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# Factors Affecting Retention of Students in Grades K-2

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**Factors Affecting Retention of Students in Grades K-2**

by

**Amy Katherine Pace**

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A thesis submitted to the  
Department of Education and Human Development of the  
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Factors Affecting Retention of Students in Grades K-2

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## **Abstract**

This study looked to investigate two things regarding student retention in grade. The first being the factors that influence retention and the second being the effectiveness of the practice. First, the researcher looked to see what factors influence student retention between kindergarten and third grade. This was investigated by using the cumulative folders of students currently in grades three and four. Their cumulative folders were used in order to find out if the student was retained and the reasons that were indicated for the retention. This data was compiled and put into a questionnaire to be completed by the first through third grade teaching staff. The staff was asked to rank order the factors from the cumulative folders in order by the way they look at them when considering retention. The kindergarten staff was also asked to participate in this study. They were to complete interviews containing questions regarding students in their classroom and whether or not they were retention candidates. Also, their beliefs regarding the effectiveness of retention were questioned.

The factor most often used to recommend retention is academic performance. However, this is not the only factor that is looked at when retention is in question. In fact, the majority of academic factors such as effort, participation, an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), and homework completion are looked at and used to recommend retention just as often as the non-academic factors. Therefore, retention recommendations are not always made based solely on academic performance. In



general retention is not an effective practice if it is not paired with some intervention program. The repetition of a grade and its curriculum is not usually beneficial for a student. The students who are being retained need more than just simply to repeat the grade level. They need more in terms of programs that will help them to achieve and excel in that grade level the second time through.

## **Chapter 1**

### **Statement of the Problem**

#### **Rationale for the Study**

What factors influence the decision to retain a student in grade? Does retention improve achievement? Retention is one of the most controversial practices in education. While few would argue that students must meet grade level standards in order to be promoted, appropriate remediation for those who don't is a complicated question.

This research will investigate factors that influenced student retention in grades K-2 in one urban elementary school. The study will focus on students entering the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> grade in the fall, 2004, who were previously retained in grades K-2, and the factors that influenced their retention. In addition, this study will investigate teachers' beliefs regarding the retained students' performance in the academic years following their retention in order to look at the effectiveness of retention during those grade levels.

#### **Statement of the Question**

What factors impact urban elementary teachers' decisions to retain students in grades K-2? Do teachers in one urban elementary school share the same beliefs about the effectiveness of retention for students in K-2?

## Method

Prior to conducting the study, an extensive literature review was done to identify factors the researcher should look for in the cumulative folders of students in the urban school setting. Cumulative folders of the current 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> graders in an urban elementary school setting were then analyzed to find students who were retained during grades K-2. A matrix was constructed to collect reasons for retention, number of absences, behavior remarks, and any other indications of academic performance. The matrix data was used to compile interview questions, which were asked of kindergarten teachers within the building regarding their current students. A questionnaire was also constructed and given to the first, second, and third grade teachers in order to determine: the importance they place on each factor (rank order) that influences retention in K-2, their perceptions of the current performance of students who were previously retained, and whether they have students now who may be retention candidates and why.

## Definition of Terms

For the purpose of this study the following definitions will be used:

- **Retention** – a student having to remain in a given grade level for two consecutive academic school years because the standards set by the state were not met
- **Social promotion** – a student being passed on from one grade level to the next in order to stay with their classmates even though the standards set by the state were not met

- **“Redshirting”** – parents choosing not to enroll their child in kindergarten according to biological age
- **New York State Standards** – standards set by the state of New York identifying what each student should know upon completion of an academic grade level

#### Limitations of the Study

The major limitation of this study is the small number of students in the urban school. A total of 32 students within grades three and four were retained during kindergarten through 2<sup>nd</sup> grade. Another limitation to this study is the number of educators participating. Since the study is being conducted only in one urban school, only teachers and administrators from that one school setting are participating. Therefore, the results of this research may differ 1) if a larger sample of both students and educators was being used and 2) the study was also being conducted in a suburban setting.

## Chapter 2

### Review of the Literature

#### Introduction

The New York State Education Department (NYSED) has created standards for every subject area which indicate where students should be at the conclusion of a grade level. By using these standards teachers know what concepts they should be teaching and are also aware of exactly what students will need to know when advancing from one grade level to the next. Written among these standards are concepts and abilities that children should have upon leaving each grade level. These standards go much farther than just stating that the students must know a concept and be able to use it. These standards also hold students accountable for being able to explain their thought processes. These standards also hold teachers accountable to teach based on the New York State standards, as well as assess students accordingly. Teachers must determine if students are achieving at, above, or below grade level standards.

What options do students have if they do not have the adequate knowledge to move on to the next grade level? The answer to this question is either social promotion or retention. Social promotion can be defined as the act of moving a student on to the next grade level even though they do not have the basic knowledge and skill mastery which is required (Potter, 1996). Retention can be defined as a student being required to remain at a given grade for two consecutive academic

school years because they did not meet the standards set by the state (Jimerson, 2001). How is retention decided? How does retention affect the student, parents, teachers, and the administrative staff of the school? Studies focusing on these questions have not been conclusive. Therefore, the topic of retention is a controversial issue within the field of education. Whether retention is effective; the way parents, students, and education staff perceive retention; and the factors involved in the decision to retain a student remain unresolved.

### Students' Perceptions

Several studies have examined the student's perception of retention. Many students, who are being retained or have been retained in the past, view retention as a negative aspect of their education. Even in the early years of a student's education, he/she is well aware of what he/she should be learning, as well as how well he/she is learning it, and where he/she is amongst the other students within the classroom. Not only is being retained seen as an academic failure, but it is also a social failure (Jimerson & Kaufman, 2003). Throughout a student's education many close friendships are developed. By not advancing to the next grade level, retained students are no longer in a classroom placement with their friends. This may impact friendships and relationships greatly.

In a review of research, Jimerson & Kaufman (2003) discussed studies completed decades ago, as well as some recent studies on the amount of stress students feel when they are retained in grade. One study which is cited by Jimerson & Kaufman was completed by Yamamoto and Byrnes in 1987. This study allowed

students who had been retained to rank order stressful events within their life.

Yamamoto & Byrnes found that having been retained in grade prior to sixth grade was very stressful. “Children reported only the loss of a parent and going blind as more stressful than grade retention” (as cited in Jimerson & Kaufman, 2003, p. 626).

A more contemporary study (Anderson, Jimerson, & Whipple, 2002 as cited in Jimerson & Kaufman, 2003) also indicated these same results: that retained students perceived retention as more stressful than the loss of a parent and going blind. In addition, these and other studies reviewed by Jimerson & Kaufman (2003) imply that friendship and the ability to bond with other children, developmentally important milestones, are significantly impacted by retention. This is especially true for students in the intermediate and middle grades.

#### Parents’ Perceptions

Few studies have examined parents’ perceptions of retention. Parents who hold high expectations for their child may be impacted more by retention. However, there are no studies that have proven this to be completely true. There are however, studies that indicate that most parents have strong feelings regarding their children’s education; parents feel that the best education should be received whether that comes as a result of retention or not (Graue & DiPerna, 2000).

