

A STUDY TO DETERMINE  
PROMOTION OR RETENTION  
OF AT RISK FIRST GRADE STUDENTS

MASTER'S PROJECT

Submitted to the School of Education  
University of Dayton, in Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Master of Science in Education

by

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I would like to dedicate this project to my social and academically successful high school son, Michael, who has given me the insight needed to retain children for success.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### Purpose of the Study

Every year thousands of children fail to meet prescribed standards of performance and as a consequence are retained at their present grade level (McKee, 1986). Promotion or retention is a dilemma for teachers and parents.

The majority of retention today occur in kindergarten or first grade (Wortham & Patton, 1992). It is the belief of the author that retention is better and more beneficial for children if it is done in kindergarten or first grade. Pomplun (1988) found that retained first and second grade students showed significant improvement on standardized tests of reading, language, and mathematics.

The author is currently a first grade teacher and is faced with making recommendations that children be retained in first grade. Drawing from professional experience the author feels many aspects of the child and the educational program should be considered before retention is used as intervention. The author intends to derive retention guidelines from review of the literature, professional people in the field of education and parents. The purpose of the guidelines is to systematically implement retention for the appropriate placement of at risk students. It appears there is a need to become more knowledgeable about the advantages, disadvantages, and methodology used concerning grade retention. There is a need for retention guidelines.

Presumably such guides would serve in appropriately retaining or promoting students.

Three reasons the guidelines are needed: 1) some schools base promotion/retention policies solely on standardized test scores (Chafe, 1984), 2) this study is directed at the first grade level and most retention occurs in kindergarten and first grade (Wortham & Patton, 1992), 3) the use of procedures and policies which are systematic, consistent, and which reflect research findings will eliminate abuses of retention (Walker, 1984).

The author believes kindergarten and first grade to be a momentous time in a child's educational career. These years may effect the student's entire educational career. It is for the above reasons that this project is believed to be important. A study of this kind is needed by the author and perhaps others. The beneficiaries of this research will be children and the author.

#### Statement of the Problem

The purpose of the study was to analyze policies and perceptions of teachers and parents about retention of at risk first grade students.

#### Definition of Terms

Grade Repetition, Nonpromotion, Retained, Retention: These terms refer to the practice of having a student repeat an entire grade level after having been at that grade level for an entire school year.

Promotion: Promotion is the practice of advancing a student from one grade level to the next highest level.

Social Promotion: Social Promotion is the practice of placing a child in the next grade even though the child has not mastered the skills required for that grade.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

#### Historical Perspective

The practice of grade retention began in the mid-19th century when graded schools began to replace the one-room schoolhouse (Chafe, 1984). Children were kept in the same grade until they had mastered the curriculum at that level.

Grade retention based on academic achievement remained a common practice in American schools throughout the nineteenth century and the first part of the twentieth century. In the 1930's, however, research began to question its value (Chafe, 1984). It was felt that the possible damage to the social development was not worth the minimal gains in cognitive development retention may bring. As a result of these studies the rates of nonpromotion decreased from over 50 percent at the turn of the century to approximately 25 percent in the 1930's, then to 10 percent in the 1950's to about 5 percent in the 1960's. Research conducted in the 1950's and 1960's were not as uniformly negative as the studies done through the 1940's. More recent studies indicate that retention could help a significant proportion of failing children if they are carefully selected to repeat a grade (Ames, 1981; Bocks, 1977; Safer et. al, 1977; Abiden et. al, 1971; Gorton and Robinson,, 1970; Williams, 1970; Scott and Ames, 1969; Peyton, 1968; Chansky, 1964; Coffield and Bloomers, 1956).

Social promotion became an accepted practice. Social promotion remained popular until there was a decline in academic achievement. The

push towards educational accountability and academic excellence has many educators and non-educators advising a return to retention as a means of assuring academic excellence. By 1980, 33 states had some form of proficiency standards for both elementary and secondary students, and the remaining states had legislation pending or studies commissioned dealing with this subject (Stiles, 1963).

