

Chapter 5

Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations

Summary

The purpose of the study was to explore the attitudes and feelings of individual students and their parents about retention and to report their recollections of feelings from that experience, as well as their present feelings and attitudes about retention. The design of the study was individual interviews, utilizing questions adapted from Deborah Byrnes' research (1985) with elementary students during the year of their retention, to present follow-up data on the effects of retention. Grades, test scores, and other school data were also gathered to provide a context for the feelings and attitudes expressed by the study subjects. The information that was collected came from the 22 students and parent(s) of 11 students who agreed to participate in the study.

The information from the interviews and school records were combined and presented individually in a series of narrative descriptions for each of the students. While each of the retention stories was as unique as the individual student or parent, several factors provide categories for consideration of this study beyond each individual.

The following personal and home factors for each of the 22 students in the study are included in Table 1:

Gender - M = male, F = female;

Age - the student's age in years and months when he/she entered kindergarten;

Family - family structure at the time of retention, N = nuclear family, B = blended family, SM = single mother;

Working mother - student's mother was employed outside the home at the time of retention;

Blue collar jobs - parent(s) had blue collar jobs;

Parent acceptance - parent(s) indicated supporting attitudes and feelings about retention; and

Student positive - student indicated acceptance of his or her retention;

The following school factors for each of the 22 students in the study are included in Table 2:

Retention Grade - grade level the student was retained;

Year Retained - the year the recommendation was made to retain the student;

Recommendation - P = retention was requested by parent(s), S = school recommended retention;

Achievement - based on school records, the student had academic difficulty;

Reading - based on school records, the student had difficulty with reading;

Repeat Grades - based on school records, the student had higher grades during the repeat year than the year the student had been retained;

Sped Services - the student was verified to receive special education services;

1994-95 Grade - grade level of the student when the interview was conducted;

The factors included in Tables 1 and 2 on the next two pages provides a starting point for the presentation of the findings from the study.

Table 1

178

Personal and Home Factors

| Student | Gender | Age - Years/Months | Family | Working mother | Blue collar job(s) | Parent positive | Student positive |
|---------|--------|--------------------|--------|----------------|--------------------|-----------------|------------------|
| A | F | 4y, 11m | N | X | X | yes | yes |
| B | M | 5y, 6m | N | X | | yes | yes |
| C | F | 5y, 6m | N | X | X | | no |
| D | M | 5y, 3m | N | X | X | yes | no |
| E | M | 5y, 6m | N | X | X | | no |
| F | F | 5y | N | X | | yes | no |
| G | M | 5y, 6m | N | X | X | yes | okay |
| H | M | 5y, 9m | N | X | X | | no |
| I | M | 5y, 3m | SM | X | X | no | yes |
| J | F | 5y, 3m | N | | X | | yes |
| K | M | 5y, 8m | SM | X | X | | yes |
| L | M | 5y, 3m | SM | X | X | yes | yes |
| M | M | 5y, 5m | B | X | X | | okay |
| N | M | 5y, 4m | N | | X | | yes |
| O | M | 4y, 10m | N | | | yes | yes |
| P | M | 5y, 6m | SM | X | X | yes | yes |
| Q | M | 5 y | SM | X | X | yes | yes |
| R | M | 5y, 2m | SM | X | X | yes | yes |
| S | M | 4y, 11m | B | X | X | | yes |
| T | M | 4y, 11m | N | X | | | yes |
| U | F | 5y, 1m | N | X | X | | yes |
| V | M | 5y, 2m | SM | X | X | | no |

Gender - M = male, F = female

School age - Student's age at school entrance

Family - N = nuclear family, SM = single mother, B = blended family

Working mother - outside the home at the time of retention

Blue collar jobs - One or both parents

Parent positive - Overall positive feelings about the retention

Student positive - Overall positive feelings about the retention

Table 2

179

School Factors

| Student | Retention grade | Year retained | Recommended | Achievement | Reading | Repeat grades | Sped services | 1994-95 grade |
|---------|-----------------|---------------|-------------|-------------|---------|---------------|---------------|---------------|
| A | k | 89 | P | | X | X | | 5 |
| B | 1 | 86 | P | X | X | X | | 9 |
| C | 1 | 85 | S | X | X | X | X | 10 |
| D | 1 | 85 | S | X | X | X | X | 10 |
| E | 2 | 86 | S | X | | X | X | 10 |
| F | 3 | 89 | S | | | X | | 8 |
| G | 3 | 86 | S | X | | X | | 11 |
| H | k | 86 | S | X | X | X | X | 8 |
| I | k | 89 | S | X | | X | X | 5 |
| J | 2 | 87 | S | X | X | X | | 9 |
| K | 1 | 86 | S | X | X | X | X | 9 |
| L | 2 | 88 | S | X | X | X | | 8 |
| M | k | 85 | S | X | X | X | | 9 |
| N | 2 | 86 | S | X | X | X | X | 10 |
| O | 1 | 88 | S | X | X | X | | 7 |
| P | k | 88 | S | X | X | X | X | 6 |
| Q | k | 88 | P | X | X | X | X | 6 |
| R | 1 | 88 | S | X | X | X | | 7 |
| S | 2 | 88 | S | X | | X | | 8 |
| T | 2 | 87 | S | X | X | X | | 9 |
| U | 3 | 87 | S | X | X | X | | 9 |
| V | 1 | 88 | S | X | X | X | X | 7 |

Retention grade - grade level repeated by student

Year retained - the year when decision was made for student to repeat

Recommendation - P = Parent request, S = School recommendation

Achievement - Student was having difficulty in academic achievement

Reading - Student was having difficulty in reading

Repeat grades - Student had improved grades for the repeat year

Sped services - Students verified for special education services

1994-95 grade - Student's grade level at the of the interview

Findings from the Study

Gender - Table 1

While this study was not composed of a random sample of retained students, the ratio of females to males is in line with the ratios described by Abidin, Galaday, and Howerton (1971), Donofrio (1977), and Walker (1984) where studies show the ratios of males to females retained being from 2 to 1 up to 9 to 1. This study included five females and 17 males for a ratio of 3.4 to 1. Beyond being females, this subgroup did not have any other consistent similarities, except that they all came from nuclear families. They ranged in age of school entrance from 4 years 11 months to 5 years 6 months and the range of their ages was similar to that of the males. There were expected individual differences, but the most noticeable in regard to their recommendations for retention was that while one female student, Student A, had satisfactory grades, the parent requested the retention since she didn't feel that her daughter was doing well enough. And, one female student, Student F, had satisfactory grades, but was retained for reasons of maturity. Immaturity was noted for several of the students, both female and male, but these two students were the only students retained where underachievement was not an expressed concern of the school.

Age - Table 1

The average age of school entrance for this group was 5 years 2 months old. They were all within the expected age for school entrance, but 13 of the 22 students had summer or early fall (June through September) birthdays. The age range of the study group was from 4 years 11 months to 5 years 9 months - a span of almost year. The age range of the study group does not include any students also normally found in a kindergarten class who are closer to six years old, or already six years old. Shepard and Smith (1986) have reported younger children to be at a higher risk for retention (p. 79).

Grade Level Retained - Table 2

Grade level at the time of retention for the students in this study was predominantly in the early primary grades. Six students were retained in kindergarten; seven students in first grade; six students in second grade; and three in third grade. While, fourth, fifth, and sixth grade students had been retained during the same years as the students in the study group, retention as a practice was more prevalent in the early grades.

Shepard and Smith (1989) have reported that often in the research literature, kindergarten retention is considered separately from retention at upper grade levels because it is considered to be a preventative treatment for immaturity, thus

the populations and social effects are thought to be different (p. 64). Kindergarten students were not considered separately in this study because pre-academic skills were considered in the recommendations for retention. Further, the feelings and attitudes expressed by students retained in kindergarten in this study were not found to be any different from those of students retained in grades 1 - 3.

Year of Retention - Table 2

Three of the students were retained in 1985, six in 1986, three in 1987, seven in 1988, and three in 1989. Since the interviews were all conducted during the second semester of the 1994-95 school year, a considerable quantity of follow-up information from school records was available for each student.

Recommendation for Retention - Table 2

The recommendation to retain was made by the school for 18 of the students in the study group, while the parent(s) of four of the students requested that their children be held back. The only noticeable difference among the students who were retained by parental request was that one student (Student A) had satisfactory grades. This was discussed in the

section on gender. The other three students who were retained by parental request did not have satisfactory grades.

Academic Achievement, Reading Achievement,
and Repeat Grades - Table 2

From the students' school records, below average achievement was indicated for all but two of the retained students, Students A and F. Despite satisfactory grades, Student A's parent requested retention and Student F was retained for reasons of immaturity only. Language development and reading were the most prevalent areas of academic difficulty according to the school records. Those students whose grades specifically indicated reading problems were identified on Table 2. All of the students who had academic problems also had reading difficulties, except Students G, I, and S. All of the students in this study had higher grades during their repeat year as compared to the year they were retained. And, as Medway and Rose point out, "nearly all retained children do show some achievement score gains after repeating" (1986, p. 158).

Special Education Services - Table 2

Ten of the 22 students in the study received special education services during at least some part of their school

years. Eight of the students were verified to receive services prior to being retained.

1994-95 Grade Level - Table 2

While the students in this study were all retained in grades K - 3, at the time of their interviews, they were enrolled in fifth grade to eleventh grade, and ranged in age from 11 years to 18 years old. Student A was the youngest participant and Student G was the oldest participant. There did not appear to be any relationship between grade level retained and the students' feelings about retention. Nor did the grade level at the time of the interview appear to be a meaningful factor in the students' attitudes and feelings about retention.

Home Situation Categories - Table 1

The categories relating to home situations at the time of retention included family structure, whether or not the mother worked, and parents' type of employment. Thirteen of the retained students came from homes where both parents resided. Two of the students were from blended families: Student M and Student S both have step-fathers and step-siblings. Student O's mother had been previously married so he has an older step-brother, but he was included in the nuclear

family count since he lives with both of his natural parents. Seven of the students had single mothers at the time of retention, although not all seven mothers have remained single since the time of their child's retention. Also, one of the factors included in the previously referred to list from Abidin, Galaday, and Howerton (1971), Donofrio (1977), and Walker (1984) for being at risk for retention was that the student's mother worked. In this study, 19 of the 22 students had working mothers at the time of retention.

In all but one case, the parents of the students in this study have "blue collar" jobs. Eighteen of the students' parents work at local industries. Research by Rose, Medway, Cantrell, and Marus (1983) has shown that while there are other factors that correlate with being at risk for retention, blacks, boys, Spanish-speaking children, economically disadvantaged students, and children whose parent(s) had less than 12 years of education are at highest risk to be retained (p. 203).

The school entry level age for the students in this study was previously delineated in the findings of the study, but not in reference to the economic implications. For those parents who are struggling financially, entrance into kindergarten reduces the cost of day care by half. In this school system, an average of 20 to 25 percent of the eligible students are held back from beginning kindergarten. While unfortunately there

are not statistics available on the parents' economic level of the students who are held back, it is the sense of the researcher and the kindergarten teachers in the school system that the children who are held back tend to be from higher economic standing. These children not only have the "year to grow" often cited in the research, but they are more frequently the children who are enrolled in private preschool settings where they are gaining in school readiness and social skills.

It should once again be noted that during the time period from 1985 -1990, the school system had no minority students at the elementary level. Therefore, while some of the other factors cited as correlating with grade retention, such as gender, school entrance age, and academic achievement, the researcher was unable to address the issue of minority status in relation to retention in this study.

Parents' Feelings about Retention - Table 1

As previously indicated, a total of 12 parents participated in this study, the mothers of 10 students and the mother and father of one student, representing 11 of the retained students. Ninety-one percent (10 out of 11) indicated generally positive feelings about their child's retention. Eight of the ten parents who had positive feelings indicated that retention had been a good idea and there had been long-term

benefits to their child. While Parent A had positive feelings about retention, she did not feel it had been beneficial for her child because of changes in her child's education apart from the retention. Parent Q was positive about the retention, but did not perceive it as long-term benefit to her son.

Only one parent, Parent I, expressed negative feelings about her son's retention. She felt that the retention had provided no academic benefits for him either during the year of retention or subsequent years and that the retention had negatively labeled her son at school. She stated that she had made the decision based on the information she had been given at that time by the teacher, but she also indicated her own feelings of regret and guilt that she had made that decision.

