Promising Development Trajectory. The process of designing and developing the toolkit took about a year in a complete trajectory in which various persons were involved.

3.1.1. The Promising Promotion Toolkit

The Promising Promotion Toolkit could be divided into three elements: four requirements, six indicators, and the individual action plan. These elements will be discussed in succession.

The 'Promising Promotion Toolkit' consists of four requirements to decide whether a student can be promoted or needs to be retained (het Marianum, n.d. (a); Het Marianum, n.d. (b)).

A student can be promoted to the next school year on the same educational level if:

1. The student has a maximum of three insufficient grades in the end results, visible in SOM, a student tracking system. In SOM, all grades a student receives during a school year are visible.
2. The personal advice about the student, as decided on by the student's teachers, is mainly positive. The personal advice is the opinion of the teachers on which educational level the student is functioning according to them, and which educational level the student should be allocated in the next school year.
3. The personal advice about the student in the application at www.leerlingbespreking.nl, is mainly positive. www.leerlingbespreking.nl is a Dutch feedback system where teachers can enter all the feedback they have about students. This feedback could explain how a student works in the classroom, but could also include suggestions to improve a student's achievement for a specific course, for example.
4. The data from Cito is positive. Cito (Central Institute for Test Development) creates standardized tests used by schools to measure student's knowledge, skills, and competence over time for different courses.

According to the Dutch explanation of the Promising Promotion Toolkit, if a student does not meet these four requirements, there is another possibility of being promoted to the next grade at the same educational level. For this to happen, a student needs to develop their individual action plan. The student needs to describe the following things: why the student chooses a promotion, what the student will tackle or manage, and how the student wants to achieve this? The plan also described what support or help the student needs from the school and the parents. In the Promising Promotion Toolkit, nothing is explained about whether this plan should be approved, by whom, and how it should be approved. There are no concrete guidelines for this.

When a student gets promoted based on their personal plan, this is only a conditional promotion. That means that students have until the autumn or Christmas holidays to prove themselves and meet the requirements described in their individual action plans. According to the toolkit, if the student does not meet the requirements, they need to return to their former educational level and are thus retained. The plan also describes when an evaluation of the plan takes place with the student, parents, and mentor and the possible consequences when the requirements defined in the personal plan are not met. There are three possible consequences broadly described by the school management in case of unmet requirements in a student's plan for promotion. The first possible consequence is that the student can succeed and stay on the same level in the same school year. The second is that the student is reasonably successful, the personal plan is repaired, and a new evaluation moment is planned. The last consequence is that the student is unsuccessful, and the

possible consequences, as described in the personal plan, will be followed. The student must leave this educational level and will continue at another educational level or in another school year (grade).

In addition to these four requirements, which are the guiding principles, the school has created a format with six indicators that support the student's perspective and show whether a student needs to repeat a year or not. These indicators are described in Table 2. For every indicator, the school has created some sample questions that could be asked to get a complete overview of the indicators. What exactly the questions were for was not made clear in the toolkit. However, it should be mentioned that the toolkit does not have a concrete explanation. No concrete decision rules are established for the four requirements and six indicators explaining what to do when a student does not meet them.

Table 2

Valuable indicators during student conversations/promotion/development conversations (Het Marianum, n.d. (b)).

Valuable indicator	Sample questions
Learning outcomes in knowledge and skills	What did the notes tell us about the knowledge and skills?
	Which learning goals have already been achieved, and which learning outcomes need to be achieved?
	Current and potential sufficiently in view?
	What did OZS tell us?
Social well-being and the home environment	How strong is the student's social network, and is the student satisfied with it?
	What is the home environment?
	Does the student enjoy going to school?
Course advice based on commitment and work attitude	What is the given course advice?
	Which trend can be seen?
	What is the course perspective?
	What feedback did the course teacher give in www.leerlingbespreking.nl (an application)?

Personal motives and characteristics	What are the student's qualities?
	Which study does the student want to follow?
	What are the student's wishes and ambitions for the future?
History	How did the student perform in primary school and in the previous year?
	What feedback has been given to the student in the previous year?
	Which appointments were made in the previous year(s)?
Standardized tests	How were the Cito scores in classes 1,2, and 3?
	What did Diataal tell us?

3.2. The aim of this study

As explained above, a Dutch secondary school has developed a 'Promising Promotion Toolkit' consisting of various requirements and factors that could be considered to decide on a student's retention or promotion, as research has shown that grade retention does not have the intended effects. As little is known about the alternative toolkit's basis (e.g., development), use in practice (usefulness), and user experience, the educational quality employees of the school asked for recommendations for improvement. In this study, these recommendations for improvement have been investigated based on a formative evaluation. According to McKenney and Reeves (2018), a formative evaluation could help identify routes to improvement. An intervention's conceptualization or the underlying theory of action could be evaluated to find an alignment with scientific literature. In addition, the implementation process could be evaluated to align the intervention and the original intentions and improve and refine the intervention (McKenney & Reeves, 2018). Alpha- and beta testing could be used for this (McKenney & Reeves, 2018).

The focus of alpha testing is assessing the design ideas, and it is used to test underlying constructs used in, for example, design documents. The focus is on the internal structure and underlying ideas of the design. The underlying structures (e.g., design requirements or propositions) could be tested. Questions about the intentions of an intervention have the main focus in alpha testing, and the design ideas are studied, meaning that, for example, the theoretical justification is studied (McKenney & Reeves, 2018).

The focus of beta testing is on the use of the intervention in context and the implementation of the intervention. It focuses on different aspects, for example, on how the intervention survives in the context and why. Besides, it focuses on how the intervention is performed and whether this was intended or not. It also focuses on factors influencing the implementation, such as clarity, perceived value, and compatibility with existing policies or practices. In addition, beta testing focuses on institutionalizing the intervention, which means how the intervention is absorbed (e.g., implemented) in the school. This is often related to the organizational conditions and support for the innovation (McKenney & Reeves, 2018). Based on the theory of McKenney and Reeves (2018) about evaluation, alpha testing, and beta testing, the research question and corresponding sub-questions of this research are formulated.

In this research, the following research question will be answered:

'What are the theoretical justification and experiences with regard to the content and use of the Promising Promotion Toolkit, and how could this be improved?'

In addition, the following sub-questions are formulated:
a) What is the theoretical justification of the Toolkit, according to the developers?
b) To what extent do the different elements of the developed Promising Promotion Toolkit (e.g., the four requirements, the six indicators, and the individual action plan) comply with the recommendations from the literature as presented by the framework of decision criteria and components that could be considered for a retention or promotion decision?
c) How does the process of using the Promising Promotion Toolkit work in practice, and to what degree does this align with the intended use?
d) How do users (teachers and/or students) experience the use of the Promising Promotion Toolkit in practice?

4. Method

In this section, the methods that have been used in this study are described. It includes the research design, participants, instrumentation, procedure, and data analysis.

4.1 Research design

This study is a qualitative formative evaluation using an alpha and beta test. It is conducted at a Dutch secondary school with two locations. This school offers education at the following levels: pre-vocational secondary education, senior general secondary education, and pre-university education. The research methods that have been used in this study are a document analysis, a comparative literature review, and in-depth semi-structured interviews.

The first step in the formative evaluation (alpha testing) was to identify the theoretical justification from the perspective of the developers. Sub-question a) *'What is the theoretical justification of the Toolkit, according to the developers?'* was used for this. To answer this research question, two semi-structured interviews with the developers of the Promising Promotion Toolkit have been conducted, transcribed, coded, and analysed. Furthermore, a document analysis of the Promising Promotion Toolkit was done, to identify the different elements of the Promising Promotion Toolkit, in order to be able to compare these different elements to the literature. In addition, a literature review was done, and based on this literature review, a self-developed framework with criteria and components that could be considered for a retention or promotion decision has been self-developed (see Table 1). The different elements of the Promising Promotion Toolkit (e.g., the four requirements, the six indicators, and the individual action plan) are compared to this framework to answer sub-question b) *'To what extent do the different elements of the developed Promising Promotion Toolkit (e.g., the four requirements, the six indicators, and the individual action plan) comply with the recommendations from the literature as presented by the framework of decision criteria and components that could be considered for a retention or promotion decision?'.* These first steps in this formative evaluation are a form of alpha testing and are used to get more insight into the intervention's conceptualization and to find alignment with the scientific literature (McKenney & Reeves, 2018).

The second step in the formative evaluation was a form of light beta testing. It was a light beta testing as there was not done a complete implementation analysis, but only a few people were interviewed to gain insights into the implementation. During this phase, the document analysis of the Promising Promotion Toolkit was used to identify the intended working process and in order to be able to compare this intended working process with the working process in practice. This was also used to gain insights into the experience of the use of the Promising Promotion Toolkit in practice. In

addition, during this phase, the two semi-structured interviews that have already been conducted with the developers have been used and expanded with semi-structured interviews with the internal supervisor(s) and three mentors (teachers). These interviews have been conducted, transcribed, coded, and analysed to answer sub-question c) *'How does the process of using the Promising Promotion Toolkit work in practice, and to what degree does this align with the intended use?'* and sub-question d) *'How do users (teachers and /or students) experience the use of the Promising Promotion Toolkit in practice?'*. These second steps in the formative evaluation, which are a form of light beta testing, are used to get more insight into the use of the intervention in context and the implementation of the intervention (McKenney & Reeves, 2018).

4.2 Instrumentation and participants

4.2.1 Instrumentation

The different instruments used in this research are the designed Promising Promotion Toolkit and the framework of decision criteria and components that could be considered for a retention or promotion decision (see Table 1). These instruments will be discussed below. In addition, several interview protocols have been self-developed for this research, serving as a basis for the semi-structured interviews. These protocols have been designed in cooperation with the external client and the supervisor of this research to ensure validity. The structure of the interview protocols is based on the different components of the designed Promising Promotion Toolkit (e.g., the four requirements, the six indicators, and the individual action plan) in combination with the research (sub)questions. The interview protocols are used to evaluate the design of the toolkit based on how the toolkit was designed and to gain insight and detailed information into the different components of the designed toolkit. There was a different interview protocol for the different functions of the participants, and these protocols have been used to collect data. These protocols can be found in appendices 2-4 and will be discussed below. The interviews were conducted in Dutch. They were recorded with an Apple iPhone 13, transcribed, and coded. More about this coding process can be read in paragraph 4.4.

The Promising Promotion Toolkit

A description of the designed Promising Promotion Toolkit could be found in paragraph 3.1.1. This instrument is used to identify the different elements of the Promising Promotion Toolkit and the intended working process. This instrument is used to answer sub-question b and c.

<u>The framework of decision criteria and components that could be considered for a retention or</u>
<u>promotion decision</u>

Based on a literature review, a self-developed framework with criteria and components that could be considered for a retention or promotion decision has been self-developed (see Table 1). This self-developed framework is used to compare the scientific literature with the different elements of the Promising Promotion Toolkit to gain insight into the (theoretical) justification and answer sub-question b.

<u>Interview protocol developers</u>

The first interview protocol (see Appendix 2) is used for the developers of the toolkit. The first phase of this interview protocol concerned the process of developing the Promising Promotion Toolkit. This part is used to get insight into the theoretical justification of the toolkit according to the developers and is used to answer sub-question a. An example question in this part is: *'Which scientific evidence or literature sources are used to design and develop the Promising Promotion Toolkit?'.* The second phase of the interview protocol concerned the process of using the Promising Promotion Toolkit in practice, which is used to get insight into how the process of using the Promising Promotion Toolkit works in practice and if this aligns with the intended use. This part is used to answer sub-question c. An example question in this part is: '*What was meant by the second requirement of the Promising Promotion Toolkit, 'the personal advice about the student, as decided on by the student's teachers, is mainly positive?'.* The last part concerned the experience of using the Promising Promotion Toolkit in practice and suggestions for improvement. This is used to get insight into how the developers experience the use of the Promising Promotion Toolkit in practice and if they have suggestions for improvement. This part is used to answer sub-question d. An example question in this part is: *What is your personal experience about the use of the Promising Promotion Toolkit?' Could you explain this further?'.*

<u>Interview protocol internal supervisors</u>

The second interview protocol (see Appendix 3) is used for the internal supervisor(s). This protocol consists of two phases. The first phase concerns the process of using the Promising Promotion Toolkit in practice, which is used to get insight into how the process of using the Promising Promotion Toolkit works in practice and if this aligns with the intended use. This part is used to answer sub-question c. An example question in this part is, '*Could you explain the working process of the Promising Promotion Toolkit in practice?'.* The second phase concerned the experience of using the Promising Promotion Toolkit in practice and suggestions for improvement. This is used to get insight into how the internal supervisor(s) experience the use of the Promising Promotion Toolkit in practice

and if they have suggestions for improvement. This part is used to answer sub-question d. An example question in this part is '*Do you think that the working process of the 'Promising Promotion Toolkit' is clearly described for the mentors?'*.