Research on the effects of retention goes back as far as 1911. The major point the reader of research on this topic becomes aware of is that the research suffers from poor methodology. The following is an example of this point. In the past 70 years, there have been about 50 studies on retention. Unfortunately, most of this research suffers from poor methodology. Most of the research compares the progress or rate of growth of the same child in the first year of the grade with the progress made in the second year of the grade. Maturation and environmental changes were not considered. Therefore, this procedure was biased toward the benefits of retention. Other research has compared matched groups of retained and promoted students whose assignment to the different groups was not random but was based on school decisions. Since the retained children presumably had some deficits relative to the promoted children and because the two groups received different instruction, this design is biased toward indicating the disadvantages of retention. Whether a particular study finds retention to be beneficial or detrimental depends in large part upon the research design chosen for the study.

Another research design studied a group of students identified for retention under normal school policies. One-half of the group was randomly chosen for promotion while the other half was retained. The short-term and

long-term effects of grade retention could then be observed from comparisons of these two groups in the following year and in later years. Only three studies under this design could be found and all of them had additional problems. An analysis of the findings of these studies did not support or reject retention as an educational policy. A number of methodological problems remain that make it difficult to reject grade retention as an educational practice and policy on empirical grounds alone (Reynolds, 1992). The main point is poor methodology makes the study invalid.

Research has not produced data strongly supporting one type of placement over the other. Therefore, school officials have been basing their decisions on two sets of considerations. One set of considerations concerns the student's achievement level, social-emotional development, chronological age, and a variety of textual variables, e.g., parental attitudes towards the placement decisions and school norms (Rose, Medway, Cantrell, and Marus, 1983).

The other set of considerations is philosophical biases. Philosophical biases regarding grade promotion versus retention act as a mediating variable in the decision making process. The two philosophical issues being debated by educators are: (a) the impact of the failure experience, and (b) the degree to which students or schools are responsible for the student achievement (Rose et al. 1983).

Literature review reveals a common belief among many educators that the research on retention is equivocal; therefore, they feel justified in relying on their good judgment and personal experience in recommending retention for students. The author believes the effect of this is reflected in Campbell and Bowman's (1993), statistics that three out of ten children show positive

gains when retained. Perhaps a systematic approach using researched policies for retention would improve the number of students showing positive gains. The author has searched for one or another predictive mechanism. There is no currently available retention scale that will predict how successful a retained student will be in the literature review.

All children are different therefore, we need to know much more about children and their curriculum before we will be able to match aspects of children with aspects of the intervention to make retention a valuable experience for children (Sandoval, 1984). Literature reports that retention can be beneficial for some children if certain conditions are met. About three out of ten children seem to gain more from retention than from promotion (Campbell and Bowman, 1993). These statistics appear to indicate the importance of research based, decision making policies on retention.

Reasons for Retention. Light stated some reasons for retention in his studies. Light feels the child who is immature will benefit from additional time in which social and intellectual maturity can develop. A child who is far behind his classmates holds back the rest of the class. This can cause a stressful situation for the child. In our competitive society, a child should learn that he must earn what he is given. Promoting a child who has failed is unfair to students who have worked hard for their promotion. A child who cannot do the work of the grade he has just completed cannot possibly understand what is presented in the next grade level (Light, 1986). Promoting a child who is "not ready" can be harmful to the child's personal adjustment and self concept (Dawson, Rafoth 1991).

Reasons Against Retention. Retention is not cost effective. The National Education Association estimated that in 1989-1990 United States

schools spent an average of \$4,890 per Kindergarten -twelfth grade per pupil (Dawson, Rafoth 1991). Research suggest that the act of retention increases the likelihood that students will subsequently drop out of school. (Dawson, Rafoth 1991). Small percentage of those may be helped, the evidence indicated that educators are unable to predict accurately which individuals these will be (Dawson, Rafoth 1991). Until definitive research exists to support retention, it seems inadvisable to retain children at all (Walker 1984). Funk found that children with poor self images were "devastated emotionally" by retention (Walker, 1984). Students that are retained show no significant positive gains (Coffield, Bloomers, 1956).

#### Summary

In summary, the research suffers from poor methodology. It is inconclusive and invalid. It would seem proper placement is the first step towards successful retention/intervention practices. Therefore, objective and valid criteria on which to base the decision are necessary.

## CHAPTER III

### PROCEDURES

#### Subjects

Parents. Thirty parents of elementary school aged children completed questionnaires for the study. The parents were chosen at random from the community involved in the study.