Some other parents had also referred to their own feelings of guilt or inadequacy because their child had been retained. While some parents seemed to have worked through these kinds of feelings, several of the parents indicated a "sense of relief" from the experience of talking about the retention.

All but two of the parents indicated that they would have to really think about retention if it were recommended again for their child. Parent M stated, "if that's what he needs, then it's what will be," and because of loss of credits, her son has in effect retained himself a second time at the high school

level. And, Parent A indicated that she was considering retention for her child a second time.

Students' Feelings About Retention - Table 1

While none of the parents expressed any negative feelings toward the teacher from the retaining year, negative feelings from students were often cited. Since this was a follow-up study, it is impossible to know if all of the students who expressed negative feelings toward the teachers had felt these feelings during the year they were retained, or if they developed these feelings as a result of being retained by that teacher.

Two of the students in the study indicated that they had been told that they were being retained by their teachers. One student said the guidance counselor had told him that he was going to be retained. Thirteen of students were told by their parents; one student was told by his mother and teacher together. This was certainly a more sensitive means of sharing the information than reported in the Byrnes' study where 42 percent of the students reported that they had found out they were being retained from their report cards. Of the students who had received the information from their parents, only one student, Student T, indicated that his parents had been angry with him because of the retention. An interesting

point was that six of the students were unable to remember how they learned of their retentions.

In general terms, 14 of the 22 students expressed acceptance of their retentions. While two of the students expressed more neutral feelings, neither very positive nor negative, six students expressed varying degrees of negative responses to their retentions. Nearly all of the students, except Students C, D, E, H, and V, verbalized agreement that they should have been retained. They may have verbalized that they should have been retained because that was what they had been told, such as Student B. Those who were retained because they were struggling in school may have understood, even if they were young, that they were not doing as well as their classmates. Even young children are capable of recognizing such differences. It seems very doubtful that children retained for reasons of immaturity would have an understanding of that concept at the time, for example the struggles of Student F in trying to understand her own retention.

According to Byrnes, despite what may be the best intentions of their teachers, "retained children perceive retention as a punishment and a stigma, not as a positive event designed to help them" (1989, p. 130). The students who did not think they should have been retained indicated that they

did not see the point in holding them back; however, only one student, Student H, used the word punishment in referring to the reason for the retention.

While the majority of students in this study felt that retention was good for them, none of these students have anything to compare this against, and the students tended to be vague in their responses as to how the retention helped them beyond that it was easier or that they could do better. Even the students who did not think they should have been retained tended to support the concept of retention for others. But, in fact, retention is "the only game in town" for students who are struggling to keep up in school. Of the 22 students in the sample, only Student J gave a response that was close to positive in regard to retention now, and she indicated that she "would adapt." The other 21 students gave responses in varying degrees of negativity from "scared" to "Can I buy a gun?"

In response to being asked what was the worst thing about being retained, the single most recurring response from the students was their peers and friends, even for students retained in kindergarten where retention is thought to have less of a social impact. The students expressed their feelings about friends in different ways. While some verbalized the loss of friends, others talked about having to make new

friends. Teasing from students from other students was mentioned, and questions from former classmates was especially difficult for Student C who stated that she "would have fights over it."

Despite the issue of friends and other factors, 16 of the students in this study gave the impression of having accepted their retentions either passively, such as Student M, or positively, such as Student J. Students verbalized the benefits of their retentions whether or not they have demonstrated long-term benefits in their schools grades or achievement test scores. As a group, their feelings may be characterized as follows:

1. Some students seem to genuinely believe that being retained helped them to do better, whether or not they have actually been successful by school standards. All of the students had higher grades during their repeat year. This may have increased the self-confidence of some of the students. If the student has not been successful over a long term basis, he or she still might perceive the retention as beneficial because the expectations of benefits were not long-term.

2. Some students may have come to believe that their retention was a positive experience because they have been told by others at school and /or home that it was beneficial to them.

3. Some students may have emotionally worked through the negatives of their retention experience and now perceive benefits. This is what Festinger (1957) referred to as "dissonance reduction," such that the individual needs to perceive what is good in an event or experience to reduce the level of pain or anger.

4. Some students may have given socially acceptable type responses to an adult member of the school system, whether or not they truly believed that being retained helped them. The high school students knew who the researcher was from her previous position at the middle school. The elementary and middle school students only knew that the researcher worked for the school system. From the perspective of the researcher, there would be no reason for the students not to share their real feelings, but it is still a point that should be considered.

However, six of the students (4 males, 2 females) in this study were very clear in expressing their feelings of pain, anger or regret. The six students (Students C, D, E, F, H, and V) who verbalized negative feelings about retention were retained as follows: one (Student H) in kindergarten, three (Students C, D, and V) in first grade, one (Student E) in second grade, and one (Student F) in third grade. Student F was retained because of maturity, while the other five students

were retained because of academic difficulties. These five students also received special education services. At the time of the interviews, Student V was in seventh grade, Students F and H were in eighth grade, and Students C, D, and E were in the tenth grade.

Conclusions

The long-term grades and achievement test scores of a number of students in this study group make a plausible case for the achievement gains to be had from repeating a grade. However, there is no way to determine the achievement gains these students might have made if they had been regularly promoted. Previously conducted control studies would indicate that these students would have made equal to or better gains in achievement had they been promoted. Furthermore, studies which demonstrate the achievement gains of students perpetuate the belief that retention has benefits to students when in fact, these students may have shown growth in spite of being retained rather than as an effect of retention.

There is no way to predict if retention will be beneficial or harmful for any given student. Light's Retention Scale (Light, 1977) was designed as an instrument to assist educators in making retention decisions, but Sandoval's study found that the total scale score "was not sufficiently reliable and has little concurrent validity for making retention

decisions" (1980, p. 442). Further, the recommendation from a study conducted by Vasa, Wendel, and Steckelberg (1984) was to not even use the scale as a nonpsychometric counseling aid with students and parents (p. 448-449). The authors stated, "Caution should be employed in using the scale for any purposes directly related to predictions or decisions about student performance and retention" (p. 449). To date, no other instruments have been shown to eliminate "the Russian roulette" of determining who should be retained.

Both during and after reviewing the literature on the effects of retention, the researcher could not understand why retention continues to be an accepted educational practice. This study explained why to the researcher. While the literature presents a bleak picture of the benefits of retention, overall the students and parents in this study speak about the benefits of the retention.

Reality is the individual's perception. For only one parent in this study was retention not perceived as positive. And, it does not even matter that her negative perception may well have been based on other factors than the retention itself. Her reality was that the retention was not only not beneficial, but it was harmful for her child. The other parents in this study each had their own perception of reality, but they had a shared perception in that they each perceived retention as

positive. Because of their perception of reality, they believe that retention is the appropriate educational treatment.

For each student retention was like taking a nasty tasting medicine. The student was told that it would make him or her better. The teacher believed that it would make the student better and the parent believed that it would make her child better, or at least believed that the school believed it. The "medicine" was harder for some of the students to swallow than for others. It made some of the students feel better and some of them did get better. But not all of the students felt better or got better because this "medication" called retention is nothing more than a placebo drug of education. As previously pointed out, most of the students indicated an acceptance of their retention. These students felt that retention had been beneficial and they had moved on in their school career. Yet, 6 of the 22 students did express their feelings of the pointlessness, hurt, and anger of having been retained. While 10 of the 11 parents in the study were positive about the benefits of retention, one parent was not. Thus, the educational medication of retention was perceived as successful in this study based on the positive perceptions shared by both students and parents. In Chapter II, this study has pointed out that the research has not shown proven benefits from retention. In Chapters IV and V, this study has

shown that there are perceived benefits from the perspectives of students and parents in retaining students at the elementary level.

Recommendations

1. School staff should provide social/emotional support in helping retained students adjust to both a different academic and social environment.
2. Further study is needed on the social impact of retention on students.
3. Follow-up studies with students and their parents beginning the year of retention and extending over a period of time would provide information unavailable in this study.
4. Other school districts will need to conduct their own retention studies to determine the effectiveness of the practice for their student populations.

Bibliography

- Abidin, R.R., Galladay, W.M., and Howerton, A.L. (1971). Elementary school retention: An unjustifiable, discriminatory, and noxious educational practice. Journal of School Psychology, 9, 410-417.
- Ames, L.B. (1980) Retention in grade can be a step forward. Early Years, XI, 10-11.
- Balow, I.H. and Schwager, M. (1990). Retention in Grade: A Failed Procedure. In R. J. Reitz, (Ed.) Retention in Grade: Looking for Alternatives. Center for Evaluation, Development Research, Phi Delta Kappa.
- Beck, R., Cook, W. and Kearney, N. (1960). Curriculum in the modern elementary school. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall
- Bocks, W.M. (1977). Non-promotion: A year to grow? Educational Leadership, 34, 379-383.
- Bruce, M. G. (1988). Making the grade or marking time? Phi Delta Kappan, 69, 383-384.
- Byrnes, D. (1989). Attitudes of students, parents, and educators toward repeating a grade. In L.A. Shepard and M.L. Smith (Eds.) Flunking grade: Research and policy on retention. New York: Falmer Press.
- Byrnes, D. and Yamamoto, K. (1986). Views on grade repetition. In R. J. Reitz, (Ed.) Retention in grade: Looking for alternatives. Center for Evaluation, Development Research, Phi Delta Kappa.

- Byrnes, D. and Yamamoto, K. (1985). Academic retention of elementary pupils: An inside look. Education, 106, 209-214.
- Cadigan, D., Entwisle, D., Alexander, K., and Pallas, A. (1988) First grade retention among low achieving students. In R. J. Reitz, (Ed.) Retention in grade: Looking for alternatives. Center for Evaluation, Development Research, Phi Delta Kappa.
- Chandler, H. (1984). Retention: Edspeak for flunk. Journal of Learning Disabilities, 17, 60-62.
- Chase, J. (1968). A study of the impact of grade retention on primary school children. The Journal of Psychology, 70, 169-177.
- Coffield, W. and Blommers, P. (1956) Effects of non-promotion on educational achievement in the elementary school. The Journal of Educational Psychology, 47, 235-250.
- Cook, W. (1941) Some effects of the maintenance of high standards of promotion. The Elementary School Journal, 41, 430-437.
- Creswell, J. (1994). Research design: Qualitative and quantitative approaches.
- Dawson, M. and Rafoth, M. (1991) Why student retention doesn't work. Streamlined Seminar, 9:3, 1-6.
- Dobbs, V. and Neville, D. (1967) The effect of nonpromotion on the achievement of groups matched from retained 1st graders and promoted 2nd graders. The Journal of Educational Research, 60, 472-475.
- Donofrio, A. (1977) Grade repetition: Therapy of choice. Journal of Learning Disabilities, 10, 349-351.

Doyle, R. (1989). The resistance of conventional wisdom to research evidence: The case of retention in grade. In R. J. Reitz, (Ed.) Retention in grade: Looking for alternatives. Center for Evaluation, Development Research, Phi Delta Kappa

Ebel, R. (1980). The failure of schools without failure. Phi Delta Kappan, 61, 386-388.

Finlayson, H. (1977). Nonpromotion and self-concept development. Phi Delta Kappan, January, 205-206.

Funk, H. (1969). Nonpromotion teaches children they are inferior. Illinois Schools Journal, Summer, 130-133.

Frymier, J., and Gansneder, B. (1989). The Phi Delta Kappa Study of Students at Risk. In R. J. Reitz, (Ed.) Retention in grade: Looking for alternatives. Center for Evaluation, Development Research, Phi Delta Kappa.

Goodlad, J. (1952). Research and theory regarding promotion and non-promotion. The Elementary School Journal, 53, 150-155.

Goodlad, J. (1954). Some effects of promotion and nonpromotion upon the social and personal adjustment of children. Journal of Experimental Education, 22: 4, 301-325.

Grissom, J. B., and Shepard, L. A. (1989). Repeating and dropping out of school. In L.A. Shepard and M.L. Smith (Eds.) Flunking grade: Research and policy on retention. New York: Falmer Press.

Hamilton, B. and Burkholder, S. (1991). A team approach to grade placement, Streamlined Seminar, 9:3, 6-7.