<div align="center">Interview protocol teachers/mentors</div>

The third interview protocol (see Appendix 4) is used for the mentors/teachers. This protocol consists of two phases. The first phase concerns the process of using the Promising Promotion Toolkit in practice and is used to get insight into how the process of using the Promising Promotion Toolkit works in practice and if this does align with the intended use. This part is used to answer sub-question c. An example question in this part is, *How often do you review the student's individual action plan that was written last year?'.* The last phase concerned the experience of using the Promising Promotion Toolkit in practice and suggestions for improvement. This is used to get insight into how the mentors experience the use of the Promising Promotion Toolkit in practice and if they have suggestions for improvement. This part is used to answer sub-question d. Example questions in this part are: '*What is your personal experience regarding the use of the Promising Promotion Toolkit?' 'Could you explain this further?'.*

<div align="center">

4.2.2 Participants

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The study was aimed at Dutch secondary school staff members, teachers, and students. All the participants were (old) students or employees of the school. The participants had different positions at the school (e.g., director, team coordinator, internal supervisor, mentor/teacher, or student). They have participated voluntarily. The external supervisor involved in this research worked at the school and knew which participants could be asked to participate in this research. The external supervisor has provided a list with the email addresses of these participants, after which the researcher has sent an invitation email to these potential participants.

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4.2.2.1. Developers of the Promising Promotion Toolkit

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Two developers of the toolkit have been interviewed to gain more insight into the (scientific) evidence used while developing the designed Promising Promotion Toolkit. This information provides more insight into the theoretical justification of the Toolkit, according to the developers. In addition, they have been interviewed to understand better the process of using the Promising Promotion Toolkit in practice and to understand whether this aligns. They have also been interviewed to learn more about how they experienced using the Promising Promotion Toolkit in practice. One developer is also the team coordinator.

4.2.2.2. Internal Supervisors

Initially, the internal supervisor of the lower secondary school department and the internal supervisor of the upper secondary school department of one location have been interviewed, to gain more insight into the process of using the Promising Promotion Toolkit in practice and if this aligns. They have also been interviewed to learn more about how they experienced using the Promising Promotion Toolkit in practice. The internal supervisors in the school guide the promotion and retention process during the school year. Therefore, they know a lot about using the Promising Promotion Toolkit in practice. However, during the interview with the internal supervisor of the upper secondary school department, it was noticed that the upper secondary school department did not use the Promising Promotion Toolkit.

4.2.2.3. Mentors (teachers)

Three mentors from the lower secondary school department of one location have been interviewed to gain more insight into the use of the Promising Promotion Toolkit in practice and whether this aligns. They have also been interviewed to learn more about how they experience using the Promising Promotion Toolkit in practice. The mentors work as teachers in the school and have the position of mentor.

Initially, the plan was to include five to ten mentors in this research to get a broader overview of their experience and the working process in practice. Unfortunately, there were not enough mentors willing to participate in this research, as only a few mentors responded to the researcher's invitation email. The response ratio was three out of eleven, which means 27.27%.

4.2.2.4. Students

To gain insight in the experiences of students, the aim was to include students who had been promoted based on the use of the toolkit, and would not have been promoted without using the toolkit. However, during the research process, it became evident that due to the limited implementation of the toolkit and lack of administrative order, as it was not registered whether students were promoted based on the use of the toolkit or not, it was impossible to include this intended participant population in this research.

4.3 Procedure

Before conducting the interviews, permission from the Ethics Committee of the University of Twente has been requested under request number 221440. The Ethics Committee gave this permission. Since the initial plan was to involve minors in this research, permission was needed from their

parents, which could be done through a written consent form. The other participants also have to fill out a written consent form to obtain their permission.

The data collection has taken place during the regular school hours of the participating students and during the regular working hours of the participating teachers and staff members. The respondents were informed that participation was voluntary and that they could drop out of the study anytime.

First, two semi-structured interviews have been conducted with the toolkit's developers. Second, a self-developed framework with criteria and components that could be considered for a retention or promotion decision (Table 1) was created based on a conducted literature review and the scientific literature as described in Chapter 2. After creating this self-developed framework, The Promising Promotion Toolkit has been observed and compared to it. After that, two semi-structured interviews with the internal supervisors of the lower and upper secondary school departments have been conducted. Finally, three semi-structured interviews have been conducted with mentors from the lower secondary school departments. All the interviews were 30-60 minutes. The interviews have been audio-taped and transcribed as well. So, the interviews have been collected in the form of transcripts.

4.4 Data analysis

After conducting and transcribing the interviews, they were coded using a self-developed coding scheme, which is included in Appendix 5. The coding scheme consists of seven main concepts, each consisting of several codes. It consists of 30 codes. The main concepts are related to the different research- and sub-questions. This coding scheme has been created based on the design of the Promising Promotion Toolkit, meaning the different elements of the Promising Promotion Toolkit (e.g., the four requirements, the six indicators, and the individual action plan), and the components of the research questions and the questions that have been asked during the interviews. These different elements were the basis for the coding scheme to evaluate the design of the Toolkit and the working process in practice, as this was a goal of this research. Creating this coding scheme was a deductive process as the codes were created based on the already existing data, such as the different elements of the designed Promising Promotion Toolkit and the components of the research questions and questions that have been asked during the interviews. After creating the coding scheme, it was checked by the researcher's supervisor. After coding the interviews, a summary of what the participants said during the interviews related to each code was made. The quotes from the participants have been translated into English for use in this research paper.

The different concepts, codes, and quotes of the codebook, in Appendix 5, are analysed and used to answer sub-questions a ,c, and d. To answer sub-question a) '*What is the theoretical justification of the Toolkit, according to the developers?*, the concepts 'Evidence' and 'Development of the Toolkit', and their related codes and quotes from the codebook (see Appendix 5), have been analysed. The concept 'Development of the Toolkit' with its related codes and quotes is also used to explain the context of this study (see paragraph 3.1), further. These concepts, codes, and quotes have been derived from the interviews with the two developers of the Promising Promotion Toolkit. To answer sub-question c) *'How does the process of using the Promising Promotion Toolkit work in practice, and to what degree does this align with the intended use?*', the concepts 'Implementation of the Toolkit', 'Elements of the Toolkit', 'Retention & Promotion policy of the school' and 'Working process in practice', and their related codes and quotes from the codebook (see Appendix 5), have been analysed. These concepts, codes, and quotes have been derived from the interviews with the two developers of the Promising Promotion Toolkit, the internal supervisor(s), and three mentors (teachers). In addition, to answer sub-question d) *'How do users (teachers and/or students) experience the use of the Promising Promotion Toolkit in practice'*, the concepts 'Implementation of the Toolkit', 'Elements of the Toolkit' , 'Retention & Promotion policy of the school', 'Working process in practice', 'Experience' and their related codes from the codebook (see Appendix 5), have been analysed. These concepts, codes, and quotes have been derived from the interviews with the two developers of the Promising Promotion Toolkit, the internal supervisor(s), and three mentors (teachers).

5. Results

5.1 Theoretical justification

This section will present the results of the sub-question a): '*What is the theoretical justification of the Toolkit, according to the developers?*' The two interviews with the developers of the Toolkit were conducted, transcribed, analysed, and coded to answer this sub-question. In their interviews, the two developers argued that they used and consulted various literary and scientific sources while developing the Toolkit, as a literature study was part of the development process. From the interviews, it became apparent that they did not consider any research about a similar concept to the Promising Promotion Toolkit as an alternative decision-making method for grade promotion or retention. Nevertheless, they have looked at the literature for information and predictors that can be used to decide on a student's promotion or retention in a broader way.

A self-developed database with multiple literature sources and studies was used during the design process. Based on that database, the developers decided what they were looking for and continued the process. Both developers could not retrieve this database and did not document the references in their design, so they had to rely on memory to provide the resources they had used. A few specific sources were mentioned to have been used during the development stage. Hattie's (2014) work was used on themes of autonomy and competencies of the students. Additionally, they were also inspired by the ideas of van der Hilst (2019). One developer mentioned this about the source of van der Hilst (2019):

"*There it is very much about that you need a small group, eehm that has a lot of attention, a lot of eye for the child that uses multiple forms of data there, and together you make decisions, and other colleagues who are less involved, so those teaching one-or two-hour subjects, or actually quite a lot of teachers, are fine teachers, but they can, the question is whether they should have that much influence on a student in promoting.*"

In the interviews, the developers explained that the literature they consulted also suggested that work attitude, discipline, and self-regulated competencies are indicators of success. Therefore, they decided to incorporate these indicators into the toolkit. However, the specific literature sources that explained these indicators were not mentioned in the interviews. Next to the literature used for developing the toolkit, the developers have explained that they asked primary schools which indicators could predict a student's school success in the future. This gave the developers insights into highlighting the importance of cognitive aspects, such as language, and the social-emotional

aspects in the promotion and retention decision-making process. Finally, one developer said that they had to decide which indicators to use, as almost all are success indicators. According to the developers, the six chosen indicators give a complete picture of a student's personal, social-emotional, and cognitive development. The developer explained that by considering only cognitive development, which was mainly done before, they are short-changing many students, as other factors could influence a student's academic success, too.

5.2 Scientific evidence

To identify to what extent the different elements of the developed Promising Promotion Toolkit comply with the recommendations from the literature (sub-question b), the three elements of the toolkit (four requirements, six indicators, and the individual action plan) were compared to the framework as presented in Table 1.

5.2.1 The four requirements

The toolkit consists of four requirements. These have been compared to the framework of components and criteria that could be considered for a retention or promotion decision, which is presented in Table 1. The results of this comparison are shown in Table 3 and will be further explained below.

Table 3

Comparative table with requirements of the Toolkit

	The student has a maximum of three insufficient grades in the end results, visible in SOM, a student tracking system.	The personal advice about the student, as decided on by the student's teachers, is mainly positive.	The personal advice about the student in the application www.leerlingbespreking.nl is mainly positive. www.leerlingbespreking.nl is a Dutch feedback system where teachers can enter all the feedback they have about students.	The data from Cito is positive. Cito (Central Institute for Test Development) creates standardized tests used by schools to measure student's knowledge,

				skills, and competence over time for different courses.
Criteria related to academic achievement(s)	x			x
Criteria related to non-academic (achievements)		x	x	

1) The student has a maximum of three insufficient grades in the end results, visible in SOM, a student tracking system.

This requirement could be seen as a criterion related to a student's academic achievement. It seems logical that this requirement is considered as a student's grades reflect their academic achievements and explains whether students master the learning goals and curriculum needed to act on an adequate level (Goos et al., 2021). It is explained in the literature that students need to master specific knowledge and skills for a course to succeed in later school years, as the new knowledge and skills will build upon the previous knowledge and skills (Goos et al., 2021). If a student has not yet mastered the knowledge and skills, which is reflected in the student's insufficient grades, they are best off repeating a school year as otherwise, the next school year's learning content would be too difficult for these students (Goos et al., 2021). Nevertheless, one should be careful when taking into account this criterion, as the framework (see Table 1) has shown that grades can be unreliable when deciding on a student's adequate level of competence, as, for example, not all teachers use the same standards and tests to grade their students (Sleenhof et al., 2019; Van der Lans et al., 2015). Therefore, the role these grades should play in allocating students seems questionable.