Most of the research done regarding the way parent(s) and/or guardian(s) perceive retention has been done by looking at late entry into kindergarten. While this, technically speaking, is not seen as true retention and does not come with so many things attached, it has some of the same impact on students. “Redshirting” in

this instance indicates the parents choosing not to enroll their child in kindergarten according to birth date and enrollment age cutoff, thus allowing the child to start kindergarten at the age of six, rather than shortly after they turn five. Parents put much thought into this decision to delay school entry. Parents usually look at age, sex, ability, maturity, and also attention span and listening. One study found that parents perceived delayed school entry more positively for males because of the psychological research that shows males develop and mature at a rate slower than females (Vasta, Haith, & Miller, 1999, ch. 6). By delaying their child's initial start in school, parents feel that their child will be better able to achieve the standards set for them in kindergarten. Furthermore, parents feel that delayed school entry is the first step toward ensuring their child will not have to be retained later on in his/her education (Graue & DiPerna, 2000). Parents however, do not feel that redshirting and entering school a year late has only positive effects. There are also many negative effects experienced by children who enter school a year later than initially indicated. The negative impact which parents have seen is in their child's progress after entering kindergarten late. Now that their child is older, and in some cases more advanced, some parents feel that he/she is not being pushed to his/her full potential because he/she is in a classroom with other children who are much younger than he/she is. So, not only do parents have to think of the positive impact retention will have on their child, they must also think of the negatives. Studies conducted on delayed entry do not show strong conclusions regarding effectiveness in the long term for the student involved (Graue & DiPerna, 2000).



As indicated in this research and what is known regarding parental expectations, not many parents like to hear that their child needs to repeat a grade level. However, when teachers and administrators bring to the parents' attention that standards are not being met, retention might seem the best option to improve achievement. Parents also believe that teachers and administrators will do what is best for their child. Unfortunately, retention is sometimes used when it is not the best answer. Some students need more than just another year in order to improve to meet the standards. Some students need a classroom more conducive to their learning style, as well as intervention programs to help them grow cognitively (Bocks, 1977). However, these programs must be implemented well in advance of deciding that retention is an option. Students also need to be pushed harder at home to achieve the state standards and parents must be able to give help when necessary in order to correct mistakes as they are being made rather than waiting until it is too late to fix the problems that are occurring (Frymier, 1997).

#### Educators' Perceptions

Educators have strong feelings regarding retention and social promotion. In many school systems, retention is the last option. Around the middle of the academic school year, teachers can usually predict whether or not a student will be able to be promoted to the next grade level. Usually, teachers will meet with parents in a parent/teacher conference in order to indicate the possibility of retention if achievement does not improve. At this point parents are usually unsure of how this will impact them or their child, but perceive that, if their child is not achieving and

learning what the grade level requires, then another year at that grade level is required (Graue & DiPerna, 2000).

Teachers and school staff have somewhat the same feelings regarding retention. When retention concerns surface for a child, many teachers try immediately to intervene to improve things before retention is the only option left. Educators would much rather help a student to achieve grade level standards and be promoted to the next grade level rather than be retained in that same grade level the following school year. Teachers, however, must be trained in ways to implement intervention programs, so they can intervene more effectively when achievement is low. There are many examples of such interventions (see Beyond Social Promotion and Retention in *Thrust for Educational Leadership*, 1999).

Administrative staff members are also hesitant to retain students without some other form of intervention first because when students are retained, the school is sometimes seen as negative in the eyes of the district office, as well as the public. Therefore, administration looks at other ways to help a student before it is decided that repeating a grade is the only or best option. As many of the studies indicate, there are not many positive outcomes of retention. In order to get around the negative outcomes of retention there must be an intervention program that goes along with it (Viadero, 2000).

In summary, retention is seen as a last resort by both educators and parents. As the literature suggests, the word retention has both positive and negative impact on the student being retained, the parent(s) of the student, the student's teacher(s), as

well as the school administrative staff. However, if retention is the option decided on for that specific child, the teachers and administrators involved will do everything within their power to make the year of retention as productive as it can possibly be for the child involved.

### Is Retention an Effective Practice?

Many parents, teachers, and administrators sometimes wonder if the standards set are reachable for everyone within a given grade level. Many will argue that even if a student does not achieve the state standards, he/she should still be promoted to the next grade level. However, is promotion without the adequate knowledge base the best option for the student or is being retained in grade going to be more effective?

Over the past several decades numerous studies have been conducted to figure out if retention is effective. There are a significant number of studies that have been done indicating that retention has very few positive effects, but is overloaded with negative effects and should truly be a last resort. In the studies done, the negative effects of retention outweigh many, if not all of the positives. Within the few studies that indicated positive effects of retention, most of them were looking at the short term and the student's ability to perform better during only the retention year. The studies that are indicating a negative effect are looking at some of the short term, but more of the long term effects. These studies are summarized below.

#### Positive

Retention is a decision made that can end up being educationally effective for the student involved when looking at short term effects. The decision to retain a

student is made when a student does not complete the grade level standards. Gordon (1999) argues throughout her article, "Retention is No Way to Boost Reading", that retention can only be successful with the change in structure and better training. Within the second year, the child is going to learn efficiently because he/she is being taught in a different way, usually by a different teacher. The child is also more developed and better able to understand the concepts which are supposed to be known at the completion of that grade level. As former President Bill Clinton stated in his State of the Union Address in 1999, "We do our children no favors when we pass them from grade to grade without mastering the material" (Gordon, 1999, p. 42). In a debate published in *NEA Today*, Gwendolyn Malone argues that retention can be good. She states that retention is effective because by moving students forward without the basic knowledge necessary, the student is being set up for nothing other than failure for the remainder of his/her education (1998).

It is indicated that retention is effective because during the year of retention, the student is able to see that he/she is able to achieve to the standards that are set before his/her. Peterson, DeGrade and Ayabe (1985) found that when looking at retention, it is not always seen as effective, but during the year of retention as well as the years immediately following, the retained student achieves higher than his/her peers who were moved on to the next grade level (Walters & Borgers, 1995). It is also stated that without intervention and a change in the way the student is taught, the effectiveness of retention is lowered and actually seen as just as ineffective as promoting them without the basic knowledge required to advance (Walters &

Borgers, 1995). Therefore, among the studies that indicate that retention has positive effects there are no studies done that indicate that retention in itself is effective. In fact, many of the studies indicate that other things such as intervention programs must also be put into action in order for the students to achieve to the level necessary to move forward in a positive manner.

### Negative

When looking at the short term effects of retention, students who have been retained are usually compared to a group of students who were low achieving, but promoted. In one such study done by Holmes (1989), students who were retained were compared to students who were low achieving, but promoted on academic achievement. It was found that there were positive short term effects of being retained which lessened over time, and become almost nonexistent as time went by and the student advanced into the upper grades (Jimerson & Kaufman, 2003). In the same study, there was a comparison made across the same groups of students in order to look at the effects retention had on social adjustment and it was found that students who had been retained were also having more problems adjusting socially to their environment. Therefore, in this study even though the academic effects initially were positive they ended up being negative in the long term education of the student. It was concluded that the social aspect was negatively impacted because the student was retained in the same grade level rather than being promoted with their low achieving peers.

There have also been a number of studies which look specifically at the long term effects of grade retention. Some of the factors that are being looked at in the long term are dropout rates, employment abilities, and behavior problems outside of an educational setting. Students who have been retained are more likely to experience a higher amount of stress relative to achievement, social adjustment, and behavior leading to dropout upon reaching the upper grades (Hartke, 1999). If students who have been retained end up dropping out of high school, then the purpose behind the retention year is gone. The student got nothing from being retained other than the knowledge that he/she is a failure and is unable to complete the tasks and standards placed before him/her. Not only does being retained affect the dropout rate, but in the long run it also effects the employment of these students. Specifically, if the dropout rates are increased, then the likelihood that they are going to be able to obtain excellent employment is low.