- Holmes, C. T. (1983). The fourth r: Retention. Journal of Research and Development in Education, 17:1, 1-6.
- Holmes, C. T. (1989). Grade level retention effects: A meta-analysis of research studies. In L.A. Shepard and M.L. Smith (Eds.) Flunking grade: Research and policy on retention. New York: Falmer Press.
- Holmes, C.T. and Matthews, K. M. (1984). The effects of nonpromotion on elementary and junior high pupils: A meta-analysis. Review of Educational Research, 54, 225-236.
- House, E. (1989). Policy implications of retention research. In L.A. Shepard and M.L. Smith (Eds.) Flunking grade: Research and policy on retention. New York: Falmer Press.
- Jackson, G. (1975). The research evidence on the effects of grade retention. Review of Educational Research, 45:4, 613-635.
- Johnson, J. (1984). Synthesis of research on grade retention and social promotion. Educational Leadership, 41, 66-68.
- Kamii, C. and Weikart, D. (1963). Marks, achievement, and intelligence of seventh graders who were retained (nonpromoted) once in elementary school. The Journal of Educational Research, 56, 425-459.
- Koons, C. (1977). Nonpromotion: A dead-end road. Phi Delta Kappan, 58:9, 701-702.
- Kowitz, G. and Armstrong, C. (1961). The effect of promotion policy on academic achievement. The Elementary School Journal, 61, 435-443.

- Labaree, D. (1984). Setting the standard: Alternative policies for student promotion. Harvard Educational Review, 54:1, 67-87.
- Lieberman, L. (1980). A decision making model for in-grade retention (nonpromotion). Journal of Learning Disabilities, 13:5, 40-44.
- Light, H. W. (1977). Light's Retention Scale. Novato, CA: Academic Therapy Publications.
- McAfee, J.K. (1981, April). Toward a theory of promotion: Does retaining students really work? Paper presented at the meeting of the American Educational Research Association, Los Angeles. (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 204 871)
- May, D. and Welch, E. (1984). The effects of developmental placement and early retention on children's later scores on standardized tests. Psychology in the Schools, 21, 381-385.
- Medway, F.J. and Rose, J.S. (1986) Grade Retention. In T. Kratochwill (Ed.) Advances in School Psychology, Volume V, 141-175.
- Nikalson, L. B. (1984). Non-promotion: A pseudo-scientific solution. Psychology in the Schools, 21, 85-99.
- Norton, M. (1984). It's time to get tough on student promotion - or is it? Contemporary Education, 54:4, 283-286.
- Peterson, P.L. (1989). Alternatives to student retention. In L.A. Shepard and M.L. Smith (Eds.) Flunking grade: Research and policy on retention. New York: Falmer Press.

- Peterson, S.E., DeGracie, J.S., and Ayabie, C.R. (1987). A longitudinal study of the effects of retention/promotion on academic achievement. American Educational Research Journal, 24(1), 107-118.
- Pierson, L. and Connell, J. (1992). Effect of grade retention on self-system processes, school engagement, and academic achievement. Journal of Educational Psychology, 84, 300-307.
- Pomplun, M. (1988). Retention: The earlier, the better? Journal of Educational Research, 81,(5) 281-287.
- Reinherz, H. and Griffith, C.L. (1970). The second time around: Achievement and progress of boys who repeated one of the first three grades. The School Counselor, 17, 213-218.
- Rose, J.S., Medway, F.J., Cantrell, V.L., and Marus, S.H. (1983). A fresh look at the retention-promotion controversy. Journal of School Psychology, 21, 201-211.
- Sandoval, J. (1980). Reliability and Concurrent Validity of Light's Retention Scale. Psychology in the Schools, 17, 442-445.
- Sandoval, J. and Fitzgerald, P. (1985). A high school follow-up of children who were nonpromoted or attended a junior first-grade. Psychology in the Schools, 22, 164-170.
- Schultz, T. (1989). Testing and retention of young children: Moving from controversy to reform. In R. J. Reitz, (Ed.) Retention in grade: Looking for alternatives. Center for Evaluation, Development Research, Phi Delta Kappa.
- Schumacher, S. and McMillan J. (1993). Research in education: A conceptual introduction. New York: HarperCollins College Publishers.

- Scott, B.A. and Ames, L.B. (1969). Improved academic, personal, and social adjustment in selected primary-school repeaters. The Elementary School Journal, 69, 431-439.
- Shepard, L.A. (1989). A review of research on kindergarten retention. In L.A. Shepard and M.L. Smith (Eds.) Flunking grade: Research and policy on retention. New York: Falmer Press.
- Shepard, L.A. and Smith, M.L. (1988). Escalating academic demand in kindergarten: Counterproductive policies. The Elementary School Journal, 89(2), 135-145.
- Shepard, L.A. and Smith, M.L. (1986). Synthesis of research on school readiness kindergarten retention. Educational Leadership, 44(3), 78-86.
- Shepard, L.A. and Smith, M.L. (1987). Effects of kindergarten retention at the end of first grade. Psychology in the Schools, 24, 346-357.
- Smith, M.L. (1989). Teachers' beliefs about retention. In L.A. Shepard and M.L. Smith (Eds.) Flunking grade: Research and policy on retention. New York: Falmer Press.
- Smith, M.L. and Shepard, L.A. (1987). What doesn't work: Explaining policies of retention in the early grades. Phi Delta Kappan, 69(2), 129-134.
- Smith, M.L. and Shepard, L.A. (1989). Flunking grades: A recapitulation. In L.A. Shepard and M.L. Smith (Eds.) Flunking grade: Research and policy on retention. New York: Falmer Press.

- Thompson, S. (1980). Grade retention and social promotion.
ACSA School Management Digest, Series 1., 20, 1-36.
- Vasa, S., Wendel, F. and Steckelberg, A. (1984). Light's
Retention Scale: Does It Have Concurrent Validity?
Psychology in the Schools, 21, 447-448.
- Walker, N.W. (1984). Elementary school grade retention:
Avoiding abuses through systematic decision-making.
Journal of Research and Development in Education, 18,
1-5.

Appendix A
Transcriptions of Interview Tapes

Student A

- Q. How did you feel about being retained?
- A. I didn't like it because now I'm in a grade behind where I should be.
- Q. Was it a good idea for you to stay in kindergarten?
- A. Yes, because I think if I wouldn't have been, I wouldn't have been ready for the higher grades.
- Q. Should you have been retained?
- A. Yes.
- Q. How did your parents feel about you repeating a grade?
- A. They felt like I really needed it.
- Q. Do you remember how you found out you were going to be retained?
- A. No, not really.
- Q. Why do you think you were retained?
- A. I think I was retained because I wasn't ready to go on to first grade.
- Q. Do you think it is a good idea to keep students in the same grade?
- A. Yes, if they really need it.
- Q. Was it a good idea to keep you in the same grade?

- A. Yes, because I needed it, because I might not have been ready.
- Q. What was the worst thing about not passing?
- A. My friends were all a grade ahead of me and I didn't see them.
- Q. What was a good thing about not passing?
- A. Now I think I'm in the right grade now.
- Q. Now that you are in 5th grade, how do you feel about yourself as a student?
- A. I think I'm doing pretty well.
- Q. Do you think that being retained in kindergarten helped you to do better in the following grades?
- A. Yes.
- Q. How did being retained help you do better in the following grades?
- A. It helped me to be ready for the next grade.
- Q. Do you spend much time now thinking about when you were retained?
- A. No.
- Q. What kinds of feelings do you have when you think about it?
- A. I feel sad because I could be with my other friends who are ahead of me.
- Q. How would you feel about being retained now?

- A. I wouldn't really like it because my friends would jump ahead of me again and I'd have to start over again.
- Q. How did answering these questions make you feel?
- A. It didn't make me feel any different.

Parent A

- Q. How did you feel about your child being retained?
- A. She needed to be held back because of slow learning problems that would have made her first grade experience even harder than it already was.
- Q. Was it a good idea for your child to stay in kindergarten?
- A. Yes.
- Q. Should your child have been retained?
- A. Yes, it was done per our request. She wasn't failing. We felt she wasn't ready to move on.
- Q. How did your child feel about repeating a grade?
- A. At the time, she didn't care. She had been in parochial school and the teacher had no patience with the slower children. If they couldn't keep up, she left them behind. We moved [Student A] to the public school system mid-semester and had better results. She liked the teacher very much, so the second year didn't bother her much if at all.

- Q. Do you remember how you found out your child was going to be retained?
- A. Yes. We had a meeting with the teacher to discuss how she was doing. She wasn't failing, but wasn't progressing as well as we would like, so per our request, she repeated the grade.
- Q. Do you think it is a good idea to keep students in the same grade?
- A. Yes. If they are not keeping up with the current class, and have a lot of trouble learning the required material, I see no reason not to hold them back. It can only be to their benefit.
- Q. Was it a good idea to keep your child in the same grade?
- A. Yes.
- Q. What was the worst thing about your child repeating?
- A. Her new friends all moved on and at times they made fun of her for flunking kindergarten. Also, she has trouble making friends and meeting new people, so she had to start over for the third time just in kindergarten.
- Q. What was a good thing about your child repeating?
- A. She had one more year of review that helped somewhat. Her attention span is still very short and she has an older sister that gets straight A's and she won't even try to

compete with her, and she really has suffered through her school work.

Q. Now that your child is in fifth grade, how do you think she feels about herself as a student?

A. She thinks she's doing about as well as can be expected. Very big self-esteem problems.

Q. Do you think that being retained in kindergarten helped your child to do better in the following grades?

A. Not really.

Q. Why didn't being retained help your child in the following grades?

A. The school has changed their reading readiness program. They do not teach phonics in the classroom anymore. Her reading problems have really impaired her learning ability. When she has a problem with reading, and we tell her to sound it out, she doesn't even know where to start. If she can't read well, I can't really expect her to do other things well.

Q. Do you spend much time now thinking about when your child was retained?

A. No.

Q. What kinds of feelings do you have when you think about it?

- A. I felt really bad about having to make the decision to hold her back. The main reason being that I know how cruel the other kids can be and I was hoping they wouldn't make fun of her. Now, I don't have any negative feelings about it at all.
- Q. How would you feel about your child being retained now?
- A. Actually, it might be a good idea to hold her back in the fifth grade. I really don't feel she's ready for the middle school experience. She has not matured as quickly as some of her other classmates. I'm worried that she'll have even more trouble than in elementary school.
- Q. How did answering these questions make you feel?
- A. It made me feel sort of relieved. I've needed to vent about this for some time and maybe, at the same time, I helped you out, too.

Student B

- Q. What grade did you repeat?
- A. First grade.
- Q. Who told you?
- A. My mom told me.
- Q. How did mom feel about it?
- A. It was actually her idea to hold me back. It wasn't the school's idea.

- Q. There were some medical problems?
- A. I had a lot of absenteeism because of epilepsy....I had blackouts.
- Q. So it was a good idea to have you stay back?
- A. Yes.
- Q. The friend part of staying back was okay?
- A. I didn't want to leave my friends in that grade but I coped with it.
- Q. You made new friends again... Did you get any flack about it from the other kids?
- A. No.
- Q. Was the worst thing the friends part or something else?
- A. Yes friends, but I also switched schools at the same time.
- Q. How do you feel about yourself as a student now?
- A. Very good.
- Q. Do you like school now?
- A. Yeah.
- Q. What are your future plans?
- A. I'm going into metals classes, then Platte College.
- Q. It has all worked out pretty well in the long run?
- A. Yes.
- Q. Do you ever think about repeating the grade?
- A. I don't think about it very much.
- Q. What if someone would like to hold you back now?

- A. It would not be a very good idea.
- Q. Would you say that it is a good idea to repeat a grade?
- A. Yeah.
- Q. Did answering these questions make you feel uncomfortable?
- A. No.

Parent B

- Q Who discussed the retention?
- A. We visited with the teacher and he had went to Montessori. The teacher there had indicated that his attention span was short. We also visited with the pediatrician. When he was in kindergarten, I noticed his unfinished work. The teacher indicated that he was slow but it was O.K. He then went into first grade. That teacher worked with him all the time but she knew he was in trouble. She approached me with the problem. I took him to [doctor] and after testing in Lincoln he was diagnosed with attention deficit and absentee epilepsy. My husband and I decided to have him take first grade over again. We had our choice between [elementary school] or [elementary school]. I let visit with the teachers and choose. He did and he chose [elementary school]. It also had a resource room. He has

had to struggle all this time. He is an oral learner. This is a problem in the classroom with his reading. His attention deficit is a real problem. He was cured of the absentee epilepsy.