2) The personal advice about the student, as decided on by the student's teachers, is mainly positive.
This requirement could be seen as a non-academic criterion considered by teachers.

The Promising Promotion Toolkit did not explicitly explain what was meant by 'mainly positive', and what the personal advice is. However, this is partially explained in the interviews with the developers of the toolkit and the internal supervisor. As explained in the interviews, teachers give advice on the student's level, referring to the different levels of the Dutch education system. In other words, teachers will decide whether they think the students act at, for example, the Havo level. However, the toolkit does not give any requirements for what exactly defines a Havo level. That makes this requirement hard to measure, as it is quite subjective and could be seen as a teacher's judgment, often related to a teacher's perception of a student, which is often based on intuition (Sleenhof, 2023). The framework, as presented in Chapter 2, explains that one should be careful when considering subjective criteria as they are based on a teacher's perception or expectation, which is often based on their intuition. This makes using this non-academic criterion give subjective and probably biased advice about a student's promotion or retention.

3)   The personal advice about the student in the application www.leerlingbespreking.nl is mainly positive. www.leerlingbespreking.nl is a Dutch feedback system where teachers can enter all the feedback they have about students.

This requirement could be seen as a non-academic criterion considered by teachers. In the Promising Promotion Toolkit, what was meant by this requirement was not explicitly explained. A definition of mainly positive was not given, and what kind of feedback teachers have to enter at www.leerlingbespreking.nl was also not explained. This did also not become clear in the interviews. That makes this requirement hard to measure. This requirement could be seen as a teacher's judgment, often related to a teacher's perception of a student, often based on their intuition (Sleenhof, 2023). As presented in paragraph 2, the framework has explained that one should be careful by considering non-academic criteria as they are based on a teacher's perception or expectation, which is often based on their intuition. This makes using this non-academic criterion gives subjective and probably biased advice about a student's promotion or retention.

4)   The data from Cito is positive. Cito (Central Institute for Test Development) creates standardized tests used by schools to measure student's knowledge, skills, and competence over time for different courses.

This requirement could be seen as a criterion related to a student's academic achievement. It seems logical to consider this criterion as a student's reading and math skills could be tested with the standardized, nationally validated objective tests from Cito (Central Institute for Test Development), which is an objective way to track a student's development over time and give insight into their

educational level on which they are functioning for the Core Concepts of Dutch, English, and mathematics (Scheerens et al., 2012).

5.2.2. The six indicators

The toolkit consists of six indicators, each with a set of sample questions. These six indicators have been compared to the framework of components and criteria that could be considered for a retention or promotion decision, see Table 1. The results of this comparison are presented in Table 4.

Table 4

Comparative table with indicators of the Toolkit

	Learning outcomes in knowledge and skills	Social well-being and the home environment	Course advice based on commitment and work attitude	Personal motives and characteristics	History	Standardized tests
Criteria related to academic achievement(s)	x				x	x
Criteria related to non-academic achievement(s)		x	x	x		

1) Learning outcomes in knowledge and skills

This indicator could be seen as a criterion related to a student's academic achievement. The degree of mastery of the learning goals and curriculum is already covered in the four requirements (paragraph 5.2.1.). The student's grades reflect their academic achievements and explain whether they master the learning goals and curriculum. This is part of the four requirements, which allow the students to have a maximum of three insufficient grades in the end results. Nevertheless, one should be careful when taking into account this criterion if the learning outcomes in knowledge and skills are represented by grades, as the framework (see Table 1) has presented that grades can be unreliable when deciding on a student's adequate level of competence, as, for example, not all teachers use the same standards and tests to grade their students. Teachers should be aware of this.

2) Social well-being and the home environment

This indicator could be seen as a non-academic criterion considered by teachers. The literature (see paragraph 2.3.2.2.) explains that teachers often rely on a student's social-emotional characteristics and well-being to form their opinions and on different criteria related to a student's background, such as their socioeconomic status (Peixoto et al., 2016; Sleenhof, 2023; Valbuena et al., 2020). However, teachers should be careful when considering these criteria. The literature has pointed out that considering non-academic factors, often based on a teacher's perception or expectation, which is often based on their intuition, is subjective and could probably cause biased advice about a student's promotion or retention. In addition, considering several criteria related to a student's background (e.g., socioeconomic status) could increase the inequality of opportunities for students.

3) Course advice based on commitment and work attitude

This indicator could be seen as a non-academic criterion considered by teachers. A student's school commitment is often related to dimensions of the student's school motivation (Korpershoek, 2016). Several criteria related to a student's motivation (e.g., motivational orientation, self-concept, and self-esteem) have been shown to be taken into account when making decisions regarding retention. This is because these factors can negatively influence student learning achievement and motivation when these are low (Jimerson et al., 2004; Peixoto et al., 2016; Valbuena et al., 2020; Yang et al., 2018). However, one should be careful when considering criteria related to a student's motivation, as retained students are more likely to be demotivated quickly (Rodríguez-Rodríguez, 2022). So, retaining unmotivated students would demotivate them even further, which may result in a vicious circle. Furthermore, several student's characteristics or personality traits can influence a teacher's perception of a student and a decision to retain or promote a student. Teachers often rely on students' social-emotional characteristics and well-being to form their opinions (Peixoto et al., 2016; Sleenhof, 2023; Valbuena et al., 2020). These social and emotional skills often influence teachers' perceptions of students; for example, a teacher is more likely to be in favour of promoting a student to the next school year when this student works hard (Sleenhof, 2023). Nevertheless, one should be careful when considering non-academic criteria such as a student's work attitude. These non-academic criteria are based on a teacher's perception or expectation, which is often based on their intuition. This makes using these non-academic criteria gives subjective and probably biased advice about a student's promotion or retention.

4) Personal motives and characteristics

This indicator could be seen as a non-academic criterion considered by teachers.

It is explained in the literature that several personality traits and factors related to a student's motivation (e.g., motivational orientation, self-concept, and self-esteem) have been shown to be taken into account when making decisions regarding retention. This is because these factors can negatively influence student learning achievement and motivation when these are low (Jimerson et al., 2004; Peixoto et al., 2016; Valbuena et al., 2020; Yang et al., 2018). However, one should be careful when considering criteria related to a student's motivation, as retained students are more likely to be demotivated quickly (Rodríguez-Rodríguez, 2022). So, retaining unmotivated students would demotivate them even further, which may result in a vicious circle.

Furthermore, it is indicated in the literature that several personality traits or student characteristics can influence a teacher's perception of a student and a decision to promote a student. Teachers often rely on the student's social-emotional characteristics and well-being to form their opinion (Peixoto et al., 2016; Sleenhof, 2023; Valbuena et al., 2020). Teachers should be careful when considering these criteria as the literature has pointed out that taking into account non-academic criteria, often based on a teacher's perception or expectation, which is often based on their intuition, is subjective and could probably cause biased advice about a student's promotion or retention.

5) History

This indicator could be seen as a criterion related to a student's academic achievement. It is indicated in the literature that a student's academic achievement is already lower in the year before retention. Students who have been retained perform less and obtain lower grades in the school year before they have been retained and in the year in which they have been retained (Peixoto et al., 2016). So, a student's history, represented by their previous achievements (e.g., grades and performances), can predict a possible retention, as previous achievements can predict the current achievements of a student (Hattie, 2014); a reason for this was not mentioned in the literature. Nevertheless, when teachers consider a student's history represented by grades, teachers should be careful, as the framework (see Table 1) has presented that grades can be unreliable when deciding on a student's adequate level of competence, as, for example, not all teachers use the same standards and tests to grade their students. Teachers should be aware of this.

6) Standardized tests

This indicator could be seen as a criterion related to a student's academic achievement. Paragraph 5.2.1 already explains the importance of considering standardized tests, such as Cito. Additionally, to Cito, Diataal is another standardized test that could be consulted. Diataal produces validated tests for Dutch, English, and mathematics. The results of these tests show which (European)reference level a student has. For every Dutch educational level, a specific reference level for Dutch and mathematics

and a specific European level for English needed to be achieved to complete the educational level in a specific school year. By using the Diataal tests, the school gets an objective understanding of the development of a student and knows on which educational level a student is functioning for the Core Concepts of Dutch, English, and mathematics. It seems logical to consider standardized tests such as Diataal, as this is an objective way to track a student's development over time and give insight into the educational level on which they are functioning for the Core Concepts. This could give valuable information in deciding a student's promotion or retention (Hacquebord, 2021; van der Marel, n.d.).

5.2.3 The individual action plan

The toolkit also includes the use of an individual action plan. This individual action plan is not part of the process or the tools for making grade retention and promotion decisions. It, therefore, cannot be directly related to the self-developed framework with criteria and components that can be considered for retention or promotion decisions (see Table 1). Nevertheless, as the individual action plan is a component of the Promising Promotion Toolkit, it was compared to the literature to find scientific evidence.

The individual action plan is used for students who do not meet the conditions for grade retention and promotion. It serves as a tool for conditional promotion. Based on the individual action plan, students could be conditionally promoted. In their individual action plans, students must describe what they aim to achieve by setting their learning goals. Hattie (2014) and Marzano (2015) argue that learning goals are essential for improving learning outcomes. If students set goals, mainly motivated goals, they are willing to reach these goals and are thus motivated to achieve their learning achievements.

The Promising Promotion Toolkit also describes that students have until the autumn or Christmas holidays to prove themselves and meet the requirements outlined in their individual action plans. Then, the individual action plan is evaluated, and if a student does not meet the requirements, there are several possible consequences. Hattie (2014) argues that feedback strongly influences learning outcomes. Therefore, it is reasonable to have at least one feedback moment on the learning goals proposed in the student's individual action plan. Thus, an evaluation of the action plan seems inevitable, as described in the Promising Promotion Toolkit.

5.3 Process of using the Promising Promotion Toolkit

In this section, the results of the sub-question c), '*How does the process of using the Promising Promotion Toolkit work in practice, and to what degree does this align with the intended use?',* will be

presented. To answer this sub-question, two interviews with the developers of the toolkit, one interview with the internal supervisor of the lower secondary school department, and three interviews with the mentors(teachers) were conducted and analysed.

5.3.1 The implementation and use of the Promising Promotion Toolkit

The toolkit was introduced in the school's lower secondary education department. However, it is not used during the promotion process from year one to two, as students are usually promoted automatically, which is called a 'drempelloze overgang' in Dutch, meaning a seamless transition. Therefore, the toolkit is used in school years two and three. In the upper classes, the school uses the same rules as used for the Dutch national exam in the last year of school. These rules vary depending on the education level.

Both developers as well as intended users were asked how the information about the toolkit was communicated in the school to gain insight into how it was introduced and how the information about how to use it was communicated within the school. The two developers stated that the working process of the Promising Promotion Toolkit was not explicitly communicated to parents and students. Instead, the focus was primarily on sharing the information with the school team. Teachers were informed by explaining that this toolkit for deciding on a student's promotion or retention has been developed and that they would use it in this way. The internal supervisor explained in one interview that the process is not clear to all the mentors, and the fact that the implementation of the toolkit did not go entirely well is confirmed by the following quote from the internal supervisor:

"*We are actually always very good at launching ideas and then thinking them through a bit, but there should actually be someone who sets the arrangements a bit tighter. When are we going to do this? What does that mean? Who do you need to communicate with? Actually, the whole thing needs to be put away more tightly.*"

However, one of the three interviewed mentors said that the information about how to use this toolkit, including its requirements and indicators, had not been communicated explicitly to them: 'So that promising promotion trajectory has never been on the agenda, I dare to say. So, on paper, it is very nice. It has also never been communicated to the mentors in the third school year.'

