THE EFFECTIVENESS OF GRADE RETENTION AS AN INTERVENTION STRATEGY FOR ACADEMIC FAILURE AS PERCEIVED BY SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS

by

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ABSTRACT

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Over the past twenty-five years, there has been public and political pressure to improve the quality of education. Schools have been encouraged to adopt grade retention policies to help children who are falling behind academically. Given the large number of students affected by this educational intervention, a study of the effectiveness of retention is worthy of educational research.

This research project involves survey research pertaining to grade retention. The study examines perceptions of practicing school psychologists regarding the academic, social, and emotional effects of this educational intervention. The results of this study show that school psychologists perceive grade retention as being an ineffective intervention. In addition, they identified few positive academic, social, or emotional outcomes of retention. Other results indicate that school psychologists perceive the

existence of several influential factors as impacting the retention decision. Implications of the results are discussed and suggestions for future research are addressed.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS.....Page

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Consider the following scenarios: (a) A parent brings her son in for preschool screening. Educational personnel recommend retaining the five-year old boy because he appears socially withdrawn and his birthday is just before the school cutoff date; (b) A couple is informed by their daughter's teacher that she is not mastering the first grade reading curriculum. The teacher suggests it might be best if she repeated first grade; and (c) A seventh grade boy received all D's and F's the last two quarters of the school year. His teachers, counselor, and principal have suggested that holding him back a year might make him realize he needs to work harder in school.

All of these situations are examples of retention decisions made by school personnel. Many strategies for improving school performance currently are being debated regarding what should be done to help the large number of children who are not meeting educational standards. Schools continue to search for the most effective interventions to help children who fall behind academically or appear more immature than their peers (Foster, 1993), and retention has often been considered as a potential option.

Intense public and political pressure to improve the quality of education in the United States has occurred in recent years. As a result, many schools have adopted rigorous retention policies and practices. Grade retention is one of education's most common interventions for the unprepared student. Retaining students in a grade often is used as a way to increase or meet educational standards. Many educators assume that by

catching up on requisite skills, students will be less likely to fail when they go on to the next grade (Shepard & Smith, 1990).

According to Rose, Medway, Cantrell, and Marus (1983), retention was prevalent in British schools as early as the 16th century. Around 1860, the educators in the United States began following many of the educational practices of Great Britain. As such, graded classrooms and grade retention were introduced to the American schools. Retention was so popular during the 19th century, it has been estimated that approximately every other child was retained at least once during his or her first eight years of school during that era.

Retention continued to be practiced until the 1930s. At this time, proponents of social promotion argued retention would lead to negative effects on children's social and emotional development (Rose et al., 1983). In the mid 20th century, researchers began to investigate the relationship between retention and dropouts (Owing & Magliaro, 1983). Over the next thirty years, students were commonly passed to the next grade, grouped according to ability, and provided remedial help. Decisions to retain students were based upon achievement results, social maturity, emotional maturity, chronological age, attendance record, and home background (Rose et al., 1983).

In the past 25 years, the value of social promotion has been reevaluated (Rose et al., 1983). In the early 1960s, there was a decline in student achievement on standardized tests. Some ascribed this decline in achievement to the lenient academic and promotion standards of that era. Demands for educational accountability led to increasing requirements for minimum competency testing programs in the public schools that were mandated by many state legislatures or local school boards (Rose et al., 1983). Retention

became so politically popular in 1985 that thirty-one states mandated stricter promotion policies. As such, the number of student retentions increased during the 1980's and 1990's (Pierson & Connell, 1992).

Although no national statistics have been gathered on grade retention, some data has been analyzed from thirteen states and the District of Columbia. According to one study (Pierson & Connell, 1992), 5-7 % (approximately 2.3 million American students) of public school children are estimated to be retained in the United States annually. This percentage equals about two children out of a classroom of thirty.

Purpose of the study

Given the large number of students affected, a study of the effectiveness of retention is highly deserving of educational research. National concern is growing about the increase of student failure. Educators continue to struggle with the decision to retain or socially promote failing students. Those who choose to retain students often do so despite some research evidence that indicates the negative effects of retention. (Holmes & Matthews, 1984; Jackson, 1975; Smith & Shepard, 1989; 1990). These research studies indicate that retention may have harmful effects on the achievement, self-concept, social development, dropout rates, and future employment of students.

School psychologists are often involved in making grade retention decisions or influencing their school district's policy on retention. They can assist in the evaluation of a student's school failure by examining the student's school and developmental history, the effectiveness of previous instruction, and the remediation strategies available to them. School psychologists are trained to assist in formulating alternative interventions for academic failure. It is their responsibility to share the research on grade retention in

order to guide school districts in the development of more informed policies on retention (Rafoth, 2002). Thus, the primary purpose of this study is to examine school psychologists' perceptions of the efficacy of grade retention as an intervention strategy for academic failure. Further, this study will investigate whether the gender or the number of years practicing has an effect on a school psychologist's perceptions of grade retention. Therefore, the three objectives of this research were: (a) To determine school psychologists' perceptions of grade retention; (b) to examine whether a school psychologist's gender has an effect on his/her perception of grade retention; and (c) to determine whether the number of years of experience has an effect on school psychologists' perceptions of grade retention.

Definition of terms

To guide the reader, the terms grade retention and social promotion are defined as follows:

Grade retention.

Grade retention is the practice of requiring a student to repeat a year of academic instruction at a particular level. It can be differentiated from course retention in that the pupil repeats the same grade, rather than one subject such as reading or math (Jackson, 1975),

Social promotion.

Social promotion is the practice of automatic advancement from grade to grade despite evidence that the student is not achieving the required performance standards in basic skills, maturity, or social behavioral problems (Shepard & Smith, 1989).

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review will begin by examining the characteristics of retained students and the anticipated outcomes of grade retention on the academic achievement, self-esteem, and cognitive competence of students. Further, students' attitudes towards school and teachers' beliefs about grade retention will be addressed. The effects of retention on the social development and dropping out of school will be examined.

Characteristics of children that have been retained

Before reviewing how grade retention impacts students, it is imperative to consider those characteristics that make students more susceptible to grade retention. What makes repeaters different from children who are promoted from grade to grade, and what distinguishes different repeaters from one another? Being aware that a child is at risk for retention can lead to increased efforts toward referring such children and families to services that might enhance the child's preparedness for school (Byrd & Weitzman, 1994).

Relative to non-retained children, repeaters are more likely to be boys (Alexander, Entwisle, & Dauber, 1994; Gofffredson, Fink, & Graham, 1994; Jimerson, Carlson, Rotert, Egeland, & Stroufe, 1997; Meisels & Liaw, 1991; Reynolds, 1992), to come from lower socioeconomic status families, be from minority groups (Alexander et al., 1994; Meisel & Liaw, 1991), to have poor reading and mathematics test scores (Alexander et al., 1994; Meisels & Liaw, 1991; Reynolds, 1992), have disruptive classroom behavior (Gottfredson et al, 1994; Hagborg, Masella, Palladino, &

Shepardson, 1991), and have parents who are not involved in the schools (Alexander et al., 1994).

As indicated, boys seem to be retained more often than girls (Alexander et al., 1994; Caplan, 1973; Carstons, 1985; McCoy & Reynolds, 1999). McCoy and Reynolds (1999) found the rate of retention for boys was 12.4 percentage points higher than that of girls. Alexander et al. (1994) conducted a study comparing 317 retained students to 458 promoted students. Of the 317 retained students, 57% were males and 43% were females. Caplan (1973) reported while boys are retained significantly more often than girls, the girls who are retained could be easily discriminated from their female counterparts who have been promoted by their more aggressive behavior.

The majority of retained students also are students of different ethnic backgrounds (Abidin, Golladay, & Howerton, 1971; Alexander et al., 1994; Meisels & Liaw, 1991). In the Alexander et al. (1994) study of 317 retained students, 63% were African American, although African Americans made up only 54% of the entire sample. Another study by Laxley, Crafter, Rodney, and Mupier (1999) examined the variables contributing to grade retention among African American adolescent males. The variables that were positively associated with grade retention were the number of suspensions from school, violence against others, and a lack of discipline in the home. Children who displayed more antisocial behaviors in the elementary grades were at increased risk for low academic achievement and failure. The Laxley et al. (1999) study sample included mostly children whose fathers were absent from the home. According to the authors, the mothers failed to provide sufficient disciplinary measures to prevent the boys from engaging in further antisocial behavior. Also, according to these authors (1999), the lack

of male role models for African American boys in general, as well as the education system, could be a factor contributing to the high rates of grade retention among this population. African Americans are three times more likely than Caucasians to be misplaced in special education, score lower on standardized tests, and are retained more often than Caucasians, especially at the elementary level (Laxley et al., 1999).

Regardless of race, many retained students come from economically disadvantaged family backgrounds. Eligibility for reduced-price meals at school can identify students from low-income families. Alexander et al. (1994) found that 53% of the promoted students and 85% of the retained students qualified for reduced-price meals at school. Lower socioeconomic status also is associated with lower parental educational attainment (Jimerson et al., 1997; McCoy & Reynolds, 1999; Reynolds, 1992). Smith and Shepard (1989) found retained students' parents averaged almost two years less schooling than promoted students' parents. The retainee parents were more likely to be high school dropouts, while the promoted parents generally finished high school. Other studies have found that more retained students than promoted students were living in one-parent households (Byrd & Weitzman, 1994; Jimerson et al., 1997; Meisels & Liaw, 1991; Smith & Shepard, 1989). Alexander et al. (1994) found that 61% of a promoted group, and only 42% of a retained group were in two-parent families. Living in a single-parent household is another demographic factor known to put children at academic risk (Shepard & Smith, 1989).

Another parental variable influencing the decision to retain or promote is the level of parental involvement in the school. McCoy and Reynolds (1999) found that the level of parental involvement in school significantly predicted retention during the early

grades. Children whose parents were rated as more involved in school activities were 18% less likely to be retained (Reynolds, 1992). Parental expectations of their child's ability level also can predict retention. Parents of children who failed first grade evaluated their children's ability to succeed in school less positively in the fall of the first grade year than did parents of the children that were promoted at the end of the year (Cadigan, Entwisle, Alexander, & Pallas, 1988).

Academic difficulties at the beginning of school also are a characteristic that can precede the process of grade retention (Alexander et al., 1994; McCoy & Reynolds, 1999; Reynolds, 1992). McCoy and Reynolds (1999) identified low reading achievement and mathematics achievement as significant predictors of retention. They discovered that each additional decrease in reading grades (e.g., B to C) was associated with a 10.9 point increase in grade retention, and a 10 point decline in mathematics achievement was associated with a 5 point increase in retention. Measures of school performance in first grade indicated that reading achievement and mathematics achievement were good predictors of retention. Alexander et al. (1994) found large differences between promoted and retained students' reading and mathematics marks. In both math and reading, retainees' initial marks at the beginning of school were well below satisfactory, while promoted children had marks averaging between satisfactory and good in math, and their reading marks were above satisfactory. Retainees also achieve below others on their initial achievement test scores according to the Alexander et al. (1994) study. Students in this study were administered the California Achievement Test (CAT) battery. The average difference for retained and promoted students CAT reading and mathematics subtest scores was 20 points. These large differences at the beginning of

school show future retainees begin with academic disadvantage compared to their classmates.

Another predictor of grade retention is a child's school adjustment (Alexander et al., 1994; Gottfredson et al., 1994; Hagborg et al., 1991; Jimerson et al., 1997). Children who are frequently absent, have difficulty getting along with other children, and have difficulty adjusting to the behavioral demands of the classroom are at a disadvantage in school compared to their well-adjusted classmates. Teachers are more likely to recommend that a student with these characteristics be held back a year. Educators' attitudes about low-achieving students can have a profound influence on whether a child is retained or not. According to the Jimerson et al. (1997) study, teachers rated retained children on the Child Behavior Checklist as having more maladjusted behaviors in the classroom. These students also were ranked lower in terms of their emotional health, peer acceptance, and popularity (Jimerson et al., 1997).