Q. He appears to have a real good understanding of the why of the retention?

A. I went to a kindergarten parent orientation and we saw a film about children with problems. I learned to remove yourself from the problem and make a decision that would help [Student B]. I took this approach with him. I also talk to him about his problem and we discuss the problem all the time. I try to help him understand himself. His grades are a lot better this year. The high school has really helped. People's attitudes are the biggest problem. Most people think that if they are not in a wheelchair, nothing is wrong with them. People's attitude is really tough and people don't understand. People's attitude was a real problem in the middle school. I even gave them tapes on the matter to watch. It was a real struggle. If you have a child with this problem and support him, some people think that I baby him.

Q. All in all, for him it was a good idea to repeat the grade?

A. Yes, because he was missing lots with his blackouts. The

Montessori helped a lot. He had lots of understanding teachers until the fifth grade. And now he has really taken on the responsibility of doing his own grades and homework. He has learned to break down the work into workable pieces. For example in 7th grade math he was having trouble. I asked to sit in class. I sat in the class. In my opinion, the teacher was not real forceful and the students did not do well with this. I observed [Student B] and also realized that there were a couple of other kids in the class with the same problem. I pointed out to him his posture was poor. Two days of this and he started working harder. He improved with just this little tip. No more problems until the end of the year and then I got calls and I worked with him to improve. A counselor could have helped with this problem. Another problem is dealing with a brother or sister who has this same disorder. It is hard to deal with. I can see where this problem is compounded in broken homes where parental support is not always available.

- Q. Has he had any problems this year?
- A. [Student B] remarked that it was hard to follow a teacher that was reading fast.
- Q. Repeating a grade was not traumatic, had benefits?

- A. It wasn't traumatic, I decided to involve him in the decision because he did not like the teacher. I let him choose and it was a good thing for him.
- Q. He has been learning and growing as time goes on?
- A. It was a good base to start with. Because of his medical issues the major thing was understanding. He wouldn't want to repeat a grade again. I would like to see a change, when a child is struggling that hard, you as a teacher need to get to know the problem and issue. Teachers can make such a difference in a child's life.

Student C

- Q. Do you remember who told you that you should repeat a grade?
- A. My mom told me that I would be retaking that same class over again.
- Q. Did you have questions about that?
- A. Yeah, I wanted to know why.
- Q. Do you remember what your mom told you?
- A. She said that I had some work that I had to catch up on.
- Q. This was what grade?
- A. First grade.
- Q. So you really were a little sprout?
- A. Yeah.

Q. Did you go to kindergarten?

A. Yeah.

Q. Kindergarten went fine and then first grade was tough?

A. Yeah.

Q. How did you feel about being retained?

A. I didn't want to do it.

Q. Was there anything specific about you not wanting to do it?

A. All of my friends were going into another grade, and the teacher that I had I didn't like her.

Q. Did you end of having the same teacher again?

A. Yeah.

Q. Was it easier the second time?

A. I think it was probably the same.

Q. How about the friends that went on? Did you make new friends?

A. The kids that went on to the second grade, they kept asking why I wasn't with them and I made some new friends but I just didn't want to be there.

Q. Was your mom angry about it?

A. No, it was just something we were going to do.

Q. Do you think that it is a good idea for students to repeat a grade?

A. I don't think first or second grade, you don't learn much.

Maybe in the third or fourth grade.

Q. You are petite. Do you think this had anything to do with it?

A. I think it probably did.

Q. When is your birthday?

A. In January.

Q. Had you already turned five when you started school?

A. I don't remember.

Q. The worst thing about repeating the first grade was friends, teacher, or boring?

A. Probably, the teacher.

Q. Now, how do you feel about yourself as a student?

A. (No response)

Q. Do you have confidence in yourself as a student?

A. Yeah.

Q. Do you like school now?

A. Kind of.

Q. In any way, did it help you as you look back?

A. I don't think it really helped. Either way, I would be where I am right now.

Q. So from your perspective, it didn't really help?

A. Yeah.

Q. Do you think about it now and does it worry you?

A. It bugs me. I don't think that I needed to be held back in

that grade.

Q. Describe your feelings . . . irritated?

A. Yeah, what was the point of making me go an extra year?

Q. Someone comes along and tells you that they want you to do this grade over again, what would you say?

A. No.

Q. Were you uncomfortable answering these questions?

A. No.

Q. If someone in class were to bring it up, would that make you feel uncomfortable?

A. It used to bug me because I would have fights over it. I would get mad.

Student D

Q Who told you that you would repeat a grade?

A. My parents.

Q Were they angry?

A. It didn't bother them too much.

Q When is your birthday?

A. June 14th.

Q You just turned five and started kindergarten?

(Couldn't understand answer on tape.)

Q Why were you held back?

A. I couldn't read. Teacher didn't take enough time with me.

Q Did you enjoy reading?

A. Not really, I still don't. I read better than I spell.

Q Did attending first grade help you with your reading?

A. Not really. I didn't start reading better till I got in the middle school.

Q From your perspective, it didn't really help you?

A. I was always in resource.

Q Did you have the same teacher for first grade?

A. Yes.

Q How did you feel about that?

A. It didn't bother me, it didn't matter.

Q Do you think it is a good idea for kids to repeat a grade?

A. Yes and no. It depends on the kid and how far behind he is.

Q What was the worst thing about repeating first grade?

A. My peers.

Q Did you make all new friends?

A. I went through elementary school by myself, I didn't have very many friends. It made me work harder I guess.

Q Were there any good things about doing first grade again?

A. Not really.

Q Did you understand why you repeated first grade?

A. My parents explained it to me.

Q Do you feel good about yourself?

A. Okay. My sister is pushing me to go to college.

Q Do you like school?

A. I like playing sports. Sports is what keeps me in school.

Q Does it bug you to think about it?

A. I kind of just blocked it out.

Q We need to hold you back now, what would you think?

A. I would ask them why. I might drop out. I know my grades are okay.

Q Did it make you uncomfortable answering these questions?

A. No.

Parent D

Q How did you feel about your child being retained?

A. If it was going to help him, then it was good.

Q Was it a good idea for your child to stay in first grade?

A. Yes.

Q Should your child have been retained?

A. Yes, I think he should have.

Q How did your child feel about repeating a grade?

A. As far as I know it didn't make him unhappy. I think it helped him.

Q Do you remember how you found out your child was going to be retained?

A. By having a meeting with his teachers.

Q Why do you think your child was retained?

A. Because he could not keep up with the regular class program.

Q Do you think it is a good idea to keep students in the same grade?

A. Yes, I do, if they need help and it will help them.

Q Was it a good idea to keep your child in the same grade?

A. Yes.

Q What was the worst thing about your child not passing?

A. Just hoping that the other kids would not pick on him about it.

Q What was a good thing about your child not passing?

A. It helped him better the next year because he was familiar with the class.

Q Now that your child is in 10th grade, how do you think he feels about himself as a student?

A. I think he feels proud of himself.

Q Do you think that being retained helped your child to do better in the following grades?

A. Yes, I do.

Q How did being retained help your child do better in the following grades?

A. It helped him understand other kids' problems and it helped him to try his very best.

Q Do you spend much time now thinking about when your

child was retained?

A. No.

Q What kinds of feelings do you have when you think about it?

A. Just that I hope it helped him at the time.

Q How would you feel about your child being retained now?

A. This late into his education, I don't think it would help him. I think it would make him feel bad now.

Q How did answering these questions make you feel?

A. I had no problem with it.

Student E

Q Who told you that you were repeating second grade again?

A. My teacher.

Q Why were you being held back?

A. Teacher said it was because I couldn't tell time.

Q Were you angry?

A. Yes, at first.

Q Was mom angry?

A. No.

Q You didn't think that you should do that grade again?

A. No I didn't.

Q Did you have the same teacher again?

A. No, I switched schools.

- Q How did you feel about the second teacher?
- A. She was a lot better.
- Q Did you switch schools because of being held back?
- A. Yes.
- Q Was it hard to make new friends?
- A. It was easy.
- Q What was the worst thing about doing second grade again?
- A. Learning new people.
- Q What was the best thing about doing the second grade again?
- A. It was easier.
- Q. Do you think it helped you at all?
- A. Maybe a little bit, but not very much.
- Q Do you think about it now?
- A. Yes.
- Q How do you feel about?
- A. It irks me a little.
- Q How do you feel about yourself as a student.....do you like school?
- A. Not very good, I just try.
- Q Has it helped you down through the years?
- A. Yes.
- Q What if someone would ask you to stay back in high school now?

- A. I already did, it feels the same as second grade.
- Q Did it make you uncomfortable answering these questions?
- A. Not really.
- Q Do you think it is a good idea for kids to repeat grades?
- A. Yes.

Student F

- Q Do you remember how you felt about being held back?
- A. I cried, a lot. It wasn't being held back that made me mad, it was not being with my friends, but right now I really don't care anymore. I tried to forget about it because it's not there anymore I guess. I just put it back in my mind and try to forget about it and move on. (L.S. but at the time it hurt and made you angry) Yeah, it did, it made me very mad.
- Q So at that point in time, you did not think it was a good idea?
- A. No, it was not.
- Q Do you recall, did anybody tell you why? Who told you?
- A. I don't remember, but my parents told me and my teacher told me and my principal told me and the counselor talked about it to me and basically everyone told me about it. It was so long ago. I told my whole class a week later I was

being held back. Some laughed, some said nifty. I was the little one in my class.

Q You felt this was not good?

A. Right.

Q How did your parents feel?

A. I don't think they liked doing it, but I knew they thought it was the best thing for me.

Q They were angry with you?

A. No. My parents always support me no matter what I do.

Q You're lucky.

A. Yes I am.

Q So, the reason was not that you weren't bright enough, you were small?

A. Yeah.

Q When you hit fourth grade did you suddenly feel mature?

A. No, I didn't; I felt so awkward being in a totally different grade, in third grade they were all different people and then fourth grade there were only a couple of people that were in my third grade class that I actually knew. A ton of new fourth graders coming in. It was like 10 new fourth graders that year . . . only about five or six people that I knew.

Q So you really had two years to go through getting acclimated again. Almost like moving two years in a row.

A. Yeah.

Q So, you had a different teacher for third grade. . . .Would it have made a difference if you would have had the same teacher?

A. Yes, I hated by third grade teacher. I absolutely hated her. My second year of third grade was much better. I had a ton of fun.

Q Did you sluff off the second year?

A. No I didn't at all. I got good grades. I think I got straight A's the whole year.

Q Was it easier?

A. It was easier. I comprehended it more and I think I comprehend things now more than most kids in my class now do because of being held back. I had an extra year to gain on how to grasp things and like keep them in my head. Sometimes I just totally forget things. (L.S. suggest that you are bright and doesn't matter that you were held back...give credit to yourself)

Q Generally, would you recommend holding students back?

A. Depends on the student. For me it was a great idea. For some kids it might be the worst thing in the world to do. Some kids just don't get it that it could help them and they totally rebel. I know a couple of boys that were held back that are in my class that were like that.

- Q Girls have a better understanding than boys of the benefits of retention?
- A. It depends on the age too. It does, because some boys in my class are so cocky and if they got held back, they would worry about their reputations. Girls just slide by. I really didn't comprehend it was for my benefit until sixth grade and I talked to [a guidance counselor] about it for like it about a half hour. It was here for a purpose but it took a lot of years to understand it.
- Q The worst thing was losing friends and making new friends? A good thing was that you enjoyed third grade again?
- A. Yes.
- Q You've come this far, you seem to think this was a good thing?
- A. Yes.
- Q If you were talking to [guidance counselor] about it, you were not feeling great about it, were you still angry, confused....?
- A. I wasn't angry or mad at anyone. At one point in time, I was mad at myself. Fifth grade I got so mad at myself. I thought about it all the time. I thought and I figured out that it was my fault that I got held back. That is when it hurt. Right now, I think I am not mad at anyone. I am

disappointed that I had to make new friends, but that's okay because I have great friends. I am very good friends with a lot of people. Confused? Yes, I was for a long time and I'm glad I talked to her because I know exactly why they did it.

(Even when we understand, it still hurts? You had no control over it. Subject is crying)

Q Now, do you think about it much?

A. No, I don't.

Q You are purposely choosing not to think about?

A. Yes.

Q For the record, it probably is still bugging you?

A. Yes, it does still bug me.

Q When you feel up to it, talk to folks or [guidance counselor]?

A. Yeah.

Q Your dad mentioned marine biology...You like science?

A. Oh yeah, I love it, I can't get enough of it. (L.S. math is tied into science, you may want to work on math)

Q You are a good student?