Besides the fact that the information about the toolkit was not explicitly communicated in the school, the clarity of the Promising Promotion Toolkit and the working process was also not always clear to all the mentors. One of the three interviewed mentors stated, 'Well, it is not clear to me anyway that the Promising Promotion Toolkit is completely tightly defined'. It became evident in the interviews that the working process was not clear to everyone and that it was not clear to

everyone which arrangements there are according to promotion and retention. One of the three interviewed mentors stated, 'I think that the Promising Promotion Toolkit is not explicitly defined or known in the school'. In addition, it has been noticed by analysing the explanation of the Promising Promotion Toolkit that there was no concrete explanation and implementation protocol. No concrete decision rules are established for the four requirements and six indicators, explaining what to do when a student does not meet them. That means that the interpretation and use of the requirements and indicators could vary between users as there are no established, clear-cut arrangements.

Furthermore, the interviews showed that the terms 'Promising Promotion' and 'Promising Promotion Toolkit' were not clear to everyone. On one side, the interviews revealed that different terminology is used for the Promising Promotion Toolkit. The internal supervisor of the lower secondary school department explained during the interview that they called it Promising Promotion last year. However, according to the internal supervisor, it is now called the Promising Development Trajectory. Conversely, the interviews revealed that the school uses different trajectories with different names but similar objects. For example, the internal supervisor of the upper secondary school department revealed that the school uses an additional Promising Promotion Trajectory. This trajectory is different from the toolkit, as it aims to help students who have difficulties with, for example, self-regulatory skills with a special mentor. As the terms Promising Promotion Toolkit and Promising Promotion Trajectory are very similar, it is not always clear to the users what both terms mean and when which term is used for which process or trajectory.

Furthermore, in the data collection phase, more problems with the implementation of the toolkit were indicated, as it was described that the data would also be collected from interviews with students promoted based on the use of the toolkit. However, in practice, it appeared that it was not registered whether students were promoted based on the use of the toolkit. During the interviews, interviewees were asked if they could mention some students who have been promoted based on the toolkit. However, one of the interviewees (e.g., one of the three interviewed mentors) argued: 'I do not think we are indeed giving them the stamp of promising promoted; there will be no lists with these students available'. It was, therefore, impossible to include this intended participant population in this study. On the other side, this lack of administrative order indicates a problem with the implementation of the toolkit.

Finally, part of the implementation should be an evaluation. However, several participants (e.g., one developer and two mentors) indicated that the working process and implementation of the toolkit in practice have never been evaluated. During the interviews, the lower secondary school department did not have a team leader, which could be a possible explanation for this.

5.3.2 Working process in practice

After analysing the implementation of the toolkit, the (intended and actual) working process of the toolkit is investigated by interviewing a developer of the toolkit, an internal supervisor, and three mentors. First, the working process in practice was analysed by one toolkit's developer's perspective. Later, this perspective was completed by the perspectives of the internal supervisor and mentors.

One developer of the toolkit has explained the working process in practice. During the school year, there are multiple moments when the mentor, the internal supervisor, and the team coordinator come together to discuss the development process of students under that mentor. The mentor, internal supervisor, and team coordinator decide which steps the student must take, and a conditional prognosis is made. This is confirmed in the interviews with the three mentors and the internal supervisor. During these meetings, not merely the grades are discussed but also the four requirements and six indicators are considered. The interviews did not clarify how these are supposed to be discussed and who should be introducing them. The internal supervisor has confirmed that they use the indicators in the consideration process and explained that they did not use the paper with, for example, the six indicators point by point. Examples of the consulted indicators mentioned by the internal supervisor are the home environment, a student's history, and the results of the Cito tests. The mentors have also confirmed that they have consulted various indicators when deciding on a student's promotion or retention. Examples they mentioned are the course advice, the home environment, the student's personal motives or wishes, motivation, work attitude, and social well-being. One of the three mentors has also explained that before starting the meetings between the team coordinator, internal supervisor, and mentor, the mentors should make an analysis of each student based on the requirements and indicators. So, all the participants have confirmed that opinions about students have been formulated based on the four requirements and six indicators. However, it became unclear in the interviews if they used this as they were known by the toolkit or spontaneously.

At the same time, there was asked to the toolkit's developers, internal supervisor, and mentors if one indicator was considered as the most important. No specific, unambiguous answer was given. One of the three mentors has stated that grades are still significant and that teachers prefer to lean on the grades a student receives. As the school has changed the number of grades students receive during a school year, the course advice has also become more important, according to this mentor. The other two mentors confirm the importance of grades as they have said that the grades for the Core concepts, such as Dutch, English, and mathematics, became increasingly important during a student's school career, especially in the years toward an exam year. In addition, the mentors have stated that the results of the Cito tests, part of the indicator 'standardized tests' and one of the requirements, are important in the decision-making process, similar to primary

school. The reason for this importance is that these tests are validated tests, and based on these tests, it could be determined if a student is at the correct educational level.

Nevertheless, various participants (e.g., the team coordinator and the mentors) have explained that the feedback included on www.leerlingbespreking.nl should not be included as a requirement for deciding a student's promotion or retention, as this is a very formative instrument and, therefore, cannot be used. Furthermore, according to one of the three mentors, the feedback included on www.leerlingbespreking.nl could be seen as very subjective. As it was not clear to the users which indicator or requirement was more important, it would be helpful, according to one of the three interviewed mentors, if a weight or decision rules could be added to the requirements and indicators.

In the interview with one developer of the toolkit (e.g., the team coordinator), it is explained that simultaneously, around February, all students are required to complete a PowerPoint presentation with the six indicators and fill in some information and arguments about these six indicators. This is not explained in the Promising Promotion Toolkit but is later completed as part of the allocating process. A reason mentioned for this is to give the students more ownership. What kind of information about the indicators students have to fill in is not explained during the interviews, as it is not explicitly asked. Subsequently, this PowerPoint will be discussed during conversations between the mentor, the student's parents, and the student, the so-called triangular conversations. However, the developer of the toolkit (e.g., the team coordinator) has confirmed in the interviews that this does not happen consistently. The process has to be more specific, as they intend to give more responsibility to the students in the future. The developer of the toolkit (e.g., team coordinator) has explained that they are still considering if students have to complete this PowerPoint once again during the school year. This developer was not sure if this had happened this school year. The internal supervisor agreed with the developer's explanation concerning the PowerPoint. The three mentors did not explain anything about this PowerPoint during the interviews, as this was also not asked during these interviews. Thus, in the interviews, it did not become apparent if students completed this PowerPoint and how they knew if they had to complete this PowerPoint.

At the end of the school year, there will be another moment when the mentor, internal supervisor, and team coordinator come together, and then they will make a final proposed decision. This decision is shared with all the student's teachers by the mentor, and these teachers could give their opinions about this proposed decision. When these teachers have a valid argument, the team coordinator could say there is a small group of students that we must discuss with each other. That means organizing an allocation meeting between the mentor, team coordinator, and teachers of the student to decide on a promotion or retention to a specific educational level. In these allocation

meetings, not all the students will be discussed. The intention is that there will not be organized allocation meetings between all the teachers of the student, the mentor, and the team coordinator. At the end of a school year, the decision for the student needs to be clear, as you cannot say to a student, 'Sorry for all your efforts, but you cannot be promoted to the next school year.' Furthermore, one developer (e.g., the team coordinator) has explained that in the allocation meetings, teachers focus too much on grades instead of the other indicators of the toolkit. However, in the school year 2022-2023, for example, the organization of allocation meetings with all the teachers of a student could not be avoided due to time issues. So, the school intends not to organize allocation meetings and to decide about a student's retention or promotion in a small group. In practice, however, this was not always feasible, and allocation meetings have been organized.

5.3.3. Individual action plan

Finally, it is explained in the Promising Promotion Toolkit that if students do not meet the four requirements in combination with the six indicators, there is another possibility of being promoted to the next grade. This is a conditional promotion. The Promising Promotion Toolkit does not explain the meaning of meeting the four requirements in combination with the six indicators. However, for this conditional promotion to happen, a student needs to develop their individual action plan, and the student has until the Autumn or Christmas holidays to prove themselves and meet the requirements described in their plan. If the students do not meet the requirements, they must return to their former educational level and are thus retained.

In practice, it became apparent that it was unclear whether the plans of action were written and that it was unclear whether every student had really made an action plan with appointments. One mentor, for example, has stated: 'The action plan, I think, does not always come down to paper in concrete terms'. Furthermore, the interviews revealed that the evaluation of the individual action plans turns out to be more difficult in practice. As in practice, by the start of a new school year, students get a new mentor, and the change of this new mentor impacts the evaluation of the individual action plan.

"*We notice sometimes in practice that because the new mentor sometimes does not know a child yet or does not know all the ins and outs of a child yet, that the mentor will put the action plan left out and think: I will learn to know the student first by myself, which causes that some steps could not be taken. So, there is something still not going right in the procedure.*"

Moreover, the findings showed that, in practice, students do not return to their former educational level if they do not meet their requirements by the Autumn or Christmas holidays. The internal supervisor, for example, has stated:

"*Besides, it is also always a bit tricky to say, Well, you will continue in Havo four, and then in December, oh no, go back to Havo three. That is actually kind of a conditional promotion, and we do not do that*".

5.4 Experience of the use of the Promising Promotion Toolkit in practice

This section will present the results to the sub-question d), '*How do users (teachers and/or students) experience the use of the Promising Promotion Toolkit in practice?*'. To answer this sub-question, two interviews with the developers of the toolkit, one interview with the internal supervisor of the lower secondary school department, and three interviews with mentors (teachers) were conducted and analysed. This section is divided into two parts: the intentions of the toolkit and the use of the toolkit.

5.4.1 Intentions of the toolkit

The participants experience the intentions and the idea of the toolkit as very positive. They are optimistic about looking at students from different perspectives and in different ways by considering various criteria. The participants find it positive to consider the broader development of students rather than solely looking at grades. They try to get an image and overview of the students as completely and honestly as possible so that they can make a fair decision about promotion or retention. The team coordinator (e.g., one developer of the toolkit), also working with the toolkit during the process about a student's promotion or retention, has stated:

"*This way, the users of the toolkit get a better picture of where things are. After all, you get a kind of broad picture of a student, which also tries to tell as honestly as possible a story about a child, and actually preferably by the child.*"

The internal supervisor and mentors have confirmed that they think of possibilities and can give the student many opportunities: 'We give students many opportunities and chances and look in a very promising way.

5.4.2. Use of the toolkit

As the implementation of the Promising Promotion Toolkit and its use were limited, it was difficult to gain insight into the experience of using the toolkit in practice during the interviews. Nevertheless, some insights were obtained.

It became evident in the interviews with the three mentors (teachers) that the transfer of information about students between mentors is not always good. With this lack of transfer of information, the evaluation of the plans of action, if they are written, could proceed better, especially the transfer of the plans of action from students. In practice, they see that with the start of a new school year, students get a new mentor, and the change of the new mentor impacts the evaluation of the individual action plans. New mentors are willing to get to know the students, and then, sometimes, they forget to dive into the students' action plans, as they want to learn to know the students by themselves. The team coordinator also does not supervise the use and evaluation of the action plans, so there is something that could be improved. As it is also not visible and apparent to the team coordinator, for example, when students have a plan of action, there probably should be a highlight on a student that this student has written a plan of action. Then, this plan of action could also be evaluated, as explained in the Promising Promotion Toolkit. One developer (e.g., the team coordinator) has commented: 'There should just be a flag or mark on such a child, actually in our systems as well. Notice there is a plan of action. Notice there are appointments made'.

Second, the mentors (teachers) indicated that the four requirements, six indicators, and the explanation of how- to use them are not always clear to all the users. It is unclear to everyone what the term course advice means, one of the four requirements. One of the tree mentors explained that colleagues are giving a Dutch Havo advice to a student, and when these colleagues are asked what they mean by this Havo advice (that students could be promoted to the next year on the same educational level or that students need to be retained at the same educational level), is not clear. So, the meaning of the course advice and how to use this course advice is still unclear at the school. Furthermore, it is unclear to the users of the toolkit (e.g., the mentors), if one indicator, for example, is more important than another indicator. One of the three mentors said that it would be helpful if they could add a kind of weight or meaning to the indicators.

Finally, one interview with a mentor showed that teachers and mentors find it challenging to interpret a student's development and results, not only based on grades. Most of the time, teachers prefer to lean on a student's grades to decide if a student has mastered specific skills and could be promoted or need to be retained. Mentors (and teachers) find it challenging to look beyond these grades in a more promising way.