Alexander et al. (1994) evaluated how homeroom teachers rated first grade students on three scales from the 1976-77 National Survey of Children: cooperation, participation, and attention. In this study, their first grade teachers perceived repeaters as less cooperative before they were retained. These retained students also were rated less favorably on enthusiasm and willingness to participate in the classroom. Homeroom teachers also were asked to rank the popularity of their students compared to their classmates. Retained students were rated less popular than their promoted peers. According to the researchers, it is difficult to tell whether this factor is a cause or consequence of retention. Students who do not perform well may be ostracized by their peers; or, because the retained students perform similarly to low performers who are

promoted, perhaps teachers evaluate unpopular students less favorably. These behavior ratings indicate that teachers perceive repeaters as not adjusting well to the school routine.

Teachers' beliefs about retention are influential variables in a decision to retain a student. Nearly all teachers think that retention is a good intervention and has few negative effects on low-achieving students. Smith and Shepard (1989) interviewed teachers to determine their beliefs about retention by evaluating the teacher's practical knowledge. Practical knowledge is based on the first-hand experience of a teacher with specific children and real circumstances. Practical knowledge can be evaluated by looking at a teacher's personal stories of particular events and children in specific situations. In the Smith and Shepard (1989) study, teachers were asked to recall specific children in their own classes who had characteristics that might make them more susceptible to retention, to describe these children in detail, and explain the consequences of these decisions. The teachers' responses classified them as nativists, remediationists, diagnostic-prescriptive teachers, or interactionists. According to the researchers, nineteen of the forty teachers were classified as nativists. These teachers appeared to believe that within some normal range of environments, children become prepared for school according to an evolutionary, physiological unfolding of abilities. This process is considered to be outside the influence of parents and teachers. According to these nativistic teachers, if a child is in a developmental stage that is inappropriate for kindergarten, teachers should allow more time for the child to grow. Remediationists were described as those teachers who believe children of legal age for kindergarten are ready for school and can be taught. These teachers believe they have the capacity to

influence a pupil's readiness and ability to learn. The diagnostic-prescriptive teachers believe any school readiness deficiencies in children of legal school age occur because the distinct traits necessary for learning and attention are not intact. They tend to endorse the remediation of problems with therapies tailored to the defect, whereas remediationists encourage general instruction. Finally, interactionists believe in complex interactions between the psychological nature of the child and the environments provided by the teachers. According to these teachers, the environments and materials should be arranged by the teacher based on the child's needs (Smith & Shepard, 1989).

According to Smith and Shepard (1989), it appears that those teachers who believe that children develop readiness for school only as a physiological process are more likely to be those who recommend and practice retention. Nativists also were more likely to rely on as measured levels of developmental readiness, chronological age, physical size, and gender in their retention decisions.

Many teachers in the Smith and Shepard (1989) study thought retention prevented frustration, stress, general difficulty in school, retention in subsequent grades, and peer pressure to engage in later delinquent behavior. Few teachers could name any negative effects that retention might produce. The majority of teachers in this 1989 study would rather retain a child who did not need it, than promote a child that needed to be retained. Teachers disregarded the possibility that children might be bored or frustrated by repeating work done before or that these children might experience negative emotions from the retention experience. They fully believed that children's achievement and adjustment would benefit from a second year of instruction (Smith & Shepard, 1989).

A multi-method approach was used to examine teacher's beliefs about retention in grades K-7 (Tomchin & Impara, 1992). Responses from the Tomchin and Impara study indicated that teachers at all grade levels believed that retention was an acceptable school practice that prevented students from facing failure and motivated them to work harder. These same teachers agreed that retention was not harmful in grades K-3, but they disagreed about the impact of retention in grades 4-7. Teachers in the later grades were less likely to retain students and less likely to agree about which characteristics warrant retention. According to Tomchin and Impara (1992), this may be because the prescribed curriculum in the older grades is beyond basic skills instruction. Also, the acquisition of specific skills is less easy to trace back to one teacher in these later grades. These teachers further believed that students assume more responsibility for learning, as they get older.

Teachers and principals tend to agree on the appropriate reasons for retaining a student (Brynes, 1986). Principals believe a lack of basic skills, emotional immaturity and excessive absences are all reasons for grade retention. When principals were asked who they thought should make the final retention decision, they believed it should be up to them. Principals believed retained students most often exhibited immaturity, low self-esteem and low motivation. However, principals indicated smaller classes with more individualized instruction and increased remedial instruction opportunities were preferable to retention as a way of handling poor academic progress (Byrnes, 1986).

Educators overwhelmingly believe that retention benefits students (Brynes, 1986; Shepard & Smith, 1989; Tomchin & Impara, 1992). They assume that because the child is older and more experienced the second time through, he or she will develop, gain

leadership skills, be more comfortable in the school environment, develop better social skills, gain self-confidence, and achieve more academic success.

Academic achievement

It is important to investigate how grade retention can affect a retained student's academic achievement. Grade retention is a common intervention used by educators to remediate academic failure. It is not a negative intervention if it benefits students, but are there positive effects from being held back a year in school? Does the student perform better after repeating a grade, or would the student do just as well if he/she had been promoted?

Research shows that grade retention generally does not improve academic achievement (Holmes & Matthews, 1984; Jackson, 1975; Shepard & Smith, 1989). Some well-designed meta-analysis and longitudinal studies have been done comparing retained and promoted students in the primary, intermediary, and secondary grades (Holmes & Matthews, 1984; McCoy & Reynolds, 1999; Peterson, DeGracie, & Ayabe, 1987; Pierson & Connell, 1992) However, not all studies on grade retention demonstrate negative effects on students' academic achievement. Some studies (Alexander et al., 1994; Peterson et al., 1987) reveal that grade retention can have a positive initial effect on academic achievement, but it is difficult to maintain this improvement after two or more years of school.

Due to the increase in grade retention, more than twenty reviews of retention research have been authored since 1980 (Hauser, 1999). Despite the many studies, valid research on how retention affects children's school performance is limited. Holmes and Matthews (1984) did a comprehensive analysis using a meta-analysis of 63 controlled

studies of grade retention in the elementary and middle schools through the mid 1980's. When promoted and retained students were compared one to three years later, the retained students' average levels of academic achievement was at least 0.4 standard deviations below that of promoted students. When Holmes and Matthews (1984) selected 25 studies with the most statistical control, the negative effects of retention were again confirmed.

According to the Holmes and Matthews study (1984), positive effects of retention on academic achievement were demonstrated after one more grade in school. However, this positive gain disappeared after three or more grades. After two years, the retained groups were scoring .45 standard deviations below the comparison groups who had been promoted to the next grade. Further, at each subsequent year, the difference became larger. Of the 63 studies reviewed in the Holmes and Matthews (1984) meta-analysis, 54 resulted in negative effects from retention. Only 9 studies produced positive effects. The few studies that produced gains also involved intensive remediation, and the retainees were fairly competent prior to the retention intervention. These studies also failed to compare retention plus remediation to promotion with an equal amount of remediation (Holmes & Matthews, 1984).

When Holmes and Matthews (1984) examined the effects of retention on achievement by grade of retention, effect sizes in the upper elementary grades were more negative than in the earlier grades. Children who repeated 4th grade were later found to be .37 standard deviations behind promoted students (Holmes & Matthews, 1984). The average effects were -.28 for kindergarten and first graders. The negative outcomes of

retention were not as severe in the earlier grades, but the students still did not show any benefits from retention.

A more recent meta-analyses and systematic review of grade retention was conducted by Jimerson (2001). He investigated 20 studies from 1990-1999 regarding the academic and socioemotional effects of grade retention. Promoted and retained students were matched by intelligence, academic achievement, socioemotional/behavioral adjustment, socioeconomic status, and gender variables. Also, the age and grade at which retention occurred was included as a predictor variable in the study, although the majority of the studies included students retained in kindergarten through third grade. Only six studies included students beyond third grade. The 20 studies resulted in 175 analyses examining the academic achievement outcomes of the retained students compared to the promoted students, of which 91 revealed statistically significant differences. Results indicated that 9 of the analyses found retained students made academic improvement, whereas 82 analyses found improvements for the promoted students. Of the 175 analyses, 84 yielded no statistically significant differences between the two groups.

Rose et al. (1983) summarized the results from approximately 25 studies on the effects of retention on school achievement. These authors found that on the average promoted students made gains of 8-12 months in a year, while retained students made gains of only 6 months. It often took two years for the retained student to learn what the promoted child learned in one year. Roughly 85% of promoted students, as compared to 35% of retained students, were found to be achieving at a normal rate. Based on an examination of more than 6,000 grade retention cases, it was found that only about 20-

35% of retainees learned more material in their second year. As many as 40% of the retainees learned less material in their second year in the same grade (Rose et al., 1983).

In the past decade, grade retention studies have commonly used longitudinal designs to determine the effects of retention on children's academic success. Longitudinal studies can provide more accurate results of the impact of grade retention on school performance. For example, a follow-up study of the consequences of grade retention up to age 14 was conducted by McCoy and Reynolds in the late 1990s. McCoy and Reynolds (1999) investigated the effects of retention on low-income minority children from the Chicago longitudinal study conducted by Reynolds in 1992. Originally, Reynolds (1992) investigated the effects of retention during Grades 1 to 3 on the fourth-grade adjustment of low-income minority children. The comparison groups included children from the same age who were promoted instead of retained (same-age comparison), children who were one year younger but were in the same grade as the retained children (same-grade comparison), or both. Based on these comparisons, grade retention was found to be significantly related to lower reading and mathematics achievement scores in the fourth year of school. The findings based on same-grade comparisons showed few negative effects on school achievement, but the performance of the retained students remained lower than that of their same-age classmates.

McCoy and Reynolds (1999) then investigated the long-term consequences of grade retention for children from the Chicago longitudinal study. They found that the retained children had significantly lower reading and mathematics achievement compared to their same-age peers who had been promoted. The retained children scored 9 points lower, on average, than their never-retained peers at age 14 on the achievement

tests. The same-grade comparison findings were similar to those of the previous study, but they found that the reading achievement of the retained children was significantly below that of the same-age comparison group.

Another study by McCombs et al. (1992) examined whether the retention of kindergarten and first-grade children was associated with long-term beneficial effects. Retained children were compared to children who were in the same grade, but had never been retained. The results showed that retention was not associated with long-term beneficial effects, but was associated with poorer academic and social functioning. This was especially true for retained Caucasian students, who fared less well academically in terms of what the teacher perceived as cognitive and social competence. The authors speculated that Caucasian students were more likely to be stigmatized by retention than were African American students because a Caucasian student was less likely to be retained than an African American student. Therefore, when a Caucasian student was retained, teachers perceived him or her as more academically or socially incompetent. McCombs et al. (1992) concluded that retention does not have any long-term beneficial effects. These results suggested, particularly for Caucasian students that retention was associated with less positive academic and social functioning.

In contrast, some recent studies indicate that retention can have some positive effects on academic performance. A study by Johnson, Merrell, and Stover (1990) investigated the academic effects of early grade retention on a group of fourth-grade students who had been retained at the K-1 level. Comparisons were made between the retained fourth-grade students, the fourth-grade students who had been recommended for retention at the K-1 level but who were not actually retained, and the fourth-grade

students who had made normal progress in school. No significant differences in academic achievement were found between the retained student and those recommended for retention. Both of these groups of students scored significantly lower on several academic achievement measures than the normally progressing comparison groups. The results of this study indicated that grade retention had no effect on academic achievement.

In their Beginning School Study, Alexander et al. (1994) examined the effects of retention in Grades 1-3. The study used multiple comparison groups and a comprehensive set of control variables, such as academic performance prior to retention and later special education placement. The results indicated that even though the post-retention academic performance of retained children remained lower than that of both the same-age and same-grade comparison groups, the performance gap between the retained and non-retained children narrowed from preretention levels up to the eighth year of school. This was particularly true for second and third graders. First graders, however, displayed less academic progress than those who were retained in second or third grade.

Based on same-grade comparisons, Peterson et al. (1987) and Pierson and Connell (1992) also found some positive academic effects of grade retention. Peterson et al. (1987) studied the long-term impact of retention and promotion on the academic achievement of primary grade students. First, second, and third graders were matched on several variables with their same age peers who were not retained. The results suggested that retained students improved their relative class standing by the end of the retained year, and sometimes they maintained this improvement over a 2-year period. After three years, though, there were no differences between retained and promoted students. The

Peterson et al. (1997) study also examined the impact of combining retention with remediation in comparison to social promotion without remediation. A program of retention plus remediation led to greater achievement gains than retention alone. However, the researchers concluded that social promotion with remediation might be more effective than retention with remediation.

