BELIEFS AND KNOWLEDGE OF SCHOOL COUNSELORS AND

SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS ABOUT GRADE RETENTION

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ABSTRACT

BELIEFS AND KNOWLEDGE OF SCHOOL COUNSELORS AND SCHOOL

PSYCHOLOGISTS ABOUT GRADE RETENTION

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Grade retention long has been a controversial approach to supporting struggling students. The current study used a survey method to investigate the knowledge and beliefs of school psychologists and school counselors as to the efficacy of grade retention. In total 383 school psychologists and 108 school counselors participated in the survey which consisted of 20 Belief Statements and13 Knowledge questions. Results show that school psychologists' beliefs are more similar to research that has been done over the past several years than the beliefs of the school counselors in the current sample.

The results of the Belief portion of the survey indicated that the school counselors in the sample favor retaining students for lack of maturity and poor attendance more than the school psychologists do, with the school psychologists' beliefs being more in line with research. Both groups agreed with the ideas that a student should only be retained once and students who are receiving support from a special education teacher should not be retained.

On the Knowledge portion of the survey the school psychologists obtained an average of 67.644 and the average for the school counselors was 44.515, with a statistically significant difference between the means. This indicates that the school psychologists have a significantly higher amount of knowledge on the subject of grade retention.

The school psychologists and school counselors were asked to identify their sources of knowledge in order to determine if they were practical or propositional. The school psychologists were fairly split on their responses, with 51 percent indicating that they had obtained their knowledge through a propositional source. The school counselors indicated that 84.3 percent had obtained their knowledge through practical means, which may explain the difference in beliefs and levels of knowledge.

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Chapter One

Introduction

Grade retention has long been a controversial approach to addressing the needs of students who fall behind their peers in academic achievement. Grade retention has been practiced since the advent of the graded system, in the 19th century (Larabee, 1984). The graded system (grouping students by age) became necessary to accommodate larger numbers of students. Prior to that time education was more individualized, with students working at their own pace in a one room school house (Lehr, 1982). The practice of grade retention fell out of favor in the 1930s and 1940s, when it was replaced with the policy of social promotion. Social promotion is the practice of moving students through grades with their peers regardless of their academic achievement. The policy of social promotion came under scrutiny in the 1960s, with educators challenging the merit of the practice, believing that it lowered standards for all students. However, social promotion was the norm until the 1980s. In 1983 The National Commission on Excellence in Education published *A Nation at Risk*, calling for higher academic standards. Many schools responded by implementing competency measures, requiring students to demonstrate mastery of grade level material prior to promotion (Smith & Shepard, 1987). It has been estimated that the retention rate during this time period was15% to 19% (Smith & Shepard, 1987). Throughout the 1990s politicians called for standards and accountability measures, leaving the impression that retention was an acceptable form of academic intervention. President Bill Clinton discussed ending the policy of social promotion in several of his state of the union addresses (1997, 1998, 1999). This led educational policy makers to believe that retention was the best option for low-achieving students.

Although retention data is not collected by the federal government several authors have used population data to estimate the retention rate of the past several decades. Using data from the *Census Bureau's October Current Population Survey* as well as state education agencies, Hauser, Fredrick and Andrews (2007) reported that the retention rate has been rising since the 1970s and spiked in 2003, after the implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. Denton (2001) reported that between 15 and 20 percent of students K-12 repeat at least one grade in their academic career. Data collected by the National Household Surveys Program (NHES) and published in *The Condition of Education 2009,* by The Institute of Education Sciences National Center for Educational Statistics, indicate that the retention rate for students K-8 stayed between 9 and 11 percent between the years 1996 and 2007 (Planty et al., 2009).

There is an increased emphasis on accountability and standards which was brought about by the passage of No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (2002). With this emphasis retention has become increasingly popular with educational policy makers. Several states such as Florida, Texas and Arizona have enacted high stakes promotion policies in an effort to have each student meet the minimum standards of their grade level. As a result of the current policies the National Center for Education Statistics estimates that 10% of students in kindergarten through eighth grade have been retained at least once. Students retained are disproportionately male, from ethnic and racial minorities, poor and live in urban areas (Jimmerson, Pletchner, Graydon, Schnurr, Nickerson & Kundert, 2006).