Teachers. Fifteen teachers were selected to fill out questionnaires on student development. These teachers averaged 16.6 years experience teaching in elementary schools. Twelve of the fifteen teachers have a Master's Degree in Elementary Education. All teachers presently teach in Darke County Schools.

#### Setting

School. The school in the study is located in Darke County, Ohio. The building is old but, well kept. The building houses 456 students grades K-6. It is staffed with twenty-four teachers, one principal, one secretary, one full time and one part-time clerical aides, three cooks, one cafeteria supervisor, and two custodians. The school property includes a nature reserve area used by many science classes and an extensive play area for recess activities. The school setting is surrounded by agricultural fields.

Community. The community in the study is small and conservative (approximately 1,100 citizens). The location is approximately twenty miles

northwest of Dayton, Ohio. The main industry is grain farming. As in all communities there is a wide range of careers therefore, the income varies. The average income per household is \$35,000. The community has several active organizations including Lions Club , Kiwanis, and an Environmental Group. There is a very strong and active Parent Teacher Organization. Much of the success of the school is due to the caring support of the community. School academic teams, athletic teams, and music programs are greatly supported by the community. This describes the kind of community in the study.

### Data Collection

Construction of the Data Collecting Instrument. Two questionnaires and one set of interview questions were constructed. For clarity of reading the questionnaires will be referred to as questionnaire A and questionnaire B.

Questionnaire A. Skills to be used in deciding the promotion or retention of first grade students were developed by reviewing the literature. The author compiled skills characteristic of first grade and constructed a questionnaire, questionnaire A. ( The appendix contains a copy of the questionnaire .) The questionnaire was divided into three domains: intellectual, social-emotional and physical factors. Each section included fifteen factors listed in random order.

Questionnaire B. Review of the literature revealed parental support as a factor in successful use of retention for intervention. Therefore, questions directed at parents were compiled from review of the literature, questionnaire B.

Teacher Interview. Seven questions were put together from review of

the literature and the author's professional experiences.

Administration of the Data Collecting Instrument. Questionnaire A. Fifteen first and second grade teachers in Darke County Elementary schools were personally asked by the author to complete and return the questionnaire in a stamped self-addressed envelope included with the questionnaire. Permission from the Superintendent was granted before the questionnaire was distributed. A copy of the letter requesting permission can be found in the appendix.

Questionnaire B. Thirty questionnaires were hand delivered and/or mailed to parents with a cover letter explaining the reason for the questionnaire and asking their assistance in completing and returning the questionnaire. Permission from the Superintendent was granted before the questionnaire was circulated.

The letter requesting permission can be found in the appendix.

Interview of Teachers. The author set up times to interview four primary teachers. These times were scheduled during plan periods of the school day.

In reviewing the literature the author studied three systematic approaches to retention. Those studied were Light's Retention Scale (1986), Lieberman's Decision-Making Model (1980), and Goodlad's Promotion/Retention Criteria (1954).

## CHAPTER IV

### RESULTS

#### Presentation of the Results

To tabulate the results of the returned questionnaires descriptive statistics were used. A composite judgment of the importance of the items was determined by the weighted totals for all the returned questionnaires. Questionnaires using ranking can provide a generalized evaluation of material.

Review of the literature revealed parental support as a factor in successful use of retention for intervention. A questionnaire was developed from the literature to get feedback from parents of school aged children. The results are in Table IV.

The author interviewed four primary teachers. All four teachers had ten years experience and a master's degree in education. The purpose of the interviews was to gain insight on validity of retention from experienced experts in the field. The data from these interviews was used for partial development of the retention guidelines.

The retention guidelines will be used by the author to make educated decisions on promotion or retention of at risk first grade students. Therefore, the author felt the need for the school psychologist to check the validity of the developed guide. The letter requesting her professional opinion can be found in the appendix.

A total of eleven of the fifteen teacher questionnaires were returned for a 73 percent response to the project. The average number of years of teaching experience for the fifteen teachers participating was 16.6.

The responses were tabulated to show the overall teacher response.

The five most important items in each section were arranged into a checklist. The study suggest that if there is a deficit in these areas the child is at risk. It appears from the study that the checklist can help in identifying at risk first grade students.

Results of the teacher questionnaire for Intellectual Factors conclude the following to be the most important: (a) grade level word attack skills, (b) grade level comprehension, (c) follows direction, (d) grade level sight words, (e) use of oral language (can express ideas). Find Table 1 on the following pages for statistics from this questionnaire.