6. Conclusion

This study aimed to investigate theoretical justifications and first experiences regarding the different elements of the Promising Promotion Toolkit, a Toolkit with broader guidelines than just grades or academic performance used as a basis for making promotion and retention decisions. Based on this investigation, recommendations for improvement are formulated. This section will present answers to the research question and corresponding sub-questions.

It can be concluded that it seems logical that the school has investigated strategies to avoid potential grade retention, as grade retention could produce various adverse effects, such as, poor academic achievement, demotivation, behavioural problems, or dropping out of school (Jimerson, 2001; Range et al., 2011). To prevent the negative effects of grade retention and decrease bias in allocation meetings, Lynch (2013) recommends using multiple sources of information (e.g., grades, test scores, teacher's evaluations), which aligns with the Promising Promotion Toolkit. This toolkit consists of various requirements and indicators that could be considered to determine a student's retention or promotion and to make better-informed allocation decisions based on more than just grades.

6.1 Theoretical justification

To answer the sub-question a), *'What is the theoretical justification of the Toolkit, according to the developers?'*, two developers of the Toolkit are interviewed through semi-structured interviews based on a designed interview protocol. The different elements of the toolkit were partly chosen based on a database with literature and partly on conversations with primary schools. It can thus be suggested that various literature and scientific evidence sources are considered while developing the toolkit. The developers were, for example, inspired by the ideas of Hattie (2014) on themes of autonomy and competencies of the students, as well as van der Hilst (2019). However, it should be noted that the developers could not retrieve this used database with literature and did not document the references in their design, so they had to rely on memory to provide the resources they had used. No sources used for developing and designing the toolkit were documented, which makes it difficult to draw substantiated conclusions about the theoretical justification.

6.2 Scientific evidence

The second sub-question was, '*To what extent do the different elements of the developed Promising Promotion Toolkit (e.g., the four requirements, the six indicators, and the individual action plan) comply with the recommendations from the literature as presented by the framework of decision criteria and components that could be considered for a retention or promotion decision?'*. To answer

this sub-question, the self-developed framework with decision criteria and components that could be considered for a retention or promotion decision (Table 1), which was created based on the literature review conducted by the research, was compared to the content of the designed Promising Promotion Toolkit as described in paragraph 3.1.1.

The results indicated that the requirements and indicators included in the designed Promising Promotion Toolkit comply with the theoretical justification as presented by the framework of decision criteria and components that could be considered for making grade retention or promotion decisions (Table 1). Nevertheless, it should be noticed that there is limited information regarding how grade retention and promotion decisions are made (Santos & Monteiro, 2024; Schnurr et al., 2009), and it should be noticed that the different criteria related to non-academic achievements are usually discussed in descriptive studies (Santos & Monteiro, 2024; Sleenhof, 2023; Sleenhof et al., 2019). The reason for teachers using these subjective criteria was not clear in these articles. Therefore, these criteria still lack clear scientific evidence and explanation for use in the grade retention and promotion decision-making process.

Half of the elements of the designed Promising Promotion Toolkit could be seen as criteria related to academic achievement(s) (e.g., 'the student has a maximum of three insufficient grades in the end results, the data from Cito is positive, learning outcomes in knowledge and skills, history, standardized tests). The other half of the criteria could be seen as criteria related to non-academic achievement(s) (e.g., the personal advice about the student, the personal advice about the student in the application www.leerlingbespreking.nl, social well-being and the home environment, the course advice based on commitment and work attitude, personal motives and characteristics). Using the criteria of the Promising Promotion Toolkit can help teachers by making better-informed grade retention and promotion decisions during allocation meetings.

Nevertheless, as Table 1 shows, the different criteria and components that could be considered when making grade retention and promotion decisions have some cautions. Grades could be unreliable, for example, when deciding on a student's adequate level of competence, as not all teachers use the same standards and tests to grade their students. Therefore, the role these grades should play in allocating a student seems questionable (Sleenhof et al., 2019; Van der Lans et al., 2015). In addition, teachers should also be careful by considering criteria and components related to a student's motivation, as retained students are more likely to be demotivated quickly (Rodríguez-Rodríguez, 2022). So, retaining unmotivated students would probably demotivate them even further, which may result in a vicious circle. Besides, teachers should be aware of the fact that considering several criteria and components related to a student's background could increase the inequality of opportunities. At least several criteria related to non-academic achievement(s) are often based on a teacher's perception or expectation, which is often based on their intuition. This makes advice based

on criteria related to non-academic achievement(s) subjective and probably biased (Santos & Monteiro, 2024; Sleenhof, 2023; Sleenhof et al., 2019). Teachers should be aware of these cautions and thus be careful when considering these criteria and components when making a grade retention or promotion decision. In addition, the users of the Promising Promotion Toolkit should be aware that the toolkit does not have concrete decision rules for the four requirements and six indicators explaining what to do when a student does not meet them. That means that the interpretation and use of the requirements and indicators could vary between users as there are no established, clear-cut arrangements.

Additionally, there is also found theoretical justification for the individual action plan, also part of the Promising Promotion Toolkit, serving as a tool for conditional promotion. This could not be directly compared to the self-developed framework in Table 1, as this was not part of the process or tools for making grade retention and promotion decisions. Nevertheless, there is theoretical justification for the individual action plan. In this individual action plan, students must describe what they aim to achieve by setting their learning goals, which is essential for improving learning outcomes, according to Hattie (2014) and Marzano (2015). According to the Promising Promotion Toolkit, this individual action plan should also be evaluated, and Hattie (2014) strongly argues that feedback influences learning outcomes. Therefore, it is reasonable to have at least one feedback moment on the learning goals proposed in the student's individual action plan.

6.3 Process of using the Promising Promotion Toolkit in practice

In this section, the sub-question c), '*How does the process of using the Promising Promotion Toolkit work in practice, and to what degree does this align with the intended use?*' will be answered, based on semi-structured interviews with the developers of the toolkit, the internal supervisor(s), and three mentors (teachers). In the description of the Promising Promotion Toolkit, nothing is explained about where this toolkit is used. However, the findings pointed out that the toolkit is only used in the lower secondary education department, by the transfer from school year two to three and from school year three to four.

However, the results show that it seems doubtful how this toolkit is implemented in the school, as it was pointed out that this introduced toolkit is not explicitly communicated to teachers, parents, and students. Additionally, the clarity of the Promising Promotion Toolkit and the working process were not clear to the users (e.g., mentors), as it can be concluded that it is not clear to everyone which arrangements there are according to promotion and retention. There was no concrete explanation or implementation protocol with concrete decision rules for the toolkit's requirements and indicators, explaining what to do when a student does not meet them. That could

lead to different interpretations between users. Furthermore, there was confusion between the terms 'Promising Promotion' and 'Promising Development Trajectory', leading to further issues with understanding.

Additionally, the results pointed out that there was no registration or monitoring of students promoted based on the toolkit, as there were no lists available with these students, which made it impossible to involve these students in this research. This lack of administrative order indicates a problem with the implementation of the toolkit. At least, it can be concluded that the working process and implementation of the toolkit in practice have never been evaluated. A possible explanation was that the lower secondary school department does not have a team leader for a while. Nevertheless, evaluating the use of the Promising Promotion Toolkit in practice would be strongly recommended. According to McKenney and Reeves (2018), by developing nearly any intervention, during the development process, an evaluation takes place to align the intervention and the original intentions and improve and refine the intervention.

The findings suggest that the process of using the Promising Promotion Toolkit, as described in paragraph 3.1.1., partially aligns with the intended use. There are different moments during the school year when the team coordinator, internal supervisor, and mentor come together to make a proposed retention or promotion decision. This aligns with the Promising Promotion Toolkit. These proposed decisions are made based on the grades students receive but also by considering the four requirements and six indicators, which aligns with the Promising Promotion Toolkit. Nevertheless, it did not become apparent of they used the requirements and indicators as they were known by the toolkit or spontaneously. In addition, the results revealed that it was unclear to the users if one requirement or indicator was more important than another, which was also not explained in the Promising Promotion Toolkit. Examples of requirements or indicators that are mentioned as important were grades and the test results or data from Cito. However, the results of the interviews with the team coordinator and the mentors pointed out that the requirement 'the personal advice about the student in the application www.leerlingbesprekingnl is mainly positive, should not be included in the toolkit, as this feedback was quite subjective.

Another important finding, which does not align with the design of the Promising Promotion Protocol, is that around February, the students have to complete a PowerPoint presentation with six indicators and fill in some information and arguments about these six indicators. This is not explained in the intended use and description of the Promising Promotion Toolkit. Besides, the teachers could not share any information related to this PowerPoint (e.g., when students have to fill in these PowerPoints and what students need to fill in in these PowerPoints), as this is not asked during the interviews.

Furthermore, the results revealed that at the end of the school year, a final proposed decision about a student's promotion or retention would be shared with all the concerned teachers. The concerned teachers could share their opinions about these proposed decisions, and small allocation meetings could be organized if needed. This does not align with the intended use of the Promising Promotion Toolkit, as there is nothing explained about this, or the probably organized allocation meetings.

At least, it can be concluded that the individual action plan that needs to be written for a conditional promotion is not always written, as described in the intended use of the Promising Promotion Toolkit. If this plan is written, it does not always come to an evaluation of this plan, so that does not correspond to the intended use of the Promising Promotion Toolkit. A possible explanation for this is the lack of administrative support, as previously indicated, and the change of the mentor from a student. The findings also suggest that if a student does not meet the requirements as described in their individual action plan, they do not have to return to their former educational level, as described in the Promising Promotion Toolkit. Therefore, it can be concluded that the use of the individual action plan in practice does not entirely align with the intended use of the Promising Promotion Toolkit.

In summary, it could be concluded that the use of the Promising Promotion Toolkit in practice partially aligns with the intended use explained in the description of the Promising Promotion Toolkit. Nevertheless, as there was no concrete implementation protocol and the implementation was not supported, there was a lot of uncertainty, and there could be seen little of the use in practice. This makes it difficult to draw conclusions about its use in practice.

6.4 Experience of the use of the Promising Promotion Toolkit in practice

To answer the sub-question d), '*How do users (teachers and/or students) experience the use of the Promising Promotion Toolkit in practice?'* semi-structured interviews with the developers of the toolkit, the internal supervisor(s), and three mentors(teachers) have been conducted, transcribed, coded, and analysed. Due to the limited implementation, only limited conclusions about the use and experience of the toolkit can be drawn. It can be concluded that the users, in this case only the team coordinator (e.g., one of the two developers), internal supervisor, and mentors (teachers), as it was impossible to incorporate the student's overall experience, experience the intentions and the idea of the toolkit as very positive. It is considered as positive that the progression of students is not only based on grades but also by taking into account the different requirements and indicators of the toolkit. By using the elements of the toolkit, the team coordinator, internal supervisor, and teachers try to get a complete picture of a student so that they can make a fair proposed decision about a

student's grade retention or promotion. They think of possibilities and can give students many opportunities.

It can be concluded that the intentions of the toolkit were positive, but the use of the toolkit could be improved in some ways. First, it can be concluded that the individual action plans are not always evaluated if they are written. The mentioned reason for this is that it is not always clear to the team coordinator which student has written a plan of action. This was not registered and monitored. This lack of administrative order indicates a problem with the implementation of the toolkit and could be improved in the future. In addition, the explanation of the toolkit's content (e.g., the four requirements and the six indicators) is not always clear, and it is not clear what the weight, decision rules, and meaning of the different indicators are. That makes it challenging to make interpretations about a student's development not only based on grades but also by considering the indicators included indicators in the toolkit. Therefore, it would be recommended to design and develop an implementation protocol consisting of clear arrangements and decision rules for the different elements of the Promising Promotion Toolkit so that the interpretation and application could not vary that much among users of the toolkit.