Outcomes of Retention

Grade retention, although popular with policy makers, does not have empirical support. The majority of research on the subject of retention indicates that it is harmful academically and socio-emotionally (Jimmerson, 2001). Students who are retained demonstrate a short term gain in achievement. However, this is followed by continued long-term low academic achievement, increased behavior issues and a negative attitude toward school. Retention is associated with a higher drop-out rate, lower self esteem and greater academic failure (Witmer, Hoffman & Nottis 2004).

The long term impact of retention has been studied by several authors. Results from longitudinal studies indicate that retention is an ineffective means of improving academic achievement and personal adjustment in low achieving students. As an example, Jimerson et al. (1997) conducted a longitudinal study on 190 students beginning in kindergarten and terminating when they turned 16. Retained students were matched with low-achieving but continuously promoted students on measures of achievement. Jimerson et al. (1997) reported that there was a gain in math achievement for the retained group, which disappeared by sixth grade. In addition, the retained group had significantly more problems with emotional well-being, behavior and peer acceptance by sixth grade. Although this disappeared by age sixteen, it was significant enough that it led the researchers to conclude that the lack of academic benefit and significant emotional cost of retention makes it a harmful intervention.

Data from the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 (NELS:88) was used to assess the impact of retention in the short and long term. The National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 conducted surveys in 1988, 1990, 1992, 1994 and 2000 on

24,599 eighth grade students. Miesels and Liaw (1993) analyzed data from the NELS:88 and found significant differences between retained students and their continuously promoted peers. The retained students demonstrated more emotional issues, behavioral problems, lower achievement and more special education placement. Fine and Davis (2003), using data from NELS:88, found a long term impact of retention on enrollment in post-secondary education. Results indicated that students that were retained but graduated high school enrolled in community college, 4-year colleges and trade schools at half the rate of students that had been continuously promoted. This led the authors to conclude that retention has a long term negative impact on employment and earning potential due to the fact that college graduates have a lower rate of unemployment and higher average income than high school graduates.

Retention also poses a great cost. For example, in Florida 208,296 kindergarten through grade 12 students were retained at the end of the 2002-2003 school year at a cost of over one billion dollars. This estimate is based on the cost of educating each of those retained students for an extra year. The cost is much likely higher when one considers the impact of factors such as the increase in dropout rates of retained students (Florida Association of School Psychologists, 2004).

Professional Organizations' Policy Statements

The professional organizations that represent the school counselors and school psychologists have developed policy statements on the subject of grade retention. Both organizations have examined the research on grade retention and have determined that it is an ineffective, if not damaging approach to solving the problem of low achievement. They also note the pitfalls of social promotion and reject both practices as a means to

address issues related to low achievement. The policy statements of the National Association of School Psychologists and the American School Counseling Association are discussed below.

The National Association of School Psychologists' (NASP) "White Paper" (2011) examined the effectiveness of grade retention by reviewing some of the research that has been conducted on the subject. They state that the majority of the retention research done over the past four decades does not support its use as an effective intervention for the remediation of academic deficits. The fact that the highest retention rates are among poor, minority and inner-city students is also raised as a great concern. The "White Paper" also mentions the high financial cost to the states that adopt the policy of retention. The example of Texas was given. In Texas there were 202,099 students retained during the 2006-2007 school year at a cost of more than two billion dollars. This figure takes into account the $10,162 per pupil cost of educating a student for one year. The paper mentions a great deal of evidence against the use of retention, but does not see social promotion as the best means of addressing the needs of low achieving students.

The NASP position on retention advocates for an alternative to retention and social promotion (NASP, 2011). It promotes the use of early intervention and progress monitoring strategies in order to avoid the need to decide between retaining a student and socially promoting them positing that early identification of academic difficulties provides time for remediation. The response to intervention model is proposed as the solution to the problems associated with both grade retention and social promotion. (NASP, 2011).