TABLE I  
QUESTIONNAIRE A  
INTELLECTUAL FACTORS FOR RETENTION

<u>Intellectual Factors</u>	<u>Raw Score</u>	<u>% Response</u>
Grade level and word attack	27	40.7
Grade level comprehension	29	37.4
Follows directions	53	20.8
Grade level sight words	57	19.3
Using oral language (can express ideas)	58	19.0
Number recognition (0-10)	71	15.5
Sequencing skills (can sequence events in a story)	72	15.3
Reads independently	77	14.3
Can create and write a simple story	80	13.8
Rote memory of addition facts 0-10	82	13.4
Forms letters well, writes legibly in daily work	87	12.6
Demonstrates problem solving skills	89	12.4

Rote memory of subtraction facts 0-10	90	12.2
Demonstrates an awareness of sentence structure	94	11.7
<u>Has classification skills (puts things into categories)</u>	<u>97</u>	<u>11.3</u>

Teachers were ask to rank the five most important intellectual factors, one being the most important.

Results of the teacher questionnaire for Social-Emotional Factors conclude the following to be the most important: (a) listens well, (b) respects adult authority, (c) self control (normal aggressiveness, competitiveness), (d) attitude (feels learning is important), (e) can take care of own needs (buttoning, tying shoes). See Table II for statistics for this questionnaire.

TABLE II  
QUESTIONNAIRE B  
SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL FACTORS FOR RETENTION

<u>Social-emotional factors</u>	<u>Raw score</u>	<u>% response</u>
Listens well	38	28.9
Respects adult authority	42	26.2
Self control (normal aggressiveness, competitiveness)	46	23.9
Attitude (feels learning is important)	47	23.4
Can take care of own needs (buttoning, tying shoes)	48	22.9
Seeks help when needed	61	18.0
Works independently	62	17.7
Relates to peers (shares, takes turns)	63	17.5
Works well with others	69	15.9
Initiative (industrious)	82	13.4
Organizational skills (desk, books, papers)	85	12.9

Doesn't talk out of turn	85	12.9
Uses time wisely	88	12.5
Completes assignments promptly	93	11.8
<u>Shows good sportsmanship (plays games fairly)</u>	<u>103</u>	<u>10.7</u>

Teachers were ask to rank the five most important social-emotional factors, one being most important.

Results of the teacher questionnaire for Physical Factors conclude the following to be the most important: (a) fine motor skills (coloring, cutting, printing), (b) alert (seems to be rested), (c) seldom ill (good general health), (d) attention span, (e) vitality (can keep up with others). The complete checklist can be found in the appendix. See Table III for statistics.

TABLE III  
QUESTIONNAIRE C  
PHYSICAL FACTORS FOR RETENTION

<u>Physical Factor</u>	<u>Raw score</u>	<u>% response</u>
Fine motor skills (coloring, cutting, printing)	46	23.9
Alert (seems to be rested)	53	20.8
Seldom ill (good general health)	56	19.6
Attention span (A.D.D.)	60	18.3
Vitality (can keep up with the others)	63	17.5
Developed speech (articulation)	64	17.2
Can print alphabet	67	16.4
July, August, September birthday	71	15.5
Normal hearing	72	15.3
Normal vision	73	15.1

Gross motor skills (running, hopping, jumping)	76	14.5
Hyperactive	88	12.5
Holds pencil properly	88	12.5
Stands while working	99	11.1
<u>Free from physical handicaps</u>	<u>107</u>	<u>10.3</u>

Teachers were ask to rank the five most important physical factors, one being most important.

A total of twenty-seven of the thirty parent questionnaires were returned for 90% response. Statistical results are presented and can be found in Table IV. A summary of the results show: (1) 74% of the parents participating in the study feel repeating first grade can help a child be more successful, (2) 40% feel repeating first grade would make little difference in a child's success, (3) 78% feel repeating first grade would be harmful to a child, (4) 48% of the parents want to be informed of retention possibilities third quarter, 37% wanted to be informed second quarter, (5) 78% thought it would be helpful to observe in their child's classroom to see expectations, (6) immaturity was the number one ranked reason for retention, developmental delays was the second ranked, (7) 45% strongly disagree with the philosophy of when in doubt retain, (8) 60% thought talking with a formerly retained child would benefit the child to be retained, (9) 60% thought it would be beneficial to talk with a previously retained child, (10) 88% feel a child should never be retained more than once.