Pierson and Connell (1992) conducted a study comparing 74 retained students in grades 3-6. They examined 69 matched ability samples of socially promoted students with similar students who were retained. From the study, it appeared that students whose academic performance suggested they should be retained (and who were) performed ahead of promoted students of similar ability and comparable performance two or more years later. The retained students, however, did not do as well as the promoted students who were randomly selected from their current classroom. In this study, the teachers did not describe the retained students as motivated compared to the non-retained students. Further, in the Pierson and Connell (1992) study, the retained students did not perform as well as nor did they exert as much effort as the non-retained classmates who were matched by ability.

Grade retention has been reviewed as a remedial intervention for academic failure. A common belief is that by repeating a grade, children will "catch up" with the next grade cohort. According to several studies, the sole use of grade retention should not be expected to remediate a student's academic problems (Peterson et al., 1987; Pierson & Connell, 1992). However, grade retention plus remediation may help students be more successful in school. Several research findings (Holmes & Matthews, 1984, Jackson, 1975; Johnson et al., 1990; Shepard & Smith, 1989) indicate that grade

retention was an insufficient intervention for improving student achievement. The majority of achievement comparison studies between retained and similar students who were promoted concluded that retained children consistently do not perform as well as their promoted peers.

Socio-emotional development

It is important to consider how retention affects different areas of a child's development. Being identified as a failure by the school may not only affect a student's intellectual or academic development, but it could impact his or her emotional and social development. The majority of children are held back in grades 1 through 3, when children's sense of self is being formed (Smith & Shepard, 1989). Therefore, the act of retention may be especially critical at this time in a child's development.

The impact of the school environment on all areas of development must be examined simultaneously. Educators need to recognize how affective variables can contribute to educational performance. Few research studies have been done on how grade retention affects self-esteem and social development. Most of the previous studies have focused on achievement, rather than affective, variables.

Self-esteem and self-concept.

Self-esteem was defined by Coopersmith (1990) as "the evaluation a person makes and customarily maintains with regard to him or herself; overall self-esteem is an expression of approval or disapproval, indicating the extent to which a person believes himself or herself as competent, successful, significant, and worthy." According to Berk (1997), self-concept is the sum total of attributes, abilities, attitudes, and values that an individual believes defines who he or she is. There have been mixed results indicating

whether grade retention has a positive, negative, or no effect on self-esteem and self-concept.

Contrary to most beliefs about grade retention, some studies have found positive results on self-concept measures after grade retention (Finalyson, 1977; Plummer & Graziano, 1987; Shepard & Smith, 1989). For example, Plummer and Graziano (1987) assessed second through fifth graders' self-esteem after being held back a grade. The retained children had more positive self-esteem than did the regularly promoted children. Finlayson (1977) also found that youngsters' self-concepts were higher in their repeated year. He conducted a longitudinal study on the effect of non-promotion upon the self-concepts of primary grade students. His research purpose was to determine whether a poor self-concept led to school failure or whether school failure led to a poor self-concept. The study found that the non-promoted students' self-concepts significantly increased, while the students that were almost retained and promoted students' self-concepts dropped slightly during the second year of the study. During the fourth year of the Finalyson study, the self-concept scores of the promoted and non-promoted students were almost indistinguishable. Finalyson hypothesized that these results may be because students' self-concepts tend to become less positive as they mature in the primary grades.

Finlayson (1977) also interviewed teachers and parents regarding their beliefs about the retained students' self-perceptions. Teachers described almost 75% of the students recommended for retention as having positive self-concepts prior to non-promotion. Teachers perceived the self-concepts of the non-promoted children as either remaining stable or becoming more positive in 96% of the cases during the repeated year. More than half of the parents reported that their child liked school more during the

second year in the same grade. The majority of the parents described their non-promoted children as being more confident during the repeated year of school.

In 1989, Shepard and Smith found similar results for primary students who had been retained. They interviewed students and parents to assess a student's academic self-confidence before and after grade retention. A self-image scale was administered to the students in the fall and spring of grades 1, 2, 4, and 8. In first grade, the never-retained students had the highest self-esteem, followed by the never-retained, poorly performing students. Prior to retention, the future first grade retainees had the lowest self-esteem. Further, they tested poorly, received lower report card marks, and had other adjustment problems at the beginning of first grade. Their self-assessments suggested that these students were aware of their poor performance.

In the second year, according to the Shepard and Smith (1989) study, the first grade repeaters' academic self-assessments were actually higher than before the retention in the first grade. The repeaters' report card marks and test scores also improved after they went through a grade for the second time. In contrast, the second grade average for the never-retained children was lower than their first grade average.

In fourth grade, the first grade repeaters' fourth grade self-assessments average dropped below that from first grade level, which initially was the lowest of any group in the Shepard and Smith (1989) study. Interestingly, Shepard and Smith (1989) found every group's self-assessment average was lower in fourth grade than in second grade. Over the time period from first grade to fourth grade, the first grade repeaters had the smallest decline of any group. According to the authors (Shepard & Smith, 1989), these

results could be because repeaters' level of academic self-esteem holds up better than that of their same aged peers.

In eighth grade, the first grade repeaters' average self-esteem scores were down, while the promoted students' averages increased. By eighth grade, the first grade repeaters' improvements dissipated compared to promoted youngsters. Since middle school is five years after first graders repeated a year, the authors (Shepard & Smith, 1989) hypothesized that the transition into middle school is generally challenging for all children, and retainees may have particular difficulty sustaining academic advances from elementary school into middle school. From the results of this study, it seems the negative effects on 1st graders did not surface until 8th grade, but the 1st graders' self-concepts were higher in the elementary grades after being retained.

In contrast, some studies have found that retained children have more negative self-concepts. White and Howard (1973) administered the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale to 624 6th graders who were promoted or repeated one or two grades in elementary school. The students who did not fail had more positive self-concepts than those who had failed. Further, those students who failed only one grade had more positive self-ratings than those students who failed two grades.

Setencich (1994) also focused on the impact of early grade retention on self-esteem. She evaluated the long-term impact of non-promotion in kindergarten or first grade on 7th and 8th graders' self-esteem. The retained students yielded significantly lower self-esteem scores than the promoted students.

In another longitudinal study, Jimerson et al. (1997) evaluated the self-esteem of retained students. They compared groups of retained students, retained low-achieving

students, and control students. These researchers examined the achievement and adjustment of these groups throughout the elementary years and at age 16. Even though the retained students received an extra year of instruction, the groups were comparable on measures of self-worth. After completing first grade, the retained, but promoted students continued to display similar levels of self-worth. Second-grade results revealed that the retained group ranked the lowest on emotional health. The retained students' initial levels of maladjustment continued despite the intervention of providing an extra year for them to "mature." In sixth grade, the retained group demonstrated significantly lower rankings on the emotional health/self-esteem indices in comparison to the other groups.

Pomplun (1988) uncovered similar findings over time in retained students' self-concepts. At the primary level, the students showed stable self-concepts two years after being retained. At the beginning of the second year, the retained students showed an increase in their self-concepts. In the intermediate grades, the retained students displayed a significant decrease in their self-concepts. This decrease in self-concept also was evident at the secondary level. It appeared that, despite the primary students' self-concepts remaining relatively stable, the retained students' self-concepts decreased over time.

Hagborg et al. (1991) also found similar results at the secondary level for students with a prior history of retention. On school-record data, the retained students reported significantly lower self-esteem on the Scholastic Competence, Behavioral Conduct, and Global Self-worth subscales of the Self-Perception Profile for Adolescents (Hagborg et al., 1991). It was found that the later a student was retained; less positive school

attitudes, lower educational expectations, and lower self-esteem were more likely to occur.

Holmes and Matthews (1984) did a meta-analysis reviewing nine studies on the effects of retention on the self-concepts of students who had been retained. Using data from these studies, 34 effect sizes were calculated. On self-concept measures, the promoted pupils significantly outscored the retained pupils by .19 standard deviation units.

Cognitive competence.

A student's self-esteem is a critical variable in determining his or her level of cognitive competence. Connell (1990) evaluated the effectiveness of retention on emotional development through a self-systems model. This model purports a theoretical framework that includes a set of motivational variables believed to be associated with grade retention. According to the model, individuals are motivated to engage in activities that meet their psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Thus, in a school environment, a student's need for autonomy is met when they believe they have a choice about what they are doing and value their choice. Their need for competence is met if they believe they can meet their desired goals, and their need for relatedness is met if they believe they are accepted by their peers and teachers. According to the authors (Pierson & Connell, 1992), if students feel their school experience meets their needs, they are more likely to be engaged in school.

Children's cognitive competence is based on their belief that they can control their academic outcomes, their understanding of what it takes to do well in school, and their belief that they have the ability to succeed in school (Pierson & Connell, 1992).

Academic performance and school engagement are enhanced by perceiving that they have the cognitive competence to do well in school. Pierson and Connell (1992) found when they asked students what they believe it takes to do well in school, retained children responded that they think getting the teacher to like them, their ability, their effort, and luck help them to succeed in school. The retained students also reported less adaptive strategies for achieving success and avoiding failure, lower perceived abilities to be smart in school and produce effort, and more negative control beliefs than did the randomly selected subjects.

McCoy and Reynolds's (1999) study found that grade retention was unrelated to children's perceived school competence. However, in the Reynolds (1992) study, grade retention was related with significantly more positive perceptions of school competence. Retained children with more physical maturity and personal expectations were more likely to rate their competence more favorably compared to their new, younger classmates. In the McCoy and Reynolds (1999) study, retained and non-retained students had similar perceptions of competence by age 12. The study's authors speculated that the transition to adolescence might alter personal perceptions of competence among low-achieving children as school norms of academic success become more internalized over time.

Shepard and Smith (1989) also examined children's expectations for their report card marks, which can be reflections of their academic competence. Children's mark expectations were evaluated in reading and math. Children were asked to predict the marks they would receive at the end of 3rd and 4th grade. They were to categorize their anticipated marks as being excellent, good, satisfactory, or unsatisfactory. In 1st grade,

the children predicted their marks would be "good" or better. In reality, their marks were somewhere between "satisfactory" and "good." First grade repeaters were especially optimistic about their marks. Even though 1st grade repeaters had the lowest anticipated marks in reading and math, their actual performance was still lower. In 2nd grade, 1st grade repeaters' expectations were not lower than they were before being retained in 1st grade. Instead, their expectations either increased or held steady. After 2nd grade, expectations lowered for everyone. The authors hypothesized that these students became more skilled at processing feedback, and the students began to recognize that their marks sometimes do not meet their expectations.

Attitudes of students.

Rather than using standardized test scores or self-concept ratings, children's accounts of what it means to be held back can be used to measure the effects of retention. Many times, children refer to being held back a grade as "flunking." Byrnes (1986) wanted to learn more about non-promoted students' opinions on "flunking." She interviewed 71 retained children in grades 1, 3, and 6. Despite the efforts of researchers to avoid labeling the retention experience as negative, children referred to the experience as '"flunking." Of the 71 children who were repeating a grade, 73% admitted having been "flunked." Interestingly, first grade girls were less likely than the boys to admit they had been retained. Many of the children who were reluctant to admit being retained, identified other children in their classrooms who had been retained. Therefore, these children appeared to understand the concept of retention. The authors speculated that the girls' reluctance to admit to being retained might indicate that the girls' self-concepts are

more related to school success. Another hypothesis was that girls are more aware of the social stigma of grade retention.

In the same study (Byrnes, 1986), when non-promoted students were asked how they would feel about being retained, 84% replied "sad," "bad," and "upset.' When non-promoted students were asked how their parents would react about their repeating a grade, 46% replied "mad," or 28% "sad" and 8% felt their parents would not care. Children also were asked how they discovered they were going to be retained. Forty-two percent of the children answered by their report cards. The next most common response was information from parents, followed by teachers. Seventy percent of the children reported that their teachers had discussed being held back a year with them. When children were asked why they thought they had been retained, their responses included "not getting good grades." Statements also were made regarding behavior problems, missing school, and not knowing English. Students' perceptions of why they were retained were compared with the school records of why they were retained. The 1st graders were accurate 50% of the time. The 3rd-6th graders were accurate 66% of the time.

In the Byrnes (1986) study, the non-promoted children were asked what was the worst thing about not passing. They also were asked what would be good about retention. The most common negative response was "being laughed at and teased," "not being with friends," and "being punished." Most of the retained children found it difficult to think of something good about not being promoted. Twenty-one percent declared there was nothing good about being retained.

