When is a student too old?

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NEW IBERIA — Late last year, the parents of a St. Martinville third-grade student filed a lawsuit alleging their daughter was sexually molested by a 14-year-old classmate.
And, just last month, a 21-year-old New Iberia High School student was charged with carnal knowledge of a juvenile after allegedly having sex with a 16-year-old fellow student.
Just two such examples do not form a trend, but, combined with student body age data, three school districts provided to The Daily Advertiser, the following question could be raised: How old is too old for school?
Currently attending Iberia Parish schools are a 14-year-old fourth-grader, a 16-year-old fifth-grader, a 15-year-old high school freshman and a pair of 21-year-old high school juniors.
In St. Martin Parish, a 17-year-old is in the seventh grade and a pair of 16-year-olds are in the sixth grade.
In St. Mary Parish, the age-to-grade numbers are somewhat better: Although, there are four 12-year-olds in third grade, a slightly lower percentage of students in St. Mary Parish are only two or three years older than their grade average.
Officials with the Lafayette Parish School District refused to provide any data or comment for this story. State officials said they do not track students by age and could not provide any equivalent data.
Although the numbers provided by the three parishes do not take into account certain factors, such as students recently transferring in, the age-by-grade data can give an example of how many students have failed at least one school year.
In Iberia Parish, 390 of the school district’s 1,280 ninth-graders are at least one year older than the average age of 14 or 15 — a statistic that indicates about 30 percent of all high school freshmen have been left back at least once during their school careers.
In 10th grade, about 20 percent of students have failed at least one year; statistics indicate. Most of the other grades tend to...