Also among the negative effects previously listed, retention has a negative impact on the self-esteem of students. When students are told that they are going to be retained for one academic year they often see that as a failure. This impacts their social adjustment significantly and it also hurts their self-esteem. Bracey (1999) found that from the time these students are retained to the time they complete their education, they look back on that year as a year of failure and never seem to get their self-esteem back to the level it was before being retained. They are not able to get past the thought of failure (Bracey, 1999).

Some studies indicated that there may be socioemotional and behavioral problems that occur after the retention year. Jimerson & Kaufman (2003) state that retention can result in social adjustment issues, attitude changes toward education which are more negative than positive, an increase in behavior problems, and also a lower attendance rate. By allowing children to fail at a young age, they are given the idea that they are not able to do better. More specifically, students who receive attention from peers and adults when acting out will continue to act out if attention is what they want. Many young children need to receive attention from adults. If the student is not receiving attention for his/her academic ability, he/she may act out in order to get the teachers attention. In some cases, this acting out may be negative. Also, by giving children this thought and the feeling of failure associated with school, they become unmotivated, as well as pull themselves away from the situation so that they are not impacted to such a great extent (Owings & Magliaro, 1998).

Given the inconclusive and/or negative findings from studies on retention, it is unclear why retention is still used. Since much of the research indicates negative findings, it seems that the use of retention should be diminishing. The only way that retention is seen as being effective is to incorporate it with an intervention program. This program is designed to help with the learning process regardless of whether or not the student is being retained. But, if the intervention program is not being used with the students who are being retained in grade, then retention is seen as unproductive. In an article synthesizing retention research found in Educational Leadership (1982), Jackson is cited as stating "recycling through a program that was

inappropriate for them the first time and that may be equally inappropriate and of less interest to them the second time” (p. 471) will lead to only a waste of a year and only negative side effects on self-esteem and other issues. Another study (Graue & DiPerna, 2000) indicated that students who are overage for their grade level usually need and require more services throughout their education. Not only do they seem to receive more services, but it is also indicated in their analysis that in comparison to their peers, retained and redshirted students will remain below grade level and never actually be achieving where they should be for grade level.

### Factors

The decision to retain a student is a decision that requires much thought and in-depth analysis. Retention may not correct academic problems and the students in question may not achieve grade level standards on the second attempt. Many factors can influence the effectiveness of retention. A research study by Lieberman (2001) indicated three categories of factors that influence retention: individual child, family, and school factors. Under the individual child category, there are factors such as disabilities, potential, physical size, maturity, age according to placement, gender, attendance, and attitude to name a few. Family factors that are cited as possible influences on retention are things such as location and relocation, predominate language spoken in the home, and attitudes of parents and siblings regarding retention. Within the school system there are also factors which can influence the retention of students. Specifically, the attitudes of people within the school building, the help that is available for the student prior to retention, and the use of all options



before retention is finally identified as the outcome of the academic year. Lieberman (2001) underlined the importance of examining each of these factors prior to making decisions regarding retention and the best educational process for the student in question.

Many studies have looked at some of the above factors and how prevalent they are. In one such study, the demographics of retained students were analyzed. It appeared that many of the retention students were coming from households where there is no father figure present, the mother is working outside the home, but in a lower level job, there was no formal education prior to going to public kindergarten, and their ethnicity falls in a minority category (Zepeda, 1993). In another study done to identify some of the characteristics of retained students, it was found that there are factors such as family history and stability that impact the student's education (Frymier, 1997). Specifically, Frymier (1997) looked at the placement of the child and how the child was taken care of outside of school. The findings of this study indicate that depending on where a child goes after school and the different living situations that the child is placed in, it could place the student at great risk of being a retention candidate.

In another study, Harris (2003) indicates that the majority of students who are retained in the lower grades are retained based on immaturity and their inability to pay attention and sit still long enough to learn. This brings up the idea of redshirting and allowing some students to wait a year before enrolling in kindergarten. However, with the positive being delayed entry they are more mature, there are negatives that

also impact the students. Students, who are redshirted, are now older than their grade level peers and may not be pushed to their full potential.

Other researchers have looked at some of the risk factors for retention in the lower grades.

Living below the poverty level, not living with both biological parents at age six, black race, birth to a teenage mother or mother with low educational attainment, male gender, and younger age cohorts had increased rates of retention. Health and behavior problems associated with early grade retention included: deafness, speech defects, enuresis, very low birth weight and low birth weight, asthma, household exposure to cigarette smoke, frequent ear infections, and behavior problems (Byrd & Weitzman, 1994, p. 483).

There are many factors that may indicate a student is at risk for retention, but rather than waiting until the student is listed as low achieving things need to be done to keep him/her motivated, as well as eager to learn to his/her full potential and ability. The more risk factors present, the more likely the student will have a harder time learning and achieving the standards that are to be met at the conclusion of each academic year (Byrd & Weitzman, 1994).

Zepeda (1993) has examined studies on the impact of the school system on the retention of children. In the studies she examines the factors within the individual classrooms which impact the way students learn. Many of the students who were retained were placed in classrooms where learning was made more difficult. Rather

than the teacher teaching in small groups and giving students one-on-one attention, most, if not all instruction were done in large groups. By doing this, students who are shy or not outgoing enough to speak up do not get heard and their achievement level gets overlooked until it is too late to correct it.

### Conclusion

Many things can impact the way that a child learns. When looking at retaining a child, things such as what goes on at home, what is going on within the classroom, and the ability of a child to learn must be examined. Since retention has not been supported as effective or ineffective, the process of retaining students will go on for several decades. The question remains as to whether or not students who have not achieved the set standards for their grade level should move on and continue their education. Some people will continue to believe, there are certain learnings that are supposed to take place and that if it is not learned then retention is the answer. However, based on the studies discussed above, there are many factors that influence retention that cannot be fixed by a teacher in one academic school year. Rather keeping the student with his or her peers may be a better option. In this study, the factors affecting students' retention in grades K-2, and teachers' perceptions of the effectiveness of retention as measured by achievement in subsequent grades will be examined.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Research Design**

#### Purpose of the Study

Student retention is a controversial issue. This study examined the factors that influence the decision to retain students in grades K-2 in one urban elementary school setting. Specifically, this research focused on students who are currently enrolled in 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> grade and were retained during K-2 in order to determine the factors that influenced the educators' choice of retention. In addition, teachers' beliefs regarding the effectiveness of retention were investigated in order to gain a better understanding on how effective retention is for students in these early grades.

#### Statement of the Question

There are many unclear aspects of retention. The reason usually given when a student is retained is that he/she is not meeting grade level standards. This research was designed to identify additional factors behind the decision to retain a student. Specifically, what factors influence/impact urban elementary school teachers' decisions to retain students in grades K-2? Are there common beliefs amongst teachers in one urban elementary school regarding the effectiveness of retention for students in K-2?

#### Methodology

##### Participants

Thirty-four students currently enrolled in one urban elementary school in grades three or four participated in this study. However, these students were not

contacted regarding this study. The researcher used information contained only in cumulative folders for each of these students in order to find out if the students were retained during grades K-2. If the students were retained in grades K-2, the factors influencing the decision(s) for retention were gathered from the cumulative folders. The kindergarten teaching staff in that same urban elementary school setting also participated in this study. There are four kindergarten teachers who completed an interview regarding their current students. Also, the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade teaching staff were asked to complete questionnaires to determine which factors influence their decisions to retain and also how effective they see retention being for students who were retained prior to entering their classrooms. Thirteen teachers within grades one, two, and three completed questionnaires.