A. Yeah, I am, I know I am.

Q. Do you have good study habits?

A. No.

- Q You learn because it comes easily, but maybe the math doesn't come as easily . . . need to use self discipline with math. Do you feel like you have the knowledge to appropriately use study skills?
- A. I hated study skills, because it was a repeat and I knew all of it. It was a total review again.
- Q Are you still required to take study skills as an eighth grader?
- A. Yes.
- Q Change requirements on study skills class?
- A. I agree, I have had A's all three years.
- Q What if [the principal] says we want to retain you in eighth grade again because of your size?
- A. I probably would be thinking of some things I could not say out loud. I'd go to the counselor. I'd ask her if she was consulted about it? I'd tell her that it is stupid because I have a "B" average. I'd feel that I'm ready to go to ninth grade. (L.S. ..feelings would be the same as in third grade.....subject is crying)
- Q How did you feel answering the questions?
- A. It felt like I was digging up a dead person. It is something, trying to think how to put it, like a band-aid coming off. You pick at the band aid for hours and hours and you get one side off and then you come to the side that

is stuck to the stupid scab. And that's the part when you start crying. It does work, you get it off. You get it out in the open and you feel much better. I will probably think about it again for a couple of weeks. Write about it in the diary. Talk to [guidance counselor]. Taking the band-aid off doesn't serve a purpose unless you take it all the way off. This conversation helped to clear things a little. I get it out in the open.

Student F's Parents

- Q How did you feel about child's retention?
- A. I felt it was a good decision. I was a little shocked at the time it was brought up to us as a parent teacher conference and I wasn't expecting it.
- Q Was it later in school year?
- A. Yeah.
- Q. So there had not been warning?
- A. Right, though we knew she was having troubles and you know I guess I just really never had any expectation that they would suggest that.
- Q So at first, it was "Oh my goodness"?
- A. Yeah, it was a bad feeling at first because I was more concerned at the way she would feel than the way I would

feel. I felt a little guilty for maybe starting her too early in kindergarten.

Q Was she young?

A. Yeah, obvious first day. She started when she was five, plus we had just moved so she was adjusting to that.

Q Did you feel she was enjoying kindergarten?

A. Yeah, kindergarten was (O.K. Dad.....Oh yeah)

Q So as she was going through school, she said like....I don't like school?

A. No, it was more just not mature enough to handle responsibility and (Dad - grades weren't that terrible as it was.) It was her (Dad....she wanted to associate with kids younger) It wasn't her ability; it was more her maturity.

Q Do you feel that is equalized now?

A. Yeah.

Q Did you have same feelings?

A. (Dad - Yeah, a little bit, not much. I saw her on the playground, I didn't think it was anything major. Yeah, I think it was a good decision.)

Q Was a good idea?

A. Yes.

Q Should your child have been retained? Academically was not so much a issue, but maturity was beneficial? How do you thing she felt?

A. (Dad - At that time she was bored the second year, repeating the same class over again. I think she was a little intimidated by the other kids, that was a major adjustment for her.)

Q Did it get at her self esteem?

A. Yeah. (Dad - a little bit.) During that period of time, she carried that with her for quite a while, even up until the seventh grade. Kids would make comments to her about it and it really hurt her cause she would tell us about it. She didn't like that. (Dad - Yeah it started going away more and more all the time.)

Q She is discovering more who she is and can let go of that . . . she can always look back and say I didn't like it, but I got through it. When you found out at PT Conference, do you recall what teacher said?

A. I can remember the whole thing. She had [principal] come into the classroom. He was actually the one that told us. And he just said that we had been talking about the troubles she had been having keeping up and trying to get her to accomplish things and he just said due to that we think it would be a good idea to hold her back. I can't

remember the exact words how he said it. Hold her back into the third grade because that was a good time during the way the building was set up, her class that she was with now would be going over to fourth grade, across and they would be away so she would be just there with you know, it would give them a chance to adjust not only her but her former classmates. So that was their reasoning for waiting till third grade I think.

Q Did you feel angry?

A. Yeah, I wasn't angry at that, probably just more at myself for making the wrong decision, cause I remember talking to someone at work about she had sent her daughter to school early too . . . and she had asked me before I sent her how I felt about it . . . and here I was saying "Oh I think it was alright, I haven't noticed any problems." And there here all of a sudden was this problem right here in my face and I had to go to her and say, I made a mistake so you might want to reconsider, but she went ahead and sent her and she is doing fine. It is just the difference in kids and maturity.

Q It is hard to predetermine. Don't think of it as a mistake, but a decision you made at the time for the best. Look at each case individually. Worst thing about holding her back

was feelings you had to deal with, do you think it hit her right away?

- A. She cried right away. She was really disappointed. And even that summer . . . there was little after shocks. Every time someone would say . . . you flunked! Even at work people would say maybe it was because of her asthma medication or even suggest that she had a learning disability. That wasn't the problem at all.
- Q. You had to deal with all the 'experts' as well as your own child. At the point in time, it was hard to see any good in the choice?
- A. I saw the good in it. I really could . . . it is just that it was one of those things that it was good, but you had to deal with some negative things with it. (Dad - Even the next year, her study habits, she would shrink from having to work at study habits, she is still a little bit that way but she is getting better.) Much better. That is the way she is with math right now. Well, this is all the better I can do. I have to work really hard just to get a "B" even in math. (Dad - Mom says, just bring it home and work a bit in the evenings, a little extra and she just won't do it.)
- Q. I can't say that I blame her if its math . . . what does she want to go into?
- A. (Dad - Marine biology.)

Student G

- Q Who told you that you were repeating a grade?
- A. My third grade teacher and my mom.
- Q Who's idea was it?
- A. It was the school's idea and my mom agreed with it.
- Q Was mom mad?
- A. No, she thought it would be the best for me.
- Q Did you think it would be the best for you?
- A. It was okay because everybody that I hung around with was in a grade below me.
- Q You did not have to make many new friends then?
- A. No, not really.
- Q Did you have the same teacher again?
- A. Yes.
- Q From your perspective it was a good idea?
- A. Yes.
- Q What kind of problems were you having in school?
- A. Nothing much, I wasn't getting along with the kids in my class.
- Q What was the worst thing about it?
- A. Lost a year.
- Q What was the best thing about it?
- A. I could be with my friends.
- Q Do you think about it now?

A. No.

Q How would you feel about being held back now in high school?

A. No.

Q Would you say that you were not as mature as the other kids in your grade?

A. Everybody in my neighborhood seemed to be a grade below me and they were my friends.

Q Do you think repeating the grade helped you to do better?

A. Yes.

Q Do you think it has been helpful since then?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you think about it ever?

A. Not really.

Q Did it make you uncomfortable to answer these questions?

A. No.

Q. Do you think retention is a good idea for other students?

A. Yes, if they are not doing too good.

Parent G

Q How did you feel about your child being retained?

A. I was for it as soon as the teacher saw he needed more help.

Q Was it a good idea for your child to stay in third grade?

A. Yes.

Q Should your child have been retained?

A. Yes, because he was not up to doing higher grade work and would have got lost.

Q How did your child feel about repeating a grade?

A. He didn't seem to mind.

Q Do you remember how you found out your child was going to be retained?

A. I discussed it with the teacher and then made the decision.

Q Why do you think your child was retained?

A. Because I told the teacher to hold him back.

Q Do you think it is a good idea to keep students in the same grade?

A. Yes, because it helps them to be equal as they are in the same level as the grade moving up.

Q Was it a good idea to keep your child in the same grade?

A. Yes.

Q What was the worst thing about your child not passing?

A. Nothing.

Q What was a good thing about your child not passing?

A. Feel [Student G] tried harder.

Q Now that your child is in 11th grade, how do you think he feels about himself as a student?

A. He knows that its his level of work - good.

Q Do you think that being retained helped your child to do better in the following grades?

A. Yes.

Q How did being retained help your child do better in the following grades?

A. Because he understands what he reads more.

Q Do you spend much time now thinking about when your child was retained?

A. No.

Q What kinds of feelings do you have when you think about it?

A. Good ones.

Q How would you feel about your child being retained now?

A. Okay, if that's what he needs, then it's what will be.

Q How did answering these questions make you feel?

A. Good.

Student H

Q Were you upset when you were told you were repeating a grade?

A. I was upset.

Q How old were you when you started school?

A. Five.

Q Were your parents mad?

A. No.

Q Why do you think you were retained?

A. As a punishment.

Q Really?

A. Well I just didn't think it was fair.

Q Did you and teacher get along?

A. No.

Q Did you have the same teacher again?

A. Yes I did.

Q Another long year?

A. Yes.

Q Did you get along better the second year?

A. A little, but not much.

Q How was first grade?

A. Different.

Q Did you and 1st grade teacher get along?

A. Yes.

Q Do you think it helped you repeating a grade?

A. Not really.

Q Why was that?

A. I already knew what was being taught.

Q What was the worst thing about it?

A. Making new friends.

Q Did you get teased?

A. No.

Q What was the best thing about it?

A. Meeting new people.

Q Did you start feeling good about yourself in first grade?

A. It took a long time to feel good about myself.

Q Do you think about it now?

A. Yes I do.

Q. And how do you feel?

A. Angry and upset It just wasn't fair.

Q Who told you about being retained?

A. Mom, who was told by the teacher.

Q How do you feel about school?

A. I like going to school.

Q. Now that you are in eighth grade how do you feel about yourself as a student?

A. I feel good about myself.

Q How would you feel about being retained now?

A. I would really be upset.

Q How did answering these questions make you feel?

A. Better. I expressed my feelings.

Q Any comments...do you think it is a good idea for other kids?

A. Not really.

Student I

Q How did you feel about being retained?

A. It didn't really bother me at the time because I didn't really know what was going on.

Q Was it a good idea for you to stay in kindergarten?

A. Yes.

Q Should you have been retained?

A. Yes.

Q How did your parents feel about you repeating a grade?

A. I don't know.

Q Do you remember how you found out you were going to be retained?

A. No, I don't remember.

Q Why do you think you were retained?

A. I needed help.

Q Do you think it is a good idea to keep students in the same grade?

A. Yes.

Q Was it a good idea to keep you in the same grade?

A. I guess.

Q What was the worst thing about not passing?

A. I couldn't be with the kids I knew.

Q What was a good thing about not passing?

A. I'm the oldest in the class and I knew some of the stuff

ahead of the other kids.

Q Now that you are in fifth grade, how do you feel about yourself as a student?

A. I think I am better.

Q Do you think that being retained in kindergarten helped you to do better in the following grades?

A. Yes.

Q How did being retained help you do better in the following grades?

A. I guess I knew how to do things better.

Q Do you spend much time now thinking about when you were retained?

A. No.

Q What kinds of feelings do you have when you think about it?

A. I really can't remember it.

Q How would you feel about being retained now?

A. Bad.

Q How did answering these questions make you feel?

A. Fine.

Parent 1

Q How did you feel about your child being retained?

A. Guilty and confused.

Q Was it a good idea for your child to stay in kindergarten?

A. No, not really.

Q Should your child have been retained?

A. At the time, with the information I was given, it seemed like a good idea.

Q How did your child feel about repeating a grade?

A. He seemed confused and disappointed.

Q Do you remember how you found out your child was going to be retained?

A. Yes, at a parent/teacher conference.

Q Why do you think your child was retained?

A. He didn't have the social skills the teacher thought he would need for the first grade. He kept to himself and didn't join in discussions.

Q Do you think it is a good idea to keep students in the same grade?

A. No.

Q Was it a good idea to keep your child in the same grade?

A. No.

Q What was the worst thing about your child not passing?

A. I feel I did irreversible damage to his self-esteem.

Q What was a good thing about your child not passing?

A. I don't think there is a good thing about [Student I] being held back.

- Q Now that [Student I] is in fifth grade, you feel he doesn't have confidence in himself as a student?
- A. He doesn't have a very high opinion of his academic abilities.
- Q Do you think that being retained in kindergarten helped [Student I] to do better in the following grades?
- A. No, I really don't think it helped at all, however, it wasn't a "hard" grade to repeat.
- Q Why didn't being retained help your child in the following grades?
- A. He says he was never made fun of and I believe some of that, but it's followed him all the way through every grade. Sometimes I think it's "branded" him.
- Q Do you spend much time now thinking about when [Student I] was retained?
- A. Yes.
- Q What kinds of feelings do you have when you think about it?
- A. Guilt and regret.
- Q How would you feel about your child being retained now?
- A. I would never let it happen. There would have to be another option.
- Q How did answering these questions make you feel?
- A. Relieved, although I'm not sure why!

