A Study of Selected Teachers’ Perceptions of Grade Retention in a Florida School District

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A Study of Selected Teachers’ Perceptions of Grade Retention

in a Florida School District

by

Julius L. Wynn

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education
Department of Educational Leadership College of Education
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Date of Approval:
March 29, 2010

Keywords: Social promotion, Dropout, Self-concept, Middle school students

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Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to the loving memory of my mother and father. I love and I miss both of you.
Acknowledgments

To Dr. Arthur Shapiro, a special thank you for guiding me through this learning odyssey. Without your assistance and wisdom, I would not have completed this program.

To the faculty and staff at the University of South Florida, thanks for allowing me to reach my goal though I had health challenges along the way. Thanks the examining committee for always being available when I called; Drs. Permuth, Lang, Sutton and Walker. Words cannot express the gratitude I have for Dr. Diane Buck Briscoe for encouraging me through your stern talks to take charge of my education.

To my family, I certainly could not have sustained this program if it were not for you. You have encouraged me as well as supported me. This document is a testimony for my three children, Julius Jr. (UCF-2011), Valua (FSU-2011), and Carmilla (TSHS-2011) that you can do all things through Christ. To Tonya, my wife, thanks for encouraging, believing in and being there unconditionally; you are a blessing from God. Thanks to D. Ash, B. Norwood, B. Holmes and the late Mother Young for being so kind.

Thanks to Valua, L. Lennox, C. Everett, E. Lukaszewski, and L. Stephens for your editing assistance. I am grateful to my donor, M. Kitchen; my nurse, J. Kimbrell and LifeLink for a rewarding life during dialysis and after kidney transplant. Much obliged to Highland for your prayers, especially to Deacon Wade and Mother Thornton. Also, thanks to my dear friend, “Bishop” Swackard, for the inspiring talks.

Last, I extend many praises to God for allowing me to pursue my dream of obtaining my Ed.D. I thank Him for being Jehovah-Jireh and for restoring my health.
## Table of Contents

List of Tables ......................................................................................................................... vi

List of Figures ......................................................................................................................... vii

Abstract ................................................................................................................................. ix

Chapter I: Introduction ......................................................................................................... 1

Demographics ......................................................................................................................... 5

Statement of the Problem ....................................................................................................... 6

Purpose of Study ..................................................................................................................... 7

Main Research Questions ...................................................................................................... 9

Hypotheses ............................................................................................................................. 9

Limitations and Assumptions ............................................................................................... 10

Theoretical Framework ......................................................................................................... 10

Significance of the Study ...................................................................................................... 11

Definition of Terms ............................................................................................................... 14

Summary ............................................................................................................................... 17

Chapter II: Review of Literature ......................................................................................... 18

Introduction ........................................................................................................................... 18

Historical Overview of Grade Retention ............................................................................. 20

Social Promotion and Grade Retention ............................................................................... 22

Efficacy of the Grade Retention Process ........................................................................... 28
Instrumentation .................................................. 70

Surveys................................................................. 72

Semi-Structured Interviews.................................... 74

Validity and Reliability............................................ 74

Data Collection and Treatment.................................. 76

Surveys................................................................. 76

Semi-Structured Interviews.................................... 77

Procedures for Surveys............................................ 77

Procedures for Semi-Structured Interviews................... 78

Content Analysis................................................... 79

Summary....................................................................... 81

Chapter IV: Data Analysis........................................... 83

Introduction............................................................ 83

Research Questions.................................................. 84

Hypotheses.............................................................. 84

Quantitative Data: Survey Results ................................ 85

Quantitative Descriptive Results................................ 96

Quantitative Data: Summary Results............................ 114

Qualitative Data: Summary of Interview Results.......... 116

Themes that Emerged................................................ 117

Interviews............................................................... 120

Summary of the Research Questions............................ 136

Chapter V: Summary, Conclusions, Implications, Recommendations and Limitations.... 139
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Summary</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Statement of the Problem</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purpose of the Study</td>
<td>141</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main Research Questions</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hypotheses</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusions</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary of Research Questions</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary of Hypotheses</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implications</td>
<td>148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendations</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Further Study</td>
<td>153</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>For Practice</td>
<td>155</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limitations</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>References Cited</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendices</td>
<td>182</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix A- Teachers’ Perceptions of Grade Retention (TPGRS)</td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix B- Interview Questions</td>
<td>186</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix C- Permission to Use Survey</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix D- Letter to Superintendent</td>
<td>188</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix E- Letter to Principals</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix F- Cover Letter</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix G- Consent Form</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix H- Urban Western Central FL School District Board Policy</td>
<td>194</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix I- Urban Western Central FL School District Admin Promotion ........202
Appendix J- Retention Rates for Five Selected Schools ..................................204
Appendix K- Students Retained in Florida, Grades 6-8 for 2007-08 ...................207
Appendix L- Pinellas County Middle School Grades 2007-2008 .........................209

About the Author ........................................................................................................End Page
List of Tables

Table 2.1 Percent of Students Enrolled Below Their Modal Grade ........................................... 19
Table 2.2 Parents, Students, Teachers, and Employees ................................................................. 25
Table 2.3 High School Dropouts by Race ........................................................................................ 42
Table 3.1 Teacher Retention Beliefs Questionnaire ....................................................................... 72
Table 3.2 Survey Return Rate ......................................................................................................... 77
Table 3.3 Item Analysis Research Questions .................................................................................... 81
Table 4.1 TPGRS Questions Part I: Descriptive Statistics ................................................................. 85
Table 4.2 Chi-Square for Hypothesis #1 ........................................................................................... 88
Table 4.3 Chi-Square for Hypothesis #2 .......................................................................................... 90
Table 4.4 Chi-Square for Hypothesis #3 ......................................................................................... 92
Table 4.5 Chi-Square for Hypothesis #4 .......................................................................................... 93
Table 4.6 Teacher Agree Percentage of Survey Questions ............................................................... 114
Table 4.7 Interview Participants ..................................................................................................... 121
Table 4.8 Teacher’s Philosophies on Grade Retention ................................................................. 123
Table 4.9 Relationship between Dropping Out of School ............................................................ 124
Table 4.10 Psychological Effects of Grade Retention ................................................................. 125
Table 4.11 Teacher Frustrations about Grade Retention .............................................................. 126
Table 4.12 Reasons Teachers Practice Grade Retention ............................................................. 133
Table 4.13 Do Teachers “Blame” Themselves for Student Failure .............................................. 135
Table 4.14 Social Promotion, Gender, and Race ............................................................................. 136
# List of Figures

| Figure 2.1 | Teachers Are Doing Well, But Could Be Doing More | 45 |
| Figure 2.2 | What Dropouts Believe Would Improve Students’ Absences | 46 |
| Figure 2.3 | PK-12 Non-Promotions, 2001-02 to 2007-08 | 60 |
| Figure 2.4 | Student Membership, 2001-02 to 2007-08 | 60 |
| Figure 4.1 | Teacher Experience in Years | 89 |
| Figure 4.2 | Teacher Race | 91 |
| Figure 4.3 | Middle School Grade Level | 92 |
| Figure 4.4 | Socio Economic Status and Schools | 94 |
| Figure 4.5 | Retention is a Good Strategy | 96 |
| Figure 4.6 | Self-Concept/Self-Image and Retention | 97 |
| Figure 4.7 | Academically Behind Students | 98 |
| Figure 4.8 | No Children Retained | 99 |
| Figure 4.9 | Absences and Retention | 100 |
| Figure 4.10 | FCAT and Retention | 101 |
| Figure 4.11 | Passing Grades and Standardized Testing | 102 |
| Figure 4.12 | Grade Retention a Motivator | 103 |
| Figure 4.13 | Behavior Problems | 104 |
| Figure 4.14 | Performance Second the Time | 105 |
| Figure 4.15 | Failing Core Subjects | 106 |
| Figure 4.16 | Documented Learning Disabilities and Retention | 107 |
Figure 4.17  Social Promotion .................................................................108
Figure 4.18  Parents and Grade Retention ........................................109
Figure 4.19  Emotional Affects ............................................................110
Figure 4.20  Students Behind ...............................................................111
Figure 4.21  Academic Performance .....................................................112
Figure 4.22  Self-Esteem .................................................................113
Figure 4.23  Graphic Interpretation of Interviewee Age, Experience and Grade Taught ..122
Figure 4.24  Graphic Interpretation of Students Retained in Interviewee Classrooms ......134
A Study of Selected Middle School Teachers’ Perceptions of Grade Retention in a Florida School District

Julius L. Wynn

ABSTRACT

This study examined and analyzed selected middle school teachers’ perceptions of grade retention, and informed teachers about current and past research on grade retention. Through analysis of teacher interviews and using a Likert scale instrument, responses indicated that teachers continue to support and to use retention when students do not master required objectives for promotion. Because of the new Florida retention policy and the No Child Left Behind policy, it was critical to measure teachers’ levels of understanding and perceptions of grade retention.

Their perceptions gave insight into their thoughts and beliefs about the practice. Survey responses of 326 teachers in five selected middle schools in Florida and ten interviews clearly indicated that teachers believe children should be retained. A majority, nearly 83%, disagreed that students should not be retained. Although suspension and attendance have bearing, over 76% of teachers agreed that poor academics were the major reason for retention.

Over 65% of teachers indicated that grade retention allows students who are behind academically to “catch-up” with peers. In addition, nearly 39% disagreed that retention is harmful to a child’s self-concept/self-image. However, nearly 80% of teachers agreed grade retention affects a child’s self-esteem. Data also indicated 56% of
students who are more than two grades behind should not be retained. A chi-square statistics test used to measure significant differences based on teachers’ years of teaching experience, grade level taught, race of teacher and socioeconomic status of the students, found significant differences only for student socioeconomic status. Although students have been retained since one-room schoolhouses, research on effectiveness of retention clearly points to instead of practicing grade retention, teachers, administrators, and parents need to analyze data in greater depth. Without more studies and analysis, teachers, administrators, and parents will continue a practice research has found harmful instead of beneficial to students.

Educators must find a way to ensure that every child experiences academic success. Each educator must devise methods of working with students before they fail a grade. Tutoring, remediation, mentoring, small group work, after school programs, Saturday school, and summer school can help children learn.
Chapter I: Introduction

Each year about 57,720,000 children enter America’s educational system (U.S. Department of Commerce, 2008). These students are enrolled in public elementary and secondary schools in the 50 states and the District of Columbia. For many, it is the beginning of an escalator-like ride toward graduation. Every June, however, far too many children find themselves in a revolving door as they repeat the same grade as the previous year. Grade retention is often euphemistically called a year to grow, holding back, repeating, non-promotion, or a gift of time, and is less politely known as flunking.

Grade retention is the practice of requiring a student who has been in a given grade level for a full school year to remain at that same grade level the next year (Jackson, 1975; Jimerson, 1999; Shepard & Smith, 1989; Owings & Kaplan, 2001). Although it is thought that giving a student the “gift” of another year in the same grade will provide the time and instruction necessary to improve reading and other academic skills, grade retention has been associated with a number of deleterious outcomes (Eads, 1990; Shepard & Smith, 1989). The U.S. Department of Education indicated the high school dropout rate is 25% in this country (U.S. Department of Education, 2005). A preponderance of this percentage is because of students repeating a grade twice (Potter, 1996).

On both the national and local levels, policy makers are shifting to a test-based grade promotion and retention era. In a memorandum to the Secretary of Education, President Clinton (1998) wrote that he had:
repeatedly challenged states and school districts to end social promotion, to require students to meet rigorous academic standards at key transition points in their school career, and end the practice of promoting students with regard to how much they have learned. Students should not be promoted past the fourth grade if they cannot read independently and well, and should not enter high school without a solid foundation in math (p. 2). They should get the help they need to meet the standards before moving on.

He further stated in his 1998 State of the Union Address:

“By raising standards, raising expectations, and raising accountability, the nation will have a voluntary national test based on national standards. When we promote a child from grade to grade who hasn’t mastered the work, we don’t do the child any favors. It is time to end social promotion in America’s schools (p. 1). Retain or promote. Repeat or stay back. These are all phrases that represent a much-debated issue in the educational community. Grade retention has been an issue in education for decades. There is currently a trend toward competency-based education and a decrease in the use of social promotion from grade to grade.”

Since President Clinton made his state of the Union Addresses (1998, 1999) with a message to end social promotion, he seemed to have signaled the debate of grade retention to resurface.

Grade retention seems to be the major strategy used as a short time repair for students not meeting the standards to proceed to the next grade. However, the research indicates that positive effects on academic achievement when a child is retained in a grade are limited. The effects of grade retention are clear and concise. The academic
benefits of retention are temporary and costly (Holmes, 1989; Hauser, 1999). “There is no evidence for claims that new retention policies will be coupled with effective remediation of learning deficits that would be worth their cost or would offset the well established long-term negative effects of retention” (Hauser, 1999, p. 2). The question is whether the child would have learned as much if he had been promoted (Fishel, 1997). No one would argue that schools should allow students to progress through the system without learning, especially those children missing the basic literacy and numeric skills. Yet, there is widespread disagreement over how to cope with the problem of inadequate mastery of grade level requirements. Thus, one finds a range of school polices and retention models to handle the child deemed unready to pass on to the next grade.

On January 8, 2002, President George W. Bush signed into law the No Child Left behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) to ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain an education. NCLB requires states to develop and to submit to the United States Department of Education, a plan based on the academic standards. The state must define adequate, yearly progress and specify annual measurable objectives in math, reading, and language arts, including students from economically disadvantaged, major racial and ethnic groups, students with disabilities, and students with limited English proficiency. All students must be assessed in grades three through eight. Since this Act, grade retention has been raised again as a matter which continues to remain an issue in education. The effort to promote higher standards, increase student achievement, and strengthen public education has been on the agenda of state, local, and national policy makers. Since many states mandate that students must pass tests to move from one grade to the next, and/or for graduation from high school, one consequence is that
more students are retained. Students will need to earn promotion through achievement and not just by spending time in class.

Learning does take time, but providing additional time does not in itself ensure that learning will occur (Bowman, 2005). If the solution to the problem of students who are failing in elementary school is to provide more time, that is, an extra year in a particular grade, then, that second year should reflect that a reasonable amount of learning has been accomplished. One concern about this practice is that the classroom experience did not result in the child meeting grade level objectives the first time, how can one know that the act of repetition alone will achieve the desired outcomes? There is missing proof that grade retention will work. There have been various studies about grade retention; however, several current reviews of past literature all drew very similar conclusions. Although the research on retention has often been lacking in scope, depth, and sound methodology, its collective findings should make educators, parents, and policy makers question any wholesale application of retention as a punitive, remedial, or developmental means (Jimerson, 2001b; Shepard & Smith, 1989).

State tests must be aligned with the state’s academic standards and must produce results that are comparable from year to year. State tests must yield results that can be used to determine whether students are meeting the state standards and to help teachers diagnose and address students’ specific academic needs. States must promptly provide test scores to local school districts by no later than the beginning of the school year after the test is given. The mandated change by our nation makes it necessary for public schools to begin to examine the effects of grade retention. Parents, educators, and the
community need to be aware of the negative implications of grade retention on children and adults, which have been explored in great detail.

Parents and educators are aware that not all students learn the same way or at the same rate. Yet, our promotion system acts to penalize those who do not fall within the norm. Only when schools provide alternatives for successful learning for each individual student, with reteaching as an alternative to retention, will school become a place where students look forward to learning with eager anticipation rather than with dread and fear (Dance, 1995).

**Demographics**

The information in this research project is disaggregated data from the urban western central Florida County where the research was conducted. The demographics will inform teachers who have not experienced working with students in a rural population and will assist teachers working with students in a similar population about the history, current research, and psychological effects of grade retention.

The researcher decided not to identify the county where the study took place because of the Consent Form (Appendix G). The researcher wanted to make sure that all aspects of the identities involved remained confidential. It was agreed that this study would be written without identifying information.

The school system chosen for this study currently serves over 91,000 students (Pre-K – 12) in the district. Demographically, the county can be described as mostly urban. Presently, the school system is comprised of 80 elementary schools (K-5), 22 middle (6-8) schools, sixteen high (9-12) schools, five alternative schools, and five exceptional student education centers. The oldest school is over 135 years old. It is still
housed in its original building. The Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) accredit all these schools. Public schools are held accountable for students’ academic performance.

The state of Florida, as well as the country, is currently involved in education reform. Florida has *The Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT)* and the Federal *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB)*. Both acts have become laws. In essence, teachers will be expected to be highly qualified to teach effectively, parents will have options and resources to assist their children and schools will be able to strengthen their weaknesses and put into practice methods and strategies supported by scientific research.

**Statement of the Problem**

Based on the writer’s educational work experience in his county, there is a problem with varying achievement levels amongst the socio-economical divides. It is perceived that retention is higher the lower a family’s financial situation is (Bowman, 2005). Based on this perception of the achievement and retention gaps between the various divides, the writer chose schools from each division based on their percentage of students on the free or reduced meal program to illustrate the following hypothetical. There are many factors which contribute to the achievement gap amongst the various socio-economical divisions; however, grade retention is not a significant factor but is a highly used practice by teachers to positively affect achievement (Bowman, 2005). Grade retention is perhaps the most powerful message a teacher can send to a student to inform the student that he or she is not achieving and is not as capable as his or her peers. Teachers, as well as parents, may not realize the tremendous power they have when it comes to the practice of grade retention. Teachers and parents may make the decision to
retain students without realizing what research has documented about this practice. Every year, teachers need to know the effects of this action facing the situation of retaining students. No training is provided to teachers in the state of Florida on what to do with students who fail to master a grade. Often the only perceived option by teachers is retention. Thus, many teachers, parents, administrators, and the educational system have chosen a course of action that may have psychological effects on students (Bowman, 2005). Often times, the educational community is not aware of the possible effects of grade retention as reported in current research. Therefore, the purpose was to study middle school teachers’ perceptions of grade retention because their perceptions of the impact of this practice have not been explored adequately.

**Purpose of Study**

Since President Clinton declared an end to social promotion in his 1998 and 1999 State of the Union Addresses, debates on the practice of grade retention have been a highly discussed topic in the education and political arena. As a response to this debate, schools in Florida have had to examine and to rewrite their grade retention policies. With the new grade retention policy for the Florida school district, the study was conducted to ascertain middle school teachers’ perspectives on grade retention in an urban western central Florida school district. With the information obtained, it is hoped that the school district can address the areas of concern about grade retention better. Some alternatives to retention are already in place within the county as a result of the number of retainees.

Because the teacher is the person who initiates the retention process, it is necessary for the beliefs of the teacher to be examined. The perspectives of teachers may influence their judgment about students and implementation of certain school policies.
Grade retention continues to be the major strategy used by educators for academic failure (Jimerson, 2001a; Jimerson, 2001b; Reynolds, Temple, & McCoy, 1997). The current research on grade retention has primarily been focused on retention in kindergarten and first grade. The different variables of race, background, gender, academic achievement also need to be considered with these students (Jimerson et al., 1997).

This study examined grade retention from a different perspective with the study focusing on teachers’ perceptions of grade retention in the middle grades. By focusing on the different variables of race, background, gender, academic achievement for those retained, researchers have not given much attention to the role of the teacher (Jimerson et al., 1997). There is increasing recognition that individual’s beliefs are the best indicators of the decisions they make during the course of everyday life. According to Bruner (1996) “the means by which teachers and pupils alike go about their business in real-life classrooms…how teachers teach and how pupils learn” (p. 86) determines whether the teacher is successful.

Smith (1989); Tomchin & Impara (1992), in their studies on grade retention, found that the classroom teacher is one of the most important elements in the practice of grade retention. Teachers are responsible for collecting the documentation of the student’s academic achievement and success. In the literature, no clear explanation for why teachers make these judgments is given. In order to understand why teachers retain students, the purpose of this study was to collect and to analyze the data acquired on a group of selected middle school teachers in a school district in Florida, in an effort to identify their explicit and implicit beliefs about grade retention. The purpose of this
study was also to serve as an information resource for parents, students, teachers, and administrators at the middle school level.

**Main Research Questions**

This study explored the following research questions: How do selected urban western central Florida middle school teachers in a school district view the psychological effects of grade retention? What do selected middle school teachers in an urban western central Florida school district perceive as the reasons they should practice grade retention? How do selected urban western central Florida middle school teachers in a school district believe parents should be involved in the grade retention process? What are selected middle school teachers’ in an urban western central Florida school district, implicit and explicit perceptions (advantages and disadvantages) of the practice of grade retention?

**Hypotheses**

There will be a significant difference in the perceptions of the practice of grade retention based on the number of years of teaching experience. There will be a significant difference in the perceptions of the practice of grade retention based on the race of the teacher. There will be a significant difference in the perceptions of the practice of grade retention based on the middle school grade level taught. There will be a significant difference in the perceptions of the practice of grade retention based on the social economic status level of the students in the school.

“A hypothesis is formulated based on a theory in review of related literature and the hypothesis logically follows the literature review and is based on the implication of previous research (Gay & Airasian, 2000, p.69).” The data collected allows the
researcher to analyze it to determine if the hypotheses are supported. Analysis of the data does not lead to a hypothesis being proven or not proven only supported or not supported (Gay & Airasian, 2000).

**Limitations and Assumptions**

Two hundred thirty-seven selected middle grade teachers at five public middle schools in an urban western central Florida school district were participants in this study. A directory of the five middle schools in the school district was obtained from the urban western central Florida school district personnel department. Based on the writer’s educational work experience in his county, there is a problem with varying achievement levels amongst the socio-economical divides. It is perceived that retention is higher the lower a family’s financial situation is (Bowman, 2005). Based on this perception of the achievement and retention gaps between the various divides, the writer choose schools from each division based on their percentage of students on the free or reduced meal program to illustrate the hypothetical. The recognized limitations of the study were that the participants were limited to one school system in Florida. However, the assumption was made that like the studies of Tomchim and Impara (1992), which focused on teachers’ perceptions on retention in elementary grades, the respondents would be representative.

**Theoretical Framework**

Education is now being influenced by the No Child Left Behind requirement of recruiting highly effective and qualified teachers. A 1998 national survey of public attitudes suggests that the public agrees that the quality of the teachers is the single factor influencing student achievement. Teachers must be familiar with a student’s learning
processes and the curriculum in order to insure that students have success in school. They must be aware of how the philosophical concepts operate on a day-to-day basis in a classroom. This can be accomplished through Novak and Gowin’s (1984) theoretical framework for education, *Learning How to Learn*. “If I had to reduce all the educational psychology to just one principle, I would say this: The most important single factor influencing learning is what the learner already knows” (Ausubel, Novak & Hanesian, 1978, p. 163). The focus of this research includes the theoretical framework of Novak and Gowin. Teaching is the achievement of shared meaning. To empower teachers and students is one of the most important points to achievement in learning (Gowin, 1980).

While this framework of education for teachers may be a solution, teachers need to provide for the wide variety of student needs in a culturally diverse environment. Policymakers are now realizing that what students know is dependent upon the teachers’ knowledge and skills. As schools plan for alternatives to retention and social promotion, all involved in the educational process must be abreast of research in order for educators to offer students a variety of tested ideas that can build academics in schools. Over time, schools will be able to employ a variety of methods for preventing failure. Teachers must continue learning by resources and instructional methods in order for students to succeed.

### Significance of the Study

With large numbers of urban students failing to meet minimum national standards in reading, mathematics and science, the push for higher standards and expectations in our schools has resulted in increasing attention to promotion and retention policies for students, and greater reliance on high stakes testing as tools for improving student performance (American Youth Policy Forum, 1998, p. 1).
Although grade retention and its research have over a century of history, it is important today because of the grade-to-grade promotion standards that have been implemented as part of education reform. Over 40 states and most urban school districts have implemented competency criteria for education. Student competency is normally assessed through standardized testing to decide if the child will be promoted to the next grade.

Grade retention emerged in 1860 (Reynolds, 1992). It evolved to improve school performance by allowing underachieving students more time to develop academic skills (Reynolds, 1992). Retention was generally accepted by teachers, parents, and administrators. In fact, it was expected.

By the 1930’s, researchers reported negative effects on grade retention (Ayers, 1933). It was reported that grade retention was linked to dropping out of school. This article was published during the time the nation was trying to keep students in school (Anderson, 1950; Holbeck, 1950; Moffit, 1945). It showed that 81.7% of U.S. students entering school between 1900 and 1904 would drop out of school before the ninth grade.

During the Depression, however, a system of social promotion rose to prominence. The nation wanted to keep students interested in school and to prevent them from dropping out, since jobs were not available. Schools began to consider age and maturity, as well as achievement in deciding whether to promote students. Bowles and Gintis (1976) argued that the practice of retention was reduced because of the number of students moving through the system. They demonstrated American’s education as producers of “good workers” who filled stratified occupations, thereby maintaining class-based inequities and benefiting capitalist economic production and product. Bowles and
Gintis wrote, the structure of social relations in education not only inures the student to the discipline of the workplace, but also develops the types of personal demeanor, modes of self-presentation, self-image, and social class identifications that are the crucial ingredients of job adequacy. Specifically, the social relationships of education replicate the hierarchical divisions of labor (Bowles & Gintis, 1976, p. 131).

Improving education in the 1980’s received extraordinary attention because it was linked to economic crisis and the future of U.S. competitiveness in world markets. *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) described the loss of U.S. pre-eminence in commerce, industry, science, and technological innovation because of non-attention to the purposes of school (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). Ending social promotion seemed to be the most practical way to improve academic standards. Policymakers, as well as educators, were concerned about self-esteem; therefore, there was a disregard for standards causing the educational system to pass students to the next grade because of age. The National Commission on Excellence in Education (1993) specifically recommended “placement and grouping of students, as well as promotion and graduation polices, should be guided by academic progress of students and their instructional needs, rather than by rigid adherence to age (p. 30).” If students did not meet objectives, they should not be promoted. Therefore, students would not arrive in high school or society without knowing how to read or knowing basic mathematics.

The same attitude of the 1980’s prevails because of the *No Child Left Behind Act*. Grade retention is often cited as a means to raise educational standards. Many teachers, as well as others in educational community, continue to believe that repeating a grade is
an effective remedy for students who failed to master basic skills. Because teachers are held accountable for a student’s success or failure, teachers should have a clear understanding of what grade retention means for the students and their parents. The significance of the study is that it is important for educators to understand what the research has found about grade retention. An unambiguous understanding of the history and the negative benefits of grade retention will allow teachers to make better decisions pertaining to grade retention. Educators may also begin to investigate alternatives to grade retention for implementation in school policy.

**Definitions of Terms**

- **Beginning Teachers** – For the purpose of this study, a beginning teacher was a teacher with 1-4 years of teaching experience in public or private education.

- **Explicit Belief** – For the purpose of this research project, explicit beliefs were beliefs that were fully revealed or expressed without being vague (Tomchin & Impara, 1992, p. 201).

- **Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT)** – Standardized tests that are linked to Florida’s Quality Core Curriculum in reading, language arts, math, science, and social studies for grades 3-11. Converting raw scores from each sub-test into standard scores will score the tests. The reliability of the FCAT is assessed by a method that results in two coefficients. One is the generalizability coefficient that examines the dependability of the score decision and the score point. Examining the individual scores by the item design, which is equated with the coefficient alpha and the traditional formula KR-20, derives this score. The validity for the tests was assessed using four criteria: Did it measure what was taught? Did it provide
consistent standards for all students? Did it produce a consistent measure over time? Was it free of biases? Content experts representing each school system in Florida and classroom teachers took part in the validation process (Florida Department of Education, 2001).

