

Examining the Efficacy of Retention Practices

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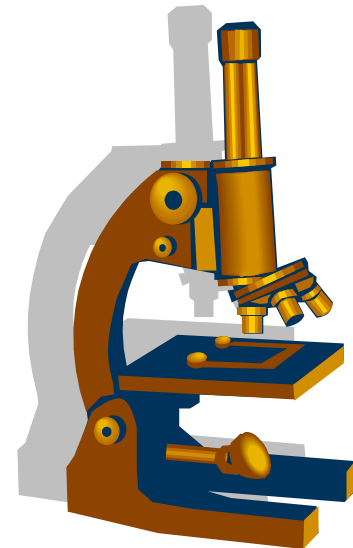
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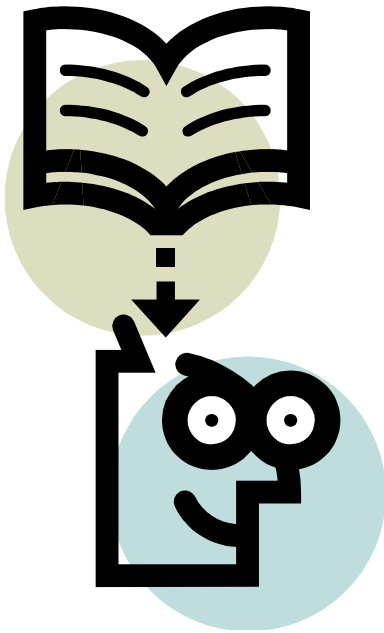
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Why We're Here

- Examine Research
- Propose an Alternative
- Engage in Questions



Outcomes of Grade Retention



- Academic Achievement
- Socioemotional Adjustment

Retention: a Common Practice

- Began in one-room school houses
- Increased over the past 25 years
- Estimated
 - 10-15% U.S. students retained each year
 - 30-50% retained at least once before Grade 9



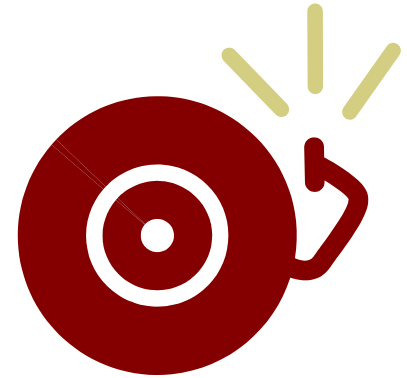
Changing Trends

- Historically, majority occurred in K-3
- 2001 report of 16 Southern states Grade 9 most common for retention



Surveys of 6th Graders— Stressful Life Events

- In '80s
 1. Loss of parent
 2. Going blind
 3. Being retained in school
- In 2001
 1. Being retained in school
 2. Loss of parent
 3. Going blind



Retention vs Social Promotion

- Long-term debate
- Clinton's urge to halt social promotion
- High-stakes accountability
- Century of research that fails to support the efficacy of grade retention
- Urged to abandon debate in favor of more productive course of action

National Association of School Psychologists

. . . Promotes use of interventions that are evidence-based and effective and discourages the use of practices which, though popular or widely accepted, are either not beneficial or are harmful to the welfare and educational attainment of America's children and youth.

Most at risk for retention

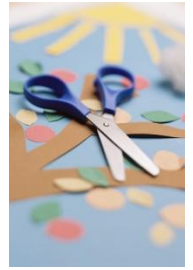
- Male
- African American or Hispanic
- Have a late birthday
- Delayed development and/or attention problems
- Live in poverty or in a single-parent household
- Have parents with low educational attainment
- Have parents who are less involved in their education
- Have changed schools frequently



Most likely to be retained

- Poverty—2-3 times more likely to be retained
- Behavior problems
- Display aggression or immaturity
- Reading problems—including ELL
- Children of middle/upper class families who request retention (or delay start of K--redshirting) for competitive advantage (academic/athletic)

Impact at elementary level



- No evidence of positive effect on either long-term school achievement or adjustment
- Early retention practices predictive of numerous health and emotional risk factors by adolescence
- Achievement gains in year retained decline within 2-3 years of retention to poorer performance than that of promoted children

New York Study

When compared to matched-ability peers who had not been retained, retainees showed

- Lower educational expectations for themselves
- More disruptive behavior
- Less impulse control
- External locus of control



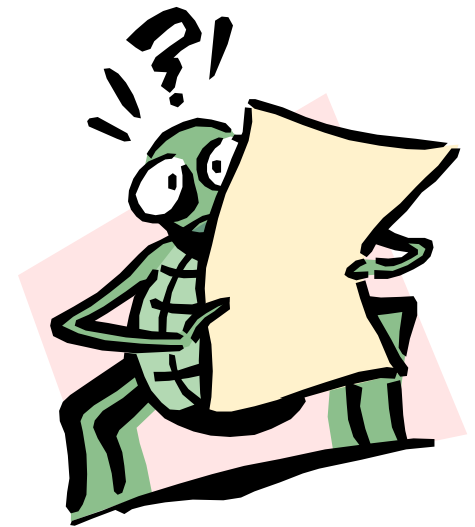
Meta-Analysis 1990-1999

- 20 studies
 - Professional publication
 - Address efficacy of grade retention
 - Identifiable comparison group of promoted students
 - Past decade
 - Most K-3
 - Some K-8



Scientific Comparison

- Comparison group variables (matching)
 - IQ (45%)
 - Academic achievement (65%)
 - Socioemotional adjustment (30%)
 - SES (75%)
 - Gender (70%)



Effect Size



- Effect size—standardized with respect to the comparison group standard deviation (negative effect size indicates intervention had negative or deleterious effect relative to comparison group)
- Effect size equals the size of the effect of the treatment or intervention
 - Small .20
 - Medium .50
 - Large .80
- Effect Size can be expressed as amount of improvement in percentile gain

An Effect Size of ...	Would increase percentile scores from:
+0.10	50 to 54
+0.20	50 to 58
+0.30	50 to 62
+0.40	50 to 66
+0.50	50 to 69
+0.60	50 to 73
+0.70	50 to 76
+0.80	50 to 79
+0.90	50 to 82
+1.00	50 to 84

What Is Known—Impact of Retention

- Negative effect on all areas of achievement
- Average effect size = $-.39$
 - Reading ES = $-.54$
 - Math ES = $-.49$
 - Language Arts ES = $-.36$

What Is Known—Impact of Retention

- Negative socioemotional/behavioral impact
- Average effect size = $-.22$
 - Social ES = $-.08$
 - Emotional ES = $-.28$
 - Behavioral ES = $-.11$
 - Self-concept ES = $-.04$
 - Adjustment ES = $-.15$
 - Attendance ES = $-.65$

Later Impact

- 78% of dropouts were retained at least once
- Increases risk of dropping out 20-50%
- Students who have been retained 2-11 times more likely to drop out of school
- Retention is single most powerful predictor of dropping out of school

Retainees More Likely To Also

- Work at lower-paying jobs
- Suffer from substance abuse
- Spend time in jail



So what do we do?



- Recognize this is a school expert's decision—not a parent's decision
 - Inherent authority of Board and administration
 - Not a parental right
- Develop positive school/family relationships
- Help parents to learn impact of retention (based on research)
- Implement 3-Tier approach to instructional delivery that is based on prevention

Expectations



- Open-mindedness to power to improve learning for all students
- All teachers need to help all teachers help all students
- Failure is simply not an option

We remind each other

- If a magic wand existed, we would already have it
- Efficacy demands paying attention to the research and what it tells us
- Change is difficult and slow
- Persistence matters
- Everyone pulling in the same direction = mighty force