Other studies also have verified that retained children find retention to be a negative experience that leads to a less positive attitude about school. Holmes and Matthews' (1984) meta-analysis reviewed eight studies measuring students' attitudes toward school. The differences between the groups indicated that retained students held school in less favor than the promoted students.

Social development.

Recently many questions have been raised about the socialization mission of the schools (Sandin, 1944). It seems that the focus on academic competency may have taken a backseat to social and interpersonal values. There is some controversy over whether schools should direct their focus toward academics or social development. Little is known about the effects of grade retention on social development because most researchers generally investigate the effects of grade retention on academic progress.

The first study to examine the social and emotional adjustment of regularly promoted and retained children was completed by Sandin in 1944. He gathered information from interviews, classroom observations, and student records. Sandin hypothesized that when retained students are placed with classmates who are younger, smaller, and less mature than themselves they are more likely to be rejected by their classmates. Interviews with these children indicated that children tended to believe that classmates of a different status were too different in age, sizes, interests, and social maturity to be friends. The promoted children were less likely to choose non-promoted students as study companions. Also, the retained children faced significant criticism and ridicule, and were perceived by peers to exhibit more negative behavior.

According to Pierson and Connell (1992), peers play an important role in the socialization of children. When children repeat a grade, they are often removed from their familiar peer group and placed in an unfamiliar one. One would assume that retention would initially decrease the retained students' perceived relatedness to their classmates. However, the direction of that change is virtually unknown. For those students who have had positive relations, the change may be negative, whereas for those who have been rejected, the change may be positive. Students with good social skills may have an easier time making friends in their new grade placement, whereas students with poor social skills may continue to have difficulty making friends (Pierson & Connell, 1992).

A study was conducted by Plummer and Graziano (1987) on the peer relations of 2nd through 5th grade retainees. This study focused on how the processes of peer interactions might contribute to the negative effects of grade retention. When children chose a partner for a non-school activity, they preferred to choose the promoted child. Independent of retention status, height appeared to positively influence the children's evaluations of their retained peers. In general, when children chose a partner for help on a school-related activity, the retained child was preferred over the promoted child. Many children assumed the retained child had more experience with academic tasks. Younger children expected the retained child to be better liked. Such positive treatment by peers enhanced the retained children's self-evaluations (Pierson & Connell, 1992).

Some studies have found that grade retention does not negatively influence social adjustment. Cuddy (1987) compared 2nd through 4th grade retained, promoted, and low-achieving, but promoted students. The children were asked to vote for three classmates

they liked best, and three they liked least. Promotion and retention did not appear to influence peer-nominated popularity, however, promotion led to fewer rejections by peers than did retention. According to Cuddy (1987), the effects of retention and promotion upon peer rejection may become more apparent in middle school, and these effects may differ by sex given the time of puberty tends to be earlier for girls than for boys.

School dropout

One of the most serious consequences of grade retention is the risk of school dropout for students that are held back a grade. In 1990, the President of the United States and the nation's governors set a goal to increase the high school graduate rate to 90% by the year 2000 as one of the six National Goals of Education. The United States Census Bureau estimated that 11% of all youth 16-24 years of age in 1992 were dropouts (McMillen, Kaufman, Hausken, & Bradby, 1993). Dropout rates were 8% for Caucasian youth age 16-24 in 1992, but 14% for African Americans and 29% for Hispanics (Rumberger, 1995). In 1989, Shepard and Smith estimated an annual retention rate of 5-7%. This is about 2.4 million students in the United States being retained annually at an expense exceeding 14 billion a year. Academic failure is one of the largest predictors of school dropout. To many teachers deciding whether a student should be retained, a student's later pupil career and successful completion of school are distant considerations. To the high school counselor, the concern for keeping students in school may be a more immediate concern. The importance of the correlation between grade retention and school dropout often has been disregarded because of the obvious

explanation that poor achievement can account for both the retention and leaving school (Grissom & Shepard, 1989).

Before examining the relationship between grade retention and school dropout, it is important to understand the association between grade retention and adolescent problem behavior. It is possible that the experience of grade retention may cause adolescent problem behaviors, or that both grade retention and problem behaviors can explained by an underlying predisposition to fail (Gottfredson et al., 1994). This underlying predisposition to fail may be caused by a pattern of personal characteristics. This pattern may consist of an inability to defer gratification, emotionality, a tendency to be easily irritated and angered, and difficulty maintaining self-control. This perspective suggests that grade retention has little effect on adolescent problem behavior because it is simply the result of low self-control. Among personal factors, a disruptive behavioral profile has been shown to predict dropping out of school after controlling for familial and socioeconomic factors (Gottfredson et al, 1994). Disruptiveness may lead to dropping out because it can contribute to school problems that are instrumental to grade retention. For example, Ensminger and Slusarcick (1992) reported that aggressive behaviors and low grades as early as first grade predicted later school dropouts. Vitaro, Larocque, Janosz, and Tremblay (1997) also showed that disruptiveness exhibited as early as kindergarten was related to dropping out of school, even after controlling for sociodemographic variables and IQ.

Previous research suggests that grade retention does coincide with adolescent problem behavior, particularly dropping out of school (Grissom & Shepard, 1989; Roderick, 1994; Rumberger, 1995). Other variables that distinguish graduates from

dropouts are lower socioeconomic backgrounds, having little school support from their families, performing poorly on academic tasks, having low self-esteem, and exhibiting a history of absenteeism and having trouble in school. Bachman et al. (1971) determined that dropping out of school could be predicted from a combination of background, school experience, and personality measures. Janosz, LeBlanc, Boulerice, and Tremblay (1997) found that school experience appeared to be only a slightly better predictor of school dropout than family background. Many potential dropouts often have been retained, have had poor academic grades, and have felt disengaged from school.

Most of the research on the causes of dropping out of school has focused on two different levels of analysis. One is at the individual level, where the researchers attempt to identify the wide range factors in and out of school that may influence a student's decision to drop out of school. Other research has focused on the school or institutional level. The purpose of this type of research has been to identify the characteristics of school systems that influence dropout rates.

Rumberger (1995) focused on dropouts from middle school. This issue was examined from both an individual and institutional perspective. At the individual level, the Rumberger (1995) results suggested a number of family and school experience factors that influenced the decision to leave school, with grade retention being the most powerful predictor. Some demographic variables also were highly correlated with the tendency to leave school. For example, dropout rates were higher for Native Americans, African Americans, and Hispanics. Socioeconomic status also was a strong predictor of school dropout. Students from single-parent and stepfamilies were more susceptible to dropping out, and there appeared to be a large number of negative school-related

experiences that were associated with dropouts. Further, dropouts are more likely to have poor school performance, exhibit disruptive behavior, have poor attendance, display negative attitudes toward school, and have been retained in the early grades.

At the institutional level, the Rumberger (1995) results suggested that the mean dropout rates vary widely between schools, and most of the differences in dropout rates can be explained by the background characteristics of the student population. Low socioeconomic schools show widespread differences in their mean dropout rates. Schools that have a large population of students from low socioeconomic backgrounds tend to have higher dropout rates. The type of school (private versus public), the number of resources available, and the system's organization (rules, decision-making, and climate of the school) has been shown to affect school effectiveness.

There is some skepticism as to whether grade retention directly increases the risk of dropping out, or whether poor achievement explains both retention and dropping out. Some studies have adjusted for student achievement before examining the effect of retention on dropping out (Gottfredson et al., 1994; Hess & Lauber, 1984). Hess and Lauber (1984) controlled for achievement by comparing normal-age and overage dropout rates within achievement strata. They found that normal-age students with low reading achievement scores were more likely to drop out; however, the dropout rate was even higher for overage students with average scores.

Grissom and Shepard (1989) reviewed three studies and analyzed new data from three schools, while controlling for the effects of poor achievement. They analyzed the retention-dropout relationship through causal modeling techniques to assess the direct effect of retention on dropping out while controlling for school achievement,

socioeconomic status, student sex, and ethnicity. The findings indicated that retained students experience a greater risk for dropping out. This risk cannot be explained by their poor achievement. These authors suggested that being retained might push a student out of school by reinforcing the youth's self-perception as a failure in school. According to Grissom and Shepard (1989), the retention experience may encourage greater susceptibility to the attractions of adult roles, thereby tempting students to drop out of school. Dropouts often report they leave school because they "did not like school" or had "poor grades." Some schools push students out by sending them negative messages about academics and behavior. These messages eventually accumulate into problems that lead to failing courses and not having enough credits to graduate. Therefore, the choice to drop out may be more appealing than adding an extra year of instruction which seems to be a negative experience for these students (Grissom & Shepard, 1989).

A more recent longitudinal study determined the antecedents for leaving school among elementary, middle, and high school students from an urban public school (Roderick, 1994). Roderick (1994) hypothesized that students who experience retention may face an increased risk of leaving school because they do more poorly in school or have lower self-esteem. Another hypothesis from the Roderick (1994) study was that those who are retained might be at a higher risk for dropping out because grade retention makes them overage for grade.

The purpose of Roderick's study (1994) was to identify how much of the association between grade retention and dropout was related to the sole impact of grade retention. It also sought to determine the impact of grade retention on later school

performance. Her results indicated that early kindergarten through third and late fourth grade retentions were associated with significantly increasing rates of dropping out. Her results found the odds would be 75% higher for a student who repeated a grade between kindergarten and third grade. Repeating a grade between fourth through sixth grade was found to be associated with a 90% increase in dropping out. The Roderick (1994) results suggest there may be an effect of repeating a grade that occurs independently of school performance and of the grade in which a youth is retained. This study suggests that early or late grade retention does not differently affect the rate of dropping out. Instead, it has more to do with being overage for grade.

In the Roderick (1994) sample, some of the students were overage for grade because of retention, some had never repeated a grade but were overage for grade, and others were immigrants. Fifty-eighty percent of the students who were overage for grade, but had never experienced retention prior to seventh grade later dropped out of school. These results suggest that the relation between grade retention and school dropout can be explained by being overage for grade. As students enter adolescence, being older than their peers becomes more apparent and more problematic.

A 21-year, prospective longitudinal study by Jimerson (1999) was conducted to determine the long-term efficacy of early grade retention. Jimerson's (1999) results suggested that retained students have a greater probability of poor educational and employment outcomes during late adolescence. Retained students were found to be more likely to drop out of school by age 19, were less likely to receive a diploma by age 20, were less likely to be enrolled in a post-secondary education program, and were more likely to receive lower employment status ratings by employers. Further, retained

students were paid less per hour and received poorer employment competence ratings at age 20 in comparison to a group of low-achieving students.

Once again, Jimerson (2002) investigated the relationship between grade retention and dropping out of high school. He performed a systematic review of seventeen studies examining grade retention as a strong predictor of dropping out of high school prior to graduation. A literature search was completed to identify those studies examining the relation between dropping out of high school and grade retention. All reviewed studies concluded that grade retention was a strong predictor of dropping out of high school. Several studies indicated that grade retention was the principal predictor of subsequent dropout status. As noted, however, it is important to keep in mind that retention is not the only event leading to school dropout. Certain risk factors (e.g., immaturity, low SES, and level of parental education) may put a student at greater risk for retention as well as eventually dropping out of high school (Jimerson, 2002).

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

Participants

A survey was mailed to a random nationwide sample of school psychologists who were registered members of the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP). A summary of the school psychologists' demographic characteristics is provided in Table 1. As is shown in Table 1, the majority of the respondents were female, Caucasian, and employed full time. Their mean age was 48 years, and they averaged 17 years of experience. All were nationally certified by NASP, and the majority of the respondents were working in schools with a student enrollment of 13,001-17,000. The mean number of student recommendations for retention was 5.02, and the average number of years in which they made retention recommendations was 14.87 years.

Survey instrument

The Grade Retention/Social Promotion Survey for School Psychologists was developed by Kelly Viland, a graduate student, and Jacalyn Weissenburger, faculty advisor for this study (See Appendix). The questionnaire included twenty retention items and a demographic information section. The items for the survey were developed from a review of literature related to school psychologists' perceptions concerning grade retention as an intervention strategy for academic failure. Thirty-five of the items were formatted on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. Also included in the survey was an Unsure Category for respondents who were uncertain about their opinion related to the particular question.