- **Grade Retention** – Often called “a year to grow” or “a gift of time” or retardation, and non-promotion, or failing, grade retention is the practice of requiring a student to spend a second year in the grade he or she has just completed (Jackson, 1975; Jimerson, 1999; Shepard & Smith, 1989; and Owings & Kaplan 2001).

- **Implicit Beliefs** – For the purpose of this study, implicit beliefs were implied or assumed (Tomhin & Impara, 1992, p. 201).

- **Middle School Teachers** – A team of teachers with the same group of students (sixth, seventh, or eighth) and a common planning time who can plan integrated instruction by correlating skills and concepts between subjects.

- **Perception** – The act, process, or product of perceiving, the ability or capacity to perceive, or a particular way of perceiving (Colman, 2001, p. 543). An awareness of the truth of something. This sense is largely nontechnical and connotes a kind of implicit, intuitive insight (Reber & Reber, 2001, p. 519). There are several factors that determine what is perceived. Learning is one of the factors. There are two issues with learning. One concerns the question of how much is acquired from experience. The other concerns the question of how learning can function to modify perception (Reber & Reber, 2001, p. 520).

- **Promotion** – Students who proceed to the next grade level at the end of a school year.
• **Reliability** – The quality of being trustworthy or dependable. In psychometrics, the internal consistency and stability with which a measuring instrument performs its function, corresponding roughly to the everyday concept of accuracy (Colman, 2001, p. 629).

• **Self-Concept** – James (1890) identified three aspects of self-concept: material self, social self and spiritual self. For the purpose of this research project, self-concept can be defined as “the totality of a complex, organized, and dynamic system of learned beliefs, attitudes, and opinions that each person holds to be true about his or her personal existence” (James, 1890).

• **Self-Esteem** – For the purpose of this research project, self-esteem referred to the way a person felt or thought about themselves (James, 1890).

• **Social Promotion** – Automatic promotion is the practice of allowing a student who has failed to meet academic requirements required to advance to the next grade. When a student is socially promoted, the social and psychological well being of a student is examined and is said to be the underlying reason for social promotion (Denton, 2001).

• **Student Achievement** – For the purpose of this study, student achievement was defined as students who met the requirement to proceed to the next grade level.

• **Validity** – The soundness or adequacy of something or to the extent to which it satisfies certain standards or conditions. A research procedure or interpretations of results obtained from a research study are considered valid if they can be justified on reasoned grounds. In psychometrics, it is the extent to which specified inferences from the test’s scores are justified or meaningful (Colman, 2001, p. 773).
• **Veteran Teacher** – For the purpose of this study, a veteran teacher was a teacher with five or more years of teaching experience in public education.

**Summary**

The purpose of the study was to examine teachers’ perceptions of grade retention. In addition, the study attempted to identify implicit and explicit beliefs about the practice of grade retention, specifically, when grade retention is considered an appropriate action with perceived consequences.

Each school district has had to meet the demands for student achievement accountability in order to move the school forward (Ferster, 1996). The recent trend of competency-based grade promotion has brought attention to grade retention.

This study addressed the question of what should schools do with struggling students. It is a difficult task for teachers, administrators, and parents to determine what to do with students who do not succeed in school. Many times the decision is to retain students, even for a second time. The goal of this research project was to ascertain the implicit and explicit perceptions of a selected group of middle school teachers in an urban western central Florida school district concerning grade retention.
Chapter II: Review of Literature

Introduction

This chapter reviews the literature on grade retention. An abundance of literature on the topic illustrates how imperative it is to understand the importance of grade retention as it relates to teachers’ perception of it. The majority of the study discusses the costs and advantages of grade retention and its process. The NASP (2003) and the Consortium for Policy Research in Education (1990) reported by 9th grade, approximately 50% of all U.S. students have been retained at least once. Using U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Census data for 2008, suggested that 30% of male students and 26% of female students have been retained in the United States by age 14. Roderick (1995) also reported a steady increase in retention rates over the previous two decades. For almost 50 years, research has shown that grade retention provides no academic advantages to students (Reynolds, Temple & McCoy, 1997). Yet, the practice continues to receive attention as schools face political pressure to demonstrate accountability for student achievement (Ritter, 1997; Reynolds, Temple, & McCoy, 1997).

Perhaps if a second year in grade resulted in higher achievement and a stronger commitment to school, educators would be justified in retaining so many students. However, research on grade retention reveals that no such thing occurs. Students who repeat a grade typically do worse academically than those in carefully matched control groups (Smith & Shepard, 1989). In districts with high percentages of students retained in the elementary grades, they begin to disengage from schooling altogether. For
example, an extensive study in one district found that middle school truancy correlated most strongly with students’ overage-for-grade status (Weitzman, et al, 1986).

According to U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of Census (2000-2007) national percentage retention rates for the years 2000-2007 increased by 7% to for females and decreased by 5% for males (see Table 2.1). The increase in retention rates appears to be a direct result of the public’s concern.

Table 2.1: Percent of Students Enrolled Below their Modal Grade
The Population 6 to 17 Years Old Enrolled Below Modal Grade: 2000 to 2007
(Numbers in thousands. Civilian noninstitutionalized population)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year, sex, race, and Hispanic origin</th>
<th>Percent below modal grade</th>
<th>Dropout rate 15 to 17 years</th>
<th>Population in age group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6 to 8 years</td>
<td>9 to 11 years</td>
<td>12 to 14 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All races</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>23.0</td>
<td>28.1</td>
<td>29.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>21.7</td>
<td>28.2</td>
<td>31.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>23.2</td>
<td>28.6</td>
<td>30.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>23.9</td>
<td>28.2</td>
<td>31.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>23.9</td>
<td>32.0</td>
<td>31.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>20.3</td>
<td>29.2</td>
<td>31.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>22.1</td>
<td>26.1</td>
<td>28.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>22.1</td>
<td>27.2</td>
<td>31.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>17.2</td>
<td>24.1</td>
<td>25.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>18.4</td>
<td>23.9</td>
<td>24.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>22.0</td>
<td>25.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>22.5</td>
<td>24.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>23.8</td>
<td>25.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>15.6</td>
<td>21.7</td>
<td>23.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>21.3</td>
<td>23.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>24.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to researchers, after more rigorous promotion criteria were put in effect, rates of retention have increased significantly (Allington, 1992; Elliget & Tocco, 1983; Gottfredson, 1986; Jimerson, 2001b; Morris, 1991; Rose et al., 1983). There are currently no statistics on file nationally; however, estimates based on census data have implied that the practice of non-promotion has continued and perhaps grown (Walters, 1995).

**Historical Overview of Grade Retention**

Pupil non-promotion or retention is not a new concept or practice. In the early twentieth century, educators became concerned for students who were unable to master the material at their particular grade level and faced the prospect of non-promotion (Barnard, 1848). Consequently, the practice of grade retention emerged. It has been estimated that one-half of all children were retained at least once, between grades one through eight, in the early nineteenth century (Cunningham & Owens, 1997). Henry Barnard (1848), who delivered a lecture *Graduation of Public Schools*, wanted to transform classrooms into a systematic plan of graduation based on the Prussian model. The goals were simple for the Prussian model: obedient soldiers to the army, subservient workers to the mines, submissive civil servants to the government, and compliant clerks to industry, and citizens who thought alike about major issues. In Prussia, the Volksshule educated 92% of the children. Its purpose was not to develop the intellect, but to socialize the children in obedience and subordination. With this crusade, the start of the graded structure, and a precursor to grade retention began to be influenced by five major developments. They include the following: the movement toward public education, state-supported education, the practical success and astonishing economy of the
monitorial system (monitors by older students trained by the teacher to help with teaching activities and duties), the several appeals of German education as interpreted by American spokesmen, and the call for trained teachers (Barnard, 1848). As the new grade system began, there developed a need for a uniform course of study and standard examinations. If pupils did not attain certain academic standards, they were forced to repeat a grade (Barnard, 1848). This is similar to students who are retained today.

It was not until about 1860 that it became common in U.S. elementary schools to group children in grade levels, with promotion dependent on mastery of a quota of content. The New York City school system was reporting the results of promotion and retention as early as the turn of the century (Owings & Magliaro, 1998). Maxwell’s (1904) age-grade progress study became the standard vehicle for school system reports on retention, promotion, and dropouts. Within the next two decades, researchers started to examine the efficacy of retention in terms of student achievement.

During the early 1900’s, educators began to examine specific measures of student ability and achievement with an aim toward obtaining greater school efficiency. Grade retention became an issue for the “educational scientist” as it jarred their sense of order, representing waste and failure (Barnard, 1848, p. 56). Retention became a problem of some magnitude and disturbed the public as well as private school officials. After the school superintendent of New York declared that at least a third of the students attending elementary schools were over the normal age for their grade, the press had a field day.

Ayres wrote in 1909: Under our present system, there are large numbers of children who are destined to live lives of failure. We know them in the schools as the children who are always a little behind physically, a little behind intellectually, and a
little behind in the power to do. Such a child is the one who is always “it” in the competitive games of childhood. As educators and parents awakened to the potentially detrimental effects of retention on a student’s self-concept, social factors became a consideration when it was time to decide for or against promotion (p. 56).

Research during the nineteenth century, in the new discipline of psychology, showed the importance of developing a child’s emotional well-being. Peer groups were found to be significant to the maturation process. These findings became factors in retention and promotion decisions (Potter, 1996). With a changing perception of the value of grade retention, schools began to adopt “social promotion” policies. “Social promotion or automatic promotion” policies meant promotion was based on social variables rather than just academics (see Appendix I). As social promotion policies became popular, academically based policies faded (Potter, 1996).

The goal of grade retention was to improve school performance by allowing more time for students to develop adequate academic skills (Reynolds, 1992). By the 1930’s researchers were reporting the negative effects of retention on achievement (Ayer, 1933; Kline, 1933).

**Social Promotion and Grade Retention**

According to the U.S. Department of Education (1999), social promotion is the practice of allowing students who have failed to meet performance standards and academic requirements to pass on to the next grade with their peers instead of completing or satisfying the requirements; social promotion is often carried out in the presumed interests of a students’ social and psychological well-being without regard to achievement (p. 5). Research confirms that social promotion, which is similar to
retention, also increases dropout rates, does nothing to increase student achievement, and creates graduates who lack the necessary skills for employment (Denton, 2001; U.S. Department of Education, 1999). “Both being promoted without regard to effort or achievement or retained without extra assistance sends a message to students that little is expected from them, that they have little worth, and they do not warrant the time and effort it would take to help them be successful in school” (U.S. Department of Education, 1999). Non-promotion became synonymous with failure. As time progressed, educators began to adopt programs that paid more attention to individual differences, but these programs, although allowing for student difference, continued to tolerate student failure (Cunningham & Owens, 1997).

Eventually, many school systems began to shift from a policy of promoting only based on achievement (see Appendix I). Social promotion was intended to replace grade retention. Grade retention did not have a positive effect on students, and retained students were more apt to drop out of school. “Social promotion appealed to the nurturing side of most educators; grade retention damaged a student’s self-esteem” (Owings & Kaplan, 2001 p. 17).

If we are going to go strong into the 21st century, we must continue to expand opportunity for all of our people — and when it comes to our children’s education, that means continuing to expect and demand the very best from our schools, our teachers, and above all, from our students. That is why I have fought for excellence, competition, and accountability in our nation’s public schools, with more parental involvement, greater choice, better teaching, and an end to
social promotion. We cannot afford to let our children down when they need us the most (President Clinton, 1998, p. 2).

With these words Clinton was saying that school districts that pass failing students do a disservice to the student and to society. The practice is used to avoid dealing with learning problems (American Federation of Teachers, 1997). The serious effect of grade retention is evident from a survey research on promotion on confidence in the academic standards of today’s high school graduates. According to Public Agenda (1998), 32% of parents and 63% of employers do not believe a high school diploma guarantees that student have met the academic standards of receiving a diploma. Educational systems have failed to meet the learning needs of students, leading to social promotion, which has been popular so that children would not be retained (See Table 2.2).
Table 2.2: Parents, Students, Teachers, and Employees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Which statement is more accurate for the students graduating from your high school:</th>
<th>Parents</th>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Employees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. A high school diploma is not a guarantee that the typical student has learned the basics; or</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>63%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. A high school diploma means that the typical student has at least learned the basics?</td>
<td>62%</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. The district should continue raising social promotion standards.</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. It is wrong to use the results of just one test to decide whether a student gets promoted or graduates.</td>
<td>90%</td>
<td>95%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Public Agenda, 2001

As noted above, survey research indicates that schools are socially promoting students; although, teachers know that promoting students that are not ready to move into society or advance to the next grade level creates a problem for teachers and peers. It also lowers the standards of education of all students. According the American Federation of Teachers (1997), the reasons teachers gave for passing students who were unprepared were as follows:

- Teachers felt under pressure to promote students out of fear that high failure rates reflect poor schools, administrators, and teachers. Teachers are sometimes pressured by building principals to promote students.
• Teachers know that educational research indicates that retention can be ineffective. Many teachers feel that there are no alternatives to retention, so they choose to socially promote rather than retain the student.

It is difficult to estimate how widespread social promotion and retention practices are because there is limited data collected. The following suggest that social promotion is a serious problem facing our school system:

Teachers surveyed indicated that they had promoted students that were not prepared;
Research indicates approximately 340,000 high school graduates each year cannot balance a checkbook, or write a letter to a credit card company to explain an error on a bill; nationally, students fail to meet the “basic standards” in education; the California State University reported in 1998, 54% of incoming freshman failed to pass an entry-level math placement test. Forty-seven percent failed an English placement test (U. S. Department of Education, 1999, pp. 5–7).

Education in American public schools is based on the belief that time invested by the student in the learning situation will result in definable achievement; students allowed to progress though the grades without mastering the fundamental concepts of each achievement level are headed for future failures and disappointment. If educators want to see these students succeed, a plan needs to be implemented (Cunningham & Owens, 1997).

With the nation expecting high standards as well as high stake testing, political pressure is “intense for retention and against social promotion” (Darling-Hammond, 1998, p. 17). Social promotion has become a concern for policy makers. The American
Federation of Teachers (1997) confirmed that many states have established statewide policies to end social promotion.

According to the U.S. Department of Education (1999) Chicago Public Schools had a rationale for ending social promotion, which include:

Success in any phase of the curriculum depends on mastery of prerequisite skills taught in the preceding grades; students entering high school with inadequate skills are unable to make the adjustments required for academic success; this situation has resulted in a large number of failures in ninth and tenth grades and a high dropout rate; social promotion depreciates the value of the eighth-grade and high school diplomas in the Chicago Public School System; by rewarding students who have not achieved acceptable standards of performance, social promotion diminishes the effects of individual student motivation; social promotion can give parents and students a false sense of accomplishment, which can have detrimental consequences in later life (pp. 10-15).

Critics of social promotion argue that social promotion:

It frustrates promoted students because it places them in classes where they cannot do the required assignments; social promotion sends a negative message to all students that they do not have to work hard to be promoted; teachers must teach those students that are not prepared as well as those that are prepared; parents have a false sense of their child’s academic success; it leads employers to believe that diplomas are meaningless; and children are thrown in our society where they cannot function (The U. S. Department of Education, 1999, pp. 10-11).

The practice of social promotion has been identified as the cause of a number of the ills currently afflicting public schools in the United States; in many districts people
are loudly demanding that promotion be based on academic achievement. Proponents are convinced that grade retention is a necessary measure to provide students with the basic knowledge and skills they need to get ready for the future (Alexander, Entwisle, & Dauber, 1994).

**Efficacy of the Grade Retention Process**

After several years of social promotion being the standard policy, the trend shifted toward competency-based education beginning in the 1980’s. The publication of *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) prompted several school systems to implement stricter promotion and retention polices without supportive research (Roderick, 1995). As a result, children being retained increased.

Jackson (1975) criticized the methodology used in retention studies; one general conclusion about the effects of grade retention relative to grade promotion is clearly warranted by all the results taken as a whole. There is no reliable body of evidence to indicate that grade retention is more beneficial than grade promotion for students with serious academic or adjustment difficulties. Thus, those educators who retain pupils in a grade do so without valid research evidence to indicate that such treatment will provide greater benefits to students with academic or adjustment difficulty than will promotion to the next grade (Jackson, 1975, p. 627).

There have been a few meta-analyses conducted on grade retention from 1925 through 2001 (Holmes & Matthews, 1984; Holmes, 1989; and Jimerson, 2001a). Holmes and Matthews were the first to conduct a comprehensive statistical meta-analysis examining the efficacy of grade retention. In their research, there were 44 studies between 1929 and 1981. A total of 4,200 retained students and 6,924 promoted students
were analyzed (Jimerson, 2001a). Those who continue to retain pupils at grade level do so despite cumulative evidence showing that the potential for negative effects consistently outweigh positive outcomes. Because this cumulative research evidence consistently points to negative effects of non-promotion, the burden of the proof legitimately falls on proponents of retention plans to show there is compelling logic indicating success of their plans when so many other plans have failed (Holmes & Mathews, 1984, p. 232).

Holmes (1989) reviewed an additional 19 studies published between 1981 and 1989 for a total of 63 studies between 1925 and 1989 where retained students were compared with promoted students. In this meta-analysis, 25 studies matched IQ, achievement, socioeconomic status, gender, and other variables with promoted students. He reported that of 63 studies completed, 54 found negative effects of grade retention. Children who were retained did worse academically than those promoted. The content area most affected was reading. When only well-matched studies were examined, a greater negative effect was found for retention than in the research literature as a whole. In studies where retained children and promoted controls matched IQ and prior achievement, repeating a grade had an average negative effect of $-0.30$ standard deviations. The weight of empirical evidence argues against grade retention (Holmes, 1989, p. 28).

One of the most current meta-analysis of studies examining the efficacy of grade retention was completed in 2001. There were 1,100 retained students and approximately 1,500 promoted students analyzed. Jimerson (2001b) indicated that 5% of 169 analyses of academic achievement outcomes resulted in significant statistical differences favoring
the retained students while 47% resulted in significant statistical differences favoring the comparison group of low-achieving peers. Studies examining the efficacy of early grade retention on academic achievement and socioemotional adjustment that have been published during the past decade report results that are consistent with the converging evidence, and conclusions of research from earlier in the century that fail to demonstrate that grade retention provides greater benefits to students with academic or adjustment difficulties than does promotion to the next grade (Jimerson, 2001a, p. 327).

**Retention and Student Failure**

It is not difficult to understand why educators would recommend grade retention for students who do not master or meet the required requirements. “Retention can take the child from the bottom to near the middle of the class. The problem is that students are compared to the grade placement, not the peers. The students caught up to the wrong group (Malone, 1998, p. 43).” In Schools without Failure, Glasser asserts that the only thing that students learn from retention is to embrace a failure identity (Glasser, 1969; Reynolds, Temple, and McCoy, 1997) have cited three reasons why retention does not work in their research. “Retention does not have a positive effect for most low achieving students, and it is also sometimes harmful to scholastic development when it occurs early in school” (pp. 1-2). Their writers list four reasons why retention does not work and is not effective:

1. Retention is often practiced for nonacademic reasons; 2. The decision to retain a student does not account for poor instruction; 3. Retained children do not do better academically after they repeat a grade; and 4. Grade retention contributes to school
dropout rates and is associated with a high percentage of students leaving school early (pp. 1-2).

There are several reasons why students fail; delayed development, physical intellectual, and language disabilities; poverty; low aspirations, poor self-efficacy; dysfunctional family situations; disvalue of education; behavior problems; poor standardized test scores; culturally diverse backgrounds; English is not the primary language; and a history of poor instruction and inadequate school resources. These items will not be corrected if students continue to be retained in school (American Federation of Teachers, 1997, p. 5).

**Self-Concept/Self-Esteem and Academic Achievement**

*What is Self-Esteem and Self-Concept?*

After several decades of research on self-concept and self-esteem, there is a growing awareness that the perceptions a person experiences in the course of living regarding one’s own personal existence, is perhaps the most profound perception. Self-esteem refers to how one feels or how one values themselves, and self-esteem can refer to self-concept (James, 1890). Some authors use self-esteem and self-concept interchangeably. Franken (1994) states the following: There is a great deal of research that shows that the self-concept is, perhaps, the basis for all motivated behavior. It is the self-concept that gives rise to possible selves, and it is possible selves that create the motivation for behavior (p. 443).

Franken (1994) suggests that self-concept is related to self-esteem in that “people who have good self-esteem have a clearly differentiated self-concept. When people
know themselves, they can maximize outcomes because they know what they can and cannot do‖ (p. 439).

**Factors that Influence Self-Esteem**

Parents and later teachers have an effect on children’s feelings and attitudes toward themselves, and whether accurate or not, correlate significantly with their self-esteem and self-concept (Coopersmith, 1967). A teacher’s ability to influence the development of students has been recognized for a long time (Perkins, 1957). In determining one’s own level of self-esteem and self-concept, one looks internally to evaluate through the process of taking action and then reflecting on feelings, thoughts, and personal actions (James, 1890). Self-concept and self-esteem are developed through interactions with the environment and reflecting on that interaction (Franken, 1994).

According to Greenier et al., (1999), there are several components of self-concept: physical, academic, social, and transpersonal. These researchers believe that when a person looks internally, he or she has a view of who he or she currently is (called the actual self) and a view of who he or she wants to be (called the ideal self). The greater the difference between the actual and ideal self, then the person’s self-concept and the self-esteem is greater. This dynamic aspect of self-concept (and by corollary, self-esteem) is important because it indicates that it can be modified (Franken, 1994). He further says that, there is a growing body of research that indicates that it is possible to change the self-concept. Self-change is not something that people can ‘will’, but rather it depends on the process of self-reflection. Through self-reflection, people often come to view themselves in a new, more powerful way, and it is through this new, more powerful way of viewing the self that people can develop possible selves (p. 443).
School Achievement and Self-Esteem/Self-Concept

Over the past several decades, research has indicated a possible relationship between self-esteem and school achievement. Coopersmith (1967) reported that a child’s self-esteem would not only predict how well he or she would read in first grade but also the measure of intelligence the child would have. Scheirer and Krant (1979) reported on several studies that indicated findings based upon the belief that educational achievements are influenced by self-concept. Wylie (1979) reported that there is an immense amount of evidence that self-concept predicts and influences achievement in school from primary grades through undergraduate education. Brookover (1985) found that there was a significant relationship between self-concept and academic achievement.

Holly (1987) compiled a study that examined the relationships between retention and academic achievement. Findings indicated most researchers supported the idea that self-esteem was more likely the result than the cause of academic achievement. He also indicated that a certain level of self-esteem was needed in order for a student to achieve academic success. Self-esteem and self-concept cannot be separated. According to Covington (1989), as the level of self-esteem increases, so does academic achievement. Furthermore, and most important, he concluded that self-esteem could be modified through direct instruction, and instruction could lead to academic success. Waltz and Bleuer (1992) concluded that negative feelings about self, absenteeism, and school retention are affected by successful school self-esteem. This study focused on relationships between a child’s self-esteem and non-promotion experiences. They also suggested that self-concept and school achievement are related. The primary issue is the
direction of the relationship: does self-concept produce achievement or does achievement produce self-concept? Gage and Berliner (1992) stated the following:

The evidence is accumulating; however, to indicate that level of school success, particularly over many years, predicts level of regard of self and one’s own ability; whereas, level of self-esteem does not predict level of school achievement. The implication is that teachers need to concentrate on the academic successes and failures of their students. The student’s history of success and failure gives them the information with which to assess themselves (p. 159).

In a study of middle school students, Setencich (1994) found that retention had a negative impact on students’ self-esteem, their status among their peers, and their personality development. She urged that “teachers and school administrators should give high priority to discovering innovative methods for reaching problem students. Re-routing low-achieving or immature students through the same course one, two, or three years in a row is not an answer (Setencich, 1994, pp. 5-8).” The quality of research studies on the relationship of retention on self-concept and self-esteem has been questionable (Harvard Education Letter, 1986). Some studies, for example, examine pupils after retention occurs. If the retained students have feelings of competence below those of their peers, it could be that the retained students already have these characteristics before retention occurred. Without the data of a student’s status prior to retention, it would be impossible to assess how retention may have affected the students (pp.1-4).

Simmons and Blythe (1987) suggest that studies do not follow a comparison group of students who have not been retained. Opponents of retention argue that it
causes students to have negative attitudes toward school and causes a negative attitude toward school improvement (Holmes, 1989; Reynolds, 1992; Roderick, 1995; Rumberger, 1987; Shepard & Smith, 1990; Smith & Shepard, 1987). Darling-Hammond (1998) suggested that self-esteem may also reduce retention. She further indicates that students who have been retained actually do worse than those who have not been retained. According to Banicky (2000), there is a link between retention and lowered self-confidence.

When one compares retained students to students with similar abilities who have never been retained, a newsletter presented by the Intercultural Development Research Association (1999) suggested that retained students suffer low-esteem and regard the retention experience as a stigma or punishment, not as a positive outcome that will be beneficial. There is evidence that supports the fact that schools do not promote self-esteem/self-concept (Reasoner, 2000). Nearly all researchers on grade retention and self-esteem/self-concept agree that students should have opportunities for learning such as extra help, qualified teachers, and additional resources rather than retention (Oakes, 1999).

**Grade Retention and Academic Achievement**

Recovering from failure is difficult for children. They do recover to some extent, but the recovery is not complete because most retained children remain behind both their previous classmates and their new ones. The recovery is also temporary. Researchers who have examined academic achievement over a period of time have found that retained children do better the year after retention, but academic achievement begins to decline within two or three years (Alexander, Entwisle, & Dauber, 1994).
Alexander, Enthwisle, and Dauber (1994) conducted an eight-year study in Baltimore, Maryland following students from 20 public schools. The study began when the students entered first grade. There were 770 students randomly selected. It ended after the students completed their seventh grade year. The first-grade repeaters made gains in grades and test scores the following year; however, they were unable to maintain those test gains. Several students repeated another grade and some were placed in special education after a two-year period.

Perhaps Shepard and Smith (1989) completed the most comprehensive studies of grade retention; they reviewed several students who had been retained. Students who have been retained had slow growth in learning. It was found that those students continued to “lag” behind classmates with similar low levels, but who were not retained. The studies that were reviewed in Flunking Grades required the students to complete the same course work that they had done the previous year. There was some improvement, but it was not long-term. The students began to fall behind again after a period of time.

There are both negative and positive effects to grade retention; however, the negative effects are greater. In summary, negative effects of grade retention are common:

- Most children do not “catch-up” when held back.
- Although some retained students do better at first, these children often fall behind in later grades.
- Students who are held back tend to get in trouble, dislike school, and feel badly about themselves more often than children that are promoted to the next grade (National Association of School Psychologists, 1998, p. 1).
Being removed from one’s peers may hinder children from adjusting to school. The child may not be helped and could have a decline in academic performance (Thompson & Cunningham, 2000).