### Data Collection

Before the researcher collected data many steps were taken in order to inform the participants of how the study would be conducted and how their data would be used. Specifically, the teaching staff that was participating was given a letter from the researcher regarding the purpose of the study and an explanation as to how the study would benefit the field of education (Appendix A). A statement of informed consent (Appendix B) was attached to the letter. Participants were asked to complete and return the informed consent letter. Also, prior to the collection of school data, the researcher did an extensive literature review on the topic of retention in order to get a better idea what factors may influence the retention of students in grades K-2.

## Procedures

In an attempt to find out which students currently in 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> grade were retained in grades K-2, the researcher examined the school cumulative folders of all 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> graders. The researcher used the cumulative folders to create a list of names of potential subjects for further inquiry. After completing this initial collection of data, the researcher was able to pull each of the student's cumulative folders, who were retained during their K-2 grade education, a second time in order to examine each more closely. The researcher created a data matrix (Appendix C), to ensure that the proper data was correlated with the correct individual. The data that was kept on the matrix included information such as the grade level of the student's retention, the reason for retention, the number of absences, behavior comments, and academic performance. After all of this data was retrieved, the researcher used a tally system and created a tally table (Appendix D) in order for the data to be more useful, as well as more comparable. Using the data matrix, the researcher then analyzed this data and rank ordered the factors indicated as influential on retention.

Upon completing the tally tables on influential factors, a questionnaire was created (Appendix E), which the researcher would use for the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade teachers to determine how they view each of the factors and whether or not they recommend retention based on some of the factors found in the cumulative folders. Specifically, the questionnaire asked teachers to complete information regarding the students who were currently enrolled in their classroom who have previously been retained and how effective that retention seems to have been. The questionnaire also

asked the teacher to complete a rank order of the factors they look at when deciding whether or not to retain a student. The factors being ranked by the teachers was data found in the cumulative folders. This will help the researcher to gain a better understanding of how these factors impact each retention recommendation. Upon receiving the questionnaire back from the teaching staff, the researcher then analyzed them in a similar manner as the cumulative folders, by creating a tally table (Appendix F).

Interviews were also completed with the kindergarten staff in the same urban elementary school setting (Appendix G). Rather than recording the interviews and replaying them so the information could be used in this study, the researcher took notes while the interview was completed. The interview consisted of four to five questions regarding the importance of retention and the teacher's beliefs about its effectiveness. The data from the four interviews was then analyzed and put into a matrix (Appendix H) in order to evaluate the findings.

Participants, who were completing a survey, were given two weeks to complete it and return it to the researcher's mailbox. In order to ensure that all of the information contained in the questionnaires remained confidential, the researcher provided the participants with an envelope so they could return it knowing that no one else would be able to read/look at the information given.

#### Triangulation of the Data

In an attempt to ensure that this study is reliable and portrays an accurate picture of retention, the researcher triangulated the data (Appendix I). Each of the

research questions being investigated were examined in multiple different ways. Specifically, the factors that influence retention were examined through each data collection process. The review of 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> grade cumulative folders, kindergarten teacher interviews, and also 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade teacher interviews were used to answer this question. The beliefs of the teaching staff were investigated through both the teacher interviews, as well as the questionnaires that were completed. Lastly, the effectiveness of retention was examined by using students' cumulative folders and also the questionnaires.

### Limitations

The following conditions, although accurate and reliable, may have had an affect on the results of this research causing the results to be an inaccurate representation of retention factors in all areas. The first limitation of this study was the small number of students in the urban school who participated. A total of 34 students within grades three and four were retained during K-2 grade, which made the sample size of the population extremely small. Since the sample is so small, the ability to generalize these findings was and will continue to be more difficult. Secondly, the number of educators who participated was also very small since the study was only conducted in one urban elementary school. Therefore, the results of this research may differ: (1) if a larger sample of both students and educators was used and, (2) the study was conducted in a different school setting.



## Chapter 4

### Research Findings and Generalizations

By analyzing data provided through interviews and questionnaires completed by the participants, the researcher found:

- 100% of the staff participants DO look at factors other than academic ability when recommending retention between grades K-2.
- 80% of the staff participants in grades 1-3 have students in their classroom that they are going to recommend for retention at the conclusion of this academic school year.
- 100% of the staff participants feel that retention can be effective for some individuals, while ineffective for others. Effectiveness of retention must be looked at on an individual basis.

When looked specifically at the factors that influence retention, many things can be determined through this study. In terms of retention in grades K-2, the following generalizations can be made based on this research study:

**Generalization #1: On average, the first factor which is looked at when a student is being recommended for retention is his/her academic performance.**

Based on the questionnaires collected from the 1<sup>st</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> grade teaching staff, academic performance was ranked among the highest factors being looked at when recommending retention. Specifically, 90% of

the staff ranked academic performance as the first factor that determines retention. (See figure 2)

**Generalizations #2: Many factors, other than performance, influence student retention in grades K-2. Non-academic factors influence retention recommendations as often as academic factors.**

Based on the interviews with kindergarten teaching staff, participants indicated that there were possibly 11 students who were going to be recommended for retention. Of those being recommended for retention the following reasons were given:

- Attention
- Behavior
- Poor academic progress
- Developmentally not ready for school
- Poor social skills
- Poor parental/family involvement

(See figure 5)

Based on the questionnaire data collected from the 1<sup>st</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> grade teaching staff, there are not any specific factors that influence retention for all students. When factors were ranked, academic performance fell in the top categories. However, all of the other factors, both academic and non-academic, were ranked close together. Indicating that one factor is not looked at any more often than the others. In fact, many of

the non-academic factors were ranked higher, on a scale of 1-10, more often than the individual academic factors. (See figure 3)

**Generalization #3: In general, teachers share the same beliefs regarding retention. Retention, when not paired with services, in grades K-2 is not an effective practice for most students.**

When looking at the progress made by students who were previously retained, it can be seen that retention is not always effective.

Retention during 1<sup>st</sup> grade is seen as much more effective than either 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup>. However, even in first grade retention is not always beneficial as indicated by the 1<sup>st</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> grade teaching staff when asked the questions, “How would you rate [previously retained students] academic progress? What factors are influencing this progress?”

(See figure 4)

The kindergarten teaching staff who participated in this research study has mixed thoughts regarding the retention of students. These teachers indicated that in some cases retention may be very beneficial for the student. The following reasons were indicated as beneficial reasons to retain students:

- Academically too low to move forward and learn effectively.
- Different setting may be more appropriate for a student’s learning.

- Borderline skills can be mastered.
- IEP/meds came from the retention recommendation enabling the student to achieve.

However, there were other circumstances in which the participants stated that retention would not benefit the student enough in order to recommend retention. The reasons retention would not be beneficial are as follows:

- Age when students are retained becomes a problem.
- Poor behavior does not usually get fixed.