The questionnaire contained four subparts. The first subpart contained three items related to the school psychologist's district policy on grade retention. The second subpart included 13 Likert-scaled items related to the respondent's opinion about grade retention and the outcomes of grade retention on a student's academic achievement, social development, self-esteem, and attitudes towards school. Further investigated in this subpart was whether school psychologist respondents believed that grade retention can make a student more susceptible to dropping out of school. In the third subpart, three Likert-scaled items were included. These were further delineated by asking the respondent to rate the importance of who should be involved in the grade retention decision, who should have a primary role in the grade retention decision-making process, and which factors can influence the grade retention decision. The next subpart requested that the participant provide his or her preferred alternative interventions to academic failure. Finally, the respondents were asked to provide the following demographic information: age, gender, ethnicity, years of experience, highest degree attained, employment status, student enrollment in school district, the type of school district, and the state of employment.

Procedures

A questionnaire packet was mailed from the University of Wisconsin-Stout to a random sample of school psychologists across the nation ($n = 400$) as identified by the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) directory. Each packet contained a cover letter, the survey, and a postage-paid return envelope. Of the 400 surveys sent, 164 were returned, yielding a return rate of 41 %. Participants were asked to respond to

the statements of the survey related to school psychologists' perspectives concerning grade retention as an intervention strategy for academic failure.

Data analysis

The demographic information and responses to the thirty-eight individual items of the surveys were analyzed by obtaining frequency counts, percentages, means, medians, and standard deviations, when applicable, for each of the items. Independent group t-test analyses were conducted for each relevant item to determine any differences between the male and female school psychologists' perceptions of grade retention. A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to investigate whether the years of practice had a significant effect on the school psychologists' perceptions of grade retention. The results will be discussed according to each survey item. Due to the exploratory nature of the study, a significance value of .05 was used to evaluate the t-test and Anova results. Cut off Likert mean scores of 3.5 or higher and 2.5 or lower were interpreted to indicate general agreement or disagreement with each survey item.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS

Results

As shown in Tables 2 and 3, descriptive statistics reveal that the majority of school psychologists have a grade retention policy in their school district ($n = 103$; 62.8%), however, school psychologists were not overwhelmingly satisfied with their district's or school's retention policy ($M = 2.83$). Five items were related to school psychologists' perceptions regarding whether or not grade retention is as an effective intervention for academic failure. The mean ratings for these five items ranged from 1.24 to 3.25. Three of the five items were rated 2.5 or lower, suggesting that school psychologists generally do not perceive grade retention as an effective intervention. These three items addressed: the effectiveness of grade retention as an intervention for academic failure; the successfulness of grade retention for low achieving students; and the amount of catching up a child obtains from an extra year. The items school psychologists rated between 2.5 and 3.5 were the effects of grade retention can continue three or four years after a student is retained and an extra year can help a child develop and become more successful in school. These results indicate most school psychologists disagree that retention helps a child develop. They were uncertain whether many positive effects of retention would continue several years after a student was retained.

The mean score ratings of the seven items related to the effects of grade retention on a student ranged from 2.08 to 4.31. Of these seven items, two of the items were rated lower than 2.5. These items addressed the effects grade retention can have on self-esteem and social development, and generally indicated that most school psychologists

believe a student's self-esteem and social development does not improve after being retained. Three of the items were rated 3.5 or higher. These items included the effects grade retention can have on peer relationships, susceptibility to dropping out, and the application of a negative label to a child. This suggests that most school psychologists generally perceive that grade retention has negative effects for students, although retention was not generally believed to have either positive or negative effects on student engagement and motivation.

Item sets 17 and 18 investigated school psychologists' perceptions of who should be involved in the grade retention decision. There were five to seven sub-items within these item sets. The mean ratings for these item sets ranged from 3.45 to 4.60. Of the 12 sub-items, 11 were rated higher than 3.5. These results indicate that school psychologists believe many different school personnel should be involved in the grade retention decision. These school personnel included parents, teachers, principals, counselors, social workers, school psychologists, and the entire team. However, they were less convinced principals should have a primary role in the retention decision.

Item 19 addressed which factors can influence the grade retention decision. This item set included ten sub-items. The mean ratings for this item ranged from 2.46 to 4.24. Of these ten sub-items, five were rated 3.5 or higher. The sub-items considered to be influential in the retention decision included: academic achievement; maturity; social skills; classroom behavior; and attendance record. One of the ten items not considered an influential factor was a student's living situation. Other non-significant sub-items included the student's ethnicity, socioeconomic status, parental school involvement, and intellectual level. However, intellectual level was considered to be a borderline

influential factor. These results indicate that school psychologists perceived some factors as having an influence, while other factors as not having an impact on students who are retained.

To examine the impact of gender on school psychologists' perceptions of grade retention, independent group t-test analyses were conducted. As shown in table 4, the *t*-test results indicate that Item #19A *(t* (158) = 1.93, p = .055), Item #19D (*t* (159) = 1.98, p = 0.49), Item #22 (*t* (159) = 2.75, p = .002), and Item #24 (*t* (161) = 4.17, p = .000) results were affected by school psychologist's gender. All four of these items (i.e., Does ethnicity influence retention decision?; Does student living situation affect decision?; Age of respondent; and # of years as school psychologist) received higher ratings by the male school psychologists.

As shown in Table 5, a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was completed to evaluate the effects of years of practice on school psychologists' perceptions of grade retention. The one-way analysis of variance results attest that Item #17C (F (4, 158) = 6.54, $p < .00$), Item #18D (F(4, 151) = 2.56, $p < .04$) and Item #22 (F(4, 155) = 39.18, $p < .00$) results were affected by the number of years of practice as a school psychologist. All three items (i.e., Should principals be involved in the retention decision?; Should a team have a primary role in the decision? and Age of respondent) received lower ratings by school psychologists who had more years of experience. Two other items approached significance. These included Item #17E (F (4, 157) = 2.07, $p < .09$) and #17F (F (4, 157) = 2.16, $p < .07$). These results indicate years of experience may have had some impact on whether school psychologists perceived grade retention to be a team decision, as well as whether school psychologists should be involved in the retention decision.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

General findings

School psychologists' perspectives on the efficacy of grade retention were examined to better understand their position on this intervention strategy for academic failure. The purpose of this study was to investigate school psychologists' beliefs regarding the characteristics of a student that make him or her more susceptible to grade retention, and the academic, social, and emotional effectiveness of retention.

Overall, descriptive results reveal that surveyed school psychologists generally do not perceive grade retention to be an effective intervention for low achieving students. This result is congruent with NASP's position on grade retention (National Association of School Psychologists, 1998). However, the respondents also reported that grade retention is a helpful strategy when implemented in kindergarten through third grade. Therefore, results suggest although school psychologists perceive grade retention as ineffective for students of all grades, less negative effects were likely for those students in the early primary grades.

The surveyed school psychologists reported several negative effects of grade retention. As a group, they did not perceive that an extra year would improve a student's self-esteem. These findings are consistent with several previous studies regarding the effects of retention. Studies comparing retained students to promoted students have found that retained children had lower self-esteem (Hagborg et al., 1991; Holmes & Matthews, 1984; Jimerson et al.1997; Poplum, 1988; Sentenich, 1994; Smith & Shepard,

1989). A complicating factor is that self-esteem levels may rise and fall depending on which grade the student was in when he or she was assessed. Some studies have found that students' self-esteem was higher in the repeated year (Finlayson, 1977), and other studies have found no differences between retained and promoted students' self-esteem (Ammon, 1976).

The results were varied as to whether school psychologists believed a student would become more engaged in school after an extra year. Some survey respondents believed an extra year would help a child become more engaged in school, while others disagreed. Students who have been held back a year report less adaptive strategies for avoiding failure and lower perceived ability to do well in school (Pierson & Connell, 1992). Other studies have found grade retention was related with more positive perceptions of school competence. Teachers describe retained students as having difficulty getting along with peers and being more maladjusted in the classroom. Retained students were also ranked as less popular compared to their promoted peers. However, it is difficult to tell whether popularity is a cause or consequence of non-promotion (Alexander et al., 1994; Jimerson et al., 1997; Smith & Shepard, 1989).

Surveyed school psychologists did not perceive grade retention as having a positive effect on social development, and they believed students might become upset when they are removed from their familiar peer group. Little is known about the effects of grade retention on social development because it has taken a backseat to those investigations on the effects of grade retention on academic achievement. It is evident that peers play an important role in the socialization of retained children, but whether that role is positive or negative is unknown. The direction of change may depend on the

child's social skills or age. Generally, when retained students are placed with younger classmates, they are more likely to be rejected by their peers. Research indicates children are less likely to choose non-promoted students as their study companions, and they assume non-promoted students will exhibit more negative behavior (Plummer & Graziano, 1987). However, primary grade retention students tend to discriminate against children based on their size. Retained children may have higher status among their younger peers due to their relative size and age. Grade levels peers may assume a child who is bigger would be better at school and more popular (Plummer & Graziano, 1987; Cuddy, 1987). The effects of retention and promotion upon peer rejection may become clearer in the middle school years.

Overwhelmingly, surveyed school psychologists agreed that retained students were more susceptible to dropping out of high school and that grade retention attaches a negative label to students. A primary negative outcome of grade retention is the tendency for retained students to eventually drop out of school. The importance of the correlation between grade retention and school dropout has often been ignored because of the explanation that poor achievement accounts for retention and leaving school. Some dropout studies have controlled for achievement. These studies have found that normal-age students with low achievement are likely to dropout, but the dropout rate is even higher for overage students who receive average grades. It may be that being overage for grade because of retention is the causal factor that leads to school dropout. Retention may push a student out of school by reinforcing the youth's self-perception as a failure in school (Hess & Lauber, 1984; Grissom & Shepard, 1989; Roderick, 1994; Jimerson, et al., 2002).

According to the current study results, school psychologists believe various school personnel should be involved in the grade retention decision. They overwhelmingly agreed that it should be a team-based decision that includes parents, teachers, principals, school counselors or social workers, and school psychologists. The school psychologists responding to this study agreed that teachers and parents should have a primary role in the decision, although they did not perceive principals as having a central role in the decision. Speech/language pathologists, reading specialists, special education teachers, and the student were others who should be involved in the retention decision, according to this study's respondents.

There were some specific factors that surveyed school psychologists perceived as influencing the decision to retain a student. Results suggest the level of parental school involvement might be an influential factor in the retention decision. Lower levels of parental involvement in the schools have been shown to predict grade retention (Alexander et al., 1994; Byrd & Weitzman, 1994; Reynolds, 1992). School psychologists in this survey overwhelmingly agreed that academic achievement and a student's level of maturity were other important factors to consider. Retained students are more likely to have academic difficulties before they are held back a grade. Reading and mathematics achievement have been found to be significant predictors of grade retention. At the beginning of school, retained students' math and reading marks tend to be well below satisfactory while promoted students have marks averaging between satisfactory and good (Alexander et al., 1994; McCoy & Reynolds, 1999). Further, surveyed school psychologists perceived a student's attendance record as being a predictor of grade retention, while a student's living situation was not considered a primary factor

influencing the grade retention decision. However, research indicates that retainees generally come from low socioeconomic backgrounds, and their parents have lower educational attainment. Most retained students are living in one-parent households (Byrd & Weitzman, 1994; Jimerson et al., 1997).

The gender of the school psychologists responding in this study did not have a significant impact upon most of the school psychologists' perceptions related to grade retention. However, female school psychologists were less likely to perceive a student's ethnicity and living situation as being influential factors in the grade retention decision. As a group, the male participants were older and had more years of experience as school psychologists. Perhaps younger, less experienced school psychologists are less likely to consider the impact of ethnicity and home environment on a student's academic performance and school adjustment because they are newer to the profession.

Years of practice had a minimal effect upon these school psychologists' perceptions of grade retention. As would be expected, a school psychologist's years of experience had an effect on the number of student recommendations made for retention and the number of years in which retention recommendations were made. School psychologists with more years of experience had made more recommendations for retention.

One interesting finding was related to the perception about whether principals were an integral component of the retention team. It seems school psychologists with more years of experience generally believed principals should have a less important role in the retention decision. Also, years of experience had a small effect on school psychologists' perceptions of the importance of involving a team in the retention

decision. School psychologists with more experience were less likely to agree that grade retention was a team decision. Perhaps school psychology veterans had more of a role in the retention decision than did principals in our educational history. Further, it may be that an educational team did not make the retention decision in the past.