Ayres (1909) suggested the course of study was too hard for the slower students and too easy for the bright kids and this led to lack of school achievement. He discovered the progress of badly “retarded” children was at a rate of eight grades in 10 years. According to Darling-Hammond (1998), dozens of studies have indicated that retaining a child contributes to academic failure, dropping out of school, and discipline problems in school. A fifty-year history shows that grade retention is not the avenue to pursue for academic achievement (Owings & Magliaro, 1998).

According to the Gale Encyclopedia of Childhood and Adolescence (n. d.), retention, even at the elementary level does not result in improved academic achievement among low-achieving students. Short-term outcomes (the period of time immediately after retention) may be a temporary improvement in academic achievement, but that decreases over time.

The negative effect of retention is greater for achievement measures than for personal adjustment, self-concept, or attitude toward school, although all are negatively affected (Shepard & Smith, 1989). There are several explanations for the negative effects associated with grade retention, including:

- Absence of specific remedial strategies to enhance social or cognitive competence;
• Failure to address the risk factors associated with retention (short term gains following retention mask long term problems associated with ineffective instruction);

• Retained children are subsequently average for grade which is associated with deleterious outcomes, particularly as retained children approach middle school and puberty (stigmatization by peers and other negative experiences of grade retention may exacerbate behavioral and socio-emotional adjustment problem (Anderson, Jimerson, & Whipple, 2002).

There have been over 75 years of research completed on grade retention and academic achievement. Researchers have concluded that there are no benefits to grade retention and academic achievement (Jimerson, 2001b). Of 66 articles on retention written from 1990 to 1997, only one supported retention (Lenarduzzi, 1990).

**Psychological Effects of Grade Retention**

Retention remains the major strategy used by educators to cure academic failure. This practice persists although the research and literature proves it is harmful to students in terms of both achievement and personal adjustment (Potter, 1996; Thompson & Cunningham, 2000; Jimerson, 2001a; Jimerson, 2001b).

The most powerful, and probably the most quoted, statement of a child’s perception of non-promotion was reported by Yamamoto (1980). Children in his study “rated the prospect of repeating a grade as more stressful than ‘wetting in class’ or being caught stealing. The only two life events that children thought would be more stressful than being retained are going blind or losing a parent (pp. 6-8).” This provides a contrast with the “idea” that retention in earlier grades is not harmful to children.
Berliner (1986) argued that the scar of early retention appears to be long lasting. Berliner repeated Yamamoto’s research with middle school students to determine whether their additional maturity had changed their view of non-promotion. He asked students to rank the psychological trauma of 15 different life experiences. The results were similar, but stronger than those of Yamamoto’s earlier study: 95% of the young adults ranked being retained in elementary school as equivalent to losing a parent or going blind.

When the study was replicated in 2001, sixth grade students rated grade retention as the single most stressful live event, higher than the loss of a parent or going blind (Anderson, Jimerson, & Whipple, 2002). These researchers suggest that the pressure of testing required by public education to determine promotion or retention of students probably influenced this finding.

According to research (Anderson, Jimerson and Whipple, 2002; NASP, 2003; Jimerson, Anderson and Whipple, 2002; Setencich, 1994), some of the devastating effects of retention are: most children do not "catch up" when held back; although some retained students do better at first, these children often fall behind again in later grades; retention is one of the most powerful predictors of high school dropout; holding a child back twice makes dropping out of school 90% certain; in 2001; students who are held back tend to get into trouble, dislike school, and feel badly about themselves more often than children who go on to the next grade; the weakened self-esteem that usually accompanies retention plays a role in how well the child may cope in the future.
Byrnes and Yamamoto (2001) also interviewed retained students. When asked how they felt about being retained, 84% of the answers included the words “sad”, “bad”, or “upset”. Forty-seven percent of the students retained reported being punished by their parents or teased by their peers.

Holmes (1989) found in his meta-analysis study that retained children scored lower on measures of self-concept and attitude toward schools than students who had not been retained.

“The overly simplistic view of retention as a panacea for education woes ignores its negative impact on children (Tweed, 2000, p. 35).” After examining the above factors, there is a strong indication that grade retention has psychological effects on children.

**Grade Retention and Dropouts**

No standard which may be applied to a school system as a measure of accomplishment is more significant than that which tells us what proportion of the pupils who enter the first grade succeed in reaching the final grade (Ayres, 1909, p. 8). It is this that gives the problem of the elimination of pupils from school and the cognate matter of retardation their educational importance. In our city school systems most of the children enter the first grade at the age of six or seven. Some of them are promoted each year and reach the eighth grade at fourteen or fifteen years of age. Others are not regularly promoted from grade to grade. They fall behind and at the age of fourteen they find themselves, not in the eighth grade, but in the fifth or sixth. This falling back process is termed retardation. The retarded pupil finds himself in the same class with much younger companions. His age and size are a continual reproach to him. He begins to resent the
maternalistic atmosphere of the lower grammar grades. He becomes discouraged through his lack of success and, when he has passed the compulsory attendance age, he leaves school. This dropping out process is termed elimination. The term retardation has been explained as referring to the pupil who is above the normal age for his grade (Ayres, 1909, p. 8). On average about 33% of all pupils in our public schools belong to the class “retarded” (Ayres, 1909, p. 8)

A dropout is a student who withdraws from school and is no longer pursuing a high school diploma in a state or district approved education program (Martin et al., 2009). The dropout rate and the attrition rate go hand in hand. Attrition is the decrease in the number of students over time. It is usually considered a loss. Today millions of young people are dropouts without a high school diploma. According to the Annie E. Casey Foundation, 1.2 million (7%) teens aged 16-19 are not enrolled in school annually and therefore dropouts (Martin et al., 2009). This number is down from 1.6 million (11%) estimated in 2000. As attested by the United States Census 2008, among people aged 16 to 19, there was a dropout rate of 7.1%, a 1.3% decrease since 2000. Whites alone and Whites alone, or in combination tied for the lowest percentage (5.6%) followed by Asian alone or in combination (See Table 2.3). Blacks or African American alone (13.7%) had the highest dropout rate followed by Blacks alone or in combination (13.2%). Asian alone had 11.7%, and Hispanic or Latino (of any race) had 10.5%. The writer would like to know the reason for the dramatic increase in the dropout rate for Black and Asian females. There was a 3.8% and 7% increase respectfully.
Table 2.3
High School Dropout by Race

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
<td>3.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White alone</td>
<td>4.3%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black or African American alone</td>
<td>5.6%</td>
<td>3.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian alone</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian alone or in combination</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
<td>3.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black alone or in combination</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
<td>6.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latino (of any race)</td>
<td>6.8%</td>
<td>6.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White alone or in combination</td>
<td>3.7%</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. Starting in 2003 respondents could identify more than one race.
2. The data shown prior to 2003 consists of those identifying themselves as “Asian or Pacific Islanders.”

National attention has been focused on dropout rates. “Although there have been few studies examining the efficacy of early grade retention that extend through high school, those longitudinal studies that do exist demonstrate that retained students are more apt to drop out of school (Jimerson & Kaufman, 2003 p. 626).” Several studies, however, have shown the link between dropping out of school and grade retention (Grissom & Shepard, 1989; Ensmiger & Slusarick, 1992; Roderick, 1994; Alexander et al., 1999).

Grade retention has been identified as the most powerful predictor of dropping out of school (Rumberger, 1995; Lyons, 2001). Owings and Kappen (1998) found that being behind or failing a grade is a strong factor in a student not completing high school. In addition, being retained in early grades affects the rate for dropping out of school. A student who fails either of the first two grades has only a 20% chance of graduating from high school. A recent study reviewed 17 studies examining factors associated with dropping out of school. Grade retention was found to be a major factor (Jimerson,
Anderson, & Whipple, 2002). Another review Jimerson et al. (2002) revealed that students retained in elementary grades were at an increased risk for dropping out of school. They further found that retained students may drop out of school two to eleven times more than promoted students, and grade retention will increase the dropout rate between 20% and 50%. Retaining students, regardless of the grade they are retained, increases the likelihood that they will drop out of school (Thompson & Cunningham, 2000). When students are held back, they sometimes end up doing far worse than students who are allowed to go to the next grade.

One study found six predictors of black urban male dropouts, with one being grade retention. Two other studies ascertained that characteristics of third and sixth grade students predicted who would dropout and when. “It was found that the strongest predictor of when a child would dropout was age. The older the child is in third grade, the earlier she or he would drop out of school” (Ostrowski, 1987, p. 6). Research connecting elementary school retention to dropping out of school has sparked further concern about retention. These findings run contrary to the popular belief that retaining students gives them a chance to build a foundation for future academic success, increasing their chances of staying in school. According to American Federation of Teachers (1997), 54% of the respondents thought that students who were promoted despite failure to meet academic standards were more likely to drop out of school than those retained for failure to meet promotion standards. Conflicting evidence suggests that the public demands for stricter promotion standards may increase the dropout rates.

The U.S. Department of Education (1999) listed six reasons students drop out of school. Retention is third on their list of the following reasons:
• Dislike of school because school is boring and irrelevant to student needs;
• Low academic achievement and poor grades;
• Retention (particularly being held back more than once);
• Poverty, the need to work;
• A feeling that teacher/administrators do not care; and
• Inability to feel comfortable in a large depersonalized school setting (p. 24).

Thus, the relationship between grade retention and dropouts has been well documented.Almost no one claims that retention causes dropouts. Instead, researchers portray grade retention as just one of the steps along the path to dropping out. Once students are considered candidates for retention, all further educational decisions surrounding them should be viewed as critical since these children are also at risk of never receiving a high school diploma (Jimerson, Anderson & Whipple, 2002, pp. 441-457).

Recommendations abound throughout the dropout literature for early identification of potential dropouts, together with recurring cries for early intervention. The resources need to be put in the primary grades. For many children, the seeds of failure are planted during the initial school years (Dance, 1995).

The place to intervene is with those individuals who are falling behind in elementary classes, and whose teachers think they cannot make it to the next grade. Ideally, the time to identify and respond to at-risk students is at the earliest stages rather than waiting for the end of the school year, i.e. at the first signs of failure. The decision-makers in schools must recognize there is a serious problem and consider offering educational alternatives to eradicate the symptoms of failure. It is important to remember
that success in school, i.e. graduating, translates into a greater likelihood of achieving success after school (Thompson & Cunningham, 2000).

When the students who had dropped out were asked what would improve students’ chances of staying in school, tied responses at 81% identified opportunities for real world learning (internships, service learning, etc.) to make classrooms more relevant and better teachers who keep classes interesting. Small classes with more individual instruction (75%), better communication between parents and school (71%), parents make sure their kids go to school every day (71%), and increase supervision at school, ensure students attend classes (70%) round out the top choices (Figure 14), (Martin et al., 2009).

**Figure 2.1: Teachers Are Doing Well, but Could Be Doing More**
**Figure 2.2: What Dropouts Believe Would Improve Students’ Chances**


*Socioeconomics, Race, and Grade Retention*

Gender, race, and socioeconomics affect grade retention. During the mid 1960’s, about 24% of boys and 16% girls were at least one year behind in school. In 1990 those percentages were 24% of white females and 74% of Hispanic males (Alexander, Entwisle, & Dauber, 1994). McCoy and Reynolds (1998) examined data from the longitudinal study of 1,164 African American 14-year old students attending a public school in Chicago. Retained students were more likely to be boys and they had low-test scores in reading and math. By the age of 15 to 17 years, 40% to 50% of African Americans and Hispanics were retained, but only 25% to 35% among Whites were retained. The Louisiana Department of Education (2001) analyzed its System Information Data (SID) from 1997-2001 in grades K-12 and found that male students are
more likely to be retained than girls, and students receiving free lunch were twice as likely to be retained as those who pay full price for their lunch.

Students in the state of Texas were analyzed, and it was found that a comparison of the cumulative total of 2.2 million students enrolled in sixth grade between the fall of 1984 and the spring of 1993, and of the cumulative total of 1.5 million graduates in the classes of 1992 and 1999 meant that during that nine year period, around 700,000 children were lost or left behind before graduation. Haney attributed this to an increase in retention rates, particularly among African Americans and Hispanics, and an increase in the dropout rate. Only 50% of minority students have been progressing from ninth grade to graduation since the initiation of the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS), again reflecting the impact of high stakes testing and accountability (Haney, 2000, p. 3).

Retention Rates and Costs in the United States

It has been pointed out that when computing the cost of grade retention there are really two types of costs: retention costs and remediation costs. Retention costs reflect expenses relating to providing an extra year of education. Remediation costs refer to expenditures for giving students special remedial help (Harvard Education Letter, 1986).

Another variable that could be factored into the expense of grade retention is a percentage of the fiscal drain dropouts place on society. A study conducted by Royce, Darlington and Murray (1983) compared a retained group of students to a promoted group of students; he found retained students were more likely to be unemployed, receive public assistance, or be in prison. Accepting the fact that holding students back is associated with leaving school early, i.e. without a diploma in hand, then, a portion of the
price society pays because of dropouts should be absorbed into the overall cost of retention. This could be thought of as a long-term cost, while the extra year and remediation are immediate expenses (Harvard Education Letter, 1986).

A study conducted by the Office of Statistics of UNESCO (1993) speaks of wastage in education as those obstacles which prevent an educational system from achieving its goals. An assumption is made that students are expected to complete their education within a prescribed period of time. Therefore, grade repetition and dropping out are both considered wastage. Repeating a class is said to be wastage since those repeating reduce the enrollment capacity of their class; thus, preventing other children from being admitted, or causing overcrowding, which raises the cost of education. It follows then, that a school manifesting a high rate of retention has a high rate of wastage.

A school with a low rate of wastage, however, may enforce a policy of automatic promotion, which does not necessarily mean it is a better educational system. The UNESCO (1993) authors acknowledge the limitation of the definition since it does not account for possible benefits derived from a second year spent in a grade.

Harvard Education Letter (1986) confirms in the mid 1980’s that expenses for having a student repeat a grade were about $3,500. In 1990 it was estimated that the annual cost for retaining students was 10 billion dollars (Shepard & Smith, 1990). It is estimated that currently over 2.4 million (5-10%) students are retained every year in the United States. On the rise for the past 25 years, retention in 2002 was estimated to cost over 14 billion dollars per year to pay for the extra year of schooling (Anderson, Whipple & Anderson, 2002).
Since statistics concerning numbers of students retained are difficult to derive, the same is true for information regarding expenses. In sum, it is evident that grade retention costs time and money. Interestingly, little attention has been given to the amount of expenditures relative to grade retention.

**Benefits of Grade Retention**

Retention is one of the most controversial issues in education today. The main reason for this controversy is that, despite substantial empirical evidence against its use, retention continues to be strongly recommended and widely used by many educators in public schools (Byrnes & Yamamoto, 2001). Darling-Hammond (1998) has questioned why so many schools remain faithful to the practice of grade retention despite an accumulation of non-supportive evidence. Some possible explanations are as follows:

- Teachers and parents observe progress during the second time in the grade. The teachers are satisfied and the parents are satisfied. It appears that the child is doing well. However, teachers do not know the long-term affect of grade retention.

- Teachers are skeptical about passing students that fail to meet the criteria for the grade. They do not want to send a negative image to the student. They want the child to realize that he/she must successfully perform in their classes. Teachers also disagree with social promotion.

- There is no alternative to grade retention.

- Some educators see students who perform better the second time in a grade, and they are convinced that grade retention is effective. They are unaware of any other literature on grade retention such as self-esteem or self-concept.
School policy makers may think the practice of grade retention will satisfy parents and other community members.

This list demonstrates what obstacle change agents are up against if they want to alter a practice that has been an integral part of the United States public school system for centuries. Some schools are under considerable pressure to maintain acceptably high levels of grade retention as proof of high standards. Public belief in the efficacy of retention also creates a powerful mandate for its use (Sheppard & Smith, 1990).

While repetition is, to specialists and statisticians, a critical indicator of the non-functionality and internal inefficiency of educational systems, society in general and the education community in particular (teachers, parents, students, headmasters, policy makers), tend to accept it as “natural” and as an inherent component of school life. The school system has incorporated repetition as a regular mechanism to cope with the diverse and complex intra- and extra-educational factors that inhibit effective teaching and learning in schools, and tends to view it as an externally driven, student and family related problem, in need of external solutions (see Appendix H). Parents, on the other hand, tend to accept such diagnoses and teachers’ verdicts on the learning capacities of their children.

While specialists equate repetition with low educational quality, often both parents and teachers/headmasters equate it with high quality: a reflection of seriousness, discipline and high standards on the part of teachers and institutions who favor repetition. Societal perception may even consider repetition as a blessing, as a benevolent “second chance” offered to those who are not fit to learn anyway (Torres, 1995, p. 3).
In earlier grades, retention is viewed as a way to prevent failure before it occurs. The extra year is believed to provide children with additional time for personal adjustment, maturation, and skill development (Horne, 1976). These researchers administered a survey to elementary teachers and asked if they would retain because of immaturity. All elementary teachers supported the school policy, and they estimated that over 80% of the repeating students had been helped. Teachers believed the students developed better self-concepts through successful experiences during the second year, and they contended that promoting children who are not ready causes a great sense of failure. Retained students were also surveyed. They indicated that they felt good about themselves and that their work output and attitude toward school were either the same or better than the prior year. This, however, was not a controlled study that matched and compared students. It relied exclusively on the opinions of teachers and students.

Retention is viewed as a mechanism for insuring that students master the basic skills necessary for success in higher grades. At the high school level, retention is advocated as a strategy to prevent schools from graduating students who lack the basic skills necessary to be productive members of society (Horn, 1976).

Gottfredson (1994) and her colleagues completed a study in a school system that served predominantly African-American sixth and seventh grade students who had been retained to a matched group of promoted students. They compared school attachment and attitudes of retained students. They found retention was not associated with negative effects on self-esteem, peer association, attitudes toward school, school attachment, or behavior. It was found that retained students showed more attachment to school and less negative school behavior than promoted students.
A learning disabilities specialist, Donofrio (1977), argues that grade retention can help many children with learning difficulties that exhibit certain constitutional and chronological factors. According to Donofrio, the presence of one or more of the following factors usually necessitates the repetition of one or two grades (kindergarten and first grade): a) the male sex; b) a July or December birth date; c) late maturation; d) verbal difficulty; e) an 80 or 90 IQ; and f) the presence of hyper-kinesis. When learning disabilities and one or more of these factors are present, the child may be best served by ‘marked time’ to align his psychological ‘wave frequency’ with that of his behaviors and maturational peers during his six-hour day. Thus, Donofrio sees grade retention as a positive intervention for students displaying certain characteristics. He offers, however, no data to confirm his assertion that grade repetition is the therapy of choice.

A Teacher’s Beliefs and Decision Making in Regard to Retention

Teachers have a vital role in the area of the practice of grade retention. They are the “centerpiece of educational improvement” (Datrow & Castellano, 2000, p. 776). The role of teachers in a student’s academic success is extremely important (Darling-Hammond, 1998).

Although A Nation at Risk (1983) implied teachers were “dumb instruments of school policy” (Prawatt, 1992, p. 355), the role of a teacher as a decision maker is extremely important in today’s classrooms. According to Bruner (1996) “the means by which teachers and pupils alike go about their business in real-life classrooms – how teachers teach and how pupils learn,” (p. 86) illustrates whether the teacher is successful.

Teacher decisions and actions shape the educational experience of the child (Ferguson, 2002, p. 9), though their decision-making is impacted by a variety of outside
factors including: personal educational experience; personal view of educational role; personal value system; learned pedagogy; content knowledge; perception of student potential; and external factors (e.g., administrators, school context, mandated policy).

During the 19th century, members of the local boards interviewed teachers before hiring them to teach, to make sure they had no unconventional views or unusual religious beliefs which would be in conflict those of the school districts. The literature suggests that the beliefs that teachers hold impact both their perceptions and judgments, and that these in turn affect their behavior in the classroom (Ashton, 1990; Ashton & Webb, 1986; Brookhart & Freeman, 1992; Buchmann, 1984; Clark, 1988; Cole, 1989; Dinham & Stritter, 1986; Eisenhart, Shrum, Harding, & Cuthbert, 1988; Fenstermacher, 1998; Goodman, 1988; Nespor, 1987; Weinstein, 1988, 1989). Clark (1988) called teachers’ beliefs preconceptions and implicit theories. He noted that their use is not at all consistent with what one might find in textbooks or professors’ lecture notes, for them “tend to be eclectic aggregations of cause-effect propositions from many sources, rules of thumb, generalizations drawn from personal experience, beliefs, values, biases, and prejudices” (p. 5).

It is known that teacher’s beliefs underline their judgments about students and influence implementation of school policies; however, teachers are often unaware of how they make decisions because of the implicit nature of the beliefs upon which they base their judgments (Tomchin & Impara, 1992, p. 201). Once beliefs are formed, individuals have a tendency to build causal explanations surrounding the aspects of those beliefs, whether these explanations are accurate or mere invention. There is the self-fulfilling
prophecy, beliefs influence perceptions that influence behaviors that are consistent with, and that reinforce, the original beliefs (Nespor, 1987).

According to Darling-Hammond (2001) this influence is a solid link that is developed between building and using knowledge. The decisions, as well as the actions, teachers make concerning this link, determines the quality of classroom practice and the success and experiences students will have in school.

Today teachers bring a host of ideological beliefs with them to school. These beliefs depict policy, behavior, and practice, which in turn affect student performance. Pajares (1992) provides a synthesis of the findings on beliefs that he drew from his review of the literature on the topic:

- Beliefs are formed early and tend to self-perpetuate, persevering even against contradiction caused by reason, time, schooling, or experience.
- Individuals develop a belief system that houses all the beliefs acquired through the process of cultural transmission.
- The belief system has an adaptive function in helping individuals define and understand the world and themselves.
- Knowledge and beliefs are inextricably intertwined, but the potent affective, evaluative, and episodic nature of beliefs makes them a filter through which new phenomenon is interpreted.
• Thought processes may well be precursors to and creators of beliefs, but the filtering effect of belief structures ultimately screens, redefines, distorts, or reshapes subsequent thinking and information processing.

• Epistemological beliefs play a key role in knowledge interpretation and cognitive monitoring.

• Beliefs are prioritized according to their connections or relationship to other beliefs or other cognitive and affective structures. Apparent inconsistencies may be explained by exploring the functional connections and centrality of the beliefs.

• Belief substructures, such as educational beliefs, must be understood in terms of their connections not only to each other, but also to other, perhaps more central or peripheral strands of the beliefs in the system. Psychologists usually refer to these substructures as attitudes and values. In all, it is a conceptual model with a very simple premise: Human beings have differing beliefs of differing intensity and complex connections that determine their importance.

• By their very nature and origin, some beliefs are more incontrovertible than others. The earlier a belief is incorporated into the belief structure, the more difficult it is to alter. Newly acquired beliefs are most vulnerable to change.

• Belief change during adulthood is a relatively rare phenomenon, the most common cause being a conversion from one authority to another or a gestalt
Individuals tend to hold on to beliefs based on incorrect or incomplete knowledge even after scientifically correct explanations are presented to them.

- Beliefs are instrumental in defining tasks and selecting the cognitive tools with which to interpret, plan, and make decisions regarding such tasks; hence, they play a critical role in defining behavior and organizing knowledge and information.

- Beliefs strongly influence perception, but also can be an unreliable guide to the nature of reality.

- Individuals’ beliefs strongly affect their behavior.

- Beliefs must be inferred and this inference must take into account the congruence among individuals’ belief statements, the intentionality to behave in a predisposed manner, and the behavior related to the belief in question.

- Beliefs about teaching are well established by the time a student gets to college (Pajares, 1992, p. 324).

The decisions and actions made by teachers in reference to this link determine the educational experiences of students. One of the problems in investigating teacher beliefs, in addition to the fact that they are not directly evident, is that there is some discrepancy over the differences between beliefs and knowledge (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). In the cognitive science literature, there is a sizeable amount of research on individual belief systems, or “mental models”. These individual belief systems are integrated systems of concepts, scripts, and scenes that lend meaning to the action systems of classrooms (Gentner & Gentner, 1983; Mayer, Dyck & Cook, 1984). Clark (1988) referred to this
phenomenon as preconceptions or implicit theories, defined as “eclectic aggregations of cause effect propositions from many sources, rules of thumb, generalizations drawn from personal experience, beliefs, values, biases, and prejudices” (p. 5). It is unavoidable that belief systems, like all cognitive processes, must be inferred from behavior. Following earlier work on teacher beliefs (Eisenhart, Shrum, Harding, & Cuthbert, 1988; Fenstermacher, 1998; Smith & Shepard, 1988), beliefs were defined as propositions accepted as true. Within this framework, beliefs consist of one or more assertions held by informants and realized in the natural language as declarative sentences.

The research data suggests that attention be given to how these beliefs are examined. For example, other researchers disapproved earlier work confirmed by Hoffman and Kugle (1982) based on methodological grounds because it relied exclusively on paper-and-pencil tasks (Hoffman & Kugle, 1982; Richardson, Anders, Tidwell & Lloyd, 1991). These critics suggest that paper and-pencil tasks, when used in isolation, do not validly measure beliefs. He further suggests that it is important to investigate and explore these beliefs not only in terms of openly declared general propositions, but also in terms of more private or unrecognized beliefs as manifested in examples of specific data collections including surveys and interviews.

“It is a common viewpoint among educators that students should repeat a grade rather than be promoted unprepared for the next grade level” (Tweed, 2001). Shepard and Smith conceded in their 1989 study “teachers believe…the pupil career should be driven by competence or readiness rather than social promotion and…for the most part they act according to those beliefs” (p. 330). Researchers now know that teachers’ beliefs underline their judgments about students and influence implementation of school
policies; however, teachers often may be unaware of how they make decisions because of their close relationship with children in the classroom.

**Summary**

A review of the literature suggests that selected psychological effects of grade retention impact self-esteem and academic achievement; however, there are few studies on the perceptions that middle school teachers have about grade retention. Most studies focus on retention in the elementary grades. Tomchin and Impara (1992) studied teacher beliefs about grade retention. They mentioned in their study that research is needed for the upper elementary students. Although they studied grades K-7 in their research, the researchers used an elementary school with elementary teachers. Despite the literature on the practice of grade retention, schools in the United States have continued to use this practice as a good practice for those students who do not master skills in a grade. What is known about retention?

- An estimated 40% of males and 20% of females in the United States have been retained by age 14.
- The highest retention rate occurs in ninth grade.
- Boys are more likely to be retained than girls.
- In terms of adjustment, first grade students who are retained show gains in academic expectations and liking for school, but tend to decline in middle school.
- Struggling students will not fully succeed in school by simply going over the same material twice.
Retained children are more likely to have parents who did not graduate from high school, parents who are not involved in the education process, or parents who have moved or changed schools (Denton, 2001, pp. 5-10).

The research literature is replete with studies on the psychological effects of grade retention and its impact on student achievement in elementary children. However, not many studies specifically target middle school teachers or children (Yamamoto, 1980; Holmes, 1989; Shepard & Smith, 1989). There has also been linkage of grade retention to socioeconomic status (Meisels & Liaw, 1993). There are studies on the linkage of high school dropouts and grade retention. When some teachers discuss whether a child should spend the next year in the same grade, they often consider the following:
Teacher-assigned grades, standardized test scores, social/emotional development, attendance, and teacher recommendations from the evidence upon which most districts claim to base retention decisions (Tomchin & Impara, 1992). Most school districts today do not have a standard that supports a uniformed grading policy. Grades mean different things to different teachers. As a result uncertain guidelines may govern the practice of retention (Tomchin & Impara, 1992). Teachers may not think about what happens to a student when the practice of grade retention occurs. Alternatively, they may be unaware of the psychological affect that may occur when a child is retained.

