

Narrative

Topic: Social-Emotional Impact of Retaining Students

Studies have found numerous times that retention has harmful effects on the social-emotional well-being of children. Retention impacts students' adjustment is associated with numerous health and emotional problems. According to the American School Counselors Association (2006), students who are retained multiple times are likely to experience feelings of shame and stress, as well as negative feelings towards self and school. These negative feelings toward school may be expressed as aggression or depression, and often lead to the student dropping out. Retention is also associated with increases in behavior problems as measured by behavior rating scales. These behavior problems not only affect the student, but those around them, such as family, friends, and peers. How children themselves perceive being retained was shown in a study by Bracey (1986, in Foster, 1993), which found that children rank failing a grade only slightly less stressful than going blind or losing a parent to death.

According to empirical studies, there is an increased risk for health-compromising behaviors among students who have been retained, as well as for students who go to schools with high proportions of old-for-grade students. These behaviors include emotional distress, drug abuse, early onset of sexual activity, cigarette use, driving while drinking, suicidal intentions, alcohol use, alcohol use during sexual activity, and violent behaviors (Florida Association of School Psychologists, 2002). Besides the immediate consequences of retention on these children's lives there are also long-term impacts that not only affect individuals, but society as a whole. For example, adults who were grade repeaters are more likely to be unemployed, living on public assistance or in prison than adults who were never retained (Florida Association of School Psychologists, 2002). The research evidence clearly indicates that retention has numerous harmful effects on the social and emotional aspects of students' lives and therefore is something no student should have to experience.

Talking Points:
Social-Emotional Impact of Retaining Students

- According to the American School Counselors Association (2006), students who are retained multiple times are likely to experience feelings of shame and stress, as well as negative feelings towards self and school.
- Children rank failing a grade only slightly less stressful than going blind or losing a parent to death (Bracey 1986, in Foster, 1993).
- Empirical studies have found that there is an increased risk for health-compromising behaviors among students who have been retained, as well as for students who go to schools with high proportions of old-for-grade students. These behaviors include:
 - emotional distress - drug abuse - early onset of sexual activity
 - cigarette use - driving while drinking - suicidal intentions
 - alcohol use - alcohol use during sexual activity - violent behaviors

(Florida Association of School Psychologists, 2002)

- Long-term impacts of retention show that adults who were grade repeaters are more likely to be unemployed, living on public assistance or in prison, than adults who were never retained (Florida Association of School Psychologists, 2002).

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