TABLE IV  
PARENT QUESTIONNAIRE



10. Do you think a child should ever be retained more than once?

YES 11%      NO 89%

The author interviewed four primary teachers. These teachers each had at least ten years experience in primary education and a master's degree in education. The interview centered around their individual philosophy on grade retention. Specific questions can be found in the appendix. The following sentences summarize the information from the interviews. All of the teachers had retained students. Three of them referred to Light's Retention Scale when asked about retention criteria. All teachers said schools should have retention policies for the students as well as for the protection of teachers. They agreed that there should be a retention team. This team should be made up of the classroom teacher, special education teacher, the school psychologist, a classroom teacher other than the child's teacher, and the physical education teacher. The parents should be involved in the retention process. Parents should be informed no later than the third quarter. Parents should have several opportunities to discuss and voice all their concerns. The consensus was unanimous that the most successful retention practices were backed by supportive positive parents.

From the results of the study the author found that it is quite probable that many schools have no consistent policies, procedures, or criteria to systematically implement retention. From the study the author will be able to use the following guidelines to assist in making the best recommendation for the proper placement of at risk first grade students. It is hoped that other first grade teachers who are faced with the retention/promotion decision will find the following procedures helpful.

The study identified five characteristics from each of the following domains as being signs of at risk first grade students. If these characteristics fit the student, then it appears there is reason for concern.

The following pages suggest guidelines, developed from the study, to follow if a first grade student fits the characteristics of "at risk "first grade students.

Intellectual signs of at risk first grade students include:

1. word attack skills are below grade level
2. comprehension skills are below grade level
3. has a difficult time following directions
4. basic number of sight words are below grade level
5. use of oral language is below grade level

Social-Emotional signs of at risk first grade students include:

1. deficit in listening skills
2. has little interest in what the teacher has to offer
3. compared to the norm of the class the child seems to have little or no self control
4. the child is interested in learning but, not in a first grade setting
5. the child cannot take care of own personal needs (tying shoes, buttoning or zipping clothes)

Physical Signs of at risk first grade students include:

1. fine motor skills (coloring, cutting, printing)
2. does not appear to be alert (seems tired)
3. poor general health, is often ill
4. short attention span compared to the rest of the class
5. low vitality, has trouble keeping up with other classmates

Does the child fit the "at risk" criteria? If the answer is affirmative, then it is recommended the guidelines developed from the study be followed.

The teacher contacts the school nurse to perform a hearing and vision test. The vision test should not only include visual acuity but, tracking as well.

The teacher contacts the parents of the child and schedules a conference time. This is a time for teachers as well as parents to share. Parents may bring valuable input as to why the child is performing the way he/she is at the present time. Teachers can share the first grade program and expectations for first grade students. Instructions can be shared on how parents can help at home. If no improvement is observed after a reasonable time following the conference and other intervention strategies such as remedial classes have shown no improvement, then the teacher refers the child to the school psychologist.

Teacher Refers Child to School Psychologist. When a child is referred to the school psychologist it is vital to have documentation of work samples and incidents that have occurred.

Role of School Psychologist. The school psychologist will provide valuable information to assist in the decision-making process about retention of the child by examining:

1. the child's school and developmental history
2. reasons for school failure (e.g., emotional problems, low ability, frequent school moves, or absences)
3. the effectiveness of instruction (e.g., teaching practices, the match between teaching and learning style and between student achievement level and curricular demands)

4. the type and quality of alternative strategies (e.g., direct instruction, remedial services, cooperative learning, peer tutoring, etc.)
5. student attitude toward retention and level of parental support, and
6. the extent of alternative programming available in both the new and repeated grades (Dawson and Rafoth, 1991)

The psychological and educational evaluation will consist of testing, observations in the classroom and data from the teacher. This process can give valuable information about the child's cognitive abilities, language skills, perceptual functioning, memory, attention span, and overall style of learning.

Findings. When the evaluation is completed the school psychologist will meet with the intervention team (classroom teacher, remedial teachers, special education teacher, and the physical education teacher) to share information and make a recommendation. After a recommendation has been presented and is accepted by the team as being in the best interest of the child a conference is set up with the parents.