The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) position on retention mirrors that of NASP, that early identification and effective intervention are the alternative to retention and social promotion. It begins by stating that the ASCA opposes laws or school district policies that require retention or social promotion without consideration of the individual student's needs (ASCA, 2012). ASCA also makes several suggestions to support schools in avoiding having to make the decision to retain a student. The ASCA advocates for educational reforms that are research based. They would like to see school counseling programs that support the academic, social-emotional and behavioral competence of all students in all schools. Teams of professional educators as well as parents should meet to determine the most effective educational strategy. ASCA advocates for supporting struggling students with: literacy strategies, career and technical education, pre-kindergarten programs, extending the school year for remediation, reducing class size and increasing parental involvement.

Given the preponderance of evidence against the effectiveness of retention, why does the practice remain so prevalent? Research indicates that the majority of school districts use an informal process to make retention decisions, which are influenced by teacher recommendations, classroom performance, social/emotional functioning as well as performance on standardized tests (Jimmerson, Carlson, Rotert, Egland & Sroufe, 1997). The decision is usually made by a team, consisting of administrators, teachers and at times counselors and school psychologists. In some school districts teachers have the responsibility of making the initial recommendation for retaining a student. This process is problematic, due to the fact that teacher's opinions about the effectiveness of retention as an academic intervention are generally favorable and influenced by past experience

and the opinion of their peers more than research (Witmer et al., 2004). Further, many administrators base their opinion on past practices and anecdotal evidence, in general having a positive perception of the effectiveness of retention, regardless of evidence to the contrary (Range, Pijanowski, Holt & Young, 2012).

With their training in child and adolescent development as well as their knowledge about academic interventions, school counselors and school psychologists can lend a great deal to the retention decision-making process. School counselors and school psychologists lend a unique perspective, working with the student on an individual basis, forming an understanding of the student's emotional, social and academic development. Their feedback can be critical in creating and implementing the appropriate educational interventions for an individual student. School counselors and school psychologists act as advocates for their students, making sure that interventions are effective and empirically supported. However, it is unclear where school counselors and psychologists stand on the issue of retention. Little research has been done on the subject.

This study seeks to gain the perspective of school counselors and school psychologist on the retention debate. It will examine their beliefs, knowledge and where they gained their knowledge. It will also provide a picture of the school counselor and school psychologist's current participation in the decision-making process and if they believe that there should be a change. A survey method will be used to ascertain the school counselor and school psychologist's perception of retention, as well as their knowledge of research on the subject.

Theoretical Orientation

This study takes an epistemological approach to the subject of grade retention. Epistemology, sometimes referred to as theory of knowledge, is the branch of philosophy that seeks to define knowledge (Steup, 2012). It is concerned with examining what knowledge is, how it is acquired and to what degree something can be known. Epistemology seeks to define knowledge and its relationship to truth, belief and justification. Epistemology divides knowledge into three categories the first being "*factual or propositional* knowledge, which consists of a theoretical comprehension of abstract arguments in the sciences" (Fenstermacher, 1994). The second is *practical* knowledge, the knowledge of how to do something, having a particular skill. The third is knowledge by *acquaintance*, the knowledge obtained by interacting with the environment. For example, the knowledge of how an apple tastes obtained through eating it. This study will focus on the first two types of knowledge, propositional and practical.

Propositional knowledge can be understood by reviewing the standard analysis or classical view of knowledge (Fenstermacher, 1994). This approach stipulates requirements for knowing. In order to state that something is known, it must be true, believed by the individual claiming the knowledge, and there must be a justification for that belief. For example, a teacher might believe that behavior modification practices are the most effective way to manage a classroom. She must believe that fact and there must be a justification for that belief. The justification takes the form of evidence, such as that obtained from educational research on classroom management. Therefore, one must have

evidence in support of their claim to knowledge. These claims must be applicable beyond the particular time, situation or context. They must be generalizable.