According to the Florida Department of Education, some Florida public schools have awakened to the research on grade retention. Annual counts of non-promotions decreased during the period of 2001-2008 (see Figure 1). This was especially significant since Florida’s student membership fluctuated during that same time period, with most years increasing in students (see Figure 2.3).
Figure 2.3: PK-12 Non-Promotions, 2001-02 to 2007-08

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>% Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2002-03</td>
<td>+28.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003-04</td>
<td>-3.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004-05</td>
<td>-5.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005-06</td>
<td>-8.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006-07</td>
<td>-9.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007-08</td>
<td>-16.8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data source: Florida Department of Education Automated Student Information Database, end-of-year (Survey 5) data.

Annual counts of non-promotions have decreased during the past five years; Florida’s student membership fluctuated during the same period but did not follow the same patterns as non-promotions. Figure 2 shows the growth in student membership for Florida’s public schools from years 2001-02 to 2007-08.

Figure 2.4: Student Membership, 2001-02 to 2007-08*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>% Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2002-03</td>
<td>+1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003-04</td>
<td>+2.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004-05</td>
<td>+1.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005-06</td>
<td>+1.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006-07</td>
<td>-0.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007-08</td>
<td>-3.5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Florida DOE Statistical Brief: “Membership in Florida’s Public Schools, Fall 2006.” EIAS, January 2007. (Includes revised statistics for years 2003-04 through 2005-06) and Florida DOE Automated Student Information Database, Survey 2 data. Data for Florida Virtual School have been removed from membership totals for this brief to avoid duplication.
Chapter III: Method

Introduction

Chapter 3 presents the study’s research methodologies as impacted by the stated problem and purpose of the study to address the proposed research questions. As a result, the chapter assesses the main research questions and hypothesis, conveys the methods and procedures for data collection, instrumentation, and participant selection while maintaining the study’s validity and reliability. Since its peak in the 1900s, several changes have been made in the practice of grade retention. New strategies and alternatives to retention have gained popularity and are being implemented by policy makers and school systems. But, what are the perceptions of a selected group of middle school teachers toward these changes? Teachers are often required to make the decision to apply this practice. Thus, their perceptions of how grade retention should be implemented are important to maximize education reform.

It is essential that middle school teachers have some understanding of the affects, history, theory, and practice of grade retention in order to make decisions to retain students. Reviewing the current policies in grade retention and observing its effects on middle school children will provide some clarity for its practice in the future.

To explore answers and obtain a better understanding of the practice of grade retention and teacher perspectives, this researcher used a descriptive educational research method. Descriptive research describes the ‘who, what, when, where, and how of a situation,’ not what caused it. Therefore, descriptive research is used when the objective
is to provide a systematic description that is as factual and accurate as possible. It provides the number of times something occurs, or frequency, and lends itself to statistical calculations such as determining the average number of occurrences or central tendencies (Borg & Gall, 2002). Descriptive research also assists in the classification of goals and objectives while indicating realistic means for reaching each (Borg & Gall, 2002). The design of this project will be to analyze quantitatively and qualitatively the attitudes of selected public middle school teachers in a western central school district in Florida of their views concerning grade retention.

**Statement of the Problem**

Based on the writer’s educational work experience in Pinellas County, there is a problem with varying achievement levels amongst the socio-economical divides. It is perceived that retention is higher the lower a family’s financial situation is (Bowman, 2005). Based on this perception of the achievement and retention gaps between the various divides, the writer choose schools from each division based on their percentage of students on the free or reduced meal program to illustrate the following hypothetical.

There are many factors which contribute to the achievement gap amongst the various socio-economical divisions; however, grade retention is not a significant factor but is a highly used practice by teachers to positively affect achievement (Bowman, 2005). Grade retention is perhaps the most powerful message a teacher can send to a student to inform the student that he or she is not achieving and is not as capable as his or her peers.

Teachers, as well as parents, may not realize the tremendous power they have when it comes to the practice of grade retention. Teachers and parents may make the decision to retain students without realizing what research has documented about grade retention.
Teachers need to know the effects of grade retention on the students who might face this situation. No training is provided to teachers in the state of Florida on what to do with students who fail to master a grade. Often the only perceived option by teachers is retention. Thus, many teachers, parents, administrators, and the educational system have chosen a course of action that may have psychological effects on students (Bowman, 2005). Often times, the educational community is not aware of the possible effects of grade retention as reported in current research. Therefore, the purpose was to study middle school teachers’ perceptions of grade retention because their perceptions of the impact of this practice have not been explored adequately.

**Purpose of Study**

Since President Clinton declared an end to social promotion in his 1998 and 1999 State of the Union Addresses, debates on the practice of grade retention have been a highly discussed topic in the education and political arena. As a response to this debate, schools in Florida have had to examine and to rewrite their grade retention policies. With the new grade retention policy for the Florida school district, the study was conducted to ascertain middle school teachers’ perspectives on grade retention in an urban western central Florida school district. With the information obtained, it is hoped that the school district can address the areas of concern about grade retention better. Some alternatives to retention are already in place within the county as a result of the number of retainees.

Because the teacher is the person who initiates the retention process, it is necessary for the beliefs of the teacher to be examined. The perspectives of teachers may influence their judgment about students and the implementation of certain school policies. Grade retention continues to be the major strategy used by educators for
academic failure (Jimerson, 2001a; Jimerson, 2001b; Reynolds, Temple, & McCoy, 1997). The current research on grade retention has primarily been focused on students being retention in kindergarten and first grade. The different variables of race, background, gender and academic achievement also need to be considered with these students (Jimerson et al., 1997).

This study examined grade retention from a different perspective with the study focusing on teachers’ perceptions of grade retention in the middle grades. By focusing on the different variables of race, background, gender, academic achievement for those retained, researchers have not given much attention to the role of the teacher (Jimerson et al., 1997). There is increasing recognition that individual’s beliefs are the best indicators of the decisions they make during the course of everyday life. According to Bruner (1996) “the means by which teachers and pupils alike go about their business in real-life classrooms…how teachers teach and how pupils learn” (p. 86) determines whether the teacher is successful.

Smith (1989); Tomchin and Impara (1992), in their studies on grade retention, found that the classroom teacher is one of the most important elements in the practice of grade retention. Teachers are responsible for collecting the documentation of the student’s academic achievement and success. In the literature, no clear explanation about why teachers make these judgments is given. In order to understand why teachers retain students, the purpose of this study was to collect and to analyze the data acquired on a group of selected middle school teachers in a school district in Florida, in an effort to identify their explicit and implicit beliefs about grade retention. The purpose of this
study was also to serve as an information resource for parents, students, teachers, and administrators at the middle school level.

**Main Research Questions**

This study explored the following research questions: How do selected urban western central Florida middle school teachers in a school district view the psychological effects of grade retention? What do selected middle school teachers in an urban western central Florida school district perceive as the reasons they should practice grade retention? How do selected urban western central Florida middle school teachers in a school district believe parents should be involved in the grade retention process? What are selected middle school teachers’ in an urban western central Florida school district, implicit and explicit perceptions (advantages and disadvantages) of the practice of grade retention?

**Hypotheses**

There will be a significant difference in the perceptions of the practice of grade retention based on the number of years of teaching experience. There will be a significant difference in the perceptions of the practice of grade retention based on the race of the teacher. There will be a significant difference in the perceptions of the practice of grade retention based on the middle school grade level taught. There will be a significant difference in the perceptions of the practice of grade retention based on the social economic status level of the students in the school.

“A hypothesis is formulated based on a theory in review of related literature and the hypothesis logically follows the literature review and is based on the implication of previous research (Gay & Airasian, 2000, p.69).” The data collected allows the
researcher to analyze it to determine if the hypotheses are supported. Analysis of the data does not lead to a hypothesis being proven or not proven only supported or not supported (Gay & Airasian, 2000).

**Methods and Procedures**

This researcher utilized a basic descriptive research design for this research project. Both qualitative and quantitative research methods were used in the study. In the last decade, educational and behavioral researchers have seen a strong shift in methods and approaches in research towards integrated designs that combine qualitative and quantitative approaches. This shift, known as the mixed methods, has been labeled the third wave of research methodology (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003). Mixed methods also give validation to research by using both deductive and inductive reasoning (Taylor, 2000). Deductive reasoning can be defined as “reasoning based on developing specific predictions from general principles, observations, or experiences, and inductive reasoning is based on developing generalizations from a limited number of related observations or experiences” (Gay & Airasian, 2000, pp. 587-588).

Descriptive research involves gathering data and then organizing, tabulating, depicting and describing the data collection. In descriptive research, graphs and charts aid the reader in understanding the data distribution (Glass & Hopkins, 1995). Its fundamental purpose is to analyze trends that are developing, as well as current situations.

Descriptive research can use both methods (Creswell, 1998). “The word qualitative implies an emphasis on the qualities of entities and on processes and meaning that are not experimentally examined or measured in terms of quantity, amount, intensity,
or frequency” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 8). In contrast, quantitative studies emphasize the measurement and analysis of causal relationships between variables, not processes” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 8). Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world and it consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that transforms the world” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 3).

Some characteristics of qualitative research include the following:

- Natural setting – “the researcher attempts to observe, describe, and interpret settings as they are maintaining what Patton calls ‘empathic neutrality’” (Patton, 2002, pp. 49-53). “This simply means that the investigator does not set out to prove a particular perspective or manipulate the data to arrive at predisposed truths” (Patton, 2002, p. 51).
- Direct data collection – the researcher acts as the “human instrument” using inductive data analysis.
- Rich narrative description – “reports are descriptive, incorporating expressive language and the presence of voice in the text; researchers aim at discovering the meaning events have for the individuals who experience them and the interpretations” (Eisner, 1991, p. 36).
- Process orientated – a researcher looks to the idiosyncratic, as well as the pervasive, and has an emergent as opposed to predetermined design; the researcher focuses on this emerging process.

Patton (1990), points out that there are “no absolute characteristics of qualitative inquiry, but rather strategic ideals that provide a direction and a framework for developing specific designs and concrete data collection tactics” (p. 59).
Before conducting a qualitative study, a researcher must construct and organize information, review the information and organize its sequential parts, develop descriptive phases around the theory constructed, analyze and categorize data, and write a final narrative report. Glaser and Strauss (1967), and Strauss and Corbin (1990) refer to “‘theoretical sensitivity,’ which is having insight, the ability to give meaning to data, the capacity to understand, and capability to separate the pertinent from that which is not pertinent” (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 42). Theoretical sensitivity can come from a number of sources, including professional literature, professional experiences, and personal experiences, and can be used to assist in the collection of data. The qualitative characteristics that were applied to this researcher’s study include direct data collection, rich narrative description, and theoretical sensitivity.

**Design and Methodology**

There are many methods, styles, and approaches to research that can be used. However, no approach prescribes or rejects the other method (Bell, 1999). Qualitative research is subjective and multiple as seen by the participants in the study. Researchers interact with what is being researched and facts are value-laden and could be biased. The language of the research is informal and the process is inductive (Creswell, 1998). Quantitative research is objective and singular, and separate from the researcher. The researcher is independent from what is being researched and facts are value-free and unbiased. The language is formal and the process deductive (Bell, 1999). Descriptive research is used to provide a systematic description that is as factual and accurate as possible. It provides the number of times something occurs, or frequency, lends itself to statistical calculations such as average number of occurrences or central tendencies. It
also utilizes elements of qualitative and quantitative research methodologies (Trochin, 2001).

**Selection of Schools and Participants**

The participants for this research project were selected middle grade teachers at five different urban public middle schools in an urban western central Florida school district (Appendix J). It is perceived that retention is higher the lower a family’s financial situation is (Bowman, 2005). Based on this perception of the achievement and retention gaps between the various divides, the researcher chose schools from each division based on their percentage of students on the free or reduced meal program to illustrate the following hypothetical (Appendix L). The schools selected had the following free and reduced lunch percentages; School A-21%, School B-52%, School C-62%, School D-54% and School E-58% (Appendix L). This gave the researcher a varied range of socio-economic ranges. There are many factors which contribute to the achievement gap amongst the various socio-economical divisions; however, grade retention is not a significant factor but is a highly used practice by teachers to positively affect achievement. The selection was made using convenience sampling. Convenience sampling relies on random interaction or population lists that have been compiled for unrelated purposes and are already available (Leedy, 2001). No attempt was made to ensure that the sample is representative of the target population, and it saves time, money, and effort (Cresswell, 1998). The total population of middle school teachers in the five schools before this research project began was 326. All teachers were given the voluntary survey. The ethnic groups represented at the schools were African-American,
Caucasian, Asian-American and Hispanic. Ten teachers participated in the qualitative part of the study.

**Human Participants Protection**

Data was kept confidential in a locked file cabinet. The researcher was the only person with access to the data. A consent form (Appendix G) was used for each participant. Forms used to collect data contained no information that could identify or be linked to the participants.

**Instrumentation**

The Teacher Retention Beliefs Questionnaire (TRBQ), developed by Tomchin and Impara (1992), was designed to “gather teachers’ explicit beliefs about retention (see Table 3.1); specifically, when it is considered an appropriate action and its perceived consequences” (Tomchin & Impara, 1992, pp. 201-202). According to Tomchin and Impara, “interviews with principals and teachers were combined with past research findings to develop questions for this survey and interview questions; the instruments were field-tested in a different school system to verify the appropriateness of the questions for teachers of grades K-7 and to determine the time required to complete the questionnaires” (p. 202). In addition, revisions were made on comments and data received during the field-testing. The sample consisted of 135 teachers in six schools. The author of this research project modified a quantitative written survey instrument, Teachers’ Perception of Grade Retention Survey (TPGRS). The survey questionnaire sought to gather implicit and explicit beliefs of teachers about grade retention, as well as to determine the attitudes of selected middle school teachers and interviews to gather qualitative data. The survey questions and the interview questions were modeled from
Tomchin and Impara (1992) because of the similarities to this research project. Permission to Use This Survey (Appendix B) instrument was given by Dr. Ellen Tomchin (Menaker).

The following items were modified on the questionnaire: (a copy of the survey can be found in Appendix A).

- The name of the survey was changed from “The Teacher Retention Beliefs Questionnaire” to “Teachers Perception of Grade Retention Survey” (TPGRS). The name of the survey was changed because the author of this research project felt that this name was more precise. The participants knew what type of survey they were completing by reading the title. Also, the title is similar to the name of this research project.

- Some questions were changed on the survey. Because the questionnaire by Tomchin and Impara (1992) was geared toward elementary teachers, all questions related to elementary students were changed to reflect middle school students. Also, some policies in this school district were different for students. Example: In the urban western central Florida county school district, students can only fail one core subject before retention would be recommended, and in their questionnaire a student could fail two core subjects. Therefore, the questions were changed to reflect the school district policy where the study took place.
Table 3.1
Teacher Retention Beliefs Questionnaire

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Retention is an effective means of preventing students from facing daily failure in the next higher grade.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Retention is necessary for maintaining grade level standards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Retaining a child in grades K-3 harms the child’s self-concept.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Retention prevents classrooms from having wide ranges in student achievement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Students who do not apply themselves to their studies should be retained.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.</td>
<td>Knowing that retention is a possibility does motivate students to work harder.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>Retaining a child in grades 4-7 harms the child’s self-concept.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>Retention is an effective means of providing support in school for the child who does not get support at home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>Students who do not make passing grades in 2 of the 3 major subject areas (reading, communication, or math) should be retained.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Students who make passing grades, but are working below grade level, should be retained.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Retention in grades K-3 is an effective means of giving an immature child a chance to catch up.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Retention in grades 4-7 is an effective means of giving an immature child a chance to catch up.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Students receiving services of a learning disabilities teacher should not be retained.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>If students are to be retained, they should be retained no later than third grade.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>In grades K-3, overage children (more than a year older than their classmates) cause more behavior problems than older children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>In grades 4-7, overage children cause more behavior problems than older children.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17.</td>
<td>Retention in grades K-3 permanently labels a child.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18.</td>
<td>Retention in grades 4-7 permanently labels a child.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.</td>
<td>Children who have passing grades but excessive absences should be retained.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20.</td>
<td>Children should never be retained.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Surveys

The word survey means, to look or see beyond the casual glance or superficial observation (Leedy, 1997, p. 190). Denzin and Lincoln (2000) state “survey research is probably the best method available to the social scientist interested in collecting original data for describing a population too large to observe directly” (p. 634). Leedy (1997)
agrees with the appropriate use of a survey as “a commonplace instrument for observing data beyond the physical reach of the observer” (p. 190).

The survey instrument in this study consisted of two parts: Part I - Perceptions and Part II - Demographics. For each question in Part I, a four-option Likert scale instrument was presented. The four options are Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree. In this section, the teachers were asked to indicate their agreement or disagreement with the 18 statements regarding grade retention. Gay and Airasian (2000) suggests that Likert scales determine what an individual “believes, perceives, or feels about self, others, activities, institutions, or situations” (p. 131). Anderson (1990) reported that Likert scales are excellent instruments for gathering data on opinions and attitudes. The questions sought to elicit from the respondents their attitudes toward the practice of grade retention. In an authentic Likert scale, McMillian (1992) reported there is usually at least a four-option scale. He defines a scale as “a series of gradations that describe something” (p. 123). Respondents are requested to indicate their attitudes by checking the place on the scale that is most reflective of their beliefs about the statement.

The questions on the study survey included statements about the psychological effects of students and grade retention, reasons why students should be retained, why teachers retain students, as well as how parents should be involved in grade retention. The survey developed for this project was developed to gather implicit and explicit beliefs about grade retention.
**Semi-Structured Interviews**

“Interviews provided another dimension for explaining how individual teachers interpret student performance to make retention decisions” (Tomchin & Impara, 1992, p. 210). Moreover, the design used to collect data enabled the researcher to examine attitudes dealing with what teachers had experienced, heard, and seen with regard to grade retention at their prospective schools (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 645).

“Both qualitative and quantitative research tends to rely on the interview as the basic method of data gathering (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 646).” The interview is a universal mode of systematic inquiry (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 647). This researcher used the most common form of interviewing which involves individual, face-to-face verbal interchange. This type of interview provides in-depth answers to be obtained. A semi-structured face-to-face interview was conducted (see Appendix B). It is more conversational. The researcher can establish a rapport and describe the research project, as well as explain any confusion that may follow complex instructions (Borg & Gall, 2002).

**Validity and Reliability**

Validity is the soundness or adequacy of something or to the extent to which it satisfies certain standards or conditions. A research procedure or interpretations of results obtained from a research study are considered valid if they can be justified on reasoned grounds. In psychometrics, validity is the extent to which specified inferences from the test’s scores are justified or meaningful (Colman, 2001, p. 773).

Reliability is the quality of being trustworthy or dependable. In psychometrics, it is the internal consistency and stability with which a measuring instrument performs its
function, corresponding roughly to the everyday concept of accuracy (Colman, 2001, p. 629).

In order for data to be valid, it must be consistent, and it must deal directly with the topics being researched (Charles & Mertler, 2002). Each participant was asked the same questions. This allowed the researcher to obtain substantial information and also to provide crosschecking for data reliability. Reliability was obtained by a) tape recording and transcribing interviews, b) establishing clear and concise questions, and c) probing for clarification and additional information. To improve the trustworthiness in this study, the researcher recorded and transcribed all interview data verbatim in order to resist subject interpretations of the raw data. The researcher attempted to clarify and verify all statements to avoid confusion. The tape-recorded interviews and the verbatim transcripts of all interviewees served as an aid for reliability. Each participant was interviewed once, the easiest form of reliability to investigate. This method was a way to measure consistency. The instrument was judged for its appropriateness by content-related evidence or face validity (Creswell, 1998). In general, content-related evidence demonstrates the degree to which the sample of items, tasks, or questions on a test are representative of some defined universe or "domain" of content. Content-related evidence for test validity is a central concern during test development, whether such development occurs in a research setting, in a publishing house, or in the context of daily professional practice. Expert professional judgment should play an integral part in developing the definition of what is to be measured: describing the universe of content, generating or selecting the content sample, and specifying the item format and scoring system. The researcher used three expert teachers and two school administrator to pilot the interviews
and surveys for face validity. Face validity refers “to the degree to which a test appears to measure what it claims to measure (Gay & Airasian, 2000, p. 137). Recommendations and suggestions were incorporated in the instrument. The experts agreed with all of the questions except three. Questions 5, 7, and 14 were changed because of expert input (Appendix A). Question 5 originally included ten absences, but the experts believed that was too close to the high school attendance policy. Question 7 originally did not include the information regarding the FCAT but it was added due to the fact the experts wanted the middle school perspective on if a student did not pass the FCAT in 8th grade should he or she be retained. Finally, question 14 originally included teachers and administrator making the decision on retention but the experts wanted to see if teachers thought the parents should have a decision in the process.

**Data Collection and Treatment**

**Surveys**

To collect the quantitative data regarding teachers’ perceptions on grade retention, the researcher used a survey instrument (Appendix A). The process used in the collection and treatment of data were as follows: A letter describing the study was sent to the superintendent of the urban western central school district in Florida asking permission to conduct the research project (Appendix D). The researcher also sent letters to each principal of the five selected middle schools in the school district to obtain permission for teachers to complete the TPGRS (Appendix E). The surveys were given to a designated contact person at each school. The contact person for the school placed a survey in every teacher’s mailbox, or handed them out at a faculty meeting. Each survey had a cover letter attached to the survey explaining the research project (Appendix F). The
researcher sent out 326 questionnaires. Teachers were asked to complete the survey in three days. Each TPGRS was returned to the contact person at their respective schools. The surveys were analyzed using descriptive statistics to provide mean scores and standard deviations.

**Semi-Structured Interviews**

Since attitudes and perceptions of teachers are being sought, semi-structured interviews were conducted to collect the qualitative data relating to the participant’s perception, suggestions, and reactions to grade retention. Semi-structured interviews allowed the researcher to establish a framework around the interview (Bell, 1999). The instrument was a questionnaire containing 12 questions (Appendix C). Participants were free to talk about the topic openly and give their personal experiences and views (Leedy & Armrod, 2002).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Schools</th>
<th>Number Sent</th>
<th>Number Returned</th>
<th>Return Rate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School A</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>92.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School B</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>88.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School C</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>65.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School D</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>50.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School E</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>51.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>326</strong></td>
<td><strong>237</strong></td>
<td><strong>72.7%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Procedures for Surveys**

A directory of the five middle schools in the school district was obtained from the urban western central Florida school district personnel department. Based on the writer’s educational work experience in his county, there is a problem with varying achievement levels amongst the socio-economical divides. It is perceived that retention is higher the
lower a family’s financial situation is (Bowman, 2005). Based on this perception of the achievement and retention gaps between the various divides, the writer choose schools from each division based on their percentage of students on the free or reduced meal program to illustrate the hypothetical. There are many factors which contribute to the achievement gap amongst the various socio-economical divisions; however, grade retention is not a significant factor but is a highly used practice by teachers to positively affect achievement (Bowman, 2005). At the time of this research project, there were 326 teachers teaching at these five middle schools in this county. Bell (1999) contended that it is often a concern of the researcher to decide how many questionnaires should be distributed or interviews conducted. In her opinion, there are no set rules. It is more important for the researcher to obtain as representative a range of responses, thus enabling the investigator to provide answers to the research questions. The researcher began this project August 3, 2009. The researcher obtained permission from the superintendent, as well as the school building administrator. A cover letter was attached to each survey explaining the research project. The teachers were given three days to complete the survey and to place it in the contact person’s mailbox.

*Procedures for Semi-Structured Interviews*

For the qualitative aspect of the study, the researcher provided teacher names to the site administrator based on their survey response agreeing to participate in the interview. Prior to the interview, the researcher with the assistance of the site-based administrator narrowed the list to obtain teachers with the following characteristics: high and low retention rates, various ethnicities, gender, and subject matters. Therefore, a convenience sample was used. Participants were visited at their respective classrooms.
Each interview participant was requested to participate in this portion of the research study. In addition, each interview participant completed the TPGRS. After participants agreed to be interviewed, appointments were scheduled with each participant. The interviews solicited data which allowed participants to discuss essential ideas, in response to questions found in Appendix B. An opportunity for the participants to elaborate on demographic data facts and opinions was provided during the interview. All interviews were recorded and analyzed by the researcher. Needs for content clarification was obtained by a follow-up telephone call and email. Transcripts were given to the respondents to proof for accuracy prior to publication. Each interview lasted approximately 20-30 minutes.

**Content Analysis**

“A content analysis is a detailed and systematic examination of the contents of a particular body of material for the purpose of identifying patterns, themes, or biases (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001, p. 155). Patton (2002) gives a more general definition of content analysis. He suggests, “content analysis is used to refer to any qualitative data reduction and sense-making effort that takes a volume of qualitative material and attempts to identify core consistencies and meanings” (p. 453). The data was analyzed using The Data Analysis Spiral through Winsteps. “The researcher engages in the process of moving in analytic circles rather than using a fixed linear approach; one enters with data of text or images and exits with an account or a narrative” (Creswell, 1998, p.142). This researcher plans to use data management of the first loop in the spiral to begin the process (Creswell, 1998). The remaining steps included the following:

- Organizing data into file folders.
- Files being converted to words and phrases for analysis.

- Reading the transcripts in their entirety several times provides a continuous analysis. Short phrases, ideas, or key concepts are written in the margin of the transcripts.

- Initial categories or themes should be formed, and evidence will show multiple perspectives about each category. Creswell (1998) refers to this as “moving from the reading and memoing loop into the spiral to the describing, classifying, and interpreting loop” (p. 144).

The mixed methods included descriptive analyses which were used with both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Descriptive analysis may be interpretable through graphs, mean scores, percentiles, and correlations. Data such as interviews and demographics may be analyzed through descriptive statistics. This data can enhance quantitative data (Taylor, 2000). Descriptive statistics were used to quantify and describe responses from the survey. The tables and graphs will be displayed in the Data Analysis Chapter of this research project.

There are 12 interview questions. Specific items on the TPGRS contained the four research questions.
### Table 3.3

**Item Analysis Research Questions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Survey</th>
<th>Question</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What are selected middle school teachers’ implicit and explicit perception</td>
<td>Survey: 1, 3, 4, 9, 10, 13</td>
<td>Question: 1, 4, 6, 7, 9, 11, 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of the practice of grade retention?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do selected urban western central Florida middle school teachers in</td>
<td>Survey: 2, 15, 18</td>
<td>Question: 3, 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a school district view the psychological effects of grade retention?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What do selected teachers in an urban western central Florida school</td>
<td>Survey: 5, 6, 7, 8, 11, 12, 14, 16, 17</td>
<td>Question: 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>district perceive as the reasons they should practice the use of grade</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>retention?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How do selected urban western central Florida middle school teachers in</td>
<td>Survey: 14</td>
<td>Question: 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a school district believe parents should be involved in the grade</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>retention process?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This table shows that the research questions are supported by the correlation of the research questions, interview questions, and survey items one through 18. This gives support and validation to the research findings.