(See figure 6)

# Figures Illustrating Data

Figure 1

# Number of Students Retained by Grade Level

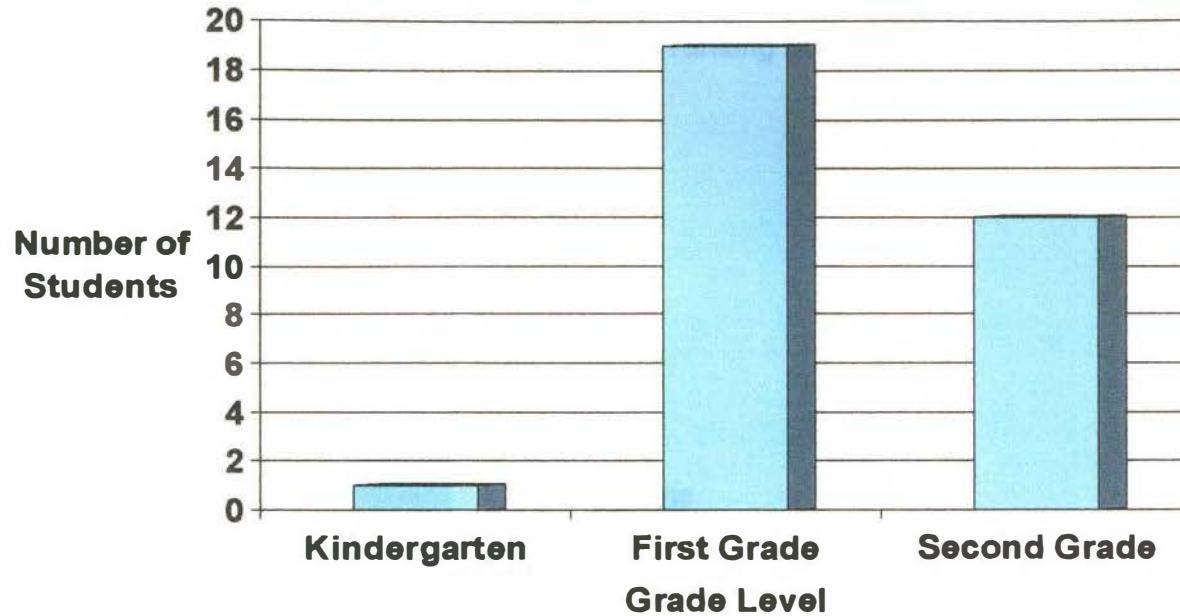


Figure 2

# Academic Factors that Influence Retention

\*Percentages based on teacher ranking of academic factors that influence decisions to retain students. Percentages indicate ranking the factor in the top 3.

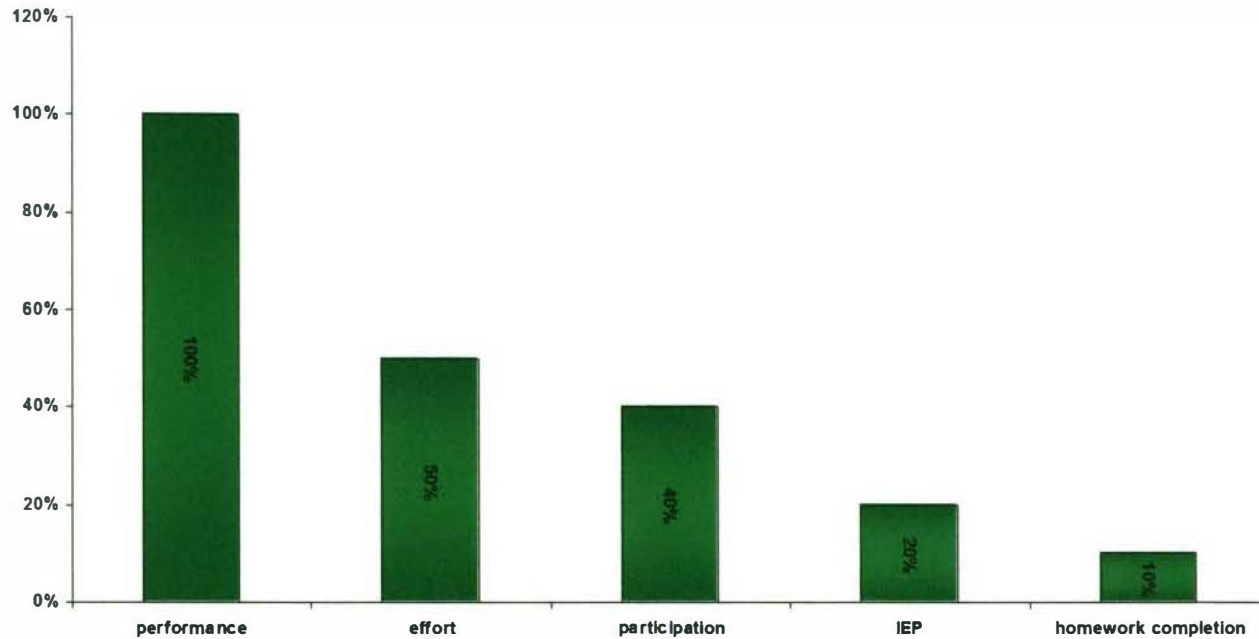


Figure 3

# Non-Academic Factors that Influence Retention

\*Percentages based on teacher ranking of non-academic factors that influence decisions to retain students . Percentages indicate ranking the factor in the top 3.

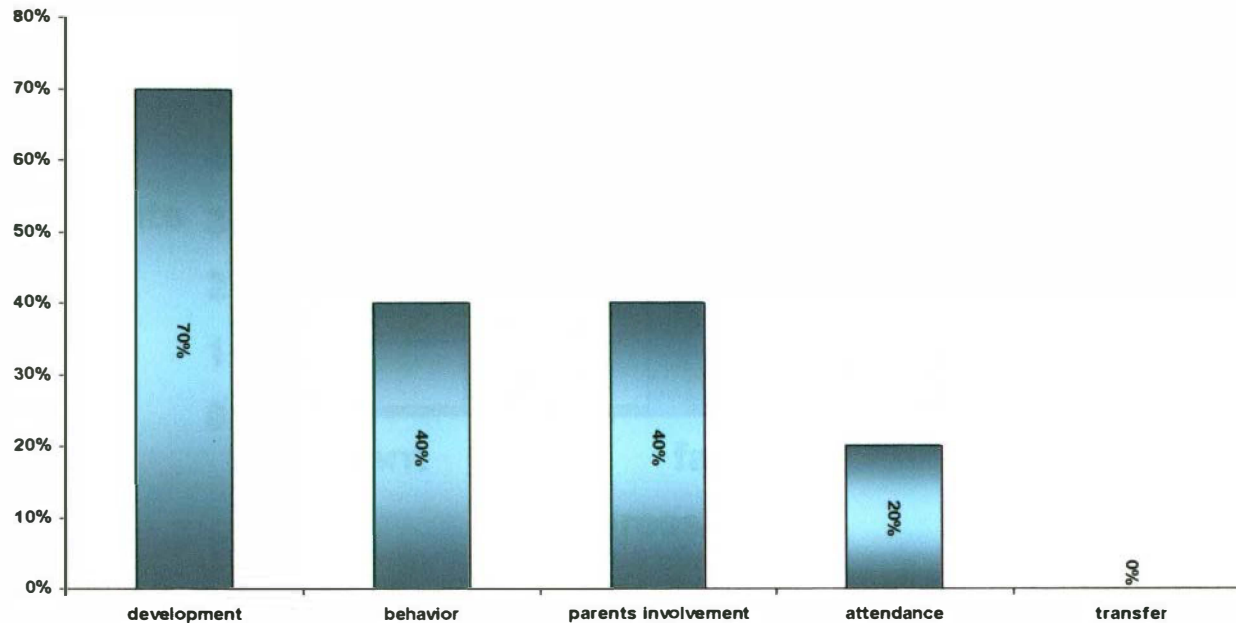




Figure 4

# Progress of Students Who Were Previously Retained

(according to his/her current grade level teacher)

