

Common Myths About Retention

MYTH *A student is below grade level. If he/she isn't retained, he/she is at risk for dropping out.*

FACT Retention actually increases the achievement gap and risk for dropping out.

MYTH *A student is immature and retention will help him/her adjust and gain self-confidence.*

FACT Research does not support the idea that retention improves maturity. In fact, retention has had the opposite effect, lowering the student's self-esteem and sense of belonging.

MYTH *Retention is the best alternative for struggling students.*

FACT Various other strategies have been proven successful with struggling students, including looping, multiage grouping, and accelerated learning. **“Simply having a student repeat a grade is unlikely to address the multiple factors influencing the student's poor achievement or adjustment that resulted in the decision to retain the student.”** (Jimerson, 2001)

MYTH *Young students benefit from retention.*

FACT There is currently no systematic means to predict accurately which children will benefit from being retained. Overall, the literature identified grade retention as an ineffective strategy for meeting the educational needs of low achieving students.

Best Practices PROMOTION PLUS

The practice of combining grade promotion *with* research-based interventions and strategies to promote cognitive, academic, and social competence in all students.

Websites for More Information:

- The National Association of School Psychologists: www.nasponline.org
- Beyond Grade Retention and Social Promotion (Jimerson): www.education.ncsb.edu/jimerson/retention
- American School Board Journal (November 2004). *Second Time Around*. www.asbj.com/2004/11/1104research.html

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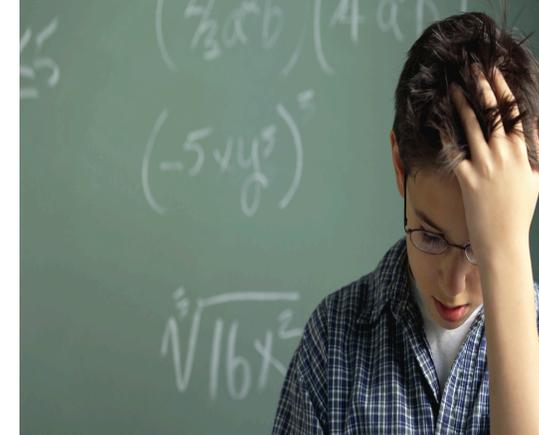


Making the Grade:

Beyond Retention and Social Promotion

“Neither retention nor social promotion closes the learning gap for low achieving students.”

U.S. Dept of Education (1999)



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Making the Grade

The debate regarding the merits and limitations of grade retention and social promotion has resurfaced with the spotlight on accountability and high stakes testing...*but what does research say?*

What are the Rates of Retention?

Nearly 2.5 million students are retained each year in U.S. schools, with the highest rates found among boys—especially minorities and low-income students (Black, 2004).

What are the Outcomes of Retention?

Short-Term Outcomes:

- Some studies have shown small academic gains in the first year after the retention, but the gains are temporary. Benefits are lost within two to three years after the retention.

Long-Term Outcomes:

- Retained students continue to perform below standards in reading and math.
- Retention has a negative effect on self-concept and social adjustment. Retained students experience *increased* social, behavioral, and motivation problems.
- Retained students are more likely to drop out of school.
 - 1 Retention: 40-50% drop out rate
 - 2 Retentions: >90% drop out rate



So...What's a School to do?

- Identify learning and behavior problems early and discard ineffective practices (i.e., grade retention and/or social promotion) in favor of “**promotion plus**” practice.
- Invest in professional development for teachers. **Teacher expertise** is the single most determinant factor that impacts performance (Darling-Hammond).

INTERVENE EARLY AND OFTEN

- Maintain consistent communication with parents. Communication serves to inform parents of concerns and provides an opportunity to enlist their help when working with their child.

WHEN TALKING TO PARENTS

- Be sure parents understand your position so they will not be surprised by future actions. Cite state requirements and expectations. Share important information from the Student Progression Plan.
- Have solutions in mind, such as classroom interventions and concrete suggestions that parents can use at home.
- Communicate *clearly* and, if necessary, schedule a follow up meeting.

Promising Alternatives

Evidenced-based alternatives to grade retention and social promotion include:

Aligning Instruction with Standards:

Standards provide students with a performance target and offer teachers a basis for giving feedback that will help students achieve their target (Wilcox, 2006).

Implementing a Multi-tiered

Prevention/Intervention System:

Response to Intervention (RtI)

RtI is a multi-tiered approach to providing validated instruction and intervention at increasing levels of intensity, based on progress monitoring and data analysis. The rate of progress over time is used to make important educational decisions. The RtI system should include the following:

- High quality, research-based instruction and behavioral supports in general education.
- Scientific, research-based interventions delivered with appropriate intensity and fidelity in general education.
- Data-based documentation reflecting continuous monitoring of student progress during interventions.
- Collaboration and consistency across general, remedial, and special education.