**Summary**

In this study, a Likert scale survey (TPGRS) was administered to 237 selected middle school teachers in a western central school district in Florida. The survey was structured with close-ended items. The survey consisted of two parts: Part I: Perceptions; and Part II: Demographics. The Likert scale was chosen because of its reliability when obtaining attitudinal data (Bell, 1999).

In addition to the Likert survey, 10 semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected middle school teachers from the same school district. Interviews then were transcribed. Interviews were conducted to assist in explaining the data collected from the quantitative method (Gay & Airasian, 2000).
The focus of this study was to ascertain the perceptions of selected middle school teachers on the practice of grade retention. The focus also was to allow teachers to understand the psychological effects of grade retention and the changes in its practice.

Mixed methods using qualitative and quantitative approaches were used. The data gathered from the instruments was then organized, coded, and analyzed. Analysis is an ongoing process in research (Leedy & Ormrod, 2001).
Chapter IV: Data Analysis

Introduction

Chapter 4 illustrates the results of this study based on qualitative and quantitative investigations of teachers’ perceptions of retention. The results are further centered on the factors which influence their perceptions. The purpose of this study was to examine middle grade teachers’ perceptions of the practice of grade retention. Using a survey instrument with closed-ended Likert scale questions and six semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions that permitted participants to clarify responses, data was collected from 237 teachers in an urban western central school district in Florida. The total survey response rate was 72.7% [237 out of 362]. The quantitative data was analyzed by using the Winsteps software.

Winsteps is Windows-based software which assists with many applications of the Rasch model, particularly in the areas of educational testing, attitude surveys and rating scale analysis. Rasch analysis is a method for obtaining objective, fundamental, additive measures from stochastic observations of ordered category responses. Rasch, a Danish mathematician, formulated this approach in 1953 to analyze responses to a series of reading tests (Rasch G, *Probabilistic Models for Some Intelligence and Attainment Tests*, Chicago: MESA Press, 1992, with instructive Foreword and Afterword by B.D. Wright).

Winsteps is designed to construct Rasch measurement from the responses of a set of persons to a set of items. Responses may be recorded as letters or integers and each recorded response may be of one or two characters. Alphanumeric characters, not
designated as legitimate responses, are treated as missing data. This causes these observations, but not the corresponding persons or items, to be omitted from the analysis. The responses to an item may be dichotomous ("right"/"wrong", "yes"/"no"), or may be on a rating scale ("good"/"better"/"best", "disagree"/"neutral"/"agree"), or may have "partial credit" or other hierarchical structures. The items may all be grouped together as sharing the one response structure, or may be sub-groups of one or more items which share the same response structure (Linacre, 2009).

**Research Questions**

This study explored the following research questions: What are selected middle school teachers’ in an urban western central Florida school district, implicit and explicit perceptions (advantages and disadvantages) of the practice of grade retention? How do selected urban western central Florida middle school teachers in a school district view the psychological effects of grade retention? What do selected teachers in an urban western central Florida school district perceive, as the reasons they should practice the use of grade retention? How do selected urban western central Florida middle school teachers in a school district believe parents should be involved in the grade retention process?

**Hypotheses**

There will be a significant difference in the perceptions of the practice of grade retention based on the number of years of teaching experience. There will be a significant difference in the perceptions of the practice of grade retention based on the race of the teacher. There will be a significant difference in the perceptions of the practice of grade retention based on the middle school grade level taught.
There will be a significant difference in the perceptions of the practice of grade retention based on the social economic status level of the students in the school.

“A hypothesis is formulated based on a theory in review of related literature and the hypothesis logically follows the literature review and is based on the implication of previous research (Gay & Airasian, 2000, p.69).” The data collected allows the researcher to analyze it to determine if the hypotheses are supported. Analysis of the data does not lead to a hypothesis being proven or not proven only supported or not supported (Gay & Airasian, 2000).

**Quantitative Data: Survey Results**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable Deviation</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Outfit Mean Square</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1) Retention is a “good” practice to use when middle school students don’t master the skills required to be promoted to the next grade level.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.39</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Retention is harmful to a child’s self-concept/self-image.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Retention will allow students who are behind academically to “catch-up” with their peers.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.54</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Children should not be retained.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.71</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) Children that have 20 or more absences should be retained.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.56</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6) If students do not meet criteria for FCAT, they should be retained.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.70</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7) Students with passing grades should not be retained no matter what scores they receive on standardized testing.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.62</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8) Teachers can use grade retention as a motivator for students to do well in classes.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.14</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9) Students that have been retained</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.40</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.25</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4.1
TPGRS Questions
Part I: Descriptive Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable Deviation</th>
<th>Range</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Median</th>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Outfit Mean Square</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>in one or more grades tend to be behavior problems.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10) Retained students normally perform better the second time in the grade retained.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.89</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11) If students fail one or more core subjects (reading, math, science, language arts, social studies) the student should be retained.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.55</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12) Students with a documented learning disability should not be retained.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.75</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13) Students should not be administratively/socially promoted.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.56</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14) Parents should have a “voice” if their child is being retained.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.33</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15) A child is emotionally affected when he/she is retained.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0.86</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16) Students who are more than two grades behind should not be required to repeat a grade.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17) Students should be retained only because of poor academic performance in class.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2.25</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18) Retention affects a child’s self-esteem.</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0.79</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Descriptive statistics shown in Table 4.1 for the TPRGS items one through eighteen are used to measure central tendencies, such as the mean and the median, and measures of dispersion (spread of the distribution) such as mean-square statistics (i.e., chi-square statistics divided by degrees of freedom). Outfit is a chi-square statistic. It is the sum of squared standardized residuals (which are modeled to be standard normal variables), which allows examination of the fit of items to the Rasch model as a function
of item analysis. The range between each question was three. This indicates that there was not much difference in the answers for each question.

The research questions and the hypotheses were linked to Part I of the survey. This examination assisted in the investigation of the teacher’s perceptions of the practice of grade retention.

Results from the TPRGS indicated that the teachers shared a common set of beliefs. Teachers reached a consensus on 13 out of 18 items on the survey. The majority of teachers indicated that retention was a good school practice. The majority of teachers also reported that students should not be administratively promoted. The majority of teachers agreed that students normally perform better the second time in a grade, and retained students who are behind academically “catch-up” with their peers. Questions 2, 15, and 18 focused on psychological affects, self-esteem, and self-concept. There is a small difference between the responses of teachers to items 2, 15, 18. The difference is three standard deviations for variables.

Quantitative data are included in a study to present the data in a way that makes the information clear as to the level of significance by examining the data for frequency of results and calculating chi-square analysis of this information, the appearance of specific results takes on a meaning that helps to interpret and explain what was learned from this study.

Chi-square is a statistic calculated to discover the number of values in various ranges and unlikely to be consistent with prior assumptions about the distribution of the data (Linacre, 2007). When the null hypothesis is correct, and when the expected cell count is at least five, chi-square can be calculated. The chi-square statistic is used to
conduct a test of homogeneity to determine if proportions of select characteristics differ with the groups under study (Linacre, 2007). The measures of central tendency revealed similar responses when selected teachers were asked their implicit and explicit beliefs about grade retention.

Using demographic variables from survey question one and four analyses was performed using Chi-Square and the Winsteps software. This researcher set the level of significance (alpha) at .05. A low significant value (below .05) supports a significant difference between the two variables a rejects the null hypotheses that there is no difference.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4.2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chi-Square for Hypothesis #1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was there any significant difference in the perceptions of the practice of grade retention based on the number of years of teaching experience?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Chi-Square</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of valid cases</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The output in Table 4.2 tests the overall data for Hypothesis 1. The Chi-Square statistic (4.1411) and its person reliability is ±0.75 fails to support a significant difference between the variables, thus no support for the hypothesis. Sometimes, a failure to reject a null hypothesis is due to a lack of design power or sampling restrictions. In this case, the Rasch analysis allows testing of individual items in addition to the overall scores.

According to the Rasch DIF (Differential Fit Analysis), teachers of years 15-20 as relating to questions 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 10, 12, 15, 16, and 18 illustrates a consistent difference
of opinion when compared to teachers of years 1-4. The majority of teachers with 0-30 years of teaching experience favored grade retention as opposed to more than 30 who did not support retention. Teachers with one to four years (beginning teachers) represented 21% and teachers with five or more experience (veteran teachers) represented 79% of the sample. According the researchers, highly skilled teachers who know how to use a wide range of successful teaching strategies adapted to diverse learners is the most important alternative to grade retention (Darling-Hammond, 1998). A teacher’s experience accounts for nearly 40% in overall student performance. Students who have experienced teacher/veteran teachers three consecutive years score as much as 50 percentile points higher on achievement tests.

Using variables from questions one and four of the survey the Chi-Square statistics test was conducted using output from Winsteps.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4.3</th>
<th>Chi-Square for Hypothesis #2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Was there any significant difference in the perceptions of the practice of grade retention based on the race of the teacher?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Chi-Square</td>
<td>2.3404</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of valid cases</td>
<td>237</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The output in Table 4.3 tests the overall data for Hypothesis 2. A low significant value (typically below .05) indicates that there may be a significant value between two variables. The statistical hypothesis test for hypothesis two, the Chi-Square (2.3404) and its person reliability is ±0.75 indicating there is no overall significant difference based on the race of the teacher. However, according to the Rasch DIF analysis, there was a difference in opinion based on whether a child should be retained based on FCAT scores and whether parental involvement should have a “voice” regarding grade retention. The
difference in DIF was 5.36 (46.25-40.89). There were 187 White teachers, 33 Black
teachers, 11 Hispanic teachers, three Asian/Pacific Islanders teachers and three other
teachers.

Using variables from questions one and four of the survey the Chi-Square
statistics test was conducted using output from Winsteps.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4.4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chi-Square for Hypothesis #3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was there any significant difference in the perceptions of the practice of grade retention based on the middle school grade level taught?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Chi-Square</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of valid cases</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.3 Middle School Grade Level

Grade Level of Respondent

\[ a= 6^{th} \text{ grade} \quad b= 7^{th} \text{ grade} \quad c= 8^{th} \text{ grade} \]
The output in Table 4.4 tests the overall data for Hypothesis 3. A low significant value (typically below .05) indicates that there may be a significant value between two variables. The statistical hypothesis test for hypothesis three, the Chi-Square (42.6528) and its person reliability indicates there is no significant difference based on the grade level taught. DIF revealed no item differences. Seventy-five teachers taught sixth grade, ninety teachers taught seventh grade and seventy-two teachers taught eighth grade. The educational community tends to believe that retention is beneficial in earlier grades (Tomchin & Impara, 1992). In this study, teachers in all grade levels agreed that retention was a good strategy to use when students do not master the objectives in a particular grade.

Using variables from questions one and four of the survey the Chi-Square statistics test was conducted using output from Winsteps.

| Table 4.5 |
| Chi-Square for Hypothesis #4 |
| **Was there any significant difference in perceptions of the practice of grade retention based on the social economic status level of the students in the school?** |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Probability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Chi-Square</td>
<td>8.8999</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>.3416</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N of valid cases</td>
<td>237</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 4.4 Socio Economic Status and Schools

The output in Table 4.5 tests the overall data for Hypothesis 4. A low significant value (typically below .05) indicates that there may be a significant value between two variables. The statistical hypothesis test for hypothesis four, the Chi-Square (42.6528) and its person reliability indicates there is a significant difference based on the socio-economic status of the students (See Appendix L) from School C and School E.

Research has shown that students rise to teacher’s expectations; therefore it is assumed
that teacher’s expectations from the above mentioned schools are low. The difference is clearly shown in items 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 10, 13, 14, 15, and 18.

Results of the TPGRS indicated a common set of retention beliefs among teachers. Teachers reached a consensus on 15 out of 18 items. Teachers were generally in agreement whether they were a beginning teacher or a veteran teacher. They were also in agreement no matter what grade was taught at the middle school level. Teachers of all years of experience accepted retention as a school practice.
Quantitative Descriptive Results

The following graphs display the percentages for cases for each question on part one of the TPGRS. The percentage shows the frequency of answer for a variable. Graphs are used to illustrate the relative frequency levels of variables by graphically displaying the number of cases for each question.

Figure 4.5 Retention is a Good Strategy

The total number of participants was 237. Over 17% of the teachers strongly agreed that retention is a good practice to use when middle school students do not master the skills required to be promoted to the next grade level. Over 52% of teachers agreed. Twenty-four percent of the teachers disagreed and seven percent strongly disagreed with the survey question.
Two hundred and thirty-seven participants completed the survey. 12% of teachers strongly agreed that retention is harmful to a child’s self-concept and self-image. Forty-nine percent agreed. Nearly 33% disagreed with the question and over six percent of teachers strongly disagreed with the statement.
Total number of participants was 237. More than 56% of the teachers agreed and over nine percent strongly agreed that students who are behind academically will catch-up with their peers if they are retained. Twenty-eight percent disagreed and seven percent strongly disagreed.
Two hundred and thirty-seven participants responded. Over 59% of teachers disagreed and nearly 24% of teachers strongly disagreed with the statement children should not be retained. Twelve percent of teachers agreed with the statement and five percent of teachers strongly agreed with the statement.
Two hundred and thirty-seven teachers responded. Nearly 60% of teachers disagreed and 11% of teachers strongly disagreed that children with 20 more absences should be retained. Seven percent of teachers strongly agreed and over 22% agreed with this statement. Therefore, teachers had mixed views on this statement. The school district policy does not indicate that students can be retained with twenty or more absences.
There were 237 participants. Teachers were one-sided in their responses to the question if students do not meet criteria for FCAT that they should be retained. Only 15% of teachers either strongly agreed or agreed with the survey item and 85% of teachers disagreed or strongly disagreed.

School policy in the school district where this study took place indicates that students in the 3rd grade are currently required to pass the FCAT. All middle school children are required to pass the test or they will be placed in remedial classes the next school year.
Two hundred and thirty-seven participants responded. Fifty-eight teachers agreed with the statement students who have passing grades should not be retained no matter what scores they receive on standardized testing. Over 25% strongly agreed with this statement. Nearly 14% percent of teachers disagreed and over three percent strongly disagreed.

School district policy states that students must have passing scores on standardized testing in order to be promoted to the next grade (in 3rd grade).
Figure 4.12 Grade Retention a Motivator

Retention as a Motivator for Children to Perform Better

Two hundred and thirty-six participants responded one item was missing. Teachers again had mixed views on the survey item “teachers can use grade retention as a motivator for students to perform well in their classes.” Responses indicated that over 46% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed with this statement. Over 32% of the teachers disagreed with this statement and 22% percent strongly disagreed.
Two hundred and thirty-seven participants responded. The issue in this survey item is referring to behavior problems and nearly 25% strongly agreed with this statement. The majority of teachers (48%) agreed that retained students are often behavior problems. Over 25% disagreed with statement and two percent strongly disagreed.
There were 237 participants. Teachers again had mixed views on an item. The majority of teachers (52%) either strongly agreed or agreed with the survey item students normally perform better the second time around in the grade retained. Nearly 48% either disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement.
There were 237 participants. The majority of teachers (55%) indicated that they agreed or strongly agreed with the survey item students failing one or more core subjects should be retained. Nearly 45% of the teachers strongly disagreed or disagreed with the item.

School district policy currently states that students failing one or more of the core subjects will be retained.
Two hundred and thirty-seven teachers responded. In responding to the survey item students with a documented learning disability should not be retained, surprisingly, only 41% of teachers strongly agreed or agreed with this statement. Fifty-nine percent of teachers either disagreed or strongly disagreed.
Figure 4.17 Social Promotion

There were 237 participants. The majority of teachers strongly agreed or agreed (62%) with the survey item students should not be socially promoted. Nearly forty (38%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with the survey item.
Figure 4.18 Parents and Grade Retention

There were 237 participants. Teachers indicated mixed views when responding to this survey item. Nearly 31% of teachers disagreed or strongly disagreed with this survey item, parents should have a voice if their child is being retained. Over 69% of teachers strongly agreed or agreed with this survey item.
Of the 237 participants, the overwhelming majority of teachers (81%) strongly agreed or agreed with the survey item a child is emotionally affected when he or she is retained. Only 19% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the survey item.
Of the 237 participants, the majority of teachers agreed or strongly agreed (56%) with the survey item, students who are more than two grades behind should not be required to repeat a grade. Seven percent of teachers strongly disagreed with the survey item and 37% of teachers disagreed.
There were 237 participants. Nearly 76% of teachers strongly agreed or agreed with the survey item students should only be retained because of poor academic performance. Nearly 24% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the survey item.
Of the 237 participants, the majority of teachers (80%) indicated that retention does affect a child’s self-esteem. Nearly 20% of teachers believe that retention does not affect a child’s self-esteem.
Quantitative Data: Summary Results

Table 4.6 Teacher Agree Percentage of Survey Questions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Questions</th>
<th>Agree Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Question 7</td>
<td>83%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 15</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 18</td>
<td>80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 17</td>
<td>76%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 9</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 1</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 14</td>
<td>69%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 3</td>
<td>65%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 13</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 2</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 16</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 11</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 10</td>
<td>52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 8</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 12</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 5</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 4</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question 6</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The quantitative findings on the attitudes of selected middle school teachers in an urban western central Florida school district toward grade retention indicated similarities and differences on responses to several questions. The data for each question was tabulated from strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree. The agree percentage for each question is listed in Table 4.6. The chi square tests were completed to find relationships between variables of significant differences.

Nearly 69% percent of the selected middle school teachers continue to feel grade retention is a good practice. Sixty-five percent agree that retention allows students academically behind to “catch up” with their peers. Teachers (83%) disagreed with the statement children should not be retained.
The interviews revealed similar responses. The respondents indicated academic achievement was not the sole reason for non-promotion; it also includes suspension, absences and one person agreed race influenced retention.

Evidence gleaned from this study supports the views of teachers from a similar study focusing on teacher perceptions. In the study, the majority of the teachers, approximately 65%, supported retention and believed students would “catch-up academically with their peers if they were retained. Researchers indicate students do not “catch-up” when held back. Although some retained students do better at first, they fall behind in later years (Shepard, 1989; Malone, 1989; Reynolds, Temple, & McCoy, 1997; Jimerson 2001b). Teachers in this study support the argument, that students should be retained. However, again it should be noted that this sample is too small to make a general inference that retention is harmful to all students in all situations.

When the data collected was reviewed for psychological effects, including self-concept and self-esteem, teachers agreed (80%) that retention affected a student’s self-esteem. Teachers also agreed (81%) students were emotionally affected. However, teachers disagreed (39%) that retention was harmful to a student’s self-concept. Again, these statements contradict research (Shepard, 1989; Reynolds, Temple, & McCoy, 1997; Jimerson, 2001b). The interviews revealed mixed responses to this question. Eight teachers responded that there were no psychological effects to grade retention. One teacher stated there were psychological effects to grade retention; only positive as well as improved academic skills in certain skills and one teacher stated that grade retention was more regional than psychological (meaning the parents were unsuccessful, therefore, the students would be unsuccessful). Self-esteem is important. It is vital to a child’s
decision healthy behavior throughout their lives. Teachers should enhance and encourage self-esteem in their daily teaching. Even though common themes were identified, there was no disparity noted between beginning teachers and veteran teachers. While earlier research discussed retention in earlier grades, academic achievement, the psychological effects of grade retention and dropouts, none dealt specifically with middle school teachers’ perception disparity or beginning and veteran teacher disparities. To this end, this study sought to determine if a disparity did exist and if it was significant.

One could assume that nearly 24% of teachers would be satisfied with other alternatives for students of non-mastery of criteria for a given grade. This raises questions that this research did not attempt to answer about other alternatives to grade retention.

The survey indicated that teachers disagree with their school district policy in two areas, standardized testing (83%), and students failing core subjects (45%). School policy states if a student fails a standardized test the child will be retained (in 3rd grade). Students failing one or more subject will be retained.

Both the survey and the interviews indicated teachers disagreed with social promotion. In addition, the survey and the interviews reveal that the lack of academic achievement as the primary reason for retention. Teachers indicated self-esteem was affected because of retention; however, self-image and self-concept were not factors when recommending retention.

Qualitative Data: Summary of Interview Results

Qualitative data analysis involves breaking down data into smaller categories or themes (Gay and Airasian, 2000). The interview questions were designed to elicit
teachers’ implicit and explicit attitudes toward the practice of grade retention. The responses to these questions were used to develop themes. “Themes are abstract (and often fuzzy) constructs that investigators identify before, during, and after data collection” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 780.). Themes may be developed in several ways.

**Themes that Emerged**

At the conclusion of the interviews, the researcher found five themes that developed within the teacher beliefs about retention: teacher frustrations, psychological affects, reasons for retention, retention is a good strategy, and negative effects of grade retention. The researcher asked several questions:

- Are these themes universal?
- Is there a relationship among the teachers on their beliefs about retention?
- Do these beliefs have a common thread?
- What can the educational community learn from this research project?
- How do these concepts relate to the world of education?

What is truth? What is authority? To whom do I listen? What counts for me as evidence? How do I know what I know? Yet to ask ourselves these questions and to reflect on our answer is more than an intellectual exercise, for our basic assumptions about the nature of truth and reality and the origins of knowledge shape the way we see the world and ourselves as participants in it. They affect our definitions of ourselves, the way we interact with others, our public and private personae, our sense of control over life events, our views of teaching and learning, and our conceptions of morality (Belenky et al., 1986, p. 3).
Can the interviews reveal insights that can be applied to the larger world? Belenky et al., (1986, p. 4); Belenky & Stanton (2000), stated it was impossible to communicate all there is to know about people; however, through themes within a data, a study can further the knowledge. The themes provided the basis for structuring the analysis and interpretation (Gay & Airasian, 2000).

The theme, teacher frustrations emerged from interview question four. What is your biggest frustration about grade retention? The researcher found that the teachers interviewed were responding with similar answers. One teacher stated there needs to be more grade retention in the early grades so the child can learn the fundamentals. Four teachers were frustrated because the retained students were being placed in their classes for a second year; they suggested there needs to be other alternatives. Three teachers were concerned about the decrease in mastery level work and students not performing the second time in the grade even though the student has the potential. Two teacher suggested that parents were unresponsive to their children failing until it was too late.

Current research suggests there are some psychological impacts to grade retention (Potter, 1996; Thompson & Cunningham, 2000; Jimerson, 2001a; Jimerson, 2001b). This theme emerged from the review of literature. The researcher wanted to know if the teachers being interviewed were familiar with the current research found on the psychological effects of grade retention. Eight teachers stated that there were psychological effects on students that were retained that they had witnessed. One teacher indicated that no psychological effects were witnessed; only positive as well as improved academic skills in certain skills. One teacher suggested that retention was more regional
than psychological (the parents were unsuccessful in school; therefore the students would also be unsuccessful in school).

The theme, reasons for retention developed because of the retention policy in the county where the study was conducted (see Appendix H). The retention policy included: suspension, attendance, standardized testing, and student achievement. All teachers agreed with the district policy.

The theme, retention is a good strategy developed from the literature review McCoy & Reynolds, 1998). Currently, the teachers in this study believe that this strategy works; although it has been proven to be harmful (Tomchin & Impara, 1992; Jimerson 2001b). All teachers interviewed believed retention had positive as well as negative affects; however, they had different responses. Thus, the theme retention is a good strategy and negative effects of grade retention evolved. Below is the list of themes.

**Teacher Frustrations**
- Mastery level decreases
- Students being placed in the teacher’s classroom twice
- Parents not involved
- Behavior problems
- Motivation and additional help needed by retained students
- Students do not work to potential
- Students do not care about retention

**Psychological Affects**
- More regional than psychological
- Students do not care about self-esteem
- Self-concept does not matter
- May hurt self-esteem
- Self-esteem addressed during school year

**Reasons for Retention**
- Suspension
- Attendance
- Absences
- Academic achievement
- Race
Non-mastery of objectives
Standardized testing

**Retention Good Strategy**
Child knows retention is inevitable if requirements are not successfully completed
Master concepts second time
Perform better second time
For elementary students
Benefits some students
Forces students to perform better
No social promotion

**Negative Effects**
Self-esteem may be damaged
Dropout rates
No initiative to do well
Middle and high school students
Student becomes uninterested in school
Child thinks he can fail and still succeed

**Interviews**

For this study, the researcher used semi-structured interviews. There were 10 participants participating in the interviews. The table below displays information regarding the respondents selected for the interviews. Teachers were referred to as Respondent A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I and J to protect the identity of each of the teachers.
### Table 4.7
Interview Participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher Name</th>
<th>Grade Taught</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Ethnicity</th>
<th>Years of Experience</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respondent A</td>
<td>7th</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent B</td>
<td>8th</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent C</td>
<td>8th</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent D</td>
<td>7th</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent E</td>
<td>7th</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent F</td>
<td>6th</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent G</td>
<td>8th</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent H</td>
<td>6th</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>W</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent I</td>
<td>6th</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>H</td>
<td>04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent J</td>
<td>8th</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>B</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Ten Participants:  W=White  B=Black/African-American  A=Asian/Pacific Islander  H= Hispanic

There were five Whites, two African-Americans, two Hispanics and one Asian in the study. The years of teaching experience ranged from two years to 52 years, and ages ranged from 26 years of age to 75.
Ten teachers were selected to participate in semi-structured interviews. The youngest teacher was a 26-year-old female and the oldest a 75-year-old male. The years of teaching experienced ranged from 2–52. Four teachers from eighth and three teachers from each sixth and seventh grade level were interviewed.
**Interview Question One: What is your philosophy on grade retention?**

All of the teachers interviewed had similar philosophies of grade retention (see Table 4.7 below). However, each teacher stated the similarities differently. Teachers believe that students should be retained if they do not successfully complete all requirements to be promoted to the next grade. In sum, interviewees believe in grade retention.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 4.8</th>
<th>Teacher’s Philosophies on Grade Retention</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respondent A</td>
<td>Mixed. Most cases it may be helpful. In some cases if they lacked motivation to do the work, it could be advantageous to repeat those skills.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent B</td>
<td>If a student needs the remediation and would not get that in the next program, then retention is appropriate.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent C</td>
<td>Only retain in elementary school. Move middle and high school students on and double up on courses that they are low academically.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent D</td>
<td>In K-2 it might be alright to retain the boy who is the youngest and least mature.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent E</td>
<td>Must be addressed on a case-by-case basis. Need to provide alternatives to address problems that cause them to fail.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent F</td>
<td>Retention is necessary when students are not mastering the content needed to move onto the next curriculum in school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent G</td>
<td>Grade retention doesn’t work at all.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent H</td>
<td>Students should be retained early, if basic skills have not been mastered, in order to function at the next grade level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent I</td>
<td>It is a necessary consequence for students who are not meeting grade level expectations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent J</td>
<td>Students should not be retained if they attend school.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Interview Question Two: Are you aware of any relationship between children dropping out of school and being retained?**

The table displays responses to question number two.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respondent A</td>
<td>There may be a correlation between an increase in the being retained and an increase in children dropping out of school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent B</td>
<td>There is a positive correlation and it’s a negative thing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent C</td>
<td>The more students are retained the chances increase of them quitting school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent D</td>
<td>Retention and dropping out are only symptoms of a greater problem.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent E</td>
<td>The student that is older than an average middle schooler may drop out.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent F</td>
<td>There is a positive correlation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent G</td>
<td>There is a high correlation between being left behind and quitting school at the minimum age (16).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent H</td>
<td>There is probably a negative. Being retained leads to dropping out.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent I</td>
<td>Common logic tells me there’s a good chance when a kid is retained he may end up dropping out of school.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent J</td>
<td>Many students that have been retained give up hope and drop out to get a GED.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Responses to interview question number two: all of the teachers believe when students are retained they will probably drop out of school.
Interview Question Three: Are you aware of any psychological effects on students due to grade retention or have you witnessed any affect due to grade retention?