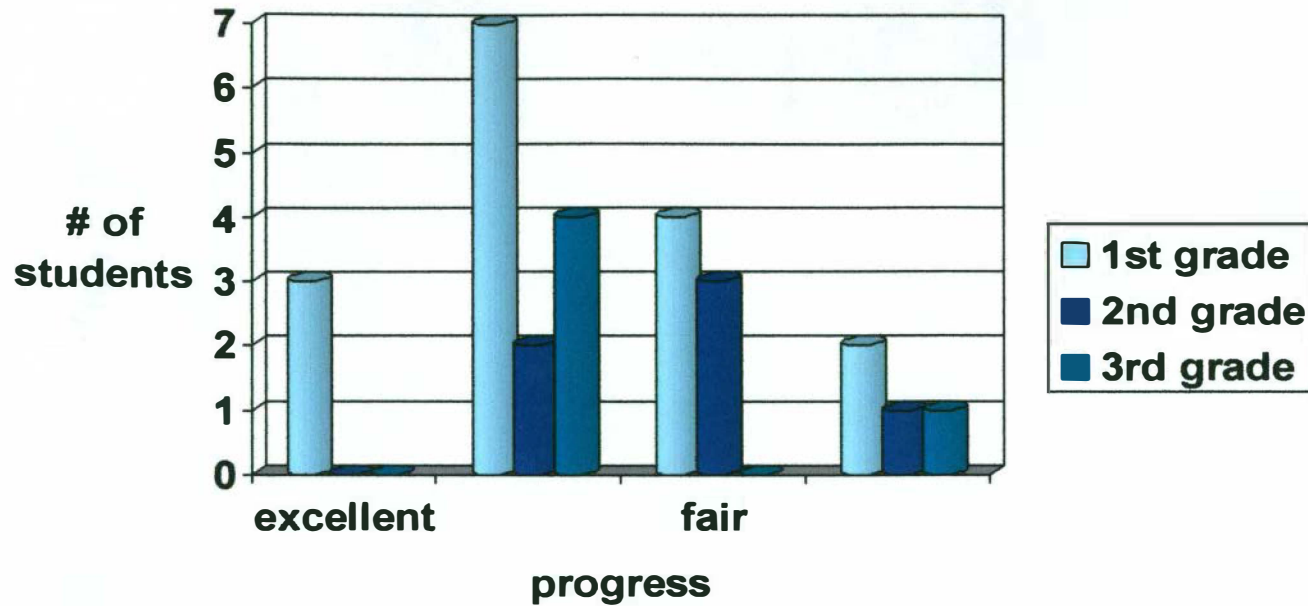
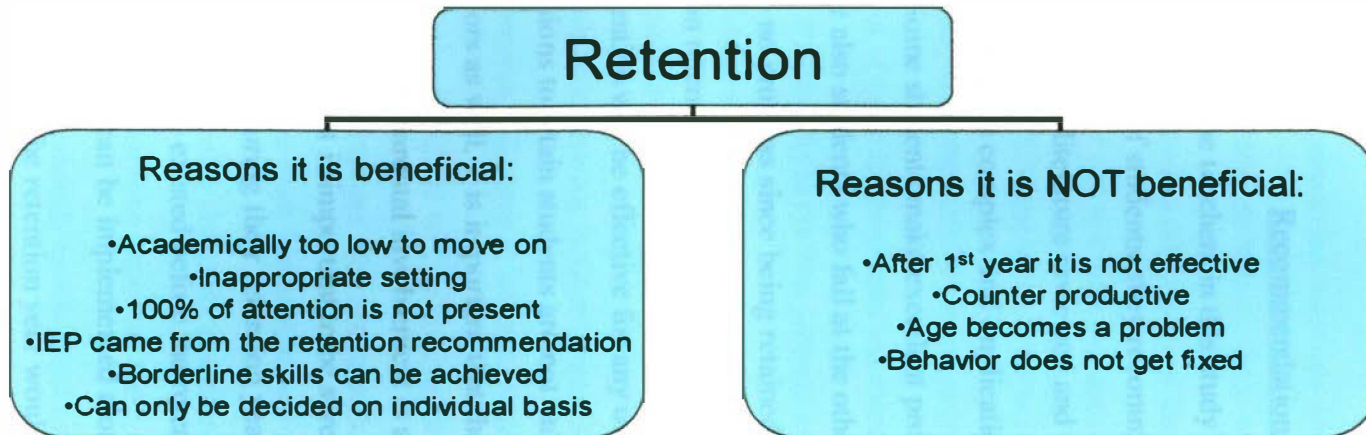


Figure 5

# Retention Recommendations for Kindergartners

No Retention Recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•All students are ready for 1<sup>st</sup> Grade</li></ul>
6 Retention Candidates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Needed meds in order to be attentive</li><li>•Behavior issues</li><li>•Little/no parental involvement</li><li>•Developmentally not ready</li></ul>
3 Retention Candidates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Poor academic progress</li><li>•Poor social skills</li><li>•Maturity level</li></ul>
2 Retention Candidates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>•Poor academic progress</li><li>•Poor social skills</li></ul>
Total Number of Retention Candidates in 4 Kindergarten Classrooms = 11	

Figure 6



## **Chapter 5**

### **Implications**

#### Recommendations

Although many of the teachers in this study indicated that retention is not beneficial for the majority of students, they recommended 11 kindergarten students for retention. Based on the literature reviewed and the data collected in this study, the decision to retain students is complex and implications must be assessed on an individual basis. Some students make excellent progress after being retained. However, there are also students who fall at the other extreme of the spectrum and have made little to no progress since being retained. This indicates that after many years of research on retention and its effectiveness, there are no true ways to know whether or not retention will be effective for any one individual.

Since decisions to retain students are not only based on academic factors, but non-academic factors as well, it is important that these other factors are watched carefully. For example, if parental involvement is a factor that is used when considering retention, then it is important to be sure that these students have some type of adult involvement during their retention year. By retaining a student and not correcting the problems that existed before the retention, the retention year will be less effective. If programs can be implemented along with retention, the progress made both during and after the retention year would increase.

### Further Research

The researcher believes that there are ways in which this study may be improved. Specifically, the researcher was only able to collect data in one urban elementary school. Within this one school, there were few participants. There were a total of 17 participants selected to participate in the study. Of these 17 participants, 13 of them were asked to fill out and return questionnaires and 4 were asked to participate in interviews. All of the interviews were completed, however only 10 of the 13 questionnaires were returned. By using only these few participants, there was a low representation of male teachers, new teachers, and grade levels other than K-3. In future research, it would be in the best interest to increase the number of participants and include a wider range of participant characteristics.

In future research on this topic, these additional approaches may be taken:

- While interviewing teachers regarding the retention candidates in their classroom, ask them to be specific as to whether or not they feel that retaining the child will be beneficial or just necessary.
- Provide participants who are completing a questionnaire with an exact listing of what each factor that they are ranking encompasses.
- After participants complete questionnaires regarding retention, interview those who state that there are students in their classroom who were previously retained not making progress academically.
- Correlate the findings with gender and ethnicity.

# APPENDICES

Appendix A

Wednesday, March 24, 2004

Dear 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 3<sup>rd</sup> grade teachers,

My name is Amy Pace and I am an intern here. I am in the process of writing my thesis on the influential factors of retention and its effectiveness. I would appreciate your help in collecting some data in order to complete this study. Since you have already indicated your willingness to participate by returning the informed consent letter, it would be greatly appreciated if you could please take a few minutes to complete the attached questionnaire regarding the students in your classroom, who have previously been retained. Please remember that all of the information that you enclose in the questionnaire will be kept confidential. Specifically, after the data has been collected the questionnaires will be destroyed. Also, no student or staff names will be used within the thesis document itself.