Practical knowledge is knowing how to do something and comes in the form of personal experience. It is the knowledge obtained through doing and not just observing. Practical knowledge is specific to time, place or context. Practical knowledge is particular to the action, event or situation and may not be applicable in other situations. To illustrate the point, consider a teacher that has years of experience that has developed a personal technique for managing the classroom. The knowledge of this technique was created by the experience of doing rather than observing or reading about the approach. The distinction between propositional and practical knowledge is important to this study, in that it seeks to form an understanding of the beliefs of school psychologists and school counselors on the subject of retention. Do they believe that retention is an effective intervention for students that are struggling academically? What are their beliefs regarding the effectiveness of retention as an intervention for students with social and emotional needs? It will also explore the justification for those beliefs, through exploring the knowledge of school counselors and school psychologists, and how they acquired that knowledge.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of the current study is to use a survey method to examine the perceptions and knowledge of counselors and school psychologists in regards to the subject of grade retention.

Significance of the Study

This study will contribute to the existing literature by examining data relevant to the perceptions and knowledge of school counselors and school psychologists on the topic of retention. Unlike the case with teachers, there has not been a great deal of research focusing on the perceptions and knowledge of school counselors or school psychologists. This information can be useful, because school counselors and school psychologists can have a large impact on the decision to retain a child at grade level. School counselors and school psychologist may have a role in making the decision by being part of the team that makes the decision of whether or not to retain a student. They can provide insight into the academic, social and emotional needs of the student. They can also provide information on evidence based practices, including providing evidence on the effectiveness of retention from the most current research.

The information provided by this study may prove useful to the professional organizations that represent school counselors and school psychologists. They may use this information to provide professional development opportunities for their members. School districts may also find this information useful in planning professional development for school counselors and school psychologists. The information obtained in this study may also be useful for university programs training future school counselors and school psychologists, providing suggestions for training on the implication of retention as an academic intervention.

Research Questions

1. What are school counselors' and school psychologists' beliefs about retention?
2. Is there a difference in the beliefs of school psychologists and school counselors?

3. How much knowledge do school counselors and school psychologists have about the impact of retention on students?

4. Is there a difference between the knowledge of the school counselor and school psychologist?

5. What sources of information (practical v. propositional) do school counselors and school psychologists base their knowledge of grade retention, and is there a difference between to two professional groups.

Definition of Key Terms

Beliefs: According to Nespor (1987) beliefs have specific characteristics; existential presumption, affective and evaluative loading and episodic structure. Existential presumptions are the very personal truths that we believe without question. They are the assumptions that we hold about ourselves and others and are seldom changed by persuasion. Beliefs are more affective and evaluative than knowledge and less open to reason. They are tied to episodic memories and create a filter through which we interpret new situations. Beliefs do not need internal consistency or group validity; they are more emotional in nature than knowledge.

Practical Knowledge: Fenstermacher (1994) states that practical knowledge is acquired trough participation and reflection upon one's actions and experiences. It is specific to the context in which it was acquired and is related to how to do something, when and where to do it and interpretation of one's own action.

Propositional Knowledge: Propositional knowledge is acquired through the scientific method. It is research based and seeks to find truths that are generalizable,

significant and valid. It is a more formal conception of knowledge (Fenstermacher, 1994).

Retention: The practice of not moving students to the next grade level with their peers. Keeping a student in the same grade for a second year is usually done to remediate academic deficiencies or address issues of maturity.

Social Promotion: A policy of moving students to the next grade level with their same aged peers, regardless of academic achievement (Larabee, 1984)

Delimitations

The study was conducted on a population of counselors and school psychologists. The counselors were recruited for participation through the membership list of the American School Counseling Association. The school psychologists were recruited through the membership list of the Georgia Association of School Psychologists and the Washington State Association of School Psychologists. They were also obtained through a posting on the blog "Notes from a School Psychologist". Recruitment of participants was also achieved by contacting former students of the school psychology program at Northern Arizona University, as well as supervisors of practicum and internship students.

There are limitations on the generalizability of the study. The sample consists of only those school counselors and school psychologists that responded to the invitation to participate. This may create a bias in that the sample may be representative of individuals that have an interest in the subject of retention, rather than the population of school counselors and psychologists as a whole.