The data for question three is shown in the table below. Two teachers believe there could be some psychological effects on students because of grade retention and three teachers suggest there are no psychological effects on students due to grade retention and one teacher suggests that retention is regional (meaning because parents are unsuccessful students will also be unsuccessful).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Respondent A</td>
<td>The psychological effects would be negative, negative self concept, negative self identity. Grade retention is more regional than psychological. The parents have been unsuccessful in school and the “wheel” continues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent B</td>
<td>Some students have to some extent regressed almost socially to be able to get along with their new peers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent C</td>
<td>Many retained students have a negative concept.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent D</td>
<td>The effects have been negative and some behavior has been disruptive.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent E</td>
<td>There appears to be some affect on social interactions with peers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent F</td>
<td>Some retained students seem distant from school and school activities. They often act out for attention and rarely see school work as a priority.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent G</td>
<td>Two extremes, work done in seconds and then playing the rest of the period, or lower self-esteem and failing again.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent H</td>
<td>Positive psychological effects as well as improvement academically in the skills that were lacking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent I</td>
<td>Some have a lower self-esteem and lack self confidence in academics.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Respondent J</td>
<td>Some feel ashamed at being retained and sometimes behavioral problems occur.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interview Question Four: What is your biggest frustration about grade retention?
### Table 4.11
Teacher Frustrations About Grade Retention

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Frustration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Seeing these students with lack of motivation to want to succeed in their school work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>It doesn’t work the way I would expect it to work.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Parents and students need to work together along with the teachers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>The age and experience differential which can cause discipline problems in the next year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>We offer failing students few alternatives to doing the same thing over again. We need to find more programs designed to address their needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>The students are held back due to a lack of mastery of material taught, so we send them to do it again.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>The students still are not learning critical skills, especially Reading.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>There is not enough of it in the early years when a child is learning the fundamentals and hasn’t mastered the building blocks for success.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>When students who need to be retained are not because of monetary reasons at an administrative level or because of the way it “looks”.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>There is no change. The students are required to complete the same work that they were unsuccessful with before.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Three teachers had the same frustrations about retained students being placed by the administrator in the same classroom the next year. One teacher was concerned about the amount of creditable or mastery work level decreases. One teacher’s concern was students who have the potential, but continue to fail; and one teacher stated that parents wait too late to get involved when the child is failing.

**Interview Question Five: Do you feel that the child’s self-esteem is hindered because of grade retention and do you consider a child’s self-concept when recommending grade retention?**

When teachers were asked if there were psychological effects as a result of grade retention, the responses vacillated between “yes” there were some noted to being unsure of any psychological affects, to none known. In answering the interview questions about
self-esteem, all the teachers thought that a child’s self-esteem was affected and most teachers did consider the child’s self-concept when recommending retention (9 of 10).

Some of the respondents direct comments follow:

Respondent A

“For the first section of that question, I would say, Yes, I believe a child’s self esteem is affected in some way by grade retention either because of their physical growth compared to their peers, or losing contact with friends they will no longer have as classmates. As to the second part of the question, I personally do not consider a child’s self concept when recommending grade retention because it’s solely, from my point, based on academics. What you did or didn’t do. Same thing as if you were college. If you passed the course, you move on. If you didn’t do what you were supposed to do, you take the class over or you find another route.”

Respondent B

“I do believe that self esteem is hindered just because their considering that they failed and in some form of documentation they failed whether the situation was due to their academic ability or not. I do consider their self concept along with what is causing them to have the poor grade in the class and if it is not their academic ability and what I believe we can provide at this school for them then I would usually recommend not retaining them.”

Respondent C

“The child’s self-esteem is hindered from grades 4-12 but, keep them K-3 if needed.”
Respondent D

“I think that it does hinder a student and self-concept is very important for the retainee.”

Respondent E

“Failing always impacts an individual’s self esteem. How one deals with failure depends on the individual. Again, retention must be considered on a case by case basis, and should be used as a tool to encourage the student to be successful, not as a punishment.”

Respondent F

“I do feel that the child’s self-esteem is hindered by grade retention. They feel they are left behind while their peers move on. I do consider this affect when recommending grade retention.”

Respondent G

“Yes”

Respondent H

“I don’t believe a child’s self esteem is hindered, if it is approached in a positive and honest light, again at an early age when fundamentals have to be mastered to be successful at later grades. Retention in later grades as consequences of poor choices may have a little effect on self esteem. I would agree that considering self-concept should be a consideration.”

Respondent I

“I do believe a child’s self esteem can be hindered because of grade retention, but I don’t believe that a student who needs to be retained should be moved to the
next grade anyway for fear of hurting their self esteem or their feelings.”

Respondent J

“Yes, the child’s self-esteem is hindered. They feel shame. Some feel they
cannot do the work, and are make fun of by their peers. I only retain if the student
is not in school and the student make no effort whatsoever.”

Interview Question Six: Do you think the practice of grade retention is a positive or
negative practice for the children involved?

Interview Question Seven: How do you view students who have been retained who are
currently enrolled in your class?

When asked if teachers think grade retention is positive or negative the responses
varied. Teachers elaborated on this question. Teachers also had varied responses to
question seven. Verbatim comments will also be presented for this question.

Respondent A

Question 6

I would say it’s probably more negative for the child, again for the social issues I
mentioned before, the child’s larger size compared to current classmates, or
perhaps a higher social development, could cause the retained student to be
isolated by others. These kinds of things could make it more of a negative
practice for the child.

Question 7

The biggest concern that I see with this right now is the isolation; especially if the
student is much physically larger than the rest of the class. The student may feel
detached from the group, so you’ve got to develop a classroom climate to try to
bring them in and make them feel more accepting. In addition a teacher has to work with them to be motivated to get the work done the second time around.

**Respondent B**

**Question #6**

A negative one. The perception of the kid, especially in middle school, I don’t know if they’re mature enough to understand fully why they would be encouraged to be retained to supplement for what’s missing in their academic background and more so see it as something that they, either by their work ethic, that they failed to accomplish.

**Question #7**

I view it for them a second chance for them to try to be successful. However, I have seen that in my experience it has been effective.

**Respondent C**

**Question #6**

It can be negative.

**Question #7**

Students currently enrolled in my classes have never been retained as far as I know. I do not check their cumulative folders not unless I have good reason to check.

**Respondent D**

**Question #6**

It is a negative practice.

**Question #7**
Generally one would want to move them on quickly. If it is a middleschooler who is not going to high school, it is extremely important to move them quickly.

*Respondent E*

*Question #6*

As I have said before, retention can be a positive tool when used appropriately, but we must decide on the best course for individual students.

*Question #7*

I notice the ones that are big, and bored. However, I may not even know about students that may have been retained early on, or are not repeating recent information.

*Respondent F*

*Question #6*

I think retention is mostly negative for the child’s self-esteem and their behavior towards school, however, if the student did not learn the material required for that grade level they are still going to feel they have been “left behind” the next year when their peers understand the new information and they don’t.

*Question #7*

I view them as a challenge. I need to get them up to speed on the material while still making the activities new and different so that they don’t feel the need to act out and not focus on the material they need to learn.

*Respondent G*

*Question #6*

Negative.
Question #7
Don’t have any.

Respondent H

Question #6
It depends on the child, teacher, and parents reasoning behind the retention. As well as a plan of action to ensure the student is enriched with a different academic approach the next year.

Question #7
Since, I teach an elective, if they have already been successful in my class I believe they should be enrolled in another class or a different teacher. Otherwise, we start off brand new and work to help them have success.

Respondent I

Question #6
I think it is a positive practice for the child. It is a negative practice to keep passing kids along when they haven’t mastered the material in the prerequisite grades. I feel like that’s setting kids up for failure.

Question #7
I view them as students that need a little more attention, but are still very much capable of being successful.

Respondent J

Question #6
I think it is negative. Retention serves no purchase other than punishing the student for not getting a certain percentage.
Question #7

I only have one student this year that was retained. I try to make every effort to make sure that she completes assignments, I contact parents, and I conference with the student.

Interview Question Eight: Will you retain a student because of age, attendance policy, suspension, or is it based solely on academic achievement?

Teachers indicated that principals had the control with attendance and suspension policies; however, they did support the policy. Nine teachers agreed that age had no bearing on whether a child was retained. The reason teachers practiced grade retention was because of attendance, suspension, and academic achievement.

Table 4.12 Reasons Teachers Practice Grade Retention

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Attendance Policy</th>
<th>Suspension</th>
<th>Academic Achievement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Response to interview question number eight. All of the teachers agreed with the district retention policy pertaining to attendance, suspension, and academic achievement. One teacher stated retention was needed if the child was the youngest in class and maturity played a role in academic achievement. One teacher stated both attendance and suspension both negatively affect academic achievement.
Interview Question Nine: How many students were retained in your classroom?

Figure 4.24 Graphic Interpretation of Students Retained In Respondents Classrooms

Ten participants responded. Teachers varied in the number of students retained in their classes. One teacher retained 15 students last year. One teacher retained 10 students, one teacher retained eight students, three teachers retained one student, and four teachers did not retain any students on last year.

Interview Question 10: As a teacher, do you take any “blame” because of grade retention or do you feel that the blame is on the parent and the student?

Teachers indicated that the phone calls home, parent conferences, progress reports, and report cards were sufficient data to inform parents of a student’s academic progress prior to the practice of grade retention.
Table 4.13
Do Teachers “Blame” Themselves for Student Failure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>There’s no way that a teacher can take no responsibility. However, the instructor has the smallest percentage, the parent the second largest and the student the largest percentage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Teacher absolutely should take blame if a student is retained and wonder what could have been done differently. The student should take half the blame and the other half split between the teacher and the parent.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>No blame taken.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Blame or guilt is upon the home.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Everyone bears responsibility. By 7th grade, students need to take responsibility for their success, but parents and teachers must help them get there.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Teacher should take blame if the student is being retained, however, blame should be placed on all parties, especially the child.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>There is no blame, just finding more and more strategies that would work with that child, which can be very hard to do. Children should choose even when parents and teachers try.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>The retention is solely on the student as well as the parent. Parent may need to go above and beyond to find the extra needed support so that their child can be successful and self motivated.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>No blame taken.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>The blame is on the parent and the student. Extra credit is given, deadlines extended and parent contact made, all in an effort to help the student be successful.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Responses to interview question 10. Five of the respondents (50%) felt that some of the blame could be placed on them as teachers when students are retained. The other five (50%) felt that the blame could not be placed on them as teachers and stated the blame is primarily on the students and parents.

*Interview Question 11: How do you feel about social promotion?*

*Interview Question 12: Do you feel that a child’s gender or race will influence the decision to retain?*

Eight of the 10 (80%) respondents agreed with social promotion. One teacher believed that gender did not influence grade retention, but race could influence the
practice of grade retention. One teacher believed that the child’s gender influences retention. One teacher believed that both gender and race influences retention.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Respondent</th>
<th>Question 11 Responses</th>
<th>Question 12 Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>No</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Summary of Research Questions

What are selected middle school teachers’ in an urban western central Florida school district implicit and explicit perception (advantages and disadvantages) of the practice of grade retention? The respondents all agreed retention was a needed practice when students did not master the required objectives to get promoted to the next grade level. Teachers indicated similar responses for their biggest frustration of grade retention. Teachers indicated their biggest frustration were retained students being placed by the administrator back in the same teacher’s classroom for an additional year, and a decrease in the amount of mastery or creditable work a retained student completes. Although absences and suspension have some influence on whether students are retained or promoted, each of the 10 respondents participating in the interview agreed academic
achievement was the primary purpose for retaining students in their classrooms. Eight of the 10 respondents agreed with social promotion. Seven of the 10 respondents agreed gender or race were not significant in the decision to retain. However, two respondents believed race influenced the decision to retain and one respondent believed that gender alone influenced the decision to retain. Each respondent indicated advantages (positives) and disadvantages (negatives) of grade retention. The teachers interviewed indicated the positives as some students perform better the second time in the grade. They also indicated some retained students would be able to “catch-up” with their peers. However, the review of the literature contradicts this belief. The negative aspects of grade retention suggested behavior problems and students continuing to perform poorly in classes the following year after being retained.

How do selected urban western central Florida middle school teachers in a school district view the psychological effects of grade retention? Fifty percent (50%) of the respondents agreed with this research question and 50% of the respondents disagreed. The respondents who agreed realized the affects were temporary (students only displayed sadness or hurt for a short while). Prior research indicated there was evidence of psychological effects on students due to grade retention. The majority (100%) indicated self-esteem was affected because of grade retention. The respondents believe that self-concept was not a concern (of theirs) when retention decisions were being made.

What do selected middle school teachers in an urban western central Florida school district perceive as the reasons they should practice grade retention. According to the review of the literature, academic achievement should not be the only reason for retaining students. However, respondents continue to practice grade retention primarily
because of academic achievement, although attendance and suspension are also reasons grade retention is practiced in their school district. Age was excluded as a reason to practice grade retention.

How do selected urban western central Florida middle school teachers in a school district believe parents should be involved in the grade retention process? Teachers interviewed believe in their school district, the required progress reports, telephone calls to parents, notes to parents, and report cards provided sufficient information to parents about the progress of their child. Several teachers believe it is the responsibility of the students, parents and teachers, to ensure highest student achievement. Fifty percent of the teachers in the interview took no responsibility for student retention. Responsibility was believed to be exclusively on the parents and students.
Chapter V: Summary, Conclusions, Implications, Recommendations and Limitations

Summary

In this chapter, the researcher will summarize the interpretations of the data collected, and discuss what was accomplished and provide conclusions, as well as recommendations related to grade retention. This research project only represents a contribution to the existing literature surrounding retention. Using mixed methods to collect data provided an overview of the beliefs held by selected middle school teachers in an urban western central Florida school district and an exploration of the beliefs and judgments about their students.

“In view of the larger body of research on retention, the continued use of retention is one of the clearest examples of poor communication between research and practice” (Sakowick, 1996). Why should school systems retain students, and then institute dropout prevention programs? The system must support what research has found about retention and implement policies that represent what is best for the child. Although the majority of teachers continue to agree with the practice of grade retention, a substantial minority opposed the practice of grade retention. In fact, 12% of teachers agreed with the survey item children should not be retained and five percent of teachers strongly agreed with this statement. Twenty-four percent of teachers disagreed with the statement retention is a good strategy and seven percent of teachers strongly disagreed with the survey question. The researcher is unaware of the actual cause, but thinks it may be based on the school’s
climate and culture. Parent’s involvement in their child’s schooling remains one of the most important factors in the academic success of a student. Educators should encourage parents to become actively involved. Research on the issue of teacher perceptions of grade retention has been difficult due to the multitude of factors that influence one’s perceptions. It continues to be important.

If alternatives to grade retention need to be developed or supported for schools working hard but still coming up short on improving student achievement, then, any future research would be most beneficial on this topic.

Although many researchers have demonstrated support that grade retention has negative impacts on children, administrators, teachers, and parents, educators continue to believe that retention is a “good strategy” when students do not master the required objectives to be promoted. The purpose of this research project was to ascertain the implicit and explicit perceptions of a selected group of middle school teachers in an urban western central Florida school district.

The approaches used to gather data were in-depth interviews, conducting a survey, and reviewing current articles, journals, and books on grade retention. By reviewing the origins of this practice and providing evidence of the affects of retention as an educational practice, this project was designed to review the history, psychological effects of grade retention, the advantages, and the disadvantages of grade retention.

Statement of the Problem

Based on the writer’s educational work experience in his county, there is a problem with varying achievement levels amongst the socio-economical divides. It is perceived that retention is higher the lower a family’s financial situation is (Bowman,
Based on this perception of the achievement and retention gaps between the various divides, the writer choose schools from each division based on their percentage of students on the free or reduced meal program to illustrate the following hypothetical.

There are many factors which contribute to the achievement gap amongst the various socio-economical divisions; however, grade retention is not a significant factor but is a highly used practice by teachers to positively affect achievement (Bowman, 2005). Grade retention is perhaps the most powerful message a teacher can send to a student to inform the student that he or she is not achieving and is not as capable as his or her peers.

Teachers, as well as parents, may not realize the tremendous power they have when it comes to the practice of grade retention. Teachers and parents may make the decision to retain students without realizing what research has documented about grade retention. Teachers need to know the effects of grade retention on the students who might face this situation. No training is provided to teachers in the state of Florida on what to do with students who fail to master a grade. Often the only perceived option by teachers is retention. Thus, many teachers, parents, administrators, and the educational system have chosen a course of action that may have psychological effects on students (Bowman, 2005). Often times, the educational community is not aware of the possible effects of grade retention as reported in current research. Therefore, the purpose was to study middle school teachers’ perceptions of grade retention because their perceptions of the impact of this practice have not been explored adequately.

**Purpose of Study**

Since President Clinton declared an end to social promotion in his 1998 and 1999 State of the Union Addresses, debates on the practice of grade retention have been a
highly discussed topic in the education and political arena. As a response to this debate, schools in Florida have had to examine and to rewrite their grade retention policies. With the new grade retention policy for the Florida school district, the study was conducted to ascertain middle school teachers’ perspectives on grade retention in an urban western central Florida school district. With the information obtained, it is hoped that the school district can address the areas of concern about grade retention better. Some alternatives to retention are already in place within the county as a result of the number of retainees.

Because the teacher is the person who initiates the retention process, it is necessary for the beliefs of the teacher to be examined. The perspectives of teachers may influence their judgment about students and the implementation of certain school policies. Grade retention continues to be the major strategy used by educators for academic failure (Jimerson, 2001a; Jimerson, 2001b; Reynolds, Temple, & McCoy, 1997). The current research on grade retention has primarily been focused on students being retained in kindergarten and first grade. The different variables of race, background, gender and academic achievement also need to be considered with these students (Jimerson, 1997).

This study examined grade retention from a different perspective with the study focusing on teachers’ perceptions of grade retention in the middle grades. By focusing on the different variables of race, background, gender, academic achievement for those retained, researchers have not given much attention to the role of the teacher (Jimerson et al., 1997). There is increasing recognition that individual’s beliefs are the best indicators of the decisions they make during the course of everyday life. According to Bruner (1996) “the means by which teachers and pupils alike go about their business in real-life
classrooms…how teachers teach and how pupils learn” (p. 86) determines whether the teacher is successful.

Smith (1989) and Tomchin & Impara (1992), in their studies on grade retention, found that the classroom teacher is one of the most important elements in the practice of grade retention. Teachers are responsible for collecting the documentation of the student’s academic achievement and success. In the literature, no clear explanation about why teachers make these judgments is given. In order to understand why teachers retain students, the purpose of this study was to collect and to analyze the data acquired on a group of selected middle school teachers in a school district in Florida, in an effort to identify their explicit and implicit beliefs about grade retention. The purpose of this study was also to serve as an information resource for parents, students, teachers, and administrators at the middle school level.

**Main Research Questions**

This study explored the following research questions: How do selected urban western central Florida middle school teachers in a school district view the psychological effects of grade retention? What do selected middle school teachers in an urban western central Florida school district perceive as the reasons they should practice grade retention? How do selected urban western central Florida middle school teachers in a school district believe parents should be involved in the grade retention process? What are selected middle school teachers’ in an urban western central Florida school district, implicit and explicit perceptions (advantages and disadvantages) of the practice of grade retention?
**Hypotheses**

There will be a significant difference in the perceptions of the practice of grade retention based on the number of years of teaching experience. There will be a significant difference in the perceptions of the practice of grade retention based on the race of the teacher. There will be a significant difference in the perceptions of the practice of grade retention based on the middle school grade level taught. There will be a significant difference in the perceptions of the practice of grade retention based on the social economic status level of the students in the school.

“A hypothesis is formulated based on a theory in review of related literature and the hypothesis logically follows the literature review and is based on the implication of previous research (Gay & Airasian, 2000, p.69).” The data collected allows the researcher to analyze it to determine if the hypotheses are supported. Analysis of the data does not lead to a hypothesis being proven or not proven only supported or not supported (Gay & Airasian, 2000, p.69).

**Conclusions**

**Summary of Research Questions**

What are selected middle school teachers’ in an urban western central Florida school district implicit and explicit perception (advantages and disadvantages) of the practice of grade retention? The respondents all agreed retention was a needed practice when students did not master the required objectives to get promoted to the next grade level. Teachers indicated similar responses for their biggest frustration of grade retention. Teachers indicated their biggest frustration were retained students being placed by the administrator back in the same teacher’s classroom for an additional year, and a
decrease in the amount of mastery or creditable work a retained student completes. Although absences and suspension have some influence on whether students are retained or promoted, each of the 10 respondents participating in the interview agreed academic achievement was the primary purpose for retaining students in their classrooms. Eight of the 10 respondents agreed with social promotion. Seven of the 10 respondents agreed gender or race were not significant in the decision to retain. However, two respondents believed race influenced the decision to retain and one respondent believed that gender alone influenced the decision to retain. Each respondent indicated advantages (positives) and disadvantages (negatives) of grade retention. The teachers interviewed indicated the positives as some students perform better the second time in the grade. They also indicated some retained students would be able to “catch-up” with their peers. However, the review of the literature contradicts this belief. The negative aspects of grade retention suggested behavior problems and students continuing to perform poorly in classes the following year after being retained.

How do selected urban western central Florida middle school teachers in a school district view the psychological effects of grade retention? Fifty percent (50%) of the respondents agreed with this research question. The respondents who agreed realized the affects were temporary (students only displayed sadness or hurt for a short while). Prior research indicated there was evidence of psychological effects on students due to grade retention. The majority (100%) indicated self-esteem was affected because of grade retention. However, the respondents believe that self-concept was not a concern (of theirs) when retention decisions were being made.
What do selected middle school teachers in an urban western central Florida school district perceive as the reasons they should practice grade retention. According to the review of the literature, academic achievement should not be the only reason for retaining students. However, respondents continue to practice grade retention primarily because of academic achievement; although attendance and suspension are also reasons grade retention is practiced in their school district. Age was excluded as a reason to practice grade retention.

How do selected urban western central Florida middle school teachers in a school district believe parents should be involved in the grade retention process? Teachers interviewed believe in their school district, the required progress reports, telephone calls to parents, notes to parents, and report cards provided sufficient information to parents about the progress of their child. Several teachers believe it is the responsibility of the students, parents and teachers, to ensure highest student achievement. Fifty percent of the teachers in the interview took no responsibility for student retention. Responsibility was believed to be exclusively on the parents and students.

**Summary of Hypotheses**

There will be a significant difference in the perceptions of the practice of grade retention based on the number of years of teaching experience. The Chi-Square statistic (4.1411) and its person reliability is ±0.75 indicating that there is no significant difference between the variables, thus no support for the hypothesis. However, according to the Mantel Hanzl, teachers of years 15-20 as relating to questions 3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 10, 12, 15, 16, and 18 illustrates a consistent difference of opinion when compared to teachers of years 1-4. The majority of teachers with 0-30 years of teaching experience favored grade
retention. Teachers with one to four years (beginning teachers) represented 21% and teachers with five or more experience (veteran teachers) represented 79% of the sample. According the researchers, highly skilled teachers who know how to use a wide range of successful teaching strategies adapted to diverse learners is the most important alternative to grade retention (Darling-Hammond, 1998). A teacher’s experience accounts for nearly 40% in overall student performance. Students who have experienced teacher/veteran teachers three consecutive years score as much as 50 percentile points higher on achievement tests (Darling-Hammond, 1998).

There will be a significant difference in the perceptions of the practice of grade retention based on the race of the teacher. The statistical hypothesis test for hypothesis two, the Chi-Square (2.3404) and its person reliability is ±0.75 indicating there is no significant difference based on the race of the teacher. However, according to the Mantel Hanzl, there is a difference in opinion based on whether a child should be retained based on FCAT scores and whether parental involvement should have a “voice” regarding grade retention. There were 187 White teachers, 33 Black teachers, 11 Hispanic teachers, three Asian/Pacific Islanders teachers and three other teachers.

There will be a significant difference in the perceptions of the practice of grade retention based on the middle school grade level taught. The statistical hypothesis test for hypothesis three, the Chi-Square (42.6528) and its person reliability indicates there is no significant difference based on the grade level taught. Seventy-five teachers taught sixth grade, ninety teachers taught seventh grade and seventy-two teachers taught eighth grade. The educational community tends to believe that retention is beneficial in earlier grades (Tomchin & Impara, 1992). In this study, teachers in all grade levels agreed that
retention was a good strategy to use when students do not master the objectives in a particular grade.

There will be a significant difference in the perceptions of the practice of grade retention based on the social economic status level of the students in the school. The statistical hypothesis test for hypothesis four, the Chi-Square (42.6528) and its person reliability indicates there is a significant difference based the socio-economic status of the students (see Appendix L) from School C and School E. The researcher is unaware of the actual cause, but thinks it may be based on the school’s climate and culture. Research has shown that students rise to teacher’s expectations; therefore it is assumed that teacher’s expectations from the above mentioned schools are low. The difference is clearly shown in items 1, 2, 3, 4, 6, 8, 10, 13, 14, 15, and 18.

In the study, some demographic representation in schools was small, and that might limit the power of the research design to detect effects. Also, when looking at the four hypotheses the researcher has to be careful not to make a mistake of thinking that a statistical difference exits when in truth there is no difference and vice versa, type 1 and type 2 errors. A type 1 error or a “false positive” occurs when one rejects a null hypothesis when it is actually true. A type 2 error or a “false negative” occurs when one fails to reject a null hypothesis when it is in fact not true (Allchin, 2001).

**Implications**

In order for a child to have success in school, the child must have a positive school experience. This study provides a foundation in understanding the reasons surrounding the perceptions of teachers and the practice of grade retention. When a teacher recommends grade retention for a student, a combination of student, school, and
teacher beliefs are implemented in the final decision. Combining findings from each of the data collection strategies provides both an overview of the beliefs widely held by teachers and an in-depth examination into the beliefs underlying teachers’ judgments about students. “Certain widely held beliefs about retention set the standard for a continuation of this practice (Tomchim & Impara, 1992, p. 219.).” As shown in previous research (Smith & Shepard, 1989, p. 218), even though a teacher may or may not retain a student, teachers generally believe that retention is a good practice when students do not master the required objectives for a particular grade.

Since the political and educational arenas support the practice of grade retention, the educational society should begin to assume leadership roles not only in the practice of grade retention and further refinement, but also as instruments for research and validation studies, especially in middle grades and beyond. Instead of merely practicing grade retention, teachers, administrators, and parents need to analyze the data in greater depth. Without more studies and analysis, teachers, administrators, and parents will continue a practice that a century of research has found to be harmful instead of beneficial to students.