Student J

- Q Who told you that you were repeating a grade?
- A Mom told me after the teacher spoke to her. They gave me a choice to stay back.
- Q Was mom angry?
- A No.
- Q Did you feel okay about it?
- A It was okay.
- Q Was it a good idea?
- A Yes.
- Q Do you think it helped you?
- A The teacher and I didn't get along.
- Q In general, do you see benefits in holding students back?
- A It depends if they want it or not. I think they should have a choice.
- Q Did you have the same teacher the second time?
- A Yes, and I later found out that that teacher got fired for abuse.
- Q What was the worst thing about repeating?
- A Making friends and fitting in with new kids.
- Q What was the best thing about repeating?
- A I learned more and felt like I fitted in better because I was so little.
- Q Do you feel secure about yourself as a student?

- A. Yes, I like it a lot better being with my own age group.
Before I was the youngest and shortest. They started me too early in school.
- Q Did it help you academically through the years?
- A. Yes, because the class before thought of me as younger, and the new class just treated me better and I concentrated more.
- Q Do you think about it much?
- A. I don't really think about repeating the grade, I think more about the teacher because she was my worst teacher.
- Q What if someone came along and asked you to repeat a grade in high school?
- A. I don't know how I would feel about that because it would be different, but I would probably adapt.
- Q Were you uncomfortable answering these questions?
- A. No, I am a very open person.

Student K

- Q Who told you that you would repeat a grade?
- A. I don't remember.
- Q How did you feel about it?
- A. I didn't really care. I moved to a different school.
- Q How did you like your third grade teacher the first time?
- A. Okay, I didn't really like her.

Q How did you like your third grade teacher the second time?

A. I liked her, but you have the wrong grade.

Q Do you think that made a difference?

A. Yeah. I didn't learn anything the first time.

Q Do you think it was a good idea for you?

A. Yeah. I didn't like the teacher.

Q Were your parents mad?

A. No. They thought it would be better for me.

Q Did you not work the first time through?

A. I worked, but she was a disciplinarian teacher and would pull your arm when you did something wrong.

Q How did you feel about changing friends and all of that?

A. It was okay.

Q How do you feel about yourself as a student?

A. Pretty good.

Q Do you ever think about it now?

A. No, the only time I think about it now is because I am 16 and have a car and the other freshmen don't.

Q Only positive feelings about it?

A. Yeah.

Q What if they would say now that they want you to repeat your freshman year?

A. Can I buy a gun? I didn't really care back then.

Q Were you uncomfortable answering these questions?

A. No.

Q Do you think there are more benefits in having a student repeat a grade?

A. Depends on what age.

Q What age do you think is critical?

A. Lower grades.

Student L

Q Do you remember who told you of your retention?

A. It was my mom.

Q Was she angry?

A. She was okay. She was the one that suggested it to my teacher.

Q Do you think it was a good idea?

A. Yeah.

Q Why do you think you were held back?

A. It was, I think it was writing and my math.

Q From your perspective, do you think it was a good idea?

A. Yeah.

Q Were there any bad things about being held back?

A. All of my friends got to go ahead. I had to meet all new kids.

Q Did they tease you?

A. I went to a different school and teacher.

Q You said you were a lot better at math. Do you like school now?

A. It is okay.

Q It was a good thing to do to help you down the line?

A. Yes.

Q Do you spend anytime now thinking about it?

A. Well, two of my cousins were in my grade and I wanted to graduate with them. So that bothers me.

Q You get a little bugged by it?

A. Yeah.

Q What if someone wanted you to do it again in Middle School?

A. I would be mad.

Q Were you uncomfortable answering these questions?

A. No.

Student M

Q Who told you that you were going to repeat a grade?

A. I think they told me in school, couldn't remember.

Q How did mom feel about it?

A. It was okay. She didn't like the extra running around because I was going to a different school in the p.m. to catch up. She did not like this.

Q How did you feel about it?

A. It wasn't that bad and I didn't really care because I was in the same grade as my brother.

Q Did you find it easier the second year?

A. Yes, I guess.

Q Do you think it helped you?

A. Not really, I was stuck with younger kids.

Q Do you like school?

A. Yes, some of the classes are boring like science and computers.

Q Do you think you are a good student?

A. Okay, but some of the classes I don't put a lot of effort in.

Q Did it help you along the line in school?

A. Not really.

Q Do you think about it?

A. It isn't nothing I think about.

Q What if someone wanted you to repeat now in high school?

A. I'll go to summer school. Not okay.

Q Are you uncomfortable answering these questions?

A. No.

Q Did it make you feel bad about yourself as a person?

A. No. But it was hard at first but it got better.

Q What do you think in general as to repeating a grade?

A. It really depends on the kids. They ought to talk to the kids about it first.

Parent M

- Q How did you feel about your child being retained?
- A. Mixed emotions, but I knew that it would be best for him.
- Q Was it a good idea for your child to stay in kindergarten?
- A. Yes, I believe so.
- Q Should your child have been retained?
- A. Yes.
- Q How did your child feel about repeating a grade?
- A. At the time and even up till he was about 12 he thought he was stupid and it wasn't until he understood then he accepted that it was our family problems at the time that affected him that he got over being so hard on himself.
- Q Do you remember how you found out your child was going to be retained?
- A. The kindergarten teacher, counselor, and principal held a meeting with me.
- Q Why do you think your child was retained?
- A. His father and I were going through a "bad" divorce and his father had major drinking problems. [Student M] withdrew into himself and wouldn't participate in class and he didn't feel comfortable around strangers.
- Q Do you think it is a good idea to keep students in the same grade?

A. If it is needed, yes.

Q Was it a good idea to keep your child in the same grade?

A. Yes.

Q What was the worst thing about your child not passing?

A. Having another child one year younger so then they both ended up in same class. At times we had a lot of competition, tattling.

Q What was a good thing about your child not passing?

A. Given the extra year to become more comfortable with people, [Student M] started to feel better about himself.

Q Now that your child is in high school, how do you think he feels about himself as a student?

A. At times I think he still thinks he's not as "smart" as other kids, but overall he has adjusted well and when he wants to do well, he is fully capable of doing so.

Q Do you think that being retained helped your child to do better in the following grades?

A. Yes.

Q How did being retained help your child do better in the following grades?

A. It made it a little easier for him to open up and try different things instead of standing in a corner and watching.

Q Do you spend much time now thinking about when your

child was retained?

A. Only when his father throws it up in my face.

Q What kinds of feelings do you have when you think about it?

A. Good feelings, because I knew [Student M] needed this extra time to adjust emotionally.

Q How would you feel about your child being retained now?

A. At his age now, 16, with peer pressure and all, he would probably quit school. He embarrasses easily.

Q How did answering these questions make you feel?

A. Didn't have a problem with it.

Student N

Q How did you feel about being retained?

A. Fine.

Q Was it a good idea for you to stay in second grade?

A. Yeah.

Q Should you have been retained?

A. Yes.

Q Do you remember how you found out you were going to be retained?

A. Some guy came and talked to me.

Q Was it the principal?

A. Naw, I think he was a counselor or something.

Q Why do you think you were retained?

A. I was bad at spelling.

Q Do you think it is a good idea to keep students in the same grade?

A. Maybe, depends.

Q Was it a good idea to keep you in the same grade?

A. Yes.

Q What was the worst thing about not passing?

A. A little bit of teasing.

Q What was a good thing about not passing?

A. Made new friends and better grades.

Q Now that you are in high school, was it a good idea?

A. Yeah, seems like I need to be in this grade.

Q Do you think that being retained helped you to do better in the following grades?

A. Yeah.

Q How did being retained help you do better in the following grades?

Q Do you spend much time now thinking about when you were retained?

A. No, but my brother does. It wasn't good for him and he really hated it.

Q How would you feel about being retained now?

A. I wouldn't want to now.

Q How did answering these questions make you feel?

A. It was okay.

Had trouble with the tape and lost some of the conversation.

Student O

Q. Do you remember who told you that you were repeating a grade?

A. No.

Q. Did your mom talk to you about it?

A. Yes, I think so.

Q. Was mom angry?

A. No, she thought it was a good idea.

Q. How did you feel about?

A. I didn't really care.

Q. Do you remember why they held you back?

A. I think he said, it was cause he was really little and younger.

Q. Did you go to the same school?

A. Yes.

Q. Did you have the same teacher?

A. No.

Q. Did first grade seem easier then?

A. Yes.

Q. How about the kids?

- A. I made some new friends.
- Q. Do you remember very much about it?
- A. No.
- Q. Do you think it was a good idea now as you look back on it?
- A. Yes.
- Q. What if now somebody would say that they want you to repeat another grade, how would you feel?
- A. No.
- Q. Did you like one teacher better than the other.
- A. Didn't matter.
- Q. Did it make you uncomfortable to answer these questions?
- A. No.

Parent Q

- Q How did you feel about child's retention?
- A. We thought it was for his best interest that he was retained. We didn't see anything wrong with it and we thought he needed to be.
- Q You weren't angry and had sufficient information during school year?
- A. We never really thought about it but then when it did come up we could see why it did and how it progressed.
- Q It was a good idea?
- A. Yes, I knew it was.

Q Should your child have been retained?

A. The only thing is that I think it should have done earlier. I think he should have repeated kindergarten and not waited till. . . . Looking back we you know I saw the problems that maybe he should have repeated kindergarten and prevented some of the first grade problems. That might have helped. He was an early, he was four and turned five after he started school so I think that might have been a mistake. At that point of time he started school you make that choice based on the knowledge you have at that point. They had that kindergarten testing and they said yes you have a lot of kids at home, he might not get as much help as he, you know as if he would have started so go ahead and start him and it might have been the wrong choice. Hindsight is a wonderful thing.

Q How do you think your child felt? Upset....

A. He . . . did not seem to bother him. Not that he let us know. The only problem being that in church we did not retain him so he has always been in two peer groups so to speak. It never seemed to be a big problem. It did kind of make the situation noticeable. Why are you in this grade in Sunday school and Sunday school kinds of things and a different grade in school. So I might have changed that if I had to do it again.

- Q In general, do you think it is a good idea to retain students?
- A. In our case, it was. I think, oh I don't know if it helped. He still has problems, but I think that it would have been worse if we wouldn't.
- Q So you got help but it didn't fix?
- A. Right, right, it did help but didn't completely solve the problem.
- Q What was the worse thing regarding the retention?
- A. I really don't think there was, there wasn't, we didn't have a bad experience.
- Q. Same teacher second year?
- A. I can hardly not remember. He had [Teacher] and then she moved to a different grade. I don't know. No, because I think she switched grades so I don't think he did have the same teacher but a different teacher.
- Q Good thing it gave him another year to work on skills . . . good thing from the social perspective?
- A. No, because he got, he has always tended to go with the younger kids and since he was so young when he started he was more with the kids of his own age then the second time around I think. (L.S. probably made him feel more comfortable) I think that it did.

- Q Now, years later, how does he feel about himself as a student now?
- A. He has really low self-esteem and he does have problems with that and he is kind of a loner, but I don't think he ever associates it with having to repeat a grade or anything. That has really never, never ever come up. He has never ever said anything that it bothered or why did you let them do that to me or any of those kinds of things so we have kind of already said that it helped in other grades, maybe it didn't fix but it helped.
- Q Did you ever consider at any other time holding him back?
- A. No, no. He was always border line low. He is kind of a day dreamer and not a really ambitious student so that has always been part of his problem so we have never ever thought about retaining him again. I don't know if I had the same choice in a higher grade I really can't honestly say what I would have done. With the lower grades you think this is the time to do it and it might not bother them as much as when they are older.
- Q How did being retained help child do better - better foundation for skills?
- A. He was struggling with his reading and stuff and I think in that aspect maybe he . . . it did help him because I think he would have really been struggling had he not repeated and

got that basic. I think that as far as age, I think it was a good idea there too. I would never do that again. I would never start a child that young again. I think we really tried hard in kindergarten and we maybe pushed and pushed him and worked too hard with him and he got by in kindergarten and wouldn't get to first grade. We couldn't push as hard because there wasn't the time or the, you know, too much to keep him up and I think that is where you noticed it where maybe we wouldn't have pushed so hard in kindergarten we would have maybe seen it sooner. (L.S. - he had a good support system.) Right, because we really did do a lot of things with him, so I think that is why we didn't notice it as soon.

Q Do you spend time thinking about the retention?

A. No, we don't really unless one of the kids tends to tease or something, once they get angry at him and bring that up and threw it in his face, you know.

Q How does he handle that?