Implications for training

The results of this study indicate that practicing school psychologists generally perceive grade retention to be an ineffective intervention for academic failure. Overall, they agreed grade retention results in minimal improvement in academic achievement, low self-esteem, less developed social skills, and more susceptibility to dropping out of school. These school psychologists also overwhelmingly believed that the grade retention decision should be a team decision. Furthermore, respondents generally believed the amount of parental school involvement, a student's maturity level, academic achievement, and attendance history were influential factors in the retention decision.

There has been little research conducted assessing school psychologists' attitudes towards grade retention and why many educators continue to ignore the research regarding the practice of grade retention. Current results suggest school psychologists understand the implications of grade retention on a student's academic, social, and emotional adjustment in school. They are in a position to educate others about the detrimental effects of this practice and the plausible influential factors that make a student more susceptible to grade retention. School psychologists can assist in these decisions by evaluating a student's academic and developmental histories, previous instructional strategies, and alternative strategies available in the district. Since many educators continue to advocate for grade retention, it is important that school

psychologists share their knowledge with school personnel and parents. They have a responsibility to influence school district policies by remaining current on grade retention research.

Limitations and directions for future research

There are some limitations that emphasize the need to interpret the results with caution. First, participants were limited to practicing school psychologists who were members of NASP. Therefore, the study did not include all practicing school psychologists across the United States. Perhaps the respondents in this study have been influenced by NASP's position statement and other publications, and nonmembers may have very different views regarding the effectiveness of grade retention on academic failure.

Also, due to financial limitations, a subsequent follow-up mailing to non-respondents was not completed after the initial mailing. A follow-up mailing may have resulted in additional respondents, which likely would have yielded a higher response rate leading to more generalizable results.

Another limitation of the study is that only school psychologists' perspectives of grade retention were examined. Future research should investigate other educational professionals' perspectives on grade retention. As indicated in this study, the grade retention decision is often influenced by others, including the administrators, teachers, counselors, social workers, parents, other specialists, and the students within a school. Additional research should be conducted with these educational stakeholders to determine their perceptions regarding the effectiveness of grade retention as an intervention strategy for academic failure.

Fourth, this study only examined school psychologists' self-reported perspectives of grade retention. Thus, this study subjectively examined school psychologists' opinions of grade retention. A more objective examination would include empirical observations or experimentation.

Finally, the survey should have included more Likert formatted questions regarding alternative interventions for academic failure other than grade retention. Generally, school psychologists recommend considering alternative interventions for grade retention. School psychologists are trained to consult with and encourage educational professionals to utilize alternative remedial strategies (Rafoth, 2002).

Summary

Over the past decade, there has been public and political pressure to improve the quality of education. Schools have been encouraged to adopt grade retention policies to intervene with children who are not achieving satisfactorily. Given the large number of students who will be affected by this educational intervention, a study of the effectiveness of retention is worthy of educational research.

This survey research was conducted to determine school psychologists' perceptions of the academic, social, and emotional effectiveness of retention as an intervention. Results indicate most school psychologists perceive grade retention as an ineffective intervention for academic failure. In addition, school psychologists in this study identified few positive academic, social, and emotional outcomes of grade retention. Respondents overwhelmingly believed the decision to retain a student should be a team decision that includes various educational stakeholders. Influential factors identified by the school psychologists included academic achievement, maturity level,

attendance record, and parental school involvement of the students under consideration for retention.

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APPENDIX A

Tables

Table 1
School Psychologists' Demographics

Characteristic	*n*	%
Gender		
Female	111	67.7
Male	53	32.3
Ethnicity		
White/Caucasian	160	97.6
Black/African American	2	1.2
Hispanic/Latino	1	.6
Age		
25-29	11	6.6
30-34	7	4.2
35-39	7	4.2
40-44	21	12.8
45-49	30	18.2
50-54	55	33.6
55-59	18	10.8
60-64	10	6.1
65-77	2	1.2

Table 1 (continued)

Characteristic	*n*	%
Highest Degree Held		
Master's	6	3.7
MS/MA + 12/30 credits	12	7.3
MS/MA + 32/60/100 credits	61	37.2
Ed.S.	34	20.7
Ph.D./Ed.D./Psy.D..	42	25.6
Other	8	4.9
Employment status		
Full time	139	84.8
Part time	24	14.6
Student Enrollment in your District		
501-1000	16	9.8
1,001-3,000	26	15.9
3,001-5,000	23	14.0
5,001-8,000	15	9.1
8,001-10,000	8	4.9
10,001-13,000	11	6.7
13,001-17,000	50	30.5
8 less than 501	1	.6

Table 1 (continued)

Characteristic	*n*	%
Years of Experience		
1-5	30	18.3
6-10	7	4.2
11-15	28	17.0
16-20	35	21.4
21-25	34	20.7
26-30	25	15.1
31-35	4	2.4
Type of School/District		
Rural	48	29.3
Suburban	67	40.9
Urban	49	29.9
Cooperative Ed. Agency	10	6.1
Level of School District		
Elementary	51	31.1
Secondary	29	17.7
Pre K-12	42	25.6
Other	16	9.8

Table 1 (continued)

Characteristic	*n*	%
Grade Levels Taught at the School/District		
elem/sec/pre & k-12	13	7.9
elem/pre & k-12	11	6.7
elem/secondary	3	1.8
elementary	24	14.6
secondary	5	3
pre & k-12	26	15.9
none chosen	82	50.0

Table 2
Frequencies and Percentages of School Psychologists' Perceptions on Grade Retention (Items 1, 3-19)

Item	*n*	%
Item # 1: Does your school have a retention policy?		
Yes	103	62.8
No	35	21.3
Unsure	18	11.0
Missing	8	4.9
Item # 3: When is retention the most helpful?		
Grades K-3	111	67.7
All grades	1	.6
Never	35	21.3
Unsure	9	5.5
Other	2	1.2
Missing	6	3.7
Item #4: I am satisfied with my school's retention policy?		
Strongly Disagree	23	14.0
Disagree	41	25.0
Neutral	24	14.6
Agree	41	25
Strongly Agree	11	6.7
Unsure	12	7.3

Table 2 (continued)

Item	*n*	%
Missing	12	28.9
Item # 5: Retention is a good intervention.		
Strongly Disagree	76	46.3
Disagree	53	32.3
Neutral	18	11.0
Agree	11	6.7
Strongly Agree	3	1.8
Unsure	2	1.2
Missing	1	.6
Item # 6: Retention can be successful for low achievers.		
Strongly Disagree	66	40.2
Disagree	57	34.8
Neutral	18	11.0
Agree	19	11.6
Strongly Agree	2	1.2
Unsure	2	1.2
Missing		
Item # 7: Extra year can help a child develop and succeed.		
Strongly Disagree	32	19.5
Disagree	48	29.3

Table 2 (continued)

Item	*n*	%
Neutral	30	18.3
Agree	47	28.7
Strongly Agree	2	1.2
Unsure	3	1.8
Missing	2	1.2
Item # 8: Extra year can help a child catch up.		
Strongly Disagree	37	22.6
Disagree	55	33.5
Neutral	25	15.2
Agree	42	25.6
Strongly Agree	2	1.2
Unsure	2	1.2
Missing	1	.6
Item #9: Effects of retention can last three to four years.		
Strongly Disagree	24	14.6
Disagree	35	21.3
Neutral	14	8.5
Agree	50	30.5
Strongly Agree	36	22.0
Unsure	5	3.0

Table 2 (continued)

Item	*n*	%
Missing	0	0.0
Item #10: Retention can improve a child's self-esteem.		
Strongly Disagree	63	38.4
Disagree	51	31.1
Neutral	22	13.4
Agree	24	14.6
Strongly Agree	2	1.2
Unsure	1	.6
Missing	1	.6
Item #11: After a year, student can become engaged in school.		
Strongly Disagree	28	17.1
Disagree	56	34.1
Neutral	36	22.0
Agree	37	22.6
Strongly Agree	2	1.2
Unsure	3	1.8
Missing	2	1.2
Item #12: Retention can be positive for social development.		
Strongly Disagree	41	25.0
Disagree	46	28.0

Table 2 (continued)

Item	*n*	%
Neutral	34	20.0
Agree	37	22.6
Strongly Agree	1	.6
Unsure	2	1.2
Missing	3	1.8
Item #13: Students may be upset when removed from peer group.		
Strongly Disagree	1	.6
Disagree	1	.6
Neutral	2	1.2
Agree	102	62.2
Strongly Agree	57	34.8
Unsure	0	0.0
Missing	1	.6
Item #14: Retained students are more susceptible to dropping out.		
Strongly Disagree	2	1.2
Disagree	11	6.7
Neutral	10	6.1
Agree	61	37.2
Strongly Agree	76	46.3
Unsure	3	1.8

Table 2 (continued)

Item	*n*	%
Missing	1	.6
Item #15: Students motivated to work if told about retention.		
Strongly Disagree	23	14.0
Disagree	46	28.0
Neutral	32	19.5
Agree	50	30.5
Strongly Agree	5	3.0
Unsure	7	4.3
Item #16: Grade retention can apply negative label to child.		
Strongly Disagree	2	1.2
Disagree	8	4.9
Neutral	12	7.3
Agree	95	57.9
Strongly Agree	45	27.4
Unsure	1	.6
Missing	1	.6
Item #17A: Should parents be involved in the retention decision?		
Strongly Disagree	4	2.4
Disagree	2	1.2

Table 2 (continued)

Item	*n*	%
Neutral	1	.6
Agree	42	25.7
Strongly Agree	115	70.1
Unsure	0	0.0
Missing	0	0.0
Item #17B: Should teachers be involved in the retention decision?		
Strongly Disagree	3	1.8
Disagree	0	0.0
Neutral	0	0.0
Agree	54	32.9
Strongly Agree	107	65
Unsure	0	0.0
Missing	0	0.0
Item #17C: Should principals be involved in the retention decision?		
Strongly Disagree	5	3.0
Disagree	4	2.4
Neutral	22	13.4
Agree	72	43.9
Strongly Agree	61	37.2
Unsure	0	0.0

Table 2 (continued)

Item	*n*	%
Missing	0	0.0
Item #17D: Should counselors be involved in the retention decision?		
Strongly Disagree	2	1.2
Disagree	2	1.2
Neutral	16	9.8
Agree	69	42.1
Strongly Agree	74	45.1
Unsure	0	0.0
Missing	1	.6
Item #17E: Should psychologist be involved in decision?		
Strongly Disagree	4	2.4
Disagree	2	1.2
Neutral	7	4.3
Agree	51	31.1
Strongly Agree	99	60.4
Unsure	1	0.6
Missing	0	0.0
Item #17F: Should it be a team decision?		
Strongly Disagree	3	1.8

Table 2 (continued)

Item	*n*	%
Disagree	2	1.2
Neutral	8	4.9
Agree	29	17.7
Strongly Agree	121	73.8
Unsure	0	0.0
Missing	1	.6
Item #17G: Should others be involved in the retention decision?		
Strongly Disagree	2	1.2
Disagree	0	0.0
Neutral	5	3.0
Agree	19	11.6
Strongly Agree	11	6.7
Unsure	2	1.2
Missing	125	76.2
Item #18A: Should parents have primary role in decision?		
Strongly disagree	3	1.8
Disagree	17	1
Neutral	19	11.6
Agree	55	33.5
Strongly Agree	61	37.2

Table 2 (continued)

Item	*n*	%
Unsure	1	.6
Missing	8	4.9
Item #18B: Should teachers have a primary role in decision?		
Strongly Disagree	2	1.2
Disagree	14	8.5
Neutral	21	12.8
Agree	75	45.7
Strongly Agree	42	25.6
Unsure	1	.6
Missing	9	5.5
Item #18C: Should principals have a primary role in decision?		
Strongly Disagree	6	3.7
Disagree	18	11.0
Neutral	49	29.9
Agree	63	38.4
Strongly Agree	18	11.0
Unsure	1	.6
Missing	9	5.5

Table 2 (continued)