Please return the completed questionnaire in the attached envelop to my mailbox in the front office as soon as possible. Thanks in advance for your help!

Sincerely,

Amy Pace

## Appendix B

### **Informed Consent Form (NO MINORS WILL BE INVOLVED)**

The purpose of this research is to examine the different factors that influence and affect retention in grades K-2. This research is being done in order to investigate the amount that each factor influences possible student retention. The secondary purpose of this research is to fulfill requirements for completion of my masters degree thesis for the Department of Education and Human Development at the State University of New York College at Brockport

In order to participate in this study, you must give informed consent. You are being asked to participate, but as to whether or not you are willing to participate the choice is yours. If you would like to participate in this study and agree with the statements below, a) please sign your name in the space provided at the end of this consent form b) your completion of either an interview or survey signifies your consent. You may leave the study at your discretion without penalty, even after the study has begun.

I understand that:

1. My participation is voluntary and I have the right to refuse to answer any questions.
2. My confidentiality is guaranteed. My name will not appear on any written documents. There will be no way to connect me back to the study or any survey or interview information. There will be no circumstances where I can be identified as participating in this research.
3. There will be no personal risks or benefits because of my participation in this research.
4. My participation involves completing an oral interview with the researcher regarding my views on retention and the current students within my classroom. This interview is estimated to take approximately 15-20



minutes. Participation may also involve completing a survey of 4 or 5 short answer questions, regarding how you rate each of the given retention factors, which will also take approximately 15-20 minutes.

5. Written notes will be taken throughout the interview process. There will not be an audio tape made of my interview.
6. There will be 14 teachers and staff participating in this study. The results will be used to complete a thesis project by the primary researcher.
7. All study papers, audio tapes, and information will be stored in a locked drawer in the investigator's office. Upon completion of the study and thesis project, everything will be destroyed.

I am 18 years of age or older. I have read and understand the above statements. All my questions about my participation in this study have been answered to my satisfaction. I agree to participate in the study and realize that I may withdraw, without penalty, at any time during the interview or survey process. Returning the survey or completing an interview indicates my consent to participate.

If you have any questions you may contact:

**Primary researcher:**

**Amy K. Pace**

**Faculty Advisor:**

**Dr. Betsy Balzano**

**585-395-5549**

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Appendix C

Table 1 (pages 41 – 48)  
Data Matrix of Cumulative Folders

Student's Name / #	Grade K	Grade 1	Grade 2	Reasons Indicated	Other Factors (# of absences; change in school; family issues; behavioral problems; recommendations for testing, etc.)
A		X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Below grade level</li> <li>• Needs improvement /assistance</li> <li>• Homework not completed</li> <li>• Develop her skills with another year</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Referred to CSE and classified speech impairment</li> <li>• AIS in reading</li> </ul>
B			X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Below grade level</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• mild asthma</li> <li>• Seizure disorder</li> <li>• Changed schools many times (4)</li> <li>• Behavior issues (talking)</li> <li>• Missed 29 days of school</li> </ul>
C		X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Needs improvement in all areas</li> <li>• Below grade level</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attendance problems</li> <li>• AIS in math and reading</li> <li>• Moved to 39 in middle of year</li> <li>• Initially home schooled</li> </ul>

Key for abbreviations (for use with Table 1 (pages 41 – 48)):

**ADHD** – Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder

**CSE** – Committee on Special Education

**IEP** – Individualized Education Plan

**OT** – Occupational Therapy

**AIS** – Academic Intervention Services

**ESOL** – English as a Second Language

**OHI** – Other Health Impairment

**SW** – Social Work

D		X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ELA below grade level</li> <li>• Needs improvement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refuses to communicate</li> <li>• Changed schools from #17 to #39</li> </ul>
E		X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Needs improvement in ELA</li> <li>• Below grade level</li> <li>• Year to grow up would be helpful</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• order of protection against mother</li> <li>• behavior log – no cooperation</li> <li>• IEP modified</li> <li>• Learning disability</li> <li>• Speech/Lang.</li> </ul>
F		X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cannot read or write English</li> <li>• Needs improvement in all subjects</li> <li>• Below grade level</li> <li>• Good attitude but doesn't stay on task</li> <li>• Needs daily support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IEP</li> <li>• Receives OT 2x/week</li> <li>• Changed schools (3)</li> </ul>
G	X			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to focus was lacking</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IEP</li> <li>• Classified as other health impairment</li> <li>• Receives speech, OT, and SW counseling</li> <li>• Changed schools (3)</li> <li>• ADHD – Ritalin</li> <li>• Attendance problems in first year</li> </ul>

H		X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Below level in all subjects</li> <li>• Works slowly</li> <li>• Will benefit from another year</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Primary lang. is Spanish</li> <li>• Classified and declassified a couple of times</li> <li>• ADHD</li> </ul>
I		X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unsatisfactory progress</li> <li>• Below grade level in all subjects</li> <li>• Difficult to focus</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attendance concerns</li> <li>• Changed schools (3)</li> <li>• Classification of learning disabled</li> <li>• Daily parent contact</li> </ul>
J		X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meds needed in order to stay focused</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changed schools (2)</li> <li>• IEP for speech, lang., OT</li> <li>• No reading/writing of English at home</li> <li>• Behavior problems-threatens teachers</li> </ul>
K		X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Below grade level in all subjects</li> <li>• Unsatisfactory progress</li> <li>• Referred to CSE (services started during year of retention)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attendance concerns</li> <li>• Performs K level in 1<sup>st</sup> grade</li> </ul>

L			X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Below grade level in ELA</li> <li>• Limited attention span</li> <li>• Talkative</li> <li>• Needs improvement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attendance problem (late)</li> <li>• Retention suggested after 1<sup>st</sup> but not approved</li> <li>• Received social promotion after 1<sup>st</sup> grade</li> </ul>
M			X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Below grade level</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Behavior problems</li> <li>• Doesn't read or write English at home</li> <li>• Slight attendance concern</li> </ul>
N			X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Needs improvement in all subjects</li> <li>• Below grade level in all subjects</li> <li>• Not returning homework</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Retained with the same teacher</li> <li>• Classification learning disabled</li> <li>• IEP for speech, lang., OT</li> <li>• Difficulty following directions</li> </ul>
O		X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Needs improvement</li> <li>• Below grade level in all subjects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Problems focusing which allows for low completion of work</li> <li>• Does not show effort</li> </ul>

P		X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unsatisfactory progress</li> <li>• Below grade level in all subjects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attendance issues</li> <li>• Changed schools (4)</li> <li>• Did not complete homework</li> <li>• Referred for testing (normal)</li> </ul>
Q			X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Needs improvement</li> <li>• Below grade level in all subjects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changed schools (4)</li> <li>• Needs to pay more attention to work</li> <li>• Effort concerns</li> </ul>
R		X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Needs improvement</li> <li>• Below grade level in all subjects</li> <li>• Effort is not consistent</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changed schools and moved out of state</li> <li>• Classified learning disabled</li> <li>• Receives speech, lang., OT</li> </ul>
S				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Needed first year just to develop</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changed schools (3)</li> <li>• Attendance concerns</li> <li>• English and Spanish spoken and written at home</li> <li>• Classified as OHI with a full time 1:1 aide</li> <li>• Receives speech and lang.</li> </ul>