A. He just doesn't make a big deal out of it and just never has bothered him . . . that I know of! (L.S. - Feelings with the whole family, supportive of the retention with the child.) We did. The teacher kept us informed on how he was doing and at that conference we discussed the possibility. That was probably at semester. At half time she told us that

there might be a possibility we might hold him back. We'll just watch and see how it goes and we said that was fine and then we decided at the end that we should.

(L.S. - It wasn't one person's decision - joint decision.)

Q How would you feel now if someone would suggest holding him back?

A. Now in the upper grades? I don't know. I guess I wouldn't totally be against it, but I would probably really see if there was other alternatives to do it or maybe tutoring before I would say. It would be a big decision now.

Q How did answering these questions make you feel?

A. Oh...(laugh)....I just never thought about this. We did it a long time ago. It was over with and it just wasn't something that we brought up. I just feel it was a good thing for [Student O] to do. So it wasn't anything negative and that it was something that needed to be done and if it helped him.

Student P

Q Who told you that you were going to repeat a grade?

A. I don't remember.

Q How did you feel about it?

- A. I don't remember. It didn't really bother me that much because I had a lot of friends and I made new friends. I like my new friends even more now.
- Q Do you remember having trouble in school?
- A. I don't know.
- Q It was a good idea from your perspective?
- A. Yeah.
- Q Was mom angry?
- A. No.
- Q Are you a good student now?
- A. Yes.
- Q Repeating a grade has helped you now?
- A. Yes.
- Q Do you ever think about repeating that grade?
- A. I have thought about it, but it doesn't bother me any more.
- Q Did the kids give you a hard time about it?
- A. No.
- Q If someone would ask you to repeat a grade again, how would you feel about it?
- A. I don't think I would like it now.
- Q Does it make you uncomfortable to talk about it?
- A. No.
- Q Do you think it was a good idea for you?
- A. Yes.

Q Do you think it is a good idea in general to repeat a grade?

A. Yes I do.

Parent P

Q How did you feel about child's retention?

A. I listened to the teachers. I thought they were doing what they thought best.

Q Was a good idea?

A. Yes.

Q Should you child have been retained?

A. Yes, he has always had trouble in school.

Q When you found out at Parent/Teacher Conference, do you recall what teacher said?

A. He was having trouble with reading.

Q Did you feel angry?

A. No, agreed with teachers.

Q Did it bother [Student P]?

A. I don't think so.

Q Would you do it again now?

A. I would really have to think about it now.

Student Q

Q Who told you about the retention?

A. My mom told my teacher.

Q Did mom talk to you about it before she talked to the teacher?

A. Yes.

Q How old were you?

A. I started a little early, about five.

Q Did you have the same teacher the second time?

A. No, I changed schools.

Q When you repeated kindergarten, you had to meet all new friends, was it hard?

A. At first it was hard in second grade.

Q Did anyone tease you?

A. Not really.

Q Did you think it was a good idea?

A. Yes.

Q Why did mom want you to repeat?

A. I needed help and I went to a resource room.

Q What was the worst thing about this?

A. I can't drive my car.

Q How do you feel about yourself, do you like school?

A. Kind of.

Q Do you think repeating a grade helped you to do better?

A. Yes.

Q Do you ever think about it now that you are older?

A. No.

Q What if someone asked you to repeat a grade now?

A. I wouldn't like it.

Q Do you think that repeating a grade is a good idea?

A. Yes, it helped me.

Q Did it make you uncomfortable answer these questions?

A. No.

Parent Q

Q How did you feel about your child being retained?

A. It was fine with me because he had just turned five before he went to kindergarten.

Q Was it a good idea for your child to stay in kindergarten?

A. Yes.

Q Should your child have been retained?

A. Yes.

Q How did your child feel about repeating a grade?

A. It didn't seem to bother him.

Q Do you remember how you found out your child was going to be retained?

A. Asked to hold him back.

Q Why do you think your child was retained?

A. He wasn't mature enough for school.

Q Do you think it is a good idea to keep students in the same grade?

A. No, especially not in later years.

Q Was it a good idea to keep your child in the same grade?

A. Yes.

Q What was the worst thing about your child not passing?

A. No response.

Q What was a good thing about your child not passing?

A. No response.

Q Now that your child is in sixth grade, how do you think he feels about him self as a student?

A. He needs a lot of guidance and reassurance.

Q Do you think that being retained helped your child to do better in the following grades?

A. No.

Q Why didn't being retained help your child in the following grades?

A. He doesn't seem to have any interest in doing good in school.

Q Do you spend much time now thinking about when your child was retained?

A. No.

Q What kinds of feelings do you have when you think about it?

A. The same as I felt at the time.

Q How would you feel about your child being retained now?

A. Not good.

Q How did answering these questions make you feel?

A. It didn't have any effect on my feelings.

Student R

Q Do you remember who told you about the retention?

A. No, I do not.

Q Did you have the same teacher?

A. No.

Q Different teacher, same school?

A. Yes.

Q Was mom upset?

A. She thought it was a good idea.

Q Was first grade easier the second time?

A. It was a lot easier.

Q Do you remember having trouble with things?

A. Reading.

Q How about friends in first grade...did they give you a hard time?

A. No. I can't remember.

Q You don't remember a lot about this?

A. No, I don't.

Q Can you remember anything that you did not like about doing it?

A. I can remember going back to kindergarten.

Q Was it a good idea?

A. Yeah.

Q Do you like school?

A. Yes.

Q How do you feel about yourself as a student?

A. I'm not doing so good this year.

Q What is the problem?

A. Some of it is hard. I ask for help but the teachers holler at me so I don't ask anymore.

Q In your opinion, do you think it is a good idea to repeat a grade?

A. I think that when you are little it is a good because you don't remember. Also I think that summer school is better than repeating a grade.

Q Were you uncomfortable answering these questions?

A. No.

Parent R

Q How did you feel about your child being retained?

A. Okay. If it were in the best interest for him, it was fine.

Q Was it a good idea for your child to stay in first grade?

A. Yes, he wasn't able to keep up with the work.

Q Should your child have been retained?

- A. Yes. To go on, he may have never caught up, just got further behind.
- Q. How did your child feel about repeating a grade?
- A. Not real good.
- Q. Do you remember how you found out your child was going to be retained?
- A. By the teacher, going through his grades and work.
- Q. Why do you think your child was retained?
- A. Because he was not able to do the work.
- Q. Do you think it is a good idea to keep students in the same grade?
- A. Yes, depending on the child and the situation and time.
- Q. Was it a good idea to keep your child in the same grade?
- A. Yes.
- Q. What was the worst thing about your child repeating?
- A. Dealing with my son. It is still hard on him now. He has a hard time understanding it.
- Q. What was a good thing about your child repeating?
- A. It gave him time to mature a little more and, hopefully, understand things better.
- Q. Now that your child is in eighth grade, how do you think he feels about himself as a student?

- A. [Student R] still struggles a lot with school, but each year is getting better. He knows that school is difficult for him.
- Q. Do you think that being retained in first grade helped your child to do better in the following grades?
- A. Probably a little.
- Q. How did being retained help your child do better in the following grades?
- A. It made him and us sit back and realize that we needed to work harder.
- Q. Do you spend much time now thinking about when your child was retained?
- A. No.
- Q. What kinds of feelings do you have when you think about it?
- A. Okay. That we had made the right decision.
- Q. How would you feel about your child being retained now?
- A. It would probably hurt him. I don't know if he would go on.
- Q. How did answering these questions make you feel?
- A. Fine, but it makes you look back and think about what has happened and how far we have come.

Student S

- Q Who told you that you were going to repeat a grade?

- A. The second grade teacher at [school].
- Q How did you feel about it?
- A. It didn't bother me because of my age.
- Q Were you having trouble with reading?
- A. I couldn't keep up with the writing skills.
- Q Was it a good idea to repeat the grade?
- A. Yes, but now I am about six months ahead of everybody now.
- Q Was mom mad?
- A. It didn't bother her.
- Q Do you think it helped you?
- A. Yes.
- Q Did you have the same teacher?
- A. I switched schools.
- Q Why did you switch schools?
- A. We moved.
- Q What was the worst thing about doing second grade again?
- A. Had to meet all new people.
- Q What was the best thing about it?
- A. Getting ahead of everybody.
- Q How do you feel now about yourself as a student?
- A. Pretty good.
- Q Did it help you then to repeat a grade?
- A. Yes.

Q Do you ever think about it?

A. No.

Q Does anybody tease you about it?

A. No.

Q Are you glad you did it?

A. Yes.

Q What if someone would like you to repeat a grade again?

A. I would be mad.

Q Does it make you uncomfortable talking about this?

A. Not really.

Q Any comments?

A. I didn't like the second grade teacher at [first school].

Q Did you like the second grade teacher at [second school]?

A. Yes.

Q In general, is it a good idea to repeat a grade if they are having troubles?

A. It depends on what kind of trouble they are having.

Student T

Q Do you remember who told you about your retention?

A. My parents.

Q Were they angry with you?

A. Yes.

Q Did your teacher talk to you about it?

A. Yes.

Q How were you feeling about it?

A. Disappointed.

Q When fall came, did you have the same teacher?

A. Yes I did.

Q Did you like that?

A. No.

Q Did you get teased some?

A. Yes.

Q Was the teacher positive about it, helpful?

A. Yes.

Q Did you like teacher?

A. No.

Q Better the second time?

A. A little.

Q Why do you think they decided to keep you back?

A. I had tonsillitis and I missed a lot of school and not too good in reading.

Q Was it a good idea?

A. Yes.

Q Do you feel better about entering third grade after retention?

A. Yes.

Q Did you make new friends?

- A. I kept same friends and made new friends also.
- Q Do you think it is a good idea for retention?
- A. Yes.
- Q Do you perceive yourself to be a strong student?
- A. Yes.
- Q Do you ever think about it now?
- A. Yes, because I am older than the other kids and I am old enough to drive and I can take the other kids around.
- Q Are you angry about it when you think about it?
- A. A little bit, but not really.
- Q What if someone came along now and wanted to do it again?
- A: Disappointed.
- Q Would you be more upset?
- A. Yes.
- Q How does talking about this make you feel?
- A. It does not upset me, not really.
- Q Anything stand out in your mind?
- A. Helped me in reading, and I got to meet more people. That is about it.

Student U

- Q Who told you about the retention?
- A. My parents.

Q Were they angry?

A. They told me it was a good idea.

Q How did you feel?

A. It wasn't that bad because I had to switch schools. I met a lot of new people.

Q Was it a good idea?

A. Yeah, I think so.

Q Did anyone else tell you about the retention?

A. My teacher.

Q At the time, did they tell you a reason?

A. No.

Q Why did you think they decided to do it?

A. Because I had a hard time reading.

Q Did you feel better the second time?

A. Yeah.

Q Generally, is it helpful to do a grade over if there are problems?

A. Yes.

Q Worst thing about retention?

A. Not having your friends with you.

Q Why did you change schools?

A. Changed districts.

Q Good thing?

A. I got to meet new people.

Q Do you have confidence in yourself?

A. Yes.

Q Do you ever think about it?

A. No, not really.

Q Now if somebody asked you to stay back, how would you feel about it?

A. I would be scared.

Q How did answering these questions make you feel?

A. It didn't affect me.

Q Any good or bad memories?

A. Bad because I have to graduate a year later. It doesn't bother me that other people know.

Student V

Q Who told you that you were going to be held back?

A. My mom.

Q How did you feel about it?

A. I didn't want to because it would be boring.

Q Did it turn out boring?

A. Yes.

Q Did you have the same teacher?

A. No.

Q Did you go to the same school but had a different teacher?

A. Yes.

Q Which teacher did you like best?

A. [Teacher]

Q Was she the first one or second one?

A. Second one.

Q Was mom angry about holding you back?

A. No.

Q Did she think it was a good idea to repeat a grade?

A. Yes.

Q Why did you repeat a grade?

A. Because I was getting bad grades.

Q When you repeated the first grade how were you grades then?

A. They were getting better.

Q Do you remember what gave you trouble in the first grade?

A. Mostly reading.

Q When you got to second grade did you feel that you were ready for it?

A. Yes, I felt ready.

Q What about kids? Did you have to make new friends? Did anyone give you a hard time about it?

A. No, not really.

Q What was the worst thing about it?

A. I don't know.

Q What was the best thing about it?

A. I don't know, it was easy.

Q How do you feel about yourself as a student?

A. Yeah.

Q Do you like school?