Item	*n*	%
Item #18D: Should a team have primary role in decision?		
Strongly Disagree	2	1.2
Disagree	5	3.0
Neutral	9	5.5
Agree	48	29.3
Strongly Agree	93	56.7
Unsure	2	1.2
Missing	5	3.0
Item #18E: Should others have primary role in decision?		
Strongly Disagree	0	0.0
Disagree	1	.6
Neutral	5	3.0
Agree	19	11.6
Strongly Agree	20	12.2
Unsure	3	1.8
Missing	116	70.6
Item #19A: Should ethnicity influence retention decision?		
Strongly Disagree	54	32.9
Disagree	32	19.5
Neutral	20	12.2

Table 2 (continued)

Item	*n*	%
Agree	43	26.2
Strongly Agree	11	6.7
Unsure	4	2.4
Missing	0	0.0
Item #19B: Should SES affect decision?		
Strongly Disagree	47	28.7
Disagree	30	18.3
Neutral	15	9.1
Agree	54	32.9
Strongly Agree	16	9.8
Unsure	2	1.2
Missing	0	0.0
Item #19C: Should parental school involvement affect decision?		
Strongly Disagree	35	21.3
Disagree	28	17.1
Neutral	21	12.8
Agree	53	32.3
Strongly Agree	24	14.6
Unsure	2	1.2

Table 2 (continued)

Item	*n*	%
Missing	1	.6
Item #19D: Should student living situation affect decision?		
Strongly Disagree	49	29.9
Disagree	38	23.2
Neutral	33	20.1
Agree	33	20.1
Strongly Agree	8	4.9
Unsure	3	1.8
Missing	0	0.0
Item #19E: Should academic achievement affect decision?		
Strongly Disagree	6	3.7
Disagree	2	1.2
Neutral	8	4.9
Agree	78	47.6
Strongly Agree	69	42.1
Unsure	1	.6
Missing	0	0.0
Item #19F: Should maturity of student affect decision?		
Strongly Disagree	5	3.0
Disagree	2	1.2

Table 2 (continued)

Item	*n*	%
Neutral	8	4.9
Agree	95	57.9
Strongly Agree	54	32.9
Unsure	0	0.0
Missing	0	0.2
Item #19G: Should social skills of student affect decision?		
Strongly Disagree	8	4.9
Disagree	11	6.7
Neutral	18	11.0
Agree	94	57.3
Strongly Agree	32	19.5
Unsure	1	.6
Missing	0	0.0
Item #19H: Should student classroom behavior affect decision?		
Strongly Disagree	15	9.1
Disagree	24	14.6
Neutral	15	9.1
Agree	73	44.5
Strongly Agree	35	21.3

Table 2 (continued)

Item	*n*	%
Unsure	2	1.2
Missing	0	0.0
Item #19I: Should student attendance record affect decision?		
Strongly Disagree	3	1.8
Disagree	10	6.1
Neutral	7	4.3
Agree	78	47.6
Strongly Agree	64	39.0
Unsure	2	1.2
Missing	0	0.0
Item #19J: Should student intellectual level affect decision?		
Strongly Disagree	21	12.8
Disagree	29	12.2
Neutral	18	11.0
Agree	80	48.8
Strongly Agree	25	15.2
Unsure	0	0.0
Missing	0	0.0

Table 3
Means and Standard Deviations of School Psychologists' Perceptions (Items 4-19)

Item	*M*	*SD*
Item #4 Satisfied with policy	2.83	1.24
Item #5 Retention good intervention	1.83	1.00
Item #6 Success for low achievers	1.98	1.05
Item #7 Extra year to develop	2.62	1.15
Item #8 Extra year to catch up	2.48	1.15
Item #9 Effects last 3-4 years	3.25	1.41
Item #10 Self-esteem	2.08	1.11
Item #11 Engaged in school	2.55	1.07
Item #12 Social Development	2.44	1.13
Item #13 Removed from peer group	4.31	.59
Item #14 Susceptibility to dropping out	4.24	.93
Item #15 Motivation	2.79	1.14
Item #16 Negative label	4.07	.81
Item #17A Parents involved	4.60	.79
Item #17B Teachers involved	4.60	.68
Item #17C Principals involved	4.10	.93
Item #17D Counselors involved	4.29	.79

Table 3 (continued)

Item	*M*	*SD*
Item #17E School psychs involved	4.47	.84
Item #17F Team decision	4.61	.80
Item #17G Others involved	4.00	.97
Item #18A Parents primary role	3.99	1.07
Item #18B Teachers primary role	3.92	.94
Item #18C Principals primary role	3.45	.98
Item #18D Team primary role	4.43	.84
Item #18E Others primary role	4.29	.76
Item #19A Ethnicity factor	2.53	1.37
Item #19B SES factor	2.77	1.43
Item #19C School involvement factor	3.02	1.41
Item #19D Living situation factor	2.46	1.25
Item #19E Academic achievement factor	4.24	.89
Item #19F Maturity factor	4.16	.82
Item #19G Social skills factor	3.80	.99
Item #19H Classroom behavior factor	3.55	1.24
Item #19I Attendance record factor	4.17	.91
Item #19J Intelligence factor	3.41	1.25

Table 4
Effects of Gender on School Psychologists' Perceptions of Grade Retention (Items 4-24)

		Male		*Female*			
Item		*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*df*	*t* value
#2S	# of student recommendations made						
		4.96	11.70	5.05	9.48	147	-.051
#2Y	# of years made recommendations						
		17.65	9.29	13.40	8.11	145	2.874**
#4	Satisfied with policy						
		2.67	1.22	2.91	1.25	138	-1.063
#5	Retention good intervention						
		1.75	.99	1.87	1.01	159	-.719
#6	Success for low achievers						
		1.92	1.10	2.00	1.03	160	-.434
#7	Extra year to develop						
		2.52	1.22	2.66	1.12	157	-.717
#8	Extra year to catch up						
		2.49	1.25	2.48	1.10	159	.043
#9	Effects last 3-4 years						
		3.17	1.48	3.28	1.39	157	-.475
#10	Self-esteem						
		2.12	1.08	2.06	1.13	160	.277

Table 4 (continued)

		Male		*Female*			
Item		*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*df*	*t* value
#11	Engaged in school						
		2.51	1.05	2.58	1.09	157	-.365
#12	Social development						
		2.34	1.19	2.49	1.10	157	-.758
#13	Removed from peer group						
		4.29	.50	4.32	.63	161	-.269
#14	Susceptibility to dropping out						
		4.22	1.01	4.25	.90	158	-.201
#15	Motivation						
		2.94	1.20	2.73	1.11	154	1.093
#16	Negative label						
		4.10	.76	4.05	.84	160	.319
#17A	Parents involved						
		4.58	.84	4.60	.77	162	-.142
#17B	Teachers involved						
		4.62	.69	4.59	.68	162	.325
#17C	Principals involved						
		4.15	.91	4.07	.95	162	.504

Table 4 (continued)

	Male		*Female*			
Item	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*df*	*t* value
#17D Counselors involved						
	4.30	.77	4.29	.81	161	.083
#17E School psychs involved						
	4.55	.91	4.43	.81	161	.852
#17F Team decision						
	4.57	.84	4.64	.77	161	-.527
#18A Parents primary role						
	3.98	1.04	4.00	1.08	153	-.106
#18B Teachers primary role						
	3.90	.93	3.92	.95	152	-.110
#18C Principals primary role						
	3.56	.89	3.39	1.02	152	.994
#18D Team primary role						
	4.37	.93	4.47	.80	155	-.708
#19A Ethnicity factor						
	2.84	1.45	2.39	1.32	158	1.934*
#19B SES factor						
	3.02	1.45	2.65	1.41	160	1.545
#19C School involvement factor						

Table 4 (continued)

	Male		*Female*			
Item	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*df*	*t* value
	3.23	1.42	2.92	1.40	159	1.324
#19D Living situation factor						
	2.75	1.37	2.33	1.18	159	1.983*
#19E Academic Achievement factor						
	4.34	.85	4.19	.91	161	.994
#19F Maturity factor						
	4.19	.81	4.15	.83	162	.258
#19G Social skills factor						
	3.81	1.06	3.80	.97	161	.068
#19H Classroom behavior factor						
	3.55	1.31	3.55	1.21	160	-.016
#19I Attendance record factor						
	4.06	1.06	4.23	.83	160	-1.109
#19J Intelligence factor						
	3.58	1.26	3.33	1.25	162	1.204
#22 Age of respondent						
	50.45	6.55	46.27	10.08	159	2.750**

Table 4 (continued)

	Male		*Female*			
Item	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*df*	*t* value
#24 # of years as school psychologist						
	21.10	8.18	15.41	8.09	161	4.171***

*p < .05 ** < .005 *** < .001

Table 5
One-Way Analysis of Variance on Effects of Years of Practice on School Psychologists' Perceptions of Grade Retention (Items 4-22)

Item	*M*	*SD*	*df*	*F*-value
#2S # of recommendations			4, 143	2.202
1-10 yrs	2.47	5.79		
11-15 yrs	2.15	3.11		
16-20 yrs	8.39	13.53		
21-25 yrs	5.21	6.85		
26+ yrs	6.88	15.65		
#2Y # of years made recommendations			4, 141	39.638 ***
1-10 yrs	4.79	4.07		
11-15 yrs	13.20	4.58		
16-20 yrs	15.87	4.84		
21-25 yrs	19.75	5.48		
26+ yrs	22.64	9.99		
#4 Satisfied with policy			4, 134	1.115
1-10 yrs	2.90	1.32		
11-15 yrs	2.78	1.35		
16-20 yrs	2.45	.95		
21-25 yrs	2.93	1.22		

Table 5 (continued)

Item	*M*	*SD*	*df*	*F*-value
26+ yrs	3.11	1.34		
#5 Good retention intervention			4, 155	1.366
1-10 yrs	2.11	1.17		
11-15 yrs	1.71	.94		
16-20 yrs	1.76	.92		
21-25 yrs	1.91	1.06		
26+ yrs	1.57	.84		
#6 Success for low achievers			4, 156	.926
1-10 yrs	2.11	1.06		
11-15 yrs	1.68	.86		
16-20 yrs	2.03	1.12		
21-25 yrs	2.12	1.09		
26+ yrs	1.89	1.07		
#7 Extra year to develop			4, 153	.666
1-10 yrs	2.64	1.05		
11-15 yrs	2.44	1.09		
16-20 yrs	2.79	1.09		
21-25 yrs	2.74	1.26		
26+ yrs	2.41	1.28		

Table 5 (continued)

Item	*M*	*SD*	*df*	*f*-value
#8 Extra year to catch up			4, 155	1.574
1-10 yrs	2.66	1.11		
11-15 yrs	2.11	.96		
16-20 yrs	2.63	1.17		
21-25 yrs	2.65	1.15		
26+ yrs	2.25	1.29		
#9 Effects last 3-4 yrs			4, 153	.547
1-10 yrs	3.09	1.40		
11-15 yrs	3.25	1.38		
16-20 yrs	3.50	1.29		
21-25 yrs	3.30	1.38		
26+ yrs	3.03	1.68		
#10 Self-esteem			4, 157	.478
1-10 yrs	2.14	1.11		
11-15 yrs	1.86	1.11		
16-20 yrs	2.15	1.05		
21-25 yrs	2.21	1.12		
26+ yrs	2.00	1.20		

Table 5 (continued)

Item	*M*	*SD*	*df*	*f*-value
#11 Engaged in school			4, 153	.428
1-10 yrs	2.51	1.01		
11-15 yrs	2.38	1.10		
16-20 yrs	2.63	1.06		
21-25 yrs	2.71	1.12		
26+ yrs	2.46	1.14		
#12 Social development			4, 153	.650
1-10 yrs	2.31	1.08		
11-15 yrs	2.54	1.10		
16-20 yrs	2.65	1.07		
21-25 yrs	2.26	1.11		
26+ yrs	2.48	1.34		
#13 Removed from peer group			4, 157	.577
1-10 yrs	4.38	.55		
11-15 yrs	4.25	.44		
16-20 yrs	4.21	.77		
21-25 yrs	4.38	.65		
26+ yrs	4.31	.47		

Table 5 (continued)