School Psychologist Conference with Parents. This conference is usually set up for the psychologist and parents only. Many times parents are more comfortable when they can discuss their child in a one on one situation. All testing information is shared with the parents at this conference. If the results indicate possible retention the recommendation is made at this time. If the results indicate a learning disability it would be addressed at this conference.

Parent involvement in the decision of a child's education plan is of vital importance. Whatever decision is made the parents must be convinced it is

the right decision for their child. The school superintendent has the power to make the final decision. The conference must be documented. A form can be found in the appendix for documentation.

Advice for Parents. It is imperative that parents can support the decision. Parents need to: 1. be convinced that it is best for their child, 2. encourage your child to talk with students who have been retained, 3. understand that your child has not failed, your child just needs more time, and 4. realize this is a chance for their child to develop talents and abilities to their fullest potential.

Recommendation. For more research and information on establishing a systematic approach to retention decisions the author recommends retention criteria by Goodlad, Lieberman's decision making model, and a retention scale by Light.

Summary. The majority of the literature on elementary school grade retention suggests that the possibility of pernicious consequences is greater with retention than promotion. There will be situations at the kindergarten, first, second grade levels where retention might be the appropriate alternative. The use of procedures and policies which are systematic, consistent, and which reflect research findings will eliminate abuses of retention (Walker, 1984).

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Restatement of the Problem

The purpose of the study was to analyze policies and perceptions of teachers and parents regarding retention of at risk first grade students.

#### Conclusions

After reviewing the related literature, results of the teacher questionnaires, parent questionnaires, teacher interviews, and professional experience the author agrees that retention at the first grade level can be beneficial to children if the correct characteristics are identified. This is in agreement with many researchers who contend that if retention has to take place, an early placement has the most positive results (Ames, 1981; Hall & Wallace, 1986; Horn, 1976; Rose et al., 1983; Sandoval & Fitzgerald, 1985). It is also in agreement with others that indicate that retention can help a significant number of failing students if they are carefully selected to repeat a grade (Ames, 1981; Bocks, 1977; Williams 1970).

#### Recommendations

The author recommends that schools develop procedures/guidelines to select children to be retained. These procedures should assist educators and parents in identification of children most likely to benefit from retention. The following policies have been adopted by the School Administrative Unit #56, Somersworth, New Hampshire and are intended to give assistance in

identifying those children who are most likely to benefit and those who are not: (1) retention is never to be used as punishment, (2) retention is never to be used to supplant other educational services (e.g., remedial instruction or special education), (3) retention decisions will be informed by team discussion guided by an objective process that considers a variety of relevant factors, (4) retention after the second grade will occur only under the most extenuating circumstances (e.g., a student unavailable for instruction due to prolonged illness), (5) while the assignment of students is the legal prerogative of the Superintendent of schools, retention decisions will be mutually agreeable to parents and school (Dawson and Rafoth, 1991). It is further recommended that inservice training on retention be available for all primary teachers.

It is recommended by the author that retention not be used to treat all complex human and academic problems. The research is inconclusive. Each at risk student must be individually evaluated. The evaluation and decision should be completed by a team of professionals with parent involvement.

School districts and school principals are urged to collect their own data, both on students retained and students promoted, and to use this data to help shape retention policies.

## APPENDICES

## APPENDIX A

Dear Superintendent:

For a graduate project at The University of Dayton, I am asking permission to send a questionnaire to first grade teachers, second grade teachers and a random selection of parents and students in your district. With the results of this survey and review of professional literature I hope to develop a guide for retention of at risk first grade students.

Respectfully,

Barbara Falknor

I, \_\_\_\_\_, give my permission for distribution of such a questionnaire to the appropriate teachers and parents.

## APPENDIX B

Dear Parent:

For a graduate project at The University of Dayton, I am collecting data on the effects of grade retention as a form of intervention for first grade students through questionnaires.

This is a random questionnaire sent to some parents of elementary children in this school district. Please do not sign your name to the questionnaire it is not necessary, as I am only interested in your input on grade retention as a form of intervention. Parent input is vital to this study. Please take a few minutes to respond to the questions. Return the completed questionnaire in the self-addressed, stamped envelope.

Thank you in advance for your response.