Summary

Grade retention has a long history as being a controversial approach to assisting students who have fallen below grade level expectations. Due to the emphasis on accountability brought about by passage of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (2002), retention has regained popularity as an alternative to social promotion. Professional educators such as school counselors and school psychologists can impact the decision on which academic interventions are most appropriate for the students whom they serve. This ability comes with the responsibility of knowing the most current research and having empirical evidence as the foundation for the choices that are made. This study attempts to ascertain the beliefs and knowledge that school counselors and school psychologists have about the policy of retention.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

This chapter will review the literature related to the educational practice of grade retention as an intervention for students that are not achieving at grade level, as well as the factors associated with the decisions to retain these students. This review contains 15 sections: 1) historical overview, 2) retention rates 3) characteristics of retained students, 4) retention policies, 5) decision-making models, 6) impact of retention on students, 7)academic outcomes, 8) social-emotional outcomes, 9) understanding beliefs and knowledge, 10) teacher's beliefs about retention, 11) teacher's knowledge of retention, 12) school counselor's beliefs about retention, 13) school psychologist's beliefs about retention, 14) student perception of retention, 15) summary.

Historical Overview

The industrial revolution hastened the need to educate students more efficiently. In order to accomplish this goal, schools in the United States started to group children by age levels around 1860 (Ownings & Magliaro, 1998). This procedure was brought from Prussia by Horace Mann, who implemented it at the Quincy Grammar School in Boston, Massachusetts (Powell, 2010). This was considered a more efficient method of education than the prior approach of a one room school house. Promotion to the next grade level was based on the mastery of skills, thus starting the practice of retention. Grade retention was relied on heavily to assist students in mastering skills, as well as making the classroom more manageable for teachers by reducing skill variance (Owings & Magliaro, 1998).

There is very little research on retention rates in the 19th century. Some authors have estimated that between 50 percent and 70 percent of students had been retained at

least once by the time they entered eighth grade (Karweit, 1991). Rather than being faced with the possibility of being retained again, 50 percent of students dropped out of school by eighth grade (Thomas, 1992). By 1900 the practice of retention was being challenged, based on the high dropout rate and the perception that there may be a negative impact on social and academic development.

Beginning in the 20th century researchers started looking into the impact that retention has on the emotional, social and academic life of the students that have been retained. In 1911 a longitudinal study (over seven years) was conducted by Keyes. The research findings indicated that 21 percent of the students that were retained did better and 39 percent did worse (Powell, 2011). This research also indicated a retention rate of 25 percent (for students in grades 1 through 9) and a high dropout rate.

During the 1930s and 1940s social promotion became the policy. Students were passed along with their peers and given supplementary instruction and support. This policy was in reaction to the high dropout rate and research that indicated that there was a negative impact on a student's self esteem, and their ability to learn in the future (Owings & Magliaro, 1998). Research conducted at that time indicated that retention did not decrease the variation in student skills in the classroom, and had no positive educational impact. The academic gain of retained students was smaller than that of their promoted peers. Further research in the 1940s indicated the relationship between retention and dropping out. This relationship was discovered when there was a push to keep students in school, so social promotion was seen as the most effective policy to do that (Owings & Magliaro, 1998). Social promotion remained the norm through the 1950s and 1960s. In the late 1960s educators began to question the policy of social promotion, believing that

it relaxed standards and had a negative impact on standardized test scores. However, a study conducted by Jackson (1975) reviewed all of the research that had been done on retention up until that time. He concluded that there was no evidence to support the policy of retention.

The 1980s brought about a demand for educational accountability. In 1983 *A Nation at Risk* (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983) was published. It called for applying increased educational standards in making the decision to promote students from one grade level to the next. Some schools answered the call by requiring students to pass competency tests before moving to the next grade. Grade retention became an increasingly popular method of dealing with low achieving students. It is estimated that the retention rate at this time was between 15% and 19% (Smith & Shepard, 1987). The policy of retention continued through the 1990s. President Clinton called for an end to social promotion policies in his state of the nation addresses (1997, 1998, 1999); despite the fact that the majority of the research indicates that retention has a negative impact on the emotional and academic life of the student.