7. Discussion

The literature pointed out that grade retention could produce adverse effects such as the risk of dropping out of school, a student's demotivation, and a decrease over time in student learning achievements (Peixoto et al., 2016; Valbuena et al., 2020). That makes it essential to search for alternative remedial strategies to facilitate students' academic success (Jimerson, 2001; Valbuena et al., 2020). In addition, the literature pointed out that the decisions on a student's grade retention or promotion, made in allocation meetings, are often based on different content and data such as observations, test results, personal experiences, and intuition (Sleenhof, 2023). The use of this intuition to strengthen these decisions makes this advice often subjective and probably biased instead of objective. To prevent the adverse effects of grade retention and decrease bias in allocation meetings, Lynch (2013) recommended using multiple sources of information (e.g., grades, test scores, teachers evaluations), which aligns with the Promising Promotion Toolkit. This toolkit consists of various requirements and indicators that could be considered to determine a student's retention or promotion and to make better-informed allocation decisions based on more than just grades.

7.1 Recommendations for research into grade retention decisions and criteria

This research pointed out that grade retention often does not have any or the intended effects on a student's learning process and performance or the effects that have been found are unfavourable (Reezigt et al., 2013). It often does not lead to positive results in student's learning achievements and is, according to Goos et al. (2013), not the solution for students who are stuck in their learning process. However, there has not been conducted much research on evidence-based alternatives to grade retention to improve the student's learning process. In addition, according to Reezigt et al. (2013), in recent years, there has been little research conducted on grade retention and its relationship with the school policy for example. There has been conducted little research into why some schools are able to prevent or limit grade retention instead of other schools. This could be investigated further (Reezigt et al., 2013).

In addition, more investigation into evidence-based alternatives to grade retention is required and into the criteria and components that could be used to make better-informed grade retention and promotion decisions during allocation meetings instead of making biased decisions based on intuition as there is little known about which evidence-based alternatives and criteria could be used (Santos & Monteiro, 2024; Schnurr et al., 2009). This research has concluded that the scientific literature on factors to consider in making decisions regarding retention or promotion is limited. There have been found some non-academic (subjective) factors that could be considered to make better-informed grade retention and promotion decisions, but these criteria are usually

discussed in descriptive studies where no reason for their use was given (Santos & Monteiro, 2024; Sleenhof, 2023; Sleenhof et al., 2019). The reason for teachers using these (subjective) non-academic factors was not clear in these articles. Therefore, these factors still lack objective scientific evidence for their use in the grade retention and promotion decision-making process. It is therefore recommended to investigate the reason for using these factors and to research if these factors could be used in allocation meetings during the decision-making process for grade retention or promotion. So that more schools and teachers could make better informed and justified decisions about a student's grade retention or promotion and could probably use the Promising Promotion Toolkit or several components of this toolkit as a basis for making more evidence-based decisions.

7.2 Practical recommendations for improvement of the Promising Promotion Toolkit

The current research pointed out that the Promising Promotion Toolkit and its elements could serve as a first basis for making better-informed grade retention and promotion decisions on more than just grades. Nevertheless, this research pointed out that the current implementation of the Promising Promotion Toolkit was limited as the working process and the term Promising Promotion Toolkit were not apparent to the users, there was no concrete explanation and implementation protocol with concrete decision rules, there was no registration and monitoring of students promoted based on the toolkit, and there was a confusion of the term Promising Promotion Toolkit. In order to be able to evaluate the actual practice, it is recommended for practice to review this implementation phase. According to Fullan (2007), a school, school leaders, and teachers must go through three stages of change in order to implement an educational innovation or change. Going through these three phases will have the effect of encouraging school leaders and teachers to engage with, adopt, and sustain the innovation. These three phases are initiation, implementation, and institutionalization. Thus, it could be concluded that the implementation phase is essential for an educational innovation. As it is questionable how this Promising Promotion Toolkit is implemented, and the working process is not clear to everyone in the school, it would be recommended for practice to review this implementation phase. A review of the implementation phase can be done by using the recommendations from this research, which are described below.

It is strongly recommended to develop an implementation guidance or protocol. This protocol would help make the various arrangements in the school more explicit, clear, and visible to everyone so that the users know how to use the Promising Promotion Toolkit and so that the interpretation and application of the toolkit could not vary that much among users of the toolkit. In addition, the term 'Promising Promotion Toolkit' should be made more explicit and communicated to all the users so that they know how to use it. At least, it would be essential to register and monitor

the students who were promoted based on the use of the toolkit as part of the working process in order to be able to evaluate the effectiveness of the toolkit ,as an evaluation of the use of the toolkit is strongly recommended. By developing nearly any intervention, an evaluation takes place during the development process (McKenney & Reeves, 2018). It would be recommended to evaluate the design and the working process (e.g., the use) of the Promising Promotion Toolkit.

In order to be able to evaluate the Promising Promotion Toolkit, it would be helpful to make a strong justification for its design. A limitation of this research was that there could only be made a limited formative evaluation (alpha test) of the design of the Promising Promotion Toolkit to find theoretical justification for the design. A reason for this was the fact that the developers of the Promising Promotion Toolkit did not document the scientific evidence and references they had used for developing and designing the Promising Promotion Toolkit. No sources used for developing and designing the toolkit were documented. That made it difficult to draw substantiated conclusions about the theoretical justification and made a formative evaluation of the theoretical justification.

In addition, by evaluating the working process and the use of the Promising Promotion Toolkit, it would be helpful to evaluate the effects and consequences for students, as this became unclear during this research, as it was not possible to incorporate students due to a lack of administration. In addition, for an evaluation, it would be recommended to incorporate more teachers in further research, as a limitation of this research was the number of conducted interviews (with teachers). Due to the time available and the availability of the employees of the school, fewer interviews were held than planned. A few mentors were available and willing to participate in this research. Only three out of eleven have responded. This made the conclusions less reliable, as only some mentors could be included, which could mean that the sample does not fully represent the entire population. So, to draw more reliable conclusions about the working process and experiences in practice, during an evaluation, an expansion of the study's population will be recommended by incorporating more teachers (e.g., mentors) and students.

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Appendix 1: Timeline for a promotion or retention decision (Het Marianum, n.d. (a)).

Month	Action
January	Conversation between the team coordinator, internal supervisor and each mentor and identifying the students needing extra attention. Which attention is not mentioned in the Promising Promotion Toolkit.
February	The team coordinator makes a proposed decision and fills in the forecast for all the students
May-Juin	Conversations between the team coordinator, internal supervisor, and mentor and making a proposed retention or promotion decision. Possible decisions: • Being promoted to the next school year on the same educational level. • Being promoted to the next school year with an individual action plan. • Not being promoted and establishing follow-up trajectories or actions.
Juin	The individual action plans are written by the students and approved by the mentor and team coordinator.
Before 1 July	The team coordinator and internal supervisor are discussing the students being promoted with an individual action plan. There are appointments made for starting conversations in the next school year.
August-December (Next school year)	Monitoring of the individual action plans. Updating the individual action plans or performing scheduled actions, as described in the individual action plan.

Appendix 2: Interview guideline developers of the toolkit

Dit interview gaat over Kansrijk bevorderen. Met dit onderzoek willen we graag kijken of er (wetenschappelijk) bewijs is voor Kansrijk bevorderen, hoe het proces Kansrijk bevorderen er in de praktijk aan toe gaat en we willen graag kijken hoe gebruikers het gebruik van Kansrijk bevorderen in de praktijk ervaren en of het gebruik eventueel verbeterd kan worden.

Dit interview zal bestaan uit verschillende onderdelen en het is belangrijk om te benoemen dat dit interview ook zal worden opgenomen. Daarom vraag ik u graag om het volgende formulier in te vullen (written consent form). Daarnaast is het belangrijk om te benoemen dat wanneer u geen antwoord op een vraag wilt geven dat uiteraard ook niet hoeft.

We gaan eerst kijken naar het proces rondom de ontwikkeling van de werkwijze 'Kansrijk bevorderen' en wat de redenen zijn voor de ontwikkeling van dit proces. Vervolgens zullen we kijken hoe het werkproces 'Kansrijk bevorderen' er in de praktijk uitziet en tot slot zullen we nog kijken naar hoe u deze werkwijze ervaart en of er eventuele verbeterpunten zijn voor het traject 'Kansrijk bevorderen'.

1. **Proces rondom de ontwikkeling van de 'Kansrijk bevorderen' (werkwijze + redenen voor de ontwikkeling).**

Het doel van dit onderdeel is om het proces rondom de ontwikkeling van de werkwijze 'Kansrijk bevorderen' boven tafel te krijgen en de redenen voor de ontwikkeling van deze werkwijze helder te krijgen.

- Wanneer kwam het idee tot stand om een andere beslissingsprocedure op te stellen rondom de overgang?/Hoe is het proces 'Kansrijk bevorderen' ontstaan?
- Wie waren allemaal betrokken bij de ontwikkeling van de werkwijze 'Kansrijk bevorderen'?
- Wat waren de redenen voor deze andere beslissingsprocedure? Bleven veel leerlingen zitten?
- Op basis waarvan is de werkwijze 'Kansrijk bevorderen' opgesteld?
- Op basis waarvan zijn de zes aanvullende indicatoren in de werkwijze gekozen?
- Welke literatuur/wetenschappelijk bewijs is er gebruikt om de werkwijze 'Kansrijk bevorderen' te ontwikkelen/onderbouwen?
- Zijn er ook onderbouwingsdocumenten voor de werkwijze 'Kansrijk bevorderen?'
- Waarom zijn deze zes specifieke aanvullende indicatoren nou zo belangrijk?

- Kunt u de verschillende onderdelen van de werkwijze 'Kansrijk bevorderen' kort toelichten en ook de verschillende aanvullende indicatoren?
- Bij onderstaande zes verschillende indicatoren zijn verschillende hulpvragen bedacht, op basis waarvan zijn deze hulpvragen bedacht?

Leeropbrengst in kennis en vaardigheden	Learning outcome in knowledge and skills
Sociaal welbevinden en thuissituatie	Social well-being and home environment
Vakadvies m.b.t. inzet en werkhouding	Course advice based on commitment and work-attitude
Persoonlijke motieven en karakteristieken	Personal motives and characteristics
Historie	History
Onafhankelijke toetsen	Standardized tests (Independent tests)

2. **Het werkproces (Kansrijk bevorderen) in de praktijk.**

Het doel van dit onderdeel is om het werkproces rondom 'Kansrijk bevorderen' in de praktijk boven tafel te krijgen.

<u>Procedure + overgangsnorm</u>
- Kunt u de werkwijze 'Kansrijk bevorderen' in de praktijk kort toelichten? Zou je mij eens kort kunnen meenemen in het tijdpad van de bevorderingscyclus?
- Is er een vast en duidelijk protocol/procedure waarmee wordt gewerkt bij het gebruik van 'Kansrijk bevorderen'? Hoe ziet dit protocol eruit en kunt u een voorbeeld geven aan de hand van een casus?
- In de documenten van de school staat beschreven dat een leerling zijn/haar eigen overgang beargumenteert naar een analyse van onderstaande gegevens (vak resultaten zichtbaar in SOM, vakadviezen zichtbaar in SOM, gegeven feedback in www.leerlingbespreking.nl, Cito-gegevens) kunt u mij wat meer uitleggen over die analyse? Wanneer vindt die analyse plaats? Wie analyseert die gegevens? Wat is er belangrijk tijdens zo'n analyse?
- Wat wordt er precies bedoeld met vakadviezen? Op basis waarvan wordt een vakadvies bepaald? Is dat op basis van cijfers of spelen werkhouding, motivatie en gedrag bijvoorbeeld ook een rol? Er staat: de vakadviezen dienen overwegend positief te zijn? Wat wordt er bedoeld met overwegend positief? Is er een aantal positieve vakadviezen dat een leerling moet behalen? Hoeveel? Is er een bepaalde verhouding?

- Er staat: de Cito-gegevens dienen over het algemeen aan te geven dat de leerling op het juiste niveau acteert? Wat zijn de Cito-gegevens? Wat wordt er bedoeld met over het algemeen? Zijn enkele afwijkingen toegestaan?