It is not easy for one to justify the decision to retain students. The principal must inform the staff, parents, and the community of the research on the negative effects of grade retention. Educators must find a way to ensure that every child has some academic success. Each educator must devise methods of working with students before they fail a grade. Tutoring, remediation, mentoring, small group work, after school programs, Saturday school, and summer school can help children learn. Neither social promotion nor holding kids back without help is a successful strategy for improving learning (U.S.
Social promotion may not help and neither does retention; educators must draw the line and say “no” to retention and “yes” to success (Potter, 1996).

Far too many students simply give up on school, largely because they feel like their school has already given up on them. Even our special education services are failure-based. "The current system uses an antiquated model that waits for a child to fail, instead of a model based on prevention and intervention. Too little emphasis is put on prevention, early and accurate identification of learning and behavior problems and aggressive intervention using research-based approaches” (U.S. Department of Education, Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services, 2002).

Based on the teacher survey and interviews, more in-service in the areas of adult accountability, making data-driven decisions and parental empowerment are required on this vital topic to change attitudes. The following are implications from the study:

1. Although research clearly indicates the deleterious consequences of grade retention (GR), the considerable majority of faculty disregards those findings, a serious indication of professional problem and a need for staff development training.

2. GR is not working; the district needs to look at what might work. Since many of the retained students are African-Americans, perhaps we need to look at the Role the Church, other faith-based entities and local community organizations such as the Urban League and the NAACP in the Black community (people outside of education).

3. All stakeholders need to understand that education is not just defined to the
classroom. We need to look outside of the traditional lines and make an effective
difference in student learning.

4. Many black children are leaders in their local church and yet are not academically
successful in school. The district needs to look at why the students have a level of
comfort ability in church that is not in school. The writer wonders if there is
dysconscious racism (a form of racism that accepts dominate white norms) in our
schools?

5. When students are retained for lack of mastery, they should not be placed back
into the same classes. The district needs to empower the guidance supervisor to
train all counselors in the proper placement of retained students.

6. 52% of teachers agreed that students perform better after being retained once.
The district needs to do more in-service training to prepare teachers to be aware of
the consequences of retention and how to correct this phenomenon.

7. 69% of teachers agree that parents should have in voice before their child is
retained; only 17% agreed that students should not be retained and 62% agreed
with no social promotion. The district needs to offer parent workshops on grade
retention and the parent’s role.

8. 61% of teachers agreed GR hurts the student’s self-concept, 81% agreed the child
is emotionally affected by GR and 80% agreed GR affect self-esteem, yet 69%
agreed GR is a good practice. The district needs to mandate site-based training
during pre-school and a follow-up training at the beginning of the second
semester. This training would allow for a more proactive approach to academic
achievement and would enable struggling students to be identified early.
9. The district needs to look at the usefulness of high stakes standardized testing, since 85% of teachers agreed that students that do not pass the FCAT should not be retained.

10. Teachers need more training in differentiated learning. This training would help teachers use different strategies with those students that have been retained. The teacher needs to use different activities so the student will not get bored and become a behavior problem.

11. When students are retained, schools need to establish a protocol of regular parent contact from the teacher and frequent teacher student conferences.

12. In 1909, Leonard Ayres wrote, students should start and finish school (grades 1-12). The district needs to stop stakeholders from placing the blame and hold everyone accountable for student academic achievement.

13. Move students on to the next grade and double up (stacking) on courses that they are low academically.

14. A teacher professional expectation in the urban western central Florida school district requires teachers to demonstrate positive classroom results and trends. The implication is teachers not meeting this expectation need to be held accountable for a student’s lack of success in their class; not doing so may led to elevated rates of retention.

15. Understanding the importance of cultural training, standardized test preparation and other trainings, the writer believes the impact of retaining a kid needs to be emphasized and understood. This impact is not only detrimental to the student but to the society as a whole, because students who are less successful in school
tend to find success in areas which are not always positive or contribute to a
democratic society.

16. In the study School A and School B, have implemented the following data-driven
process to decrease grade retention:

   a. A query is conducted at the end of the 4th grading period to identify
      possible retainees based on a student having more than two or more F’s.

   b. Parents are notified by telephone, email, and an indicator of possible
      failure on their child’s report card. This step aligns with the survey results
      because 69% of teachers surveyed agreed that parents should have a voice
      before their child is retained.

   c. Identified students meet with the guidance counselor and administrator to
      establish a plan or action to correct deficiencies.

   d. Progress monitoring is conducted weekly and parents are notified of the
      progress.

   e. At the end of the year, those students who have not meet expectations are
      provided an opportunity to attend summer school to make up courses.

**Recommendations**

**Further Study**

Future studies are necessary for the following:

While the data indicates Pinellas County Schools has one of the lowest middle
school retention rate in the State of Florida among large school districts, there is still
room for improvement (Appendix K).

- Immanuel Kant argued Ethics is at its most pure when we will ourselves to do the
right thing, even when it goes against our personal interests and desires. Since the majority of teachers believed that GR affected the child’s emotional state, self-esteem and self-concept, district policy needs to be reviewed.

- District policies need to be consistent. Can a teacher retain a student for anything other than academics, i.e., age, absences or suspension?

- In 2007, Pinellas County Schools started three alternatives to grade retention. According to Cheryl DiCicco, administrator, the 8.5 programs, Virtual School and Moodle are not as effective as the district would hope. Early indications are that many of the students did not make adequate gains and many were retained. The district continues to look for ways to improve all three programs and improve student success. The district needs to look at alternatives to GR. Monitor the effectiveness of the three new alternatives, 8.5 programs, Virtual School and Moodle. Also look at funding more extended learning classes.

Based on the output of Table 2.3, the writer would like to see further research on the reasons the dropout rate for Black and Asian females increased so dramatically for the years 2000-2008. It would also be noteworthy to see if the dropout rate has improved since that time period. The writer was surprised by the lack of significance found between the race of the teacher and the perception of grade retention. Further research can be done with a larger sample size or a different population of participants to see if there is a significant difference found.

Since the political and educational arenas support the practice of grade retention, the educational society should begin to assume leadership roles not only in the practice of grade retention and further refinement, but also as instruments for research
and validation studies, especially in middle grades and beyond (Bowman, 2005). If alternatives to grade retention need to be developed or supported for schools working hard but still coming up short on improving student achievement, then, any future research would be most beneficial on this topic.

Recommendations

For Practice

Educators and policy makers should adopt policies that are consistent with current research on grade retention. If overall the child’s needs are not being met, but the child is being impacted by the negative connotations of grade retention, this practice should be reexamined. Previous research has indicated that neither retention nor social promotion is a good practice for underachieving students. Educators must be willing to examine alternatives to grade retention and social promotion. Without question, the best strategy a school can use to foster achievement and prevent either grade retention or "social promotion" is to set out to remake itself into a school with "holding power," a school that offers a rich grade-level curriculum in classrooms staffed by teachers knowledgeable in the content and skilled in helping all students understand that content. Schools with holding power further organize themselves to foster positive teacher-student relationships and develop a strong motivational climate that values achievement for all students. These practices all contribute to developing a school wide "culture of high standards" (Wheelock, 1997). The educational community must examine a child’s developmental age rather than birth age. Consideration of more than academic achievement is critical in order for each child to grow and to have the best opportunity to develop into a productive citizen in today’s society. Central East Middle School in Philadelphia is one such school
that has set out to prove that every student can succeed in the middle grades by putting a set of practices in place that complement one another and creates a school culture that encompasses both caring relationships and challenging learning opportunities. The school fosters positive relationships by organizing students and teachers into teams, with the same group of teachers remaining with their students for three years through the middle grades. Teacher-student advisories mean that every student has an advocate who knows him well in the school. Further, classrooms are organized cooperatively through literacy approaches that include student team reading and writing so that students receive encouragement from one another (Wheelock, 1997). A 7-year-old school promotion policy in New York City that targets extra help to students at risk of having to repeat a grade is whittling down the number of students held back and improving struggling students' test scores, a study finds. Under the policy, students in grades 3-8 who are at risk of failing promotional-benchmark tests are identified at the beginning of the school year, given additional instructional time, and continuously monitored. If they fail to pass the required tests in the spring, other options kick in, including a review of portfolios of their work or additional testing. Students who still fail to meet the school system's benchmarks at that point are required to enroll in several weeks of summer school. They are retained in grade if they end up failing end-of-summer tests or last-chance reviews of their work (Viadero, 2009). According to the Urban Prep Academy for Young Men, “there approach is to encircle the student with four connecting arcs that provide a comprehensive educational experience: the academic arc, the service arc, the activity arc, and the professional arc (Urban Prep, 2010).” In summary, a rigorous academic program,
contribution to the community, participation in extra-curricular activities and internships prepares students to be college ready.

In 2004, Florida passed the Middle Grades Reform Act to begin the systematic reform of the state’s middle schools. The Act required the commissioner of education to conduct a study on how overall academic performance of middle grades students could be improved and submit recommendations to state leaders. In addition to recommendations to the state legislature, the state board of education and district school boards, this report contains sections on: (1) why middle grades reform is needed in Florida; (2) stakeholder participation in Florida’s middle grades reform; (3) a look at other states; and (4) effective practices in selected middle grades in Florida. (Florida Department of Education, February 2005)

Recommendations abound throughout the dropout literature for early identification of potential dropouts, together with models for early intervention. The resources need to be put in the primary grades. For many children, the seeds of failure are planted during the initial school years.

The place to intervene is with those individuals who are falling behind in elementary classes and whose teachers think they cannot make it to the next grade (Dance, 1995). Ideally, the time to identify and to respond to at-risk students is at the earliest stages rather than waiting for the end of the school year, i.e. at the first signs of failure, as with the Finnish schools (Grubb, 2007).

Grubb discussed the inequality of the U.S. education system in the fact that some students enter ready to perform at higher levels than others. He also shared that in Finland there is a consistency in teacher training and the staffing patterns of schools, that
is universal across the schools (Grubb, 2007). The Finns also have high status and good working conditions for teachers—small classes, adequate support from counselors and special-needs teachers, a voice in school decisions, and low levels of discipline—which in turn leads to success in the early years of teaching. It does not rely on excessive amounts of low-level testing or on draconian accountability systems (Grubb, 2007). In terms of training, very few U.S. teachers have been prepared to teach low-performing students in special ways, though differentiated instruction has its enthusiasts (Grubb, 2007).

The decision-makers in schools must recognize that there is a serious problem and consider offering educational alternatives to eradicate the symptoms of failure. It is important to remember that success in school, i.e. graduating, translates into a greater likelihood of achieving success after school (Dance, 1995).

Effectively dealing with at-risk students is not a total mystery. Research on dropout prevention programs has been done on the secondary level. Some of these ideas may be applicable to younger children. Hamilton (1986) identified the following four characteristics of effective dropout prevention programs.

- They separate potential dropouts from other students;
- They have strong vocational components;
- They utilize out-of-classroom learning; and
- They are intensive in the sense of being small, having individual instruction, having low student teacher ratios and offering more counseling than ordinary schools

This list could be written for at-risk elementary school students as follows:
- Periodically separate potential retainees from other students, e.g. for summer school and/or for after school programs might be a welcome alternative to other forms of childcare arrangements. It was found that a majority of the teachers surveyed said the major reason children have difficulty in school is their isolation and lack of supervision after school.

- Provide and support a curriculum that focuses on basic literacy and numeric skills during the early primary grades.

- Be sure the program has a strong hands-on component and frequent experiential field trips. This can help link school learning to the real world of young students.

Given that retention has not been shown to accelerate learning as compared to ordinary promotion, and social promotion does not solve the problems of slow learners, it follows that educators should explore alternatives. Yet, the author believes the ideal solution to grade retention is prevention. Rather than continuing to retain students or to promote them automatically, it would make more sense for schools to invest their time designing effective programs, which can avert the need for retention. The path for educators and communities to follow is not obscure, nor has it been discovered recently. In a 1973 report, Reiter pointed out that, “For maximal learning to take place, the crucial issue is how the individual pupil is treated in his school. The need is for human treatment of each pupil as a person of value, and creative provision of appropriate learning tasks in which the individual pupil can experience success (p. 9). Owings’ (1997) study suggested strategies to help prevent the need for grade retention are the following:

- Create non-graded elementary schools;
• Focus on student literacy in elementary schools;
• Develop easy warning systems;
• Furnish remediation during the year child is failing;
• Offer individualized diagnosis and instruction;
• Adopt characteristics of “effective schools.”

In a report issued by the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory early intervention strategies were stressed. They offered the following suggestions as alternatives to retention:

• If grade retention has to be used it should not be the norm. It should be used only after all other interventions have proved unsuccessful.
• If a child is retained he should not repeat the same curriculum and should have a different teaching strategy implemented for the new curriculum.
• Early intervention should be implemented as soon as the child is identified as being at risk.
• Teachers should be well informed and well educated.
• Retention should be based on multiple forms of assessments (Fager, 1999).

In Florida, a number of approaches to improving student achievement without resorting to retention have been proposed. Among them are:

1. Tutorial programs, including peer tutoring, cross-age tutoring, and adult volunteer tutoring. These need to be coordinated with classroom instruction, and be an addition to, not a substitute for, regular teaching. The Reading Recovery program, which originated in New Zealand, is demonstrating remarkable success in many districts (Darling-Hammond, 1998, pp. 48-53).
2. Extended basic skills. These eliminate “non-essentials” from the student day, with the additional time being applied to reading, writing, and mathematics. While this approach has been successful, there are often political problems with the elimination of several areas of study. Also, it can degenerate into a dull, skill-centered drill — and practice routine the further alienates disadvantaged students from school. It ignores the fact that there are methods of teaching basic skills through integration with the arts and the content subjects.

3. Cooperative learning programs. Research shows that cooperative learning arrangements produced excellent results with all students; both the brightest and the slowest students make significant gains, because one of the best ways to learn something permanently is to explain it to someone else. Cooperative learning is underused in Florida, primarily because of the restrictions of state and federal compensatory education programs. Funding restrictions prevent combining capable and deficient students in small groups for instruction, eliminating a major resource for effective education.

4. Extended-year programs. Although there is little likelihood that the Florida legislature will increase funding for an extended school year, summer school may be designed to achieve the same objective for students who are not achieving to their potential. The content of the summer program and the attitude of the teacher, parents, and administrators are crucial; summer school must be perceived as an opportunity to grow.
5. Individualized instruction through technology. Computerized instruction is moving away from the “workbook on a tube” quality that marked its early years. Interactive video, word-processing, story starters, and the analysis of individual needs in mathematics are all within reach of public school classrooms. The motivational level of good computer software is high, and although the initial investment in equipment is formidable, the ongoing costs are reasonable (Darling-Hammond, 1998, pp.48-53).

Darling-Hammond (1998) argues regardless of the approach taken by a district or individual school, there are successful methods of overcoming student achievement problems. “It is obvious from the body of educational research that retention in grade is not appropriate; in the imminent school improvement process mandated by the state there will be many opportunities for school advisory councils to develop innovative approaches that will eliminate non-promotion of students” (Georgia Department of Education, 2003, p. 3).

Critics of social promotion argue that social promotion:

- Frustrates promoted students because it places them in classes where they cannot do the required assignments;
- Social promotion sends a negative message to all students that they do not have to work hard to be promoted;
- Teachers must teach those students that are not prepared as well as those that are prepared;
- Parents have a false sense of their child’s academic success;
- It leads employers to believe that diplomas are meaningless; and
Children are thrown in our society where they cannot function (The U. S. Department of Education, 1999, p. 10-11.). Both grade retention and social promotion fail to improve learning or facilitate positive achievement and adjustment outcomes. The NASP recommends that educational professionals:

- Encourage parents’ involvement in their children’s schools and education through frequent contact with teachers, supervision of homework, etc.
- Use student support teams to assess and identify specific learning or behavior problems, design interventions to address those problems, and evaluate the efficacy of those interventions.
- Use effective behavior management and cognitive behavior modification strategies to reduce classroom behavior problems.
- Implement tutoring and mentoring programs with peer, cross-age, or adult tutors.
- Incorporate comprehensive school-wide programs to promote the psychosocial and academic skills of all students.
- Establish full-service schools to provide a community-based vehicle for the organization and delivery of educational, social and health services to meet the diverse needs of at-risk students (NASP, 2003).

Social promotion costs everyone in our society; therefore, comprehensive approaches to ending social promotion require leadership, resources, and community support to complete the following tasks:

- Set clear objects for students to meet performance standards at key grades;
- Identify student needs early in order to apply appropriate instructional strategies;
- Emphasize early childhood literacy;
- Focus on providing high-quality curriculum and instruction;
- Provide professional development that deepens teachers’ content knowledge and improves instructional strategies to engage all children in learning;
- Set out explicit expectations for all stakeholders, including families and communities, in efforts to help end social promotion;
- Provide summer school for students who are not meeting high academic standards;
- Extend learning time through before and after-school programs, tutoring, homework centers, and year-round schooling;
- Reduce class sizes in the primary grades;
- Keep students and teachers together for more than one year and use other effective student grouping practices;
- Develop transitional and dropout prevention programs;

**Limitations**

The recognized limitations of the study were that the participants were limited to one school system in Florida. However, the assumption was made that like the studies of
Tomchim and Impara (1992), which focused on teachers’ perceptions on retention in elementary grades, the respondents would be representative.

The information received by teachers may have been distorted and limited by several factors. The population was only five schools; thus, presenting problems of representation of the population. The total population of middle school teachers, at five different urban public middle schools in a western central Florida school district (Appendix J), before this research project began was 326. It is perceived that retention is higher the lower a family’s financial situation is. Based on this perception of the achievement and retention gaps between the various divides, the researcher chose schools from each division based on their percentage of students on the free or reduced meal program to illustrate the following hypothetical (Appendix L). The schools selected had the following free and reduced lunch percentages; School A-21%, School B-52%, School C-62%, School D-54% and School E-58% (Appendix L). This gave the researcher a varied range of socio-economic ranges. All teachers were given the voluntary survey. The ethnic groups represented at the schools were African-American, Caucasian, Asian-American and Hispanic. Ten teachers participated in the qualitative part of the study. There were five Whites, two African-Americans, two Hispanics and one Asian in the study. The years of teaching experience ranged from two years to 52 years, and ages ranged from 26 years of age to 75. Convenience sampling was a contributing factor because it relies on information readily available. It may not include a representative subset of a population. Teachers in this school district supporting grade retention observed students the following year, but they may not have observed the long term affects of grade retention. Teachers do not know if the child would have been successful
had they been promoted to the next grade (Jimerson, 2001b). Teachers also believed retaining a student allowed the student to obtain information they did not previously learn. Several factors determine whether a teacher will retain a student. McCoy, Reynolds, and Temple (1997) found teachers’ beliefs about academic achievement are related to their retention practices. Finally, data was gathered through self-reporting. It was assumed that each participant in this study would answer questions honestly and not pre-assumed answers (answers they think the researcher wants). Teachers’ beliefs about retention and its practice continue to contribute to their decisions to retain or promote (Jimerson, 2001b).
References Cited


Holbeck, E. (1950). *Seven ways to prevent dropouts.* Nation’s Schools, (43), 35-36.


Appendices
Appendix A

Teachers’ Perceptions of Grade Retention (TPGRS)

1. Retention is a “good” practice to use when middle school students don’t master the skills required to go to the next grade level.

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2. Retention is harmful to a child’s self-concept/self-image.

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3. Retention will allow students who are behind academically to “catch-up” with their peers.

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4. Children should not be retained.

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5. Children who have 20 or more absences should be retained.

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6. If students do not meet criteria for FCAT, they should be retained?

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7. Students who have passing grades should not be retained no matter what scores they receive on the FCAT.

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8. Teachers can use grade retention as a motivator for students to do well in their
classes.

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9. Students who have been retained in one or more grades tend to be or cause behavior problems.

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10. Retained students normally do better the second time in the grade retained.

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11. If students fail one or more core subjects (reading, math, science, language arts, social studies) the student should be retained.

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12. Students with a documented learning disability should not be retained.

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13. Students should not be administratively or socially promoted.

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14. Parents should have a “voice” if their child is being retained.

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15. Do you feel that a child is emotionally affected when he/she is retained?

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16. Students who are more than two grades behind should not be required to repeat a grade.
17. Students should be retained only because of poor academic performance in class.

18. Do you feel retention affects a child’s self-esteem?

Part II: Demographics

19. How many years have you been teaching?
   a. 1-4   b. 5-9   c. 10-14   d. 15-20   e. over 20

20. Are you certified in Middle Grades? If no, what is your certification type?
   a. yes   b. no __________________________

21. What grade do you teach?
   a. 6th grade   b. 7th grade   c. 8th grade

22. How many students received an ‘F’ in your class for the 2008-2009 school year?
   ___________ out of a total of ___________ students.

23. Circle one of the following which apply to you.
   a. White   b. Black   c. Hispanic   d. Asian/Pacific Islander   e. Other

24. What is your highest level of education?

25. Would you be willing to be interviewed for this research study?
   Yes_____________   No_____________

   If yes, give me your name and school:
   Name_____________________________________ School_______________________
Appendix B

Interview Questions

1. What is your philosophy on grade retention?

2. Are you aware of any relationship between children dropping out of school and being retained in a grade?

3. Are you aware of any psychological effects on students due to grade retention or have you witnessed any affects due to grade retention?

4. What is your biggest frustration about grade retention?

5. Do you feel that the child’s self-esteem is hindered because of grade retention and do you consider a child’s self-concept when recommending grade retention?

6. Do you think the practice of retention is a positive or a negative practice for the child involved?

7. How do you view students who have been retained who are currently enrolled in your class?

8. Will you retain a student because of age, attendance policy, suspension, or is it based solely on academic achievement?

9. How many students were retained in your classroom on last year?

10. As a teacher, do you take any “blame” because of grade retention or do you feel that the “blame” is on the parent and student.

11. How do you feel about social promotion?

12. Do you feel a child’s gender or race influence the decision to retain?
Appendix C

Permission to Use Survey

Hello Dr. Impara,

My name is Julius L. Wynn and I am currently pursuing my doctoral degree at the University of South Florida. I am writing a dissertation that attempts to measure the teacher's perceptions of the use of the practice of grade retention. This study focuses only on middle grade teachers (6th 7th and 8th) in an urban county in central Florida. To obtain this information, I have developed a series of survey questions relating to a teacher's perception of grade retention. I would like your permission to use a portion of the questions that were developed by Dr. Tomchin and yourself. The survey comes from your 1992 article Unraveling Teachers' Beliefs About Grade Retention, American Educational Research Journal, 29 (1), 199-223.

If you have any questions about this research project or would like a copy of the results, please email me at revjwynn@yahoo.com. Thank you for your time and your assistance with this research project.

Sincerely,

Julius L. Wynn

---

On Thu, 12/11/08, Ellen Menaker wrote:

From: Ellen Menaker <Menaker.Ellen@idsi.com>
Subject: RE: Request for permission to use survey
To: "Jim Impara" <jimpara@unlserve.unl.edu>, revjwynn@yahoo.com
Date: Thursday, December 11, 2008, 1:15 PM

Hello Julius

I would be delighted to have you use the questions as part of your research (will appreciate appropriate attribution) and look forward to reading your results. Please send me a copy when you are ready.

Good luck with your work.

Ellen Menaker

From: Jim Impara [mailto:jimpara@unlserve.unl.edu]
Sent: Monday, December 01, 2008 6:40 PM
To: revjwynn@yahoo.com
Cc: Ellen Menaker
Subject: Re: Request for permission to use survey

You should write to Ellen Menaker for permission.

James C. Impara, Ph.D.
Professor Emeritus
10515 US Hwy 24 & 285
PO Box 4658
Buena Vista, CO 81211
Ph. 719 395-0478 Mobile 719 221 9581 Fax 719 395-0479
Appendix D

Letter to Superintendent

Julius L. Wynn
1901 Nugget Drive
Clearwater, Florida 33755

April 10, 2009

Dr. Julie Janssen
301 Fourth Street SW
Largo, Florida 33779-2942

Dear Superintendent Janssen:

I am a Pinellas County assistant principal and am currently enrolled in the Graduate School at the University of South Florida where I am pursuing a doctoral degree. I am writing this letter because I am required to complete a research project. The research project deals with teachers’ beliefs about grade retention. A survey, grade retention information about this county, as well as interviews with five middle schools faculty is needed in order to complete this project.

I would like permission to place individual surveys in the five middle school mailboxes. The survey is only for those who choose to fill out the survey. Interviews will also be on a volunteer basis. Also, interviews will be done after school with those teachers that are selected and would like to participate in this research project.

After the research is completed, a copy will be mailed to middle school principals to place in their media center for viewing. If you have any questions, please contact Julius L. Wynn at 727-475-0982 (Cell).

Please sign at the bottom of this page if the research is approved. I will also provide the principals with a copy of this letter before research begins.

Thank you,

Julius L. Wynn

Approved: ____________________________  Disapproved by: ____________________________
Appendix E

Letter to Principals

Dear Principal:

I am a Pinellas County assistant principal and I am currently enrolled in the Graduate School at the University of South Florida where I am pursuing a doctoral degree. I am writing this letter because I am required to complete a research project. The research project deals with teachers’ beliefs about grade retention. Surveys, as well as interviews with your faculty, are needed in order to complete this project.

I would like permission to have my research assistant (assistant principal or teacher) to place individual surveys in your faculty mailboxes. The survey is only for those who choose to fill out the survey. Interviews will also be on a volunteer basis. Also, interviews will be done after school with those teachers that are selected and would like to participate in this research project.

After the research is complete, a copy will be mailed to you to place in your media center for viewing. If you have any questions, please contact Julius L. Wynn at 727-475-0982 (Cell).
Appendix F

Cover Letter

Informed Consent to Participate in Research
IRB Study # 107920 G

Attention Teachers:

Please take a few minutes to complete the attached voluntary survey. This survey is being conducted in order to complete a Research Project with the University of South Florida. The Research Project entitled “Teachers’ Perceptions of Grade Retention”. All information obtained in the surveys will be confidential and will be used only for this Research Project. After data is collected, surveys will be properly destroyed.

Alternatives

You have the alternative to choose not to participate in this research study.

Voluntary Participation / Withdrawal

You should only take part in this study if you want to volunteer. You should not feel that there is any pressure to take part in the study, to please the investigator or the research staff. You are free to participate in this research or withdraw at any time. Your decision to participate or not to participate will not affect your job status.

A copy of the Research Project will be placed in the Media Center for your viewing. If you have any questions, please contact Julius L. Wynn at 727-475-0982 (Cell). Thank you for spending a few minutes to complete the survey.

Thank you

Julius L. Wynn
Appendix G

University of South Florida
4202 East Fowler Avenue
Tampa, FL 33620

Informed Consent to Participate in Research
IRB Study # 107920 G

Modeled from Guide to the Applied Dissertation Process by Dr. Peter K. Mills of NOVA Southern University.