Item	*M*	*SD*	*df*	*f*-value
#14 Susceptible to dropping out			4, 154	.193
1-10 yrs	4.22	.82		
11-15 yrs	4.36	.83		
16-20 yrs	4.16	1.05		
21-25 yrs	4.21	.96		
26+ yrs	4.28	1.07		
#15 Motivation			150	1.546
1-10 yrs	2.94	1.09		
11-15 yrs	2.64	1.25		
16-20 yrs	2.82	1.04		
21-25 yrs	2.45	1.15		
26+ yrs	3.11	1.17		
#16 Negative label			156	.356
1-10 yrs	4.16	.80		
11-15 yrs	4.04	.79		
16-20 yrs	4.09	.79		
21-25 yrs	3.94	.92		
26+ yrs	4.11	.79		
#17A Parents involved			158	.668
1-10 yrs	4.68	.47		

Table 5 (continued)

Item	*M*	*SD*	*df*	*f*-value
11-15 yrs	4.75	.44		
16-20 yrs	4.51	.98		
21-25 yrs	4.47	1.11		
26+ yrs	4.62	.68		
#17B Teachers involved			4, 158	1.811
1-10 yrs	4.65	.48		
11-15 yrs	4.82	.39		
16-20 yrs	4.43	.78		
21-25 yrs	4.47	.99		
26+ yrs	4.69	.47		
#17C Principals involved			4, 158	6.535***
1-10 yrs	4.19	.81		
11-15 yrs	4.54	.58		
16-20 yrs	3.51	1.09		
21-25 yrs	4.00	1.07		
26+ yrs	4.38	.62		

Table 5 (continued)

Item	*M*	*SD*	*df*	*F*-value
#17D Counselors involved			4, 157	1.145
1-10 yrs	4.30	.74		
11-15 yrs	4.54	.64		
16-20 yrs	4.12	.77		
21-25 yrs	4.24	1.02		
26+ yrs	4.34	.72		
#17E School psychs involved			4, 157	2.067
1-10 yrs	4.54	.65		
11-15 yrs	4.67	.55		
16-20 yrs	4.23	1.00		
21-25 yrs	4.29	1.00		
26+ yrs	4.69	.81		
#17F Team decision			4, 157	2.160
1-10 yrs	4.78	.48		
11-15 yrs	4.81	.40		
16-20 yrs	4.34	1.00		
21-25 yrs	4.50	1.11		
26+ yrs	4.69	.60		

Table 5 (continued)

Item	*M*	*SD*	*df*	*F*-value
#18A Parents primary role			4, 149	.119
1-10 yrs	4.06	.93		
11-15 yrs	3.96	1.29		
16-20 yrs	3.91	1.14		
21-25 yrs	4.06	1.03		
26+ yrs	4.00	1.00		
#18B Teachers primary role			4, 148	.238
1-10 yrs	4.00	1.03		
11-15 yrs	3.77	1.07		
16-20 yrs	3.91	.83		
21-25 yrs	3.90	1.01		
26+ yrs	3.97	.82		
#18C Principals primary role			4, 148	1.433
1-10 yrs	3.33	1.05		
11-15 yrs	3.50	.95		
16-20 yrs	3.21	.95		
21-25 yrs	3.52	.96		
26+ yrs	3.76	.95		

Table 5 (continued)

Item	*M*	*SD*	*df*	*F*-value
#18D Team primary role			4, 151	2.558*
1-10 yrs	4.69	.53		
11-15 yrs	4.64	.49		
16-20 yrs	4.15	.89		
21-25 yrs	4.27	1.18		
26+ yrs	4.48	.78		
#19A Ethnicity factor			4, 154	1.116
1-10 yrs	2.46	1.43		
11-15 yrs	2.43	1.50		
15-20 yrs	2.94	1.28		
21-25 yrs	2.50	1.30		
26+ yrs	2.25	1.38		
#19B SES factor			4, 156	1.475
1-10 yrs	2.68	1.33		
11-15 yrs	2.54	1.55		
16-20 yrs	3.23	1.35		
21-25 yrs	2.82	1.36		
26+ yrs	2.46	1.55		

Table 5 (continued)

Item	*M*	*SD*	*df*	*F*-value
#19C School involvement factor			4, 155	1.367
1-10 yrs	3.03	1.34		
11-15 yrs	2.64	1.52		
16-20 yrs	3.44	1.44		
21-25 yrs	3.00	1.26		
26+ yrs	2.86	1.48		
#19D Living situation factor			4, 155	.501
1-10 yrs	2.43	1.09		
11-15 yrs	2.32	1.49		
16-20 yrs	2.69	1.16		
21-25 yrs	2.47	1.14		
26+ yrs	2.29	1.46		
#19E Academic Achievement factor			4, 157	1.036
1-10 yrs	4.41	.86		
11-15 yrs	4.04	1.16		
15-20 yrs	4.37	.69		
21-25 yrs	4.15	.74		
26+ yrs	4.14	1.03		
#19F Maturity factor			4, 158	.916
1-10 yrs	4.27	.61		

Table 5 (continued)

Item	*M*	*SD*	*df*	*F*-value
11-15 yrs	3.96	1.10		
16-20 yrs	4.31	.72		
21-25 yrs	4.12	.69		
26+ yrs	4.10	1.01		
#19G Social skills factor			4, 157	.398
1-10 yrs	3.89	.91		
11-15 yrs	3.75	1.27		
16-20 yrs	3.91	.87		
21-25 yrs	3.65	.85		
26+ yrs	3.79	1.15		
#19H Classroom behavior factor			4, 156	.741
1-10 yrs	3.70	1.10		
11-15 yrs	3.43	1.43		
16-20 yrs	3.71	1.19		
21-25 yrs	3.56	1.11		
26+ yrs	3.25	1.46		
#19I Attendance record factor			4, 156	.905
1-10 yrs	4.35	.79		
11-15 yrs	4.21	.96		
16-20 yrs	4.06	1.00		

Table 5 (continued)

Item	*M*	*SD*	*df*	*F*-value
21-25 yrs	4.22	.75		
26+ yrs	3.97	1.05		
#19J Intelligence factor			4, 158	.097
1-10 yrs	3.41	1.28		
11-15 yrs	3.39	1.50		
16-20 yrs	3.51	1.17		
21-25 yrs	3.35	1.07		
26+ yrs	3.34	1.32		
#22 Age of respondent			4, 155	39.180***
1-10 yrs	36.62	8.98		
11-15 yrs	46.69	5.82		
16-20 yrs	50.35	6.69		
21-25 yrs	50.94	4.79		
26+ yrs	55.41	5.44		

*p < .05 ** < .005 *** < .001

APPENDIX B

Survey

Grade Retention/Social Promotion Survey for School Psychologists

Please respond to all of the following items.

1. **Your school has a grade retention policy.**
   ☐ Yes ☐ No

2. **How many recommendations for grade retention have you made overall?**
   Approximately _____ in _____ years

3. **When is grade retention the most helpful?**
   ☐ Grades K-3 ☐ Grades 4-7 ☐ All grades ☐ Never
   ☐ Unsure

Please indicate whether you strongly disagree, disagree, are neutral, agree, strongly agree or are unsure to the following items.

In my opinion.....

4. **I am satisfied with my school's grade retention policy.**
   ☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree
   ☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Unsure

5. **Grade retention is a good intervention to consider for academic failure.**
   ☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree
   ☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Unsure

6. **Grade retention can be a successful intervention for low achieving students.**
   ☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree
   ☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Unsure

7. **An extra year can help a child develop and become successful in school**
   ☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree
   ☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Unsure

8. **An extra year can help a child catch up.**
   ☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree
   ☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Unsure

Turn Page

9. The effects of grade retention can continue three or four years after a student is retained.

☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Unsure

10. Grade retention can improve a child's self-esteem.

☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Unsure

11. After a year of retention, a student can become more engaged in school.

☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Unsure

12. Grade retention can have a positive effect on a student's social development.

☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Unsure

13. Retained students can become upset when they are removed from their familiar peer group.

☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Unsure

14. Grade retention can make a student more susceptible to dropping out of school.

☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Unsure

15. Students can be motivated to work harder when they know there is a possibility that they might be retained.

☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Unsure

16. Grade retention can apply a negative label to a child.

☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Unsure

Continue

Please answer the following items to the best of your knowledge.

17. Who do you believe should be involved in the grade retention decision?

a. Parents
☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Unsure

b. Teachers
☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Unsure

c. Principal(s)
☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Unsure

d. Counselors/ social workers
☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Unsure

e. School Psychologists
☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Unsure

f. Team decision
☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Unsure

g. Other:_____
☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Unsure

18. Who should have a primary role in the grade retention decision-making process?

a. Parents
☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Unsure

b. Teachers
☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Unsure

Continue

c. Principal(s)
☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Unsure

d. Team decision
☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Unsure

e. Other:_____
☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Unsure

19. Which factors can influence the grade retention decision?

a. The ethnicity of the student:
☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Unsure

b. The socioeconomic status of the student:
☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Unsure

c. The student's parental involvement in the school:
☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Unsure

d. The student's living situation (i.e., living in a one or a two parent household):
☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Unsure

e. The academic achievement of the student:
☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Unsure

f. The maturity of the student:
☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Unsure

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g. The social skills of the student:
☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Unsure

h. The classroom behavior of the student:
☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Unsure

i. The attendance record of the student:
☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Unsure

j. The intellectual level of the student:
☐ Strongly Disagree ☐ Disagree ☐ Neutral ☐ Agree
☐ Strongly Agree ☐ Unsure

Please answer to the best of your knowledge.

20. Do you think some interventions are preferable to grade retention? If so, indicate in the lines below.

_____
_____
_____
_____

Please provide the following background information.

21. Gender: ☐ Female ☐ Male

22. Age: _____ years of age

23. Ethnicity: ☐ White/Caucasian ☐ Black/African American
☐ Asian American ☐ Pacific Islander ☐ Native American
☐ Hispanic/Latino ☐ Other

24. Number of years as a school psychologist:_____ years

25. Highest degree held: ☐ M.S. ☐ M.S. + 12 credits ☐ M.S. + 32 credits
☐ Ed.S. ☐ Ph.D. or Ed.D. ☐ Other

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26. Employment status: ☐ Full time ☐ Part time

27. Student enrollment in your school district:

☐ 501-1000 ☐ 1001-3000 ☐ 3001-5000 ☐ 5001-8000
☐ 8001-10,000 ☐ 10,001-13,000 ☐ 13,001-17,000+

28. Please characterize the type of school and district in which you work (Check all that apply).

☐ Rural ☐ Suburban ☐ Urban ☐ Elementary

☐ Cooperative Education Agency ☐ Secondary ☐ Pre K-12

☐ Other_____

29. State of employment: _____

Thank-you

APPENDIX C

Survey Letter

STOUT
UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN

University of Wisconsin-Stout
P.O. Box 790
Menomonie, WI 54751-0790

February 4, 2002

Dear Colleague,

The University of Wisconsin-Stout is conducting a survey regarding school psychologists' perceptions concerning grade retention as an intervention strategy for academic failure. Our intent is to collect data from a random sample of school psychologists from the United States.

Attached is a survey that asks you some questions related to your perceptions about grade retention. It also ask you to provide some background information. The survey takes less than 15 minutes to complete. Please return the completed survey in the preaddressed, prepaid envelope by **June 1, 2002.**

Although your participation is voluntary, we strongly encourage you to complete the questionnaire. The information you provide is important for informing educators about school psychologists' perceptions regarding grade retention. School psychologists often are important contributors in the retention decision-making process. The information will be kept strictly confidential, though the envelopes will have code numbers to allow for follow-up surveys. The identifying information and other findings only will be reported on a group basis.

If you have any questions, please contact Jacalyn Weissenburger, Assistant Professor in the Department of Education; School Counseling; School Psychology at the University of Wisconsin-Stout, (715-232-1326). We truly appreciate your participation in this project.

Sincerely,

Kelly Viland
UW-Stout Graduate Student

Jacalyn Weissenburger
UW-Stout Assistant Professor

Informed Consent:
I understand that by completing this questionnaire, I am giving my informed consent as a participating volunteer in this study. I understand the basic nature of the study and agree that any potential risks are exceedingly small. I also understand the potential benefits that might be realized from the successful completion of this study. I am aware that the information is sought in specific manner so that only minimal identifiers are necessary and confidentiality is guaranteed. I realize that I have the right to refuse my participation at any time during the study. Additionally, I understand that the results of the study only will be reported on a group basis.

Questions or concerns about participation in the study should be addressed first to the research advisor (Jacalyn Weissenburger, 715-232-1326 or weissenburgj@uwstout.edu), and second to the UW-Stout Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects, 11 Harvey Hall, Menomonie, WI, 54571.