- Er staat de gegeven feedback in leerlingbespreking.nl dient overwegend positief te zijn? Wat voor feedback staat er in leerlingbespreking.nl? Hoe wordt beoordeeld of deze feedback overwegend positief is? Wordt er bij deze gegeven feedback subjectief of objectief beargumenteerd? Kunt u een voorbeeld van deze feedback geven?

- In jullie overgangsnorm staat beschreven dat een leerling over mag met maximaal 3 tekorten, wat gebeurd er als een leerling meer tekorten heeft en tellen bepaalde vakken zwaarder bij tekorten (bijvoorbeeld Nederlands, Wiskunde, Engels, mag je daar maar één tekort in hebben?)? Wegen de Core Courses (Wiskunde, Nederlands en Engels) ook daadwerkelijk zwaarder mee in het beslissingsproces?

- Wordt er na de driehoeksgesprekken nog wel eens overgegaan tot een ander besluit dan een leerling vooraf heeft opgesteld? Waarom wel/niet?

Specifieke aanvullende indicatoren

- Er staat in jullie document: tijdpad beslissing overgang leerlingen: naast cijfers kijken we naar indicatoren, die mede bepalen welk perspectief we zien voor de individuele leerling. Op welk moment en door wie wordt er naar deze indicatoren gekeken? Hoe wordt er naar die indicatoren gekeken? Wordt er naar alle indicatoren gekeken of naar enkele specifieke indicatoren? Indien er alleen naar specifieke indicatoren wordt gekeken: op basis waarvan worden deze indicatoren dan gekozen?

- Hoe worden de verschillende specifieke indicatoren gemeten?

- Zijn er indicatoren die zwaarder tellen in een afweging of een leerling 'Kansrijk bevorderd' wordt of niet? Waarom wel/niet?

- Kunt u per indicator aangeven waarom deze indicator belangrijk is? Op basis waarvan is deze indicator onderbouwd?

- Bij de indicatoren staan allerlei verschillende afkortingen vermeld, kunt u deze afkortingen kort toelichten?: OZS/Diataal/B4Y/KOS?

- Bij de indicatoren staan een heleboel hulpvragen, worden al deze hulpvragen gesteld?

- Zijn de verschillende indicatoren in de werkwijze 'Kansrijk bevorderen' voor leraren/mentoren duidelijk of vinden leraren/mentoren het lastig om ze soms op een correcte manier te interpreteren?

Plan van aanpak

- Is er een format voor het schrijven van een plan van aanpak? Hoe wordt een leerling begeleid bij het schrijven van zijn/haar plan van aanpak?

- Wie controleert/checkt een plan van aanpak van een leerling alvorens de leerling over gaat?

- Wanneer een leerling een plan van aanpak heeft geschreven, wat gebeurt er dan met dit plan van aanpak?

- Er staat: in het PVA wordt ook beschreven wanneer een evaluatie plaats gaat vinden? Zijn daar regels voor? Wie beslist wanneer er een evaluatie plaatsvindt? Hoe ziet zo'n evaluatie eruit? Wie zijn er betrokken bij zo'n evaluatie?

- Indien er een evaluatie plaatsvindt zijn er drie verschillende opties, er wordt altijd bekeken of een leerling succesvol is. Maar wat is precies succesvol? Zijn dat positieve resultaten (cijfers), gaat dat op gedrag, heeft dat te maken met motivatie? Wat wordt er precies met succesvol bedoeld?

- Als een leerling niet voldoet aan de criteria, beschreven in zijn/haar plan van aanpak, wordt deze leerling dan ook daadwerkelijk teruggeplaatst en blijft hij/zij dan dus alsnog zitten? Waarom gebeurt dit wel/niet?

- Gebeurd het vaak dat leerlingen alsnog afstromen/naar een ander niveau/leerjaar gaan?

Aanvullende ondersteuning en begeleiding

- In het plan van aanpak wordt ook beschreven welke ondersteuning de leerling kan en mag verwachten van school en ouders? Krijgt een kansrijk bevorderde leerling meer begeleiding? Hoe ziet die begeleiding er dan uit?

- Welke ondersteuning kan een leerling allemaal van school en ouders verwachten?

- Ziet iemand binnen de school toe op de extra ondersteuning voor kansrijk bevorderde leerlingen? Hoe ziet dit eruit?

3. **Ervaringen gebruik in de praktijk + verbeterpunten (Kansrijk bevorderen)**
Het doel van dit onderdeel is om te kijken hoe gebruikers het gebruik van de werkwijze 'Kansrijk bevorderen' in de praktijk ervaren en verbeterpunten van de werkwijze 'Kansrijk bevorderen' boven tafel krijgen.

- Hoe groot is het percentage zittenblijvers bij jullie op school & specifiek per afdeling?

- Hoe groot is het percentage kansrijk bevorderde leerlingen op jullie school & specifiek per afdeling?

- Heeft u het idee dat het proces 'Kansrijk bevorderen' voor de mentoren duidelijk is omschreven? Begrijpt iedereen wat het traject inhoudt?
- Merkt u weerstand bij uw collega's bij het gebruik van de werkwijze 'Kansrijk bevorderen'?
- Merkt u tijdens de overgangsvergaderingen/overleggen dat mentoren/leraren vaak afgaan op hun intuïtie?
- Wat is uw persoonlijke mening/ervaring over het gebruik van de werkwijze 'Kansrijk bevorderen'? Kunt u dit verder toelichten?
- Ervaart u de werkwijze 'Kansrijk bevorderen' als een goed alternatief voor zittenblijven en waarom wel/niet?

Appendix 3: Interview guideline internal supervisor

Dit interview gaat over Kansrijk bevorderen. Met dit onderzoek willen we graag kijken of er (wetenschappelijk) bewijs is voor Kansrijk bevorderen, hoe het proces Kansrijk bevorderen er in de praktijk aan toe gaat en we willen graag kijken hoe gebruikers het gebruik van Kansrijk bevorderen in de praktijk ervaren en of het gebruik eventueel verbeterd kan worden.

Dit interview zal bestaan uit verschillende onderdelen en het is belangrijk om te benoemen dat dit interview ook zal worden opgenomen. Daarom vraag ik u graag om het volgende formulier in te vullen (written consent form). Daarnaast is het belangrijk om te benoemen dat wanneer u geen antwoord op een vraag wilt geven dat uiteraard ook niet hoeft.

We gaan eerst kijken naar het werkproces 'Kansrijk bevorderen' in de praktijk, vervolgens zullen we nog kijken hoe u deze manier van werken ervaart en of er eventuele verbeterpunten zijn.

1. **Het werkproces (Kansrijk bevorderen) in de praktijk.**
Het doel van dit onderdeel is om het werkproces rondom ' Kansrijk bevorderen' in de praktijk boven tafel te krijgen.

<u>Procedure + overgangsnorm</u>

- · Kunt u de werkwijze ' Kansrijk bevorderen' in de praktijk kort toelichten? Zou je mij eens kort kunnen meenemen in het tijdpad van de bevordering cyclus?
- · Is er een vast en duidelijk protocol/procedure waarmee wordt gewerkt bij het gebruik van 'Kansrijk bevorderen?' Hoe ziet dit protocol eruit en kunt u een voorbeeld geven aan de hand van een casus?
- In de documenten van het de school staat beschreven dat een leerling zijn/haar eigen overgang beargumenteert naar een analyse van onderstaande gegevens (vak resultaten, zichtbaar in SOM, vakadviezen, zichtbaar in SOM, gegeven feedback in www.leerlingbespreking.nl, Cito-gegevens) kunt u mij wat meer uitleggen over die analyse? Wanneer vindt die analyse plaats? Wie analyseert die gegevens? Wat is er belangrijk tijdens zo'n analyse?
- Wat wordt er precies bedoeld met vakadviezen? Op basis waarvan wordt een vakadvies bepaald? Is dat op basis van cijfers of spelen werkhouding, motivatie en gedrag bijvoorbeeld ook een rol? Er staat: de vakadviezen dienen overwegend positief te zijn?

Wat wordt er bedoeld met overwegend positief? Is er een aantal positieve vakadviezen dat een leerling moet behalen? Hoeveel? Is er een bepaalde verhouding?

- Er staat: de Cito-gegevens dienen over het algemeen aan te geven dat de leerling op het juiste niveau acteert? Wat zijn de Cito-gegevens? Wat wordt er bedoeld met over het algemeen? Zijn enkele afwijkingen toegestaan?
- Er staat de gegeven feedback in leerlingbespreking.nl dient overwegend positief te zijn? Wat voor feedback staat er in leerlingbespreking.nl? Hoe wordt beoordeeld of deze feedback overwegend positief is? Wordt er bij deze gegeven feedback subjectief of objectief beargumenteerd? Kunt u een voorbeeld van deze feedback geven?
- In jullie overgangsnorm staat beschreven dat een leerling over mag met maximaal 3 tekorten, wat gebeurt er als een leerling meer tekorten heeft en tellen bepaalde vakken zwaarder bij tekorten (bijvoorbeeld Nederlands, Wiskunde, Engels, mag je daar maar 1 tekort in hebben?)? Wegen de Core Courses (Wiskunde, Nederlands en Engels) ook daadwerkelijk zwaarder mee in het beslissingsproces?
- Wordt er na de driehoeksgesprekken nog weleens overgegaan tot een ander besluit dan een leerling vooraf heeft opgesteld? Waarom wel/niet?

Specifieke aanvullende indicatoren

- Er staat in jullie document: tijdpad beslissing overgang leerlingen: naast cijfers kijken we naar indicatoren, die mede bepalen welk perspectief we zien voor de individuele leerling. Op welk moment en door wie wordt er naar deze indicatoren gekeken? Hoe wordt er naar die indicatoren gekeken? Wordt er naar alle indicatoren gekeken of naar enkele specifieke indicatoren? Indien er alleen naar specifieke indicatoren wordt gekeken: op basis waarvan worden deze indicatoren dan gekozen?
- Hoe worden de verschillende specifieke indicatoren gemeten?
- Zijn er indicatoren die zwaarder tellen in een afweging of een leerling ' Kansrijk bevorderd' wordt of niet? Waarom wel/niet?
- Kunt u per indicator aangeven waarom deze indicator belangrijk is? Op basis waarvan is deze indicator onderbouwd?
- Bij de indicatoren staan allerlei verschillende afkortingen vermeld, kunt u deze afkortingen kort toelichten?: OZS/Diataal/B4Y/KOS?
- Bij de indicatoren staan een heleboel hulpvragen, worden al deze hulpvragen gesteld?
- Zijn de verschillende indicatoren in de werkwijze ' Kansrijk bevorderen' voor leraren/mentoren duidelijk of vinden leraren/mentoren het lastig om ze soms op een correcte manier te interpreteren?

Plan van aanpak

- Is er een format voor het schrijven van een plan van aanpak? Hoe wordt een leerling begeleid bij het schrijven van zijn/haar plan van aanpak?
- Wie controleert/checkt een plan van aanpak van een leerling alvorens de leerling over gaat?
- Wanneer een leerling een plan van aanpak heeft geschreven, wat gebeurt er dan met dit plan van aanpak?
- Er staat: In het PvA wordt ook beschreven wanneer een evaluatie plaats gaat vinden? Zijn daar regels voor? Wie beslist wanneer er een evaluatie plaatsvindt? Hoe ziet zo'n evaluatie eruit? Wie zijn er betrokken bij zo'n evaluatie?
- Indien er een evaluatie plaatsvindt zijn er drie verschillende opties, er wordt altijd bekeken of een leerling succesvol is. Maar wat is precies succesvol? Zijn dat positieve resultaten (cijfers), gaat dat op gedrag, heeft dat te maken met motivatie? Wat wordt er precies met succesvol bedoeld?
- Als een leerling niet voldoet aan de criteria, beschreven in zijn/haar plan van aanpak, wordt deze leerling dan ook daadwerkelijk teruggeplaatst en blijft hij/zij dan dus alsnog zitten? Waarom gebeurt dit wel/niet?
- Gebeurd het vaak dat leerlingen alsnog afstromen/naar een ander niveau/leerjaar gaan?