A. Sometimes.

Q What subject do you like?

A. Math and science.

Q Do you feel that you do better in school now because you repeated a grade?

A. I don't think it made that much difference.

Q Do you ever think about it?

A. I don't even think about it now.

Q What if you would be asked to repeat a grade now, how would you feel about it?

A. Bad.

Q In general, do you think it is a good idea to repeat a grade if they are having troubles?

A. Yes.

Q Did it make you uncomfortable answering these questions?

A. No.

Appendix B

To: University of Nebraska-Lincoln
Institutional Review Board

From: Lynne Swantz - ID# 224-72-1257

1. Significance of the Project: The study is a Doctoral Dissertation on students' and parents' attitudes and feelings about retention. The purpose of the study is to explore through interviews the feelings and attitudes of previously retained students and their parents about the experience of retention. The attitudes and feelings of these students and their parents combined with documentation of each student's school success could provide a better understanding of the long-term effects of the educational practice of retention.

2. Methods and Procedures: Interviews will be conducted during the 1994-95 school year. Each interview will be conducted at a time and place that is comfortable for the student or parent. Each interview will be taped. Each tape will be transcribed verbatim. Quantitative documents including students' grades, achievement test scores, and attendance records will be part of the data collection. To protect the individuals who will be interviewed, no real names will be used in this study. Other identifying information, such as the specific elementary school attended, will not be

included. The objective is to explore the effects of retention from the students' and parents' perspectives without identifying the individuals.

All materials, such as the interview tapes, transcriptions, and my notes, will be kept in my office at the in a locked drawer. These tapes will be transcribed by an individual who works for the school system. She has no direct student contact in her position. Her only access to the tapes will be for transcribing them. Each tape will only be kept until it has been transcribed. No one else will have access to the tapes. Only first names will be used in interviews, so the transcriber will not know the identities of the individuals on the tapes.

3. Subject Population: Of the 83 students who were retained in the school district between 1985 and 1990, 48 are enrolled in the school district for the 1994-95 school year. The students are presently in grades 5-12. Twelve of the students are female and 36 of the students are male. I will interview as many of these 48 students who are willing to participate. I will also interview the parents who are willing to participate.

4. Benefits: The interviews will provide an opportunity for students and parents to express their feelings and attitudes about grade retention. The generalized benefit will be to

provide previously untapped perspectives (students' and parents') on a standard educational practice.

Risks: A student may become upset during the interview process if the experience of retention was unpleasant for the child. I would stop the interview and help the child with his/her discomfort. A Guidance counselor or the student's parent will be available during all interviews to the subjects should any problems arise.

5. Recruitment of subjects: Notes asking the parents to please stop and see me will be attached to student report cards. The report cards are picked up at parent/teacher conferences and then parents can visit with each teacher. I will have a table at the conferences where I can have an initial visit with parents. Parents who do not attend conferences or do not stop to see me will be called and I will attempt to make an appointment for an initial visit.

6. Compensation: None

7. Informed Consent : Please see the attached Parental Informed Consent Form, Adult Consent Form, Youth Assent Form, and Child Assent Form.

8. Obtaining Informed Consent:

- a. The Child Assent Form will be verbally reviewed with students who are between 7 and 12 years old.

- b. The Youth Assent Form will be verbally reviewed with students who are 13 years of age or older.
- c. The Adult Consent Form will be verbally reviewed with each parent.
- d. Each prospective interviewee will be asked to sign the appropriate assent form.
- e. The Parental Informed Consent Form will be signed for each student who agrees to participate.
- f. Each subject will be given a copy of the assent forms that they have signed, and each parent will be given a copy of the signed consent form.

9. Anonymity and Confidentiality: To protect the students and their parents, no real names will be used in this study. Other identifying information, such as the specific elementary school attended, will not be included. The intent of the study is to explore the experience of retention from each child's and parent's perspective, and to share in written form the experiences and perspectives without exposing the individuals.

10. Interview Questions: Please see attachment.

11. Approvals: Please see attached letter of approval from the Superintendent of the school district .

12. Outside Funding : None

Student Interview Questions

1. How did you feel about being retained?
2. Was it a good idea for you to stay in ____ grade?
3. Should you have been retained?
4. How did your parents feel about you repeating a grade?
5. Do you remember how you found out you were going to be retained?
6. Why do you think you were retained?
7. Do you think it is a good idea to keep students in the same grade?
8. Was it a good idea to keep you in the same grade?
9. What was the worst thing about not passing?
10. What was a good thing about not passing?
11. Now that you are in ____ grade, how do you feel about yourself as a student?
12. Do you think that being retained in ____ grade helped you to do better in the following grades? 12a. How did being retained help you do better in the following grades? 12b. Why didn't being retained help you in the following grades?
13. Do you spend much time now thinking about when you were retained?
14. What kinds of feelings do you have when you think about it?
15. How would you feel about being retained now?

16. How did answering these questions make you feel?

Parent Interview Questions

1. How did you feel about your child being retained?
2. Was it a good idea for your child to stay in ____ grade?
3. Should your child have been retained?
4. How did your child feel about repeating a grade?
5. Do you remember how you found out your child was going to be retained?
6. Why do you think your child was retained?
7. Do you think it is a good idea to keep students in the same grade?
8. Was it a good idea to keep your child in the same grade?
9. What was the worst thing about your child not passing?
10. What was a good thing about your child not passing?
11. Now that your child is in ____ grade, how do you think he/she feels about himself/herself as a student?
12. Do you think that being retained in ____ grade helped your child to do better in the following grades? 12a. How did being retained help your child do better in the following grades?
- 12b. Why didn't being retained help your child in the following grades?
13. Do you spend much time now thinking about when your child was retained?

14. What kinds of feelings do you have when you think about it?
15. How would you feel about your child being retained now?
16. How did answering these questions make you feel?



University of
Nebraska
Lincoln

Department of Educational Administration
1204 Seaton Hall
P.O. Box 880638
Lincoln, NE 68588-0638
(402) 472-3726

IRB# 94-10-050 FB

Child Assent Form

Students' and Parents' Attitudes and Feelings about the Experience of Retention

I would like to invite you to participate in this research study. I am asking you to participate because you repeated a grade in elementary school.

In this study I will try to learn about you as a student. I will ask you questions about how you felt when you repeated a grade, and about your school experiences since then. I will make a tape recording of my questions and your answers.

Your parents will be asked to give their permission for you to take part in this study. They will also be asked to answer questions. The reason for this study is to find out from students and parents if repeating a grade helps students do better in school. Please talk this over with your parents before you decide whether or not to participate.

You do not have to be in this study if you do not want to. Your participation in this study is voluntary. If you decide to participate, you may stop at any time. If you have any questions at any time, please ask me.

If you sign this form, it means that you have decided to participate and have read everything that is on this form. You and your parents will be given a copy of this form to keep.

Signature of Student

Date

Signature of Investigator

Date

Lynne Swantz, Principal Investigator Work Phone: 564-8532
Dr. Miles Bryant, UNL Faculty Advisor Work Phone: (402)472-3726



University of
Nebraska
Lincoln

Department of Educational Administration
1204 Seaton Hall
P.O. Box 880638
Lincoln, NE 68588-0638
(402) 472-3726

IRB# 94-10-050 FB

Youth Assent Form

Students' and Parents' Attitudes and Feelings about the Experience of Retention

I would like to invite you to participate in this research study. I am asking you to participate because you repeated a grade in elementary school. In this study I will try to learn about you as a student. I will ask you questions about how you felt when you repeated a grade, and about your school experiences since then. I will make a tape recording of my questions and your answers. I will also ask your parents to participate in the study.

All responses will be strictly confidential. I will be writing a paper about the responses that students and parents give, but the identity of all participants will be totally confidential. Participating in this study will provide you with an opportunity to express your views about retention, and it may help in determining both the positives and negatives of retention.

Your parents will be asked to give their permission for you to take part in this study. Please talk this over with your parents before you decide whether or not to participate. You do not have to be in this study if you do not want to. If you decide to participate, you may stop at any time. If you have any questions at any time, please ask me. If you sign this form, it means that you have decided to participate and have read everything that is on this form. You and your parents will be given a copy of this form to keep.

_____ Yes, I would like to participate in the study.
_____ No, I do not want to participate in the study.

Signature of Student

Date

Signature of Investigator

Date

Lynne Swantz, Principal Investigator
Dr. Miles Bryant, UNL Faculty Advisor

Work Phone: 564-8532
Work Phone: (402)472-3726



University of
Nebraska
Lincoln

Department of Educational Administration
1204 Seaton Hall
P.O. Box 880638
Lincoln, NE 68588-0638
(402) 472-3726

IRB# 94-10-050 FB

Adult Consent Form

Students' and Parents' Attitudes and Feelings about the Experience of Retention

You are invited to participate in this research study. The following information is provided in order to help you to make an informed decision whether or not to participate. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to ask.

The purpose of this study is to explore students' and parents' attitudes and feelings about the experience of grade retention at the elementary level. Participation in this study will require approximately 1-2 hours of time. The process will be 1-2 verbal interviews that will be taped.

There are no risks or discomforts associated with the interview. Your benefit in participating in the study will be to provide you an opportunity to express your views, and the study may help to determine the positives and negatives of grade retention. The data will be aggregated and will not be identified in relationship to you in the Doctoral dissertation.

You may ask questions concerning the research before agreeing to participate or during the actual interview(s). You are free to decide not to participate in this study or to withdraw at any time without adversely affecting your relationship with the investigator or the University of Nebraska. Your decision will not result in any loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to participate in this research study. Your signature certifies that you have read and understood the above information and have decided to participate. You will be given a copy of this consent.

Signature of Parent

Date

Signature of Investigator

Date

Lynne Swantz, Principal Investigator
Dr. Miles Bryant, UNL Faculty Advisor

Work Phone: 564-8532
Work Phone: (402)472-3726



University of
Nebraska
Lincoln

Department of Educational Administration
1204 Seaton Hall
P.O. Box 880638
Lincoln, NE 68588-0638
(402) 472-3726

IRB# 94-10-050 FB

Parental Informed Consent Form

Students' and Parents' Attitudes and Feelings about the Experience of Retention

You are invited to permit your child to participate in this research study. The following information is provided in order to help you to make an informed decision whether or not to participate. If you have any questions please do not hesitate to ask.

Your child is eligible to participate in this study because he/she repeated a year of school at the elementary level. The purpose of this study is to explore students' and parents' attitudes and feelings about the experience of grade retention at the elementary level. Participation in this study will require approximately 1-2 hours of your child's time. The process will be 1-2 verbal interviews that will be taped. None of the information gained from the interviews will become part of your child's school records.

Your child's school records, including achievement test scores, grades, and attendance, will be reviewed by the investigator as part of the research study.

The benefit to your child in participation in this study will be an opportunity for your child to share his/her feelings and attitudes about grade retention. The information gathered will help to determine the positives and negatives of grade retention from the perspectives of students and parents.

A copy of the initial questions is available for your review before signing the consent. If the experience of repeating a grade was emotionally difficult for your child, the interview may bring back some of those feelings. If your child would become upset during the interview, I would stop the interview and assist your child with his/her discomfort. Further, I will only conduct an interview with either a school counselor or parent available to assist your child if there is a need.

_____ Parent's Initials

IRB# 94-10-050 FB

Parental consent Form
Page 2 of 2

Any information obtained during this study, from the interviews or the educational records, will be aggregated and will not be identified in relationship to your child in the Doctoral dissertation.

Your child's rights as a research subject have been explained to you. If you have any additional questions concerning your child's rights, you may contact the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Institutional Review Board (UNL IRB), telephone (402) 472-6965.

You are free to decide not to give permission for your child to participate, or to withdraw your child at any time without adversely affecting you or your child's relationship with the investigator or the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Your decision will not result in any loss of benefits to which your child is otherwise entitled.

DOCUMENTATION OF INFORMED CONSENT

You are voluntarily making a decision whether or not to allow your child to participate in this research study. Your signature certifies that you have decided to allow your child to participate and to allow your child's grades, achievement test scores, and attendance records to be released for use in this study having read and understood the information presented. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep.

Signature of Parent

Date

In my judgement the parent/legal guardian is voluntarily and knowingly giving informed consent and possesses the legal capacity to give informed consent to participate in this research study.

Signature of Investigator

DateLynne Swantz, Principal Investigator
Dr. Miles Bryant, UNL Faculty AdvisorWork Phone: 564-8532
Work Phone: (402)472-3726