T		X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Below grade level in all subjects</li> <li>• Needs improvement</li> <li>• Easily distracted</li> <li>• Dependent on adults</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impulsive</li> <li>• Receives speech and lang. services</li> <li>• Attendance concerns the first year of 1<sup>st</sup> grade</li> </ul>
U		X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Below grade level</li> <li>• Needs improvement</li> <li>• No effort being made</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Suspension for fighting</li> <li>• Difficulty following rules</li> <li>• Frustrated with lack of progress</li> <li>• Needs to improve behavior</li> </ul>
V			X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Greatly frustrated with 2<sup>nd</sup> grade work</li> <li>• Will benefit from additional year</li> <li>• At level but needs improvement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Problems getting along with others</li> <li>• Both years in same classroom with same teacher</li> <li>• Receives speech and lang. services for stuttering</li> </ul>
W		X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Below grade level in all subjects</li> <li>• Not making progress academically</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attendance concerns</li> <li>• Attitude and moodiness leads to problems</li> <li>• ESOL student</li> <li>• Speaks Spanish as a first lang.</li> </ul>

X			X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Below grade level in ELA</li> <li>• Reading skills are unsatisfactory</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attendance concerns</li> <li>• ESOL student</li> <li>• Tried his best on most assignments</li> </ul>
Y			X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Below grade level in all areas</li> <li>• Unsatisfactory effort</li> <li>• Not retaining info for later use</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changed schools (3)</li> <li>• Attendance concerns</li> </ul>
Z		X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Below grade level</li> <li>• Needs improvement</li> <li>• Gets frustrated easily</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changed schools (3)</li> <li>• Has problems retaining information</li> <li>• Classified as learning disabled with a speech impairment</li> <li>• Receives speech, lang., OT</li> </ul>
AA			X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unmotivated to learn</li> <li>• Performs at level but has unsatisfactory work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attendance is a problem</li> <li>• Needs to work on growth</li> </ul>
BB		X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Below level in reading, writing, and decoding</li> <li>• Difficulty paying attention</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• behavior problems (log kept)</li> <li>• attendance problem</li> <li>• extended time needed to complete work</li> </ul>



CC			X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Needs to focus more on learning</li> <li>Performs at level but needs improvement on effort</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Problems paying attention to the lesson</li> <li>Acts silly in order to make friends</li> <li>Trouble listening and following directions</li> </ul>
DD			X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Below grade level</li> <li>Needs improvement</li> <li>Effort decreased</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Focusing is a problem</li> <li>Classified as speech impairment</li> <li>Receives speech and OT services</li> <li>Modified instruction</li> </ul>
EE			X	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Below grade level</li> <li>Needs to improve</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Relies on help constantly</li> <li>Cannot listen and follow directions</li> <li>Needs to use self control</li> <li>Behavior problems</li> </ul>
FF		X		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Below grade level</li> <li>Needs improvement</li> <li>Needs to develop independent skills</li> <li>Poor memory</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Problem communicating</li> <li>Attendance problem</li> <li>Classified as learning disabled</li> <li>Receives speech, lang., and OT services</li> <li>Has language deficit</li> </ul>

Appendix D

Table 2 (pages 49 – 50)  
Tally Table for Cumulative Folders

Total number retained K-2

Retained in Kindergarten	I	1
Retained in 1 <sup>st</sup> grade	IIII IIII IIII IIII	19
Retained in 2 <sup>nd</sup> grade	IIII IIII II	12
Retained in K-2	IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII II	32

Factors possibly influencing retention

IEP	IIII IIII IIII II	17
Homework completion	IIII	4
Year of development	IIII IIII I	11
Attendance concerns	IIII IIII IIII I	16
Participation/ability to focus	IIII IIII II	12
Below grade level in math and/or ELA	IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII I	26
Behavior problems	IIII IIII IIII	15
Improvement in effort needed	IIII IIII IIII IIII IIII	25

Medication	III	3
School location/transfers	<del>III</del> <del>III</del> III	13
Parents involvement/home life	III	4

Other details regarding retention

Retention year with same teacher as first year	II	2
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Appendix E

**Questionnaire for Teachers in Grades 1-3**

1. Please use the following scale (1 = most 10 = least) to rate the factors in order of the way that you use them to influence student retention in your grade level/classroom.

- \_\_\_\_\_ Completion of homework
- \_\_\_\_\_ Attendance
- \_\_\_\_\_ Generally performs below grade level
- \_\_\_\_\_ Lack of participation/ability to focus
- \_\_\_\_\_ Year of Development
- \_\_\_\_\_ Attitude
- \_\_\_\_\_ IEP
- \_\_\_\_\_ Discipline/behavior problems
- \_\_\_\_\_ Effort needs improvement
- \_\_\_\_\_ Movement/school location (transferring in middle of education)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Parental involvement
- \_\_\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Do you presently have students who were previously retained? How would you rate their academic progress? What factors are influencing this progress?

Student	Rating of progress: Excellent, good, fair, poor	Factors

3. Do you have students this year that would benefit from retention? What factors make you think so? Will you recommend retention based on these factors?

Appendix F

Table 3 (pages 52 – 53)  
Tally Tables from Grade 1-3 Staff Questionnaires

Factors that influence retention	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Completion of homework			I		II		I	I	III	II
Attendance	II			II	II	II	I			I
Performs below grade level	<del>III</del> III	I								
Lack of participation/ability to focus		I	III	II	II		I	I		
Year of development	II	III	II			I		I		
Attitude			II		I	<del>III</del>	I	I		I
IEP			II	II	I		I			II
Discipline/behavior problems		III	I		I		I	II	I	
Effort needs improvement	I	I	III	I	I	III				
Movement/school location (transferring)					III		III		II	I
Parental Involvement	II	II			I	I		III		II

progress for students who were previously retained (by current grade level)	Excellent	Good	Fair	Poor
1 <sup>st</sup> Grade	III	<del>III</del> II	<del>III</del>	II
2 <sup>nd</sup> Grade		II	III	I
3 <sup>rd</sup> Grade		<del>III</del>		I

## Appendix G

### **Interview Questions for Kindergarten Teachers**

1. How many students are in your classroom?
2. If you could retain students in kindergarten, do you have students you would recommend for retention?
3. Why would you recommend each of these students?
4. If you would not recommend any students why not?
5. Do you think retention can benefit students? Why or why not?

Appendix H

Table 4  
Data Matrix for Kindergarten Staff Interviews

No Retention Recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All students are ready for 1st Grade</li> </ul>
6 Retention Candidates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Needed meds in order to be attentive</li> <li>Behavior issues</li> <li>Little/no parental involvement</li> <li>Developmentally not ready</li> </ul>
3 Retention Candidates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Poor academic progress</li> <li>Poor social skills</li> <li>Maturity level</li> </ul>
2 Retention Candidates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Poor academic progress</li> <li>Poor social skills</li> </ul>
Total Number of Retention Candidates in 4 Kindergarten Classrooms = 11	

Effective:	Not Effective:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Academically too low to move on</li> <li>Inappropriate setting</li> <li>100% of attention is not present</li> <li>IEP came from the retention recommendation</li> <li>Borderline skills can be achieved</li> <li>Can only be decided on individual basis</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>After 1st year it is not effective</li> <li>Counter productive</li> <li>Age becomes a problem</li> <li>Behavior does not get fixed</li> </ul>



Appendix I

Table 5  
Data Triangulation Table

Research Questions	Cumulative Folder Review (data matrix)	Teacher Interviews	Teacher Questionnaires
What factors impact individual teachers' decisions to retain students in grades K-2?	X	X	X
Do teachers in one urban school share the same beliefs regarding retention of students in K-12?		X	X
Is being retained in grades K-2 an effective practice?	X		X

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## **Vita**

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