Aanvullende ondersteuning en begeleiding

- In het plan van aanpak wordt ook beschreven welke ondersteuning de leerling kan en mag verwachten van school en ouders? Krijgt een kansrijk bevorderde leerling meer begeleiding? Hoe ziet die begeleiding er dan uit?
- Welke ondersteuning kan een leerling allemaal van school en ouders verwachten?
- Ziet iemand binnen de school toe op de extra ondersteuning voor kansrijk bevorderde leerlingen? Hoe ziet dit eruit?

2. **Ervaringen gebruik in de praktijk + verbeterpunten (Kansrijk bevorderen).**

Het doel van dit onderdeel is om te kijken hoe gebruikers het gebruik van de werkwijze 'Kansrijk bevorderen' in de praktijk ervaren en verbeterpunten van de werkwijze 'Kansrijk bevorderen' boven tafel krijgen.

- Hoe groot is het percentage zittenblijvers bij jullie op school & specifiek per afdeling?

- Hoe groot is het percentage kansrijk bevorderde leerlingen op jullie school & specifiek per afdeling?
- Heeft u het idee dat het proces 'Kansrijk bevorderen' voor de mentoren duidelijk is omschreven? Begrijpt iedereen wat het traject inhoudt?
- Merkt u weerstand bij uw collega's bij het gebruik van de werkwijze 'Kansrijk bevorderen'?
- Merkt u tijdens de overgangsvergaderingen/overleggen dat mentoren/leraren vaak afgaan op hun intuïtie?
- Wat is uw persoonlijke mening/ervaring over het gebruik van de werkwijze 'Kansrijk bevorderen'? Kunt u dit verder toelichten?
- Ervaart u de werkwijze 'Kansrijk bevorderen' als een goed alternatief voor zittenblijven en waarom wel/niet?

Dit interview gaat over Kansrijk bevorderen. Met dit onderzoek willen we graag kijken of er (wetenschappelijk) bewijs is voor Kansrijk bevorderen, hoe het proces Kansrijk bevorderen er in de praktijk aan toe gaat, en we willen graag kijken hoe gebruikers het gebruik van Kansrijk bevorderen in de praktijk ervaren en of het gebruik eventueel verbeterd kan worden Met dit interview hoop ik een duidelijk beeld te krijgen hoe de werkwijze van 'Kansrijk bevorderen' werkt en hoe u het gebruik ervaart.

Dit interview zal bestaan uit verschillende onderdelen en het is belangrijk om te benoemen dat dit interview ook zal worden opgenomen. Daarom vraag ik je graag om het volgende formulier in te vullen (written consent form). Daarnaast is het belangrijk om te benoemen dat wanneer je geen antwoord op een vraag wilt geven dat uiteraard ook niet hoeft.

We gaan eerst kijken naar het werkproces 'Kansrijk bevorderen' in de praktijk, vervolgens zullen we kort kijken naar hoe de begeleiding vanuit u voor 'Kansrijk bevorderde' leerlingen er precies uitziet en tot slot zullen we nog kijken hoe u deze manier van werken ervaart en of er eventuele verbeterpunten zijn.

1. **Het werkproces (Kansrijk bevorderen) in de praktijk.**
Het doel van dit onderdeel is om het werkproces rondom 'Kansrijk bevorderen' in de praktijk boven tafel te krijgen.

Werkproces
- Helpt u als mentor bij het opstellen van een overgangsbesluit van uw leerlingen?
- Hoe vaak bekijkt u als mentor nog het plan van aanpak van een kansrijk bevorderde leerling? Hoe ziet dat proces eruit?
- Hoe vaak komt u nog terug op het plan van aanpak van dat de leerling vorig jaar heeft geschreven? Evalueert u bepaalde onderdelen uit een plan van aanpak? Is dit wekelijks, tweewekelijks of bijvoorbeeld maandelijks?
- Zijn er leerlingen die eigenlijk dit jaar op basis van de gemaakte afspraken in het plan van aanpak terug hadden gemoeten naar een ander leerjaar/niveau en is dit wel/niet gebeurd en waarom wel/niet?

Begeleiding

- Welke begeleiding geeft u uw mentorleerlingen?
- Heeft u het idee dat u uw mentorleerlingen meer begeleiding geeft dan leerlingen die niet het 'Kansrijk bevorder' traject volgen?
- Hoe betrekt u ouders bij het leerproces van hun zoon/dochter?

2. **Ervaringen gebruik in de praktijk + verbeterpunten.**

Het doel van dit onderdeel is om te kijken hoe gebruikers het gebruik van de werkwijze 'Kansrijk bevorderen' in de praktijk ervaren en verbeterpunten van de werkwijze 'Kansrijk bevorderen' boven tafel krijgen.

- Vindt u de werkwijze 'Kansrijk bevorderen' duidelijk omschreven?
- Wat is uw persoonlijke mening/ervaring over het gebruik van de werkwijze 'Kansrijk bevorderen'? Kunt u dit verder toelichten?
- Vindt u dat bepaalde onderdelen (cijfers, gedrag, motivatie, werkhouding) in de werkwijze zwaarder mee moeten wegen dan anderen en waarom wel/niet?
- Heeft u nog eventuele verbeterpunten ter aanbeveling op het 'Kansrijk bevorder traject'?

Appendix 5. Coding scheme

Concept	Code	Example quotes of the Developers of the Promising Promotion Toolkit	Example quotes of the Internal supervisor and mentors
Evidence	Scientific	Hattie has inspired us on themes related to the autonomy and competence of students.	N.A.
	Practical	In conversations with primary schools, we picked up a few things. So, for example, which indicators are success for you? What indicators of success are relevant to you for the future?	N.A.
	Establishing evidence	I do not think we have really established this in such a way that we say, Well, here is the literature, and based on that literature, we are now going to set this up like this.	N.A.
Development of the Toolkit	Cause	Once, there was a public discussion, and I think a question came from the Ministry of Education about a promising promotion trajectory.	N.A.

		Think about that as a school. Well, every school could respond to that question or not, and we did that as this was in line with how we think and work here at school.	
	Involved persons	X is also a teacher leader. With him, I worked a lot during this process.	N.A.
	Duration of the development process	That has been a complete trajectory, and I do not remember all the details of that trajectory.	N.A.
Implementation of the Toolkit	Communication	Researcher: And how is this communicated in the school and to the parents? Developer: To the parents, for example, a little bit less, and to the students, also not so much. It has been communicated more to the team in some meetings; this is how we are going to do so.	So, that promising promotion trajectory has never been on the agenda, I dare to say. So, on paper, it is very nice. It has also never been communicated to the mentors in the third school year.
	Implementation in the school	Promising Promotion starts in school year two. It is used in school years two and three. From year one	I think that the Promising Promotion Toolkit is not explicitly defined or known in the school.

	to two, students are automatically promoted most of the time.	+ We are actually always very good at launching ideas and then thinking them through a bit, but there should actually be someone who sets the lines arrangements a bit tighter. When are we going to do this? What does that mean? Who do you need to communicate with? Actually, the whole thing needs to be put away more tightly.
Evaluation	Researcher: Has this trajectory ever been evaluated again? Developer: Well, yes, right now we do not have a team leader in the lower secondary school department, but after the summer holidays, a new team leader starts, so I assume these will be reviewing these things.	Researcher Does this trajectory still have to be evaluated again? Teacher: I do not think specifically the Promising Promotion Toolkit.
Overview of students promoted based on the Promising Promotion Toolkit	N.A.	I do not think we are indeed giving them the stamp of promising promoted. There will be no

			lists with these students available.
Elements of the Toolkit	Six unique indicators	We had to make choices. But these six were complete for us. They say something about your personal development, about the social-emotional development, and about the cognitive development.	I do think that people are increasingly formulating their opinions based on these indicators.
	Learning outcome in knowledge and skills	Learning outcomes are thus the results for the school subjects.	N.A.
	Social well-being & home situation	There may also be something in the home situation, something that a child cannot influence at all. So, there could be something, something very unpleasant happening at home that makes a child not perform well for a while. But if we know that, of course we cannot ignore that.	We try to take all these things into account. How does the student feel at school? Is there something going on at home that prevents them from learning? We try to take all that into account.
	Course advice based on commitment and work attitude	The course advice. So, what did the course	So, is there anything extra important? I think the course advice although

	teacher say about a student.	they are not always completed very well, they are becoming more and more important since we were using formative education.
Personal motives and characteristics	What does the student want? So, personal motives are very important.	Ultimately, you consider the student's wishes. What does the student want (to do?)
History	We also consider a student's history. That is not quite standard, but if it is necessary, we do. We have files up to primary school.	We always consider Cito tests as well. Did we see a development in the Cito tests? For example, you see that the student is scoring GT everywhere; did the student do that last year by entering secondary school as well?
Standardized tests	We use the results of the Cito tests and Diataal.	For example, you see that the student now scores GT everywhere. Did that student do that last year at entry? Cito tests can still support that a bit. Then you have a kind of more objective measurement.

Grades	Grades are our history, and therefore, I am afraid, this afternoon, people are considering the grades instead of the other indicators.	We also always consider grades.
Personal advice	There are sometimes teachers saying, I will give this student a Havo-advice, and then we are going to ask: You have given a Havo-advice, but what did you mean with this Havo-advice? Havo and promotion or Havo and retention? It is still not clear what that personal advice means; that needs some fine-tuning.	The personal course advice means that the teachers are going to decide if they think that the students' needs to go to Mavo 3 or Havo 3, for example. They are going to decide on which educational level the student is acting.
Application www.leerlingbespreking.nl	www.leerlingbespreking.nl is a formative instrument so actually we should not use this as a valuable indicator.	www.leerlingbespreking.nl is also considered. That is the program where teachers can share feedback with students on how they feel students are doing in class.
Data of Cito	Well, that's why we've made the Cito tests very important in our Promising Promotion trajectory. Those tests have been validated. And so, you can	What you can see from the Cito 1, 2, and 3 tests is that there might be development.

		just say that if the Cito tests reveal that a student who is following education at the Dutch Havo level shows the Dutch Havo level results on the Cito test, he is following education at the right educational level.	
Retention & Promotion policy of the school	Grades	We are considering the valuable indicators and not just the grades.	There are teachers who find it difficult to consider students in a promising way and don't consider only the grades in SOM but look at them in a broader way.
	Lower secondary school department	In school year one, we do not use the Promising Promotion Toolkit. This Promising Promotion Trajectory starts in school year two. School year one to two is actually a seamless transition ('drempelloze overgang').	From school year one to two, more or less everyone will be promoted.
	Upper secondary school department	In the upper secondary school department, it is really different. There they have the so-called Dutch 'slaag-zakregeling', so then you really start looking more at the grades again.	N.A.

	Use of retention (at the school)	In the lower secondary school, almost no one has been retained.	Very occasionally, someone will be retained.
Working process in practice	Working process	In our trio, we take a proposed decision from the mentor, team coordinator, and internal supervisor. So based on these indicators, we think this child is best off there next year.	Besides, it is also always a bit tricky to say, Well, you are going to continue in Havo four, and then in December, oh no, go back to Havo three. That is actually kind of a conditional promotion, and we do not do that.
	Individual action plan	We notice sometimes in practice that because the new mentor sometimes does not know a child yet or does not know all the ins and outs of a child yet, that the mentor will leave the action plan left out and think I will learn to know the student first by myself, which causes that some steps could not be taken. So, there is something still not going right in the procedure.	The action plan, I think, does not always come down to paper in concrete terms.
	Transfer between mentors	There is a transfer between the new mentor and the old mentor.	If the mentor changes, then a transfer moment between the mentors will

			be organized wherein the mentors can discuss the student.
Experience	Improvement points	The course advice is another thing that we need to properly develop again or explain what exactly we mean by that.	I would really like it if we could add some weight to certain indicators.
	Overall experience	This way, the users of the toolkit get a better picture of where things are. After all, you get a kind of broad picture of a student, which also tries to tell, as honestly as possible, a story about a child, and preferably by the child.	We give students many opportunities and chances and look at them in a very promising way.