Researcher:
Julius L. Wynn
1901 Nugget Drive
Clearwater, FL 33755
(727) 475-0982 (Cell)
wynnj@pcsb.org

Faculty Advisor / Major Professor:
Arthur Shapiro, Ph.D.
University of South Florida, HMS 212
Tampa, Florida 33620
(813) 974-3421 (Office)
Shapiro@tempest.coedu.usf.edu

Description

I understand that Julius L. Wynn is a doctoral student at the University of South Florida and is engaged in research for the purpose of fulfilling a requirement for the Doctor of Education in Educational Leadership. I further understand that this research will describe how teachers view grade retention. Teachers will also gain an understanding about the psychological effects of grade retention as well as current research on grade retention. If I participate in this study, I understand that I may be interviewed. The researcher will strive to arrange the interview to accommodate my schedule.

The interview will last between 20-30 minutes and may be recorded. I understand that I may initiate subsequent conversations with Julius L. Wynn should I choose.

Risks and Benefits

I understand that there is no direct benefit to me for agreeing to be in this study. It has been explained to me that the purpose of this study is to help the researcher identify teachers’ beliefs about retention as well as inform teachers about current research about grade retention. The information gained from this study may someday be helpful to educators.

Costs and Payments

Participation in this study is voluntary. I understand that I will not receive payment for my participation.
Confidentiality

We must keep your study records as confidential as possible. All information obtained in the face-to-face interview is strictly confidential. I understand that the interview will be audio taped. As each tape is transcribed, information such as names, and other identifying data will be deleted. The tapes will be erased after the transcription is checked for accuracy. To further protect my identity, any publications from this study will be written without identifying information. I understand that the protection of my identity is regarded as an issue of the utmost importance by the researcher and that my anonymity is safeguarded.

However, certain people may need to see your study records. By law, anyone who looks at your records must keep them completely confidential. The only people who will be allowed to see these records are:

The research team, including the Principal Investigator, study coordinator, and all other research staff.

Certain government and university people who need to know more about the study. For example, individuals who provide oversight on this study may need to look at your records. This is done to make sure that we are doing the study in the right way. They also need to make sure that we are protecting your rights and your safety.) These include:

- The University of South Florida Institutional Review Board (IRB) and the staff that work for the IRB. Other individuals who work for USF that provide other kinds of oversight may also need to look at your records.
- The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS).

We may publish what we learn from this study. If we do, we will not let anyone know your name. We will not publish anything else that would let people know who you are.

Alternatives

You have the alternative to choose not to participate in this research study.

Right to Withdraw

I understand that I may discontinue our interview at any time. If I offer any information that, I later decide that I do not want used in the study, I understand that I can request it not be used.

Questions, concerns, or complaints

If you have any questions, concerns or complaints about this study, call Julius L. Wynn at 727-475-0982.

If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this study, general questions, or have complaints, concerns or issues you want to discuss with someone outside the research, call the Division of Research Integrity and Compliance of the University of
South Florida at (813) 974-9343.
If you experience an unanticipated problem related to the research call Dr. Arthur Shapiro at 813-974-3421.

**Voluntary Consent**

I have read this consent form (or it has been read to me), and I understand the contents. All of my questions concerning this research have been answered. If I have further questions in the future about this study, the investigator will answer them. A copy of this form has been given to me.

__________________________________________________________________________
Participant’s Signature

__________________________________________________________________________
Witness Signature

__________________________________________________________________________
Researcher’s Signature

__________________________________                            _______________________
Participant’s Signature

__________________________________                            _______________________
Witness Signature

__________________________________                            _______________________
Researcher’s Signature

Date

Date

Date
Appendix H

URBAN WESTERN CENTRAL FLORIDA SCHOOL DISTRICT
BOARD POLICY

5.09 REGULAR PROGRAM CORE CURRICULUM/PROMOTION/RETENTION/ACCELERATION--MIDDLE SCHOOL

(1) Regular Program Requirements: Each middle school student will be registered in eighteen (18) units (six per year) during middle school education, twelve (12) of which will be basic unit requirements and six (6) of which will be additional requirements. Students attending a middle school using a 4x4 schedule will be registered in twenty-four (24) units (eight per year), twelve (12) of which will be basic unit requirements and twelve (12) of which will be additional requirements.

(a) Basic Unit Requirements: The basic unit requirements are listed below for middle school pupil progression. Students must pass all 12 of these courses:

- Language Arts: Grades 6, 7, 8
- Mathematics: Grades 6, 7, 8
- Science: Grades 6, 7, 8
- Social Studies: Grades 6, 7, 8

(b) Additional Requirements: Students must pass three out of six units in reading, physical education, health, and electives as described below. Students attending a middle school using a 4x4 schedule must pass six (6) of twelve (12) units in reading, physical education, health, and electives as described below.

1. Reading is required for the following students:

a. All sixth grade students in the standard diploma program who scored Level 1 or 2 on the fifth grade FCAT Reading Sunshine State Standards test must take a year-long reading course. Sixth grade students who scored Level 3 or higher must take a semester or year-long reading course, as determined by the school. Sixth grade students enrolled in the gifted reading program, the sixth grade MEGSSS program, or the approved magnet world languages programs at John Hopkins and Bay Point may exempt this requirement if they scored at Level 3 or above on the fifth grade FCAT Reading Sunshine State Standards test.

b. Seventh and eighth grade students in the standard diploma program who scored at Level 1 or 2 on the previous year’s FCAT Reading Sunshine State Standards test must take a year-long reading course. Seventh and eighth grade students who are Fluent Level 2 students may receive the required reading intervention in a district approved content area class.

2. Career Education and Planning -- Students entering sixth grade in the 2006-2007 school year and beyond must complete a course containing the standards of Career Education and Planning.
before finishing eighth grade. Each student must generate an academic plan in the ePEP(FACTS.org).

3. **Computer literacy** is incorporated into seventh grade reading, gifted, world languages programs, and as appropriate in all curriculum areas.

4. **Physical education/health** is required in grades 6 and 8 for a minimum of one semester. Physical education is required in grade 7 for a minimum of twelve (12) weeks.

5. **School-Based Requirements**: Reading, physical education, and health may be scheduled beyond the minimum requirements shown above.

6. **Elective Program** Grades 6, 7, and 8: Elective courses are part of the core curriculum and are described in the Middle School Course Code Directory with recommendations regarding course length and grade level. Middle schools should attempt to schedule a variety of elective offerings, but no attempt should be made to establish classes that are not feasible or practical for a particular school as it strives to meet the needs of its students.

7. **Advisor/Advisee**: Each middle school will provide advisement support to meet the needs of students.

1. The basic unit requirements for middle school students pursuing a special diploma are listed below. Students must pass all twelve (12) of these courses:
   - ESE Language Arts: Grades 6, 7, 8
   - ESE Mathematics: Grades 6, 7, 8
   - ESE Science/ESE Health Grades 6, 7, 8
   - ESE Social Studies Grades 6, 7, 8

2. All ESE academic courses address the general education Sunshine State Standards as appropriate for the individual student as well as the eleven (11) additional Special Diploma Sunshine State Standards.

3. Additional requirements are listed below. Students must pass three (3) out of six (6) units:
   - ESE Reading Grades 6 and 7
   - ESE Exploratory Vocational or ESE Unique Skills Grade 8
   - Physical Education One semester in grades 6 and 8: 12 weeks in grade 7
   - Electives One semester in grades 6 and 8: 24 weeks in grade 7

(4) **Student Promotion, Retention and Acceleration**

(a) **Promotion from Elementary School to Middle School**. Students entering middle school must have successfully completed the requirements and standards of the elementary school program and demonstrated adequate reading ability as specified in the elementary promotional guidelines in policy 5.07 paragraph (7) (e) 4 or shall have been retained at least one (1) year in elementary school.

(b) **Unit Definitions and Unit Requirements for Regular Middle School Students**

1. Unit Definition
a. A yearlong course has a value of 1 unit. A yearlong course in the 4x4 schedule is two (2) quarters.
b. A semester course has a value of 1/2 unit. A semester course in the 4x4 schedule is one (1) quarter.
c. A twelve-week course has a value of 1/3 unit.
d. Units granted through course modification – see 5.11 (12) Secondary Course Modification

2. Exceptional Student Education courses identified in the Pinellas County course code directory may be used to meet requirements for promotion. Note: ESE courses with special diploma performance standards do not prepare a student to pursue a standard diploma.

(c) Promotion/Retention/Acceleration

1. Promotion of middle school students shall be based upon their achieving minimum standards as identified in program objectives and meeting the required number of units of credit. Students scoring below Level 2 on FCAT Reading or Mathematics, below 4.0 on FCAT Writing or the district writing test, or below Level 2 on FCAT Science or the district science test will receive remediation and may be retained. Additional diagnostic assessments aligned to FCAT will be administered. Upon subsequent evaluation, if the documented deficiency has not been remediated in accordance with the academic improvement plan, the student may be retained. In cases in which minimum standards have not been met, the decision to promote a student to the next grade shall be made by the school's principal and staff, based upon supporting data concerning classroom performance, reassessment results, and past educational history. For promotion to high school, this decision will be made by the middle school staff in consultation with the receiving high school principal. The promotion of a student from a regular middle school to high school is also based upon successful completion of the Sunshine State Standards and Pinellas County Schools Student Expectations. The standards and expectations are embedded in the middle school curriculum. No students may be assigned to a grade level based solely on age or other factors that constitute social promotion.

2. Basic Unit Requirement

a. Promotion to grades 7 or 8: To be promoted from grade to grade within the middle school program, a student may fail only one basic unit course. The student will be required, however, to pass the course either during the following year or in the extended learning program or its equivalent.

i. If a sixth or seventh grade student fails two basic units, the student may be promoted upon passing one unit in the extended learning program and taking one unit during the following school year.

ii. If a sixth or seventh grade student fails three basic units in an academic year, the student will be retained at the same grade level or will be promoted upon passing two units in the extended learning program and taking one unit during the following school year.

iii. If a sixth or seventh grade student fails more than three (3) basic units within an academic year, the student will be retained.
b. Promotion to High School: If an eighth grade student fails one or more basic units, the student will be retained or will be promoted upon passing the unit(s) in the extended learning program. Promotion from a regular middle school to a high school is contingent upon the student's passing not fewer than twelve (12) basic units and three (3) of the additional requirements in paragraph (1)(b) and related arts units, for a total of fifteen (15) units. Students attending a school using a 4x4 schedule must pass twelve (12) basic units and six (6) of the additional requirements. Students who pass the required units will be considered to have demonstrated adequate progress for promotion to ninth grade. All students will demonstrate adequate reading ability before promotion to the 9th grade. Acceptable demonstration of adequate reading ability includes: 1) scoring a Level 2 or higher on the most recent FCAT Reading or 2) meeting grade level expectations in a year-long reading course or 3) demonstrating a year's growth on the FCAT Reading.

3. Other Requirement: If a student fails a related arts, vocational, or elective unit, including physical education/health, the student will be promoted but will be required to pass three (3) of the six (6) units in such courses before promotion to a high school. Students attending a middle school using a 4x4 schedule must pass six (6) of twelve (12) units.

4. In all instances of promotion, retention and challenged promotion, the parents' input shall be solicited and considered; however, the decision to retain, accelerate, promote or place a student in an alternative program shall be based upon the professional judgment of the principal and staff, with the principal having final jurisdiction.

5. The decision to accelerate promotion of a student shall be made by the principal and staff.

(5) Progress Monitoring Plan: Each student must participate in the statewide assessment tests. Each student who does not meet specific levels of performance for each grade level, or who does not meet specific levels of performance on statewide assessments, must be provided with additional diagnostic assessments to determine the nature of the student’s difficulty, the areas of academic need, and strategies for appropriate intervention and instruction. The school in which the student is enrolled must develop, in consultation with the student’s parent, and must implement a progress monitoring plan which provides the school flexibility in meeting the academic needs of the student and reduces paperwork. A student who is not meeting the school district or state requirements for proficiency in reading and math shall be covered by a school wide system of progress monitoring for all students. The plan must assist the student or the school in meeting state and district expectations for proficiency. If the student has been identified as having a deficiency in reading, the K-12 comprehensive reading plan shall include instructional and support services to be provided to meet the desired levels of performance. Students may be required to attend remediation programs held before or after regular school hours or during the summer if transportation is provided. Upon subsequent evaluation, if the deficiency has not been remediated the student may be retained. Each student who does not meet the minimum performance expectations for the statewide assessment testing program must continue to be provided with remedial or supplemental instruction until the expectations are met or the student graduates from high school.
(6) Enrollment in Florida Virtual School: With the approval of the principal (or designee) and the student’s parent, a middle school student may enroll in a Florida Virtual School course or courses during or beyond the regular school day/year.

1. The course must fulfill an educationally valid purpose and be an appropriate course placement based on the student's academic history, grade level, and age. The assistant principal will collaborate with the guidance counselor and teacher(s) to decide if placement in a virtual course is appropriate. A parent may appeal the staff decision to the principal who will make the final decision on placement.

2. Certain district required middle school courses or course sequences may not be substituted by taking a Florida Virtual School course.

3. The student must meet the recommended prerequisites.

4. Students enrolled in a magnet program may not take their specific magnet courses through Florida Virtual School.

5. A student may not be enrolled simultaneously in the same course at both their school and the Florida Virtual School. Students should enroll in Florida Virtual courses at the beginning of a semester. While students await acceptance in a Florida Virtual School course, they must be enrolled full time in a Pinellas County school.

6. Although Florida Virtual School may have institutional drop/add procedures and timelines, students must be enrolled in a full schedule in Pinellas County Schools and may not drop a Florida Virtual School course that results in less than a full course load. Florida Virtual School “W/F” codes will be treated as a grade of “F” on a student’s transcript.

7. During a grading period, a student must be enrolled in and attending at least four (4) courses at a regular schedule middle school and three (3) courses at a 4x4 middle school in order to be a Pinellas County student.

8. Middle schools may build Florida Virtual School courses into their master schedules during the school day.

(7) Middle School Courses Offering High School Credit: Placement in a course that offers high school credit in middle school will be based on the consideration of a variety of indicators such as grades, classroom performance, assessment data, student motivation/interest and by the student making a plan with the guidance counselor and parent for a sequence of courses that would allow the student to earn college credit while in high school through Advanced Placement course(s) or dual credit course(s). If a student is not recommended for placement, placement may be requested by signing a Request for Placement form (PCS Form 2-3059). The classroom teacher and other school personnel will work with the student to help them be successful and the parent is expected to provide additional support that the student may need to succeed in the class. The high school credit can be awarded only upon successful completion of all course requirements including performance assessments for specific courses. Middle school courses that offer high school credit are:
1. Physical Science Honors
2. Algebra I Honors
3. Geometry Honors
4. M/J Mathematics 3 Advanced—Algebra Option (Algebra I credit)
5. M/J Advanced World Language Courses - Only one high school credit may be earned in a world language in middle school. Students will be placed in the appropriate level of the language in high school based on assessment results.
6. Computer Programming Basic I (offered through Florida Virtual School only)
7. Business Systems Technology (offered through Florida Virtual School only)

Note: Grades for courses that offer high school credit in middle school will be used to calculate high school class rank and grade point average. A middle school student enrolled in a course awarding high school credit and earning a grade of "C", "D", or "F" may repeat the course for forgiveness as defined in policy 5.15(6).(b)

5.10 REPORTING STUDENT PROGRESS--MIDDLE SCHOOL

(1) Progress reports: The progress report provides a grade for the student's academic performance in each class or course, the student's conduct and the student's attendance. Student evaluations shall be reported to parents as a formal Student Progress Report at six (6) week intervals in middle schools using the six period day schedule. In middle schools using a 4x4 schedule, the formal Student Progress report will be reported to parents at nine (9) week intervals. Each progress report shall contain information regarding a student's performance or non-performance at grade level, behavior and attendance. The final progress report shall contain information regarding a student's promotion or nonpromotion.

(a) Interim Progress reports: Interim conferences or written progress reports or both are recommended for those students having such need of them. Some schools choose to distribute interim progress reports to all students. Interim progress reports must be given to students whose performance indicates that a D or F grade for the grading period is likely. Interim progress reports are to be issued near the midpoint of the grading period.

(b) Alternate Progress reports: No changes shall be made in the form of the progress report without the express approval of the Superintendent.

(c) Exceptional Students: Exceptional students with disabilities must receive progress reports indicating progress towards Individual Education Plan (IEP) goals and the likelihood they will accomplish the goals during the period covered by the IEP, in addition to the general education progress report each time the general education progress report is provided.

The IEP of each student with a disability specifies the student's curriculum:
1. Grade level expectations, without accommodations.
2. Grade level expectations, with accommodations: Accommodations cannot change the student expectations. They specify changes in instructional strategies that are required as a result of a student's disability and may address methods and materials for instruction,
assignments and classroom assessments, learning environment, time demands and scheduling, or special communication styles.

3. Below grade level curriculum: A student is below grade level curriculum if the student's instructional level in reading, writing, or mathematics is two or more years below grade level. The student's IEP and progress reports specify instructional levels and progress is reported based on specified instructional levels.

4. Sunshine State Standards for Special Diploma (SSSSD): If a student is involved in a functional life skills curriculum, progress is reported based on the SSSSD at the independent, supported, or participating level, as selected by the student's IEP team.

(2) Academic and Conduct Grades Separate: In arriving at the academic grades of all students, teachers are expected to carefully distinguish between the academic grade and the student's conduct. All progress reports shall provide some form of evaluation concerning the student's conduct or deportment. In no case shall the student receive an academic grade which is contingent upon his conduct, except as provided in policy 4.01 (7) 1. Code of Student Conduct.

(3) Grading Scale: The grading system and interpretation of letter grades used in middle and high school shall be as follows:

- A = 4 grade points (90%-100%) (outstanding progress)
- B = 3 grade points (80%-89%) (above average progress)
- C = 2 grade points (70%-79%) (average progress)
- D = 1 grade point (60%-69%) (lowest acceptable progress)
- F = 0 grade points (0-59%) (failure)
- I = 0 grade points (Incomplete)

Percents between 89% and 90%, 79% and 80%, 69% and 70%, and 59% and 60% shall be rounded up to the higher grade if at the midpoint (.5) or above; those below the midpoint (.5) shall be rounded down to the lower grade.

(4) Final Grades:

(a) No Final Examinations: There will be no final examinations counting as separate grades in the marking procedures. During the examination period, teachers will continue with their teaching activities and have evaluations appropriate to their on-going programs. An exception to this procedure is that students enrolled in courses for high school credit may be required to take final examinations.

(b) Grade Computation: The six (6) marking period grades shall be used to formulate the final grade for the yearlong course. In the case of semester courses, the three (3) six weeks' grades will be used to determine the final grade. In the case of twelve (12) weeks' courses, the two (2) six-weeks' grades will be used to determine the final course grade. In the case of middle schools using a 4x4 scheduling, the two nine weeks' (quarter) grades shall be used to formulate the final grade for the yearlong course. In the case of semester courses, the nine weeks' (quarter) grade will be used to determine the final grade. In case of alternate day or flexible block scheduling within a 4x4 schedule, the average of the nine weeks' grades will be used to determine the course grade.
Final grades are computed by summing the grade point value (A=4, B=3, C=2, D=1, F and I=0) for each grade and dividing by the number of grades. The resulting final grade average is converted to a letter grade based on the scale below (see also paragraphs (e), (f), and (g)):

A = 3.5-4
B = 2.5-3.5
C = 1.5-2.5
D = .5-1.5
F = 0-.5

(c) Incomplete Progress report Grades: A student receiving a grade of Incomplete (I) in a course(s) during any grading period shall have a period of three (3) weeks after his return to school to make up any work missed that is needed for the teacher to be able to assign an appropriate grade. Any incomplete grade will revert to an "F" if the student does not make up the work missed within the three (3) weeks of returning to school. Extensions of time may be granted by the principal for the final grading period of the year.

(d) Grades for Courses Awarding High School Credit:

1. Grades for courses that offer high school credit in middle school will be used to calculate high school class rank and grade point average.
2. Grade Forgiveness: A middle school student enrolled in a course awarding high school credit and earning a grade of "C", "D", or "F" may repeat the course for forgiveness as defined in policy 5.15(6).

(e) Options for Grading: If the student’s grade point average in a course is 3.5, 2.5, 1.5, or .5 it will be the option of the teacher as to whether the higher or lower grade will be given. If the lower grade is given, the decision must be documented and approved by the principal (or designee).

(f) Three or More Fs: When three (3) or more of the marking period grades are "F" and the grade point average is .67 (rounded) or above, it will be the option of the teacher and principal as to the final grade. This section does not apply to middle schools offering a 4x4 schedule.

(g) Plus and Minus: No plus (+) or minus (-) symbols shall be used for any final grade.

(6) Secondary Course Modification: Schools may combine the content of two courses into one single period of instruction through the development of a course modification. Students may be granted credit for both of the courses represented in the course modification. In order to participate in a secondary course modification for students other than those enrolled in dropout prevention or exceptional student education, a school must complete the steps of the course modification process developed by the Division of Curriculum and Instruction.
Appendix I
(Pinellas County Form2-2466)

PINELLS COUNTY SCHOOLS
ADMINISTRATIVE PROMOTION
MIDDLE TO HIGH SCHOOL

All students must successfully complete the state requirements for promotion from eighth to ninth grade, which include:
• 3 Units in Language Arts
• 3 Units in Science
• 3 Units in Social Studies
• 3 Distinct Units in Math
• Career Planning Class (which is embedded in US History)
• Completed ePEP
• Acceptable demonstration of adequate reading ability, which would be one of the following:
  – Scoring a Level 2 or higher on the most recent FCAT Reading
  – Meeting grade level expectations in a yearlong reading course
  – Demonstrating a year’s growth on the FCAT Reading

This form may not be used in lieu of successful completion of state requirements listed above.

Please ensure that the data management technician enters administrative promotion codes before leaving in June and completes all promotion entries after the Extended Learning Program closes.

Please complete all sections:
School Name Date
Student’s Name Date of Birth
Check if applicable: ___ ESE ___ ESOL ___ MSAP Total days absent:
School to Attend: ___ Bayside High School ___ Other High School
Reading Score (SRI) if Available:
1. Required attachments:
   1. Discipline Browse
   2. Conference Report (from conference or telephone conversation for #6 on reverse side of form)
   3. Copy of Dropout Prevention Application, if applicable (Bayside referral or Eligibility Form – Secondary Dropout Prevention/Academic Intervention (PCS Form 2-2180-B)

Check all that apply:
___ Two years of age above grade level (Administrative promotion cannot be based on this information alone.)
___ Previous psychological evaluation
___ Academic/intellectual test scores show readiness for high school course work
___ Extenuating family circumstances (Explain below)
___ Attendance Problem
Academic Reason for Suggested Recommendation
___ Has not passed all district required courses but has met state promotion standards for grades 8 to 9.
List required district course/s not passed:

Comments:

Principal’s Signature:

White – High School       Yellow – Middle School
(Over)

PCS Form 2-2466 (Rev. 4/09)        Category A
Review Date 4/10

ADMINISTRATIVE PROMOTIONS
PROCEDURES FOR ADMINISTRATIVE PROMOTIONS

1. Sending school will hold a grade placement conference by the end of May. Completed forms should be sent to the receiving principals by the first part of June. Additional conferences may be warranted pending Extended Learning Program. Completed forms resulting from these additional conferences should be sent to the receiving principals by the end of June.

A. A school committee comprised of at least three of the following will consult to complete the appropriate form:
   • Classroom teacher
   • Guidance counselor
   • Special teacher(s)
   • Non-school based staff member (i.e., psychologist, ESE curriculum specialist, etc.)
   • ESE program specialist (required for all ESE students)
   • Parent or guardian (required – conference preferred or telephone conference if necessary)
   • An administrator

The sending school will send the completed form to the receiving principal.

B. The criteria listed on the reverse side should be utilized when making placement decisions:

2. The two principals involved may change the time line as long as the same procedures are used.

3. Students who have failed district required courses and who meet the criteria should be considered for placement through Dropout Prevention.

4. Placement issues which develop after the school year begins are not to be handled through the administrative promotion procedure, but through consultation between principals with advice from appropriate sources (ESE, Operations, etc.)
## Appendix J

Retention Rates in Pinellas County Middle Schools (School B and D)

**Baypoint Middle School**

<table>
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<th>Grade 07</th>
<th>Grade 08</th>
<th>School Totals</th>
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**Note.** ED = Economically Disadvantaged; SW = Students with Disabilities; ELL = English Learning Language; N/A = Unknown Race; Gr = Grade level total. Pinellas County Schools Student Retention Rates 2008/2009 School Year.
# Appendix J

## Retention Rates in Pinellas County Middle Schools (School C and A)

### Meadowlawn Middle School

<table>
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<th>Grade 08</th>
<th>School Totals</th>
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<td># Ret</td>
<td># Stu</td>
<td>% Sch</td>
<td># Ret</td>
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<td>M</td>
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<th>School Totals</th>
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</thead>
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<td># Stu</td>
<td>% Sch</td>
<td># Ret</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>0.00</td>
<td>0 15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>H</td>
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<td>0 25</td>
</tr>
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<td>I</td>
<td>0 1</td>
<td>0.00</td>
<td>0 1</td>
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<td>M</td>
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<td>0.00</td>
<td>0 28</td>
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<tr>
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Note. ED = Economically Disadvantaged; SW = Students with Disabilities; ELL = English Learning Language; N/A = Unknown Race; Gr = Grade level total. Pinellas County Schools Student Retention Rates 2008/2009 School Year.
Appendix J
Retention Rates in Pinellas County Middle Schools (School E)

<table>
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<td>% Sch</td>
<td>#</td>
<td>% Sch</td>
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<td>Dist</td>
<td>Ret</td>
<td>Dist</td>
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</table>

Note.  ED = Economically Disadvantaged; SW = Students with Disabilities; ELL = English Learning Language; N/A = Unknown Race; Gr = Grade level total.  Pinellas County Schools Student Retention Rates 2008/2009 School Year.
## Appendix K

### Students Retained (Not Promoted) in Grades 6 through 8, 2007-08

Florida Department of Education

**Education Information & Accountability Services, Data Report**

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Percen</th>
<th>Numbe</th>
<th>Grade 7 End-of-Year</th>
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<th>Numbe</th>
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*End-of-year membership is the count of all students who are enrolled at the end of the year and for whom a decision on promotion status is required and reported.*
### Appendix L

![Florida School Grades Logo](image)

**You selected:**
- **District:** PINELLAS
- **Years:** 2007-2008
- **School Grades:**
- **Report Type:** School Grades

<table>
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<th>Writing</th>
<th>Science</th>
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<th>Writing Gain</th>
<th>Science Gain</th>
<th>Points Earned</th>
<th>Percent Tested</th>
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Source: Florida Department of Education
2008 School Accountability Report
About the Author

Julius L. Wynn, Sr., is a 1981 graduate of Sanford-Seminole High School in Sanford, Florida. He received his B.S. in Business from Florida State University in 1985. In 1987 he began teaching Business and Mathematics in Pinellas County, Florida. Julius earned his M.A. in educational leadership from the University of South Florida in December 1993. He was promoted to assistant principal June 1996.

Julius had a kidney transplant January 9, 2008 at Tampa General Hospital. His donor is a member of Highland M.B. Church, where he serves as Pastor since April 1995. He serves as Secretary to the President, Progressive M & E Baptist State Convention of Florida.

He is married to Tonya and they have a son and two daughters; Julius, Valua and Carmilla. He began working at St. Petersburg College in the Education and Ethics departments in January 2009. His goal is to teach Ethics and Education full-time.