Sincerely,

Barbara Falknor

## APPENDIX C

Dear First and Second Grade Teachers:

For a graduate project at The University of Dayton I hope to develop a checklist to help determine promotion or non-promotion of at risk first graders. Part of the process is to collect data through a questionnaire.

Please rank each group of items from one to ten with one being the most important and ten being the least important.

Please return the enclosed questionnaire as soon as possible. A stamped, self-addressed envelope has been provided for your convenience.

Thank you for your kind attention.

Sincerely,

Barbara Falknor

## INTELLECTUAL FACTORS

- \_\_\_ A. Follows directions
- \_\_\_ B. Grade level word attack skills
- \_\_\_ C. Grade level sight words
- \_\_\_ D. Grade level comprehension
- \_\_\_ E. Reads independently
- \_\_\_ F. Use of oral language (can express ideas)
- \_\_\_ G. Can create and write a simple story
- \_\_\_ H. Demonstrates an awareness of sentence structure  
(correct punctuation and capitalization at first grade level)
- \_\_\_ I. Sequencing skills (can sequence events in a story)
- \_\_\_ J. Has classification skills (puts things into categories)
- \_\_\_ K. Number recognition (0-100)
- \_\_\_ L. Rote memory of addition facts 0-10
- \_\_\_ M. Rote memory of subtraction facts 0-10
- \_\_\_ N. Demonstrates problem solving skills
- \_\_\_ O. Forms letters well, writes legibly in daily work

## SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL FACTORS

- A. Self control (normal aggressiveness, competitiveness)
- B. Initiative (industrious)
- C. Attitude (feels learning is important)
- D. Can take care of own needs (buttoning, tying shoes)
- E. Organizational skills (desk, books, papers)
- F. Uses time wisely
- G. Listen well
- H. Works well with others
- I. Seeks help when needed
- J. Completes assignments promptly
- K. Respects adult authority
- L. Doesn't talk out of turn
- M. Works independently
- N. Shows good sportsmanship (plays games fairly)
- O. Relates to peers (shares, takes turns)

## PHYSICAL FACTORS

- A. Gross motor skills (running, hopping, jumping)
- B. Fine motor skills (coloring, cutting, printing)
- C. Hyperactive
- D. Normal vision
- E. Normal hearing
- F. Developed speech (articulation)
- G. Alert (seems to be rested)
- H. Seldom ill (good general health)
- I. Free from physical handicaps
- J. Attention span (A.D.D.)
- K. July, August, September birthdate
- L. Vitality (can keep up with others)
- M. Holds pencil properly
- N. Stands while working
- O. Can print alphabet

Please add any additional comments you feel would be beneficial in this study. Thank you.

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## APPENDIX D

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Have you retained students?
2. What criteria do you use when retaining students?
3. Should schools have retention policies?
4. What is the value of retention policies?
5. Should there be a retention team?
6. Who should be on a retention team?
7. Should parents be involved in the retention process and to what extent?

## APPENDIX E

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

As part of a Master's Project for The University of Dayton I reviewed related literature, gathered data from educators and parents through questionnaires and interviews to develop a "Teacher Guide for Retention of At Risk First Grade Students".

As a School Psychologist with experience working with young children, your opinion on the validity of this guide is important to the completion of the project.

Thank You,

Barbara Falknor

APPENDIX F  
RECOMMENDATION FORM

The retention evaluation team recommends \_\_\_\_\_ be placed in  
grade \_\_\_\_\_ for the \_\_\_\_\_ school year.

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

school psychologist

principal

I agree with the team's recommendation \_\_\_\_\_  
parent signature

I am requesting that my child \_\_\_\_\_ be placed in grade \_\_\_\_\_ for  
the \_\_\_\_\_ school year, despite the recommendation above. I understand  
that my child has not mastered the skills and/or reached the developmental  
level necessary for probable success in the \_\_\_\_\_ grade. I will not hold the  
school system responsible for problems that arise due to my decision to  
override this recommendation.

\_\_\_\_\_  
parent signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
date

Final decision on the academic on the academic placement of \_\_\_\_\_ will  
be the decision of the school system. The final placement decision for  
\_\_\_\_\_ in the \_\_\_\_\_ school year is \_\_\_\_\_ grade.

\_\_\_\_\_  
superintendent

\_\_\_\_\_  
date

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