In 2001 the George Bush administration enacted the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). This act sought to insure that all students would have an equal opportunity to obtain an appropriate education. The act requires that students meet a minimum level of mastery before moving on to the next grade level. Due to the fact that not all students master material at the same rate, the retention debate has been reignited. There is a greater focus on high stakes testing, with some states requiring that students pass a competency test before moving to the next grade level. This leaves educators with the difficult decision of what to do for a student that has not met the minimum level of

mastery. Since the passage of NCLB, the retention rate has increased (Jimerson, Pletchner, Graydon, Schurr, Nickerson & Kundert, 2006), leaving many children behind despite the intentions of the legislation. NCLB mandates the use of evidence based practices in educational decision-making. Despite evidence that retention is not an effective intervention for students not achieving at grade level, the retention rate continues to grow.

For more than a century the policy of retaining low performing students has been the subject of a great deal of controversy. When first put in place it was seen as an intervention that would allow children time to "catch up" to their peers. This belief was challenged when researchers began to look into the impact that retention has on the emotional and academic life of the student and advocated for an alternative. Research in the early part of the 20th century indicated that the policy of retention had a negative impact on self esteem and increased the chance that a student would drop out before completing high school (Owings & Magliaro, 1998). The policy of social promotion was the norm until the late 1960's when educators began to believe that it reduced standardized test scores. A further demand for educational accountability in the 1980's and 1990's increased retention's appeal as an alternative intervention for students that were not meeting the minimum standards. The present policies put in place by the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001 has reignited the debate on the effectiveness of retention. Several states have adopted high-stakes requirements, where students must achieve a minimum level of competency (as demonstrated on a standardized test) or remain in the same grade for a second year. However, the vast majority of research does not indicate that retention is effective in enhancing academic achievement.

Retention Rates

Due to the lack of a national, systematic method for reporting the number of students retained each year it is difficult to obtain a clear picture. In absence of a national data collection system most statistics on retention rates are speculative, approximate and uncertain (Hauser , Fredrick & Andrews, 2007). One method used to estimate the rate of retention is calculating the number of students that are below the modal grade for their age. This is only an approximation, due to several factors. States have different cut-off dates for enrollment in kindergarten; some of these policies are established at the district level so there is no uniformity in cut-off dates. Academic redshirting (the practice of starting a child a year late in kindergarten) also contributes to the number of students that are overage for grade (Range, Dugan and Pijanowski, 2011). Federal regulations do not require that retention statistics be kept, so it is up to researchers to use resources such as the census and national surveys.

Retention rates have fluctuated with time. In the beginning of the 20th century it is estimated that the retention rate was close to 50 percent (Holmes & Matthews, 1984). The years between the 1930s and 1970s saw a decline in retention rates (Johnson, Merrell, & Stover, 1990). Retention rates for the 1980s appear to fall between 5 and 7 percent, according to census data reviewed by Shepard and Smith (1990). While other authors, reviewing the *Census Bureau's October Current Population Survey* (for the years 1982 to 1996) came to the conclusion that the retention rate was closer to 15 percent (Hauser, Pager & Simmons, 2004). Denton (2001) reported that 15 to 20 percent of children between the ages of six and 17 repeat at least one grade. Many of these students will be retained in first grade. However, the vast majority of them will have to

repeat 9th grade. The National Center for Educational Statistics (NCES) conducted a

survey of parents with children in grades K-8. The researchers found that the retention

rate for students in kindergarten through eighth grade has consistently been between 9%

and 11% in the years that the interviews were conducted, between 1996 and 2007 (Planty

et al., 2009).

Characteristics of Retained Students

To get an understanding of retention it is important to examine the characteristics

that retained students share. Several authors have examined the impact that gender,

race/ethnicity and socio-economic status have on retention rates. They have all come to

similar conclusions. Boys are retained more often than girls. Students from racial/ethnic

minorities are retained at a rate much higher than White students. Families from the

lowest socio-economic status tend to have their children retained at a much higher rate

than those in the middle and upper classes (McCoy & Reynolds, 1999).

Gender. Research has demonstrated a gender gap in retention rates with boys

being more likely to have been retained at least once in their academic career. The

National Center for Educational Statistics (2010) found that 12 percent of boys were

retained as compared to 8 percent of girls in the years between 1996 an 2007. Alexander,

Entwisle and Dauber (2003) collected data on the retention practices of the Baltimore

City Schools over eight years. They found that despite the fact that the population was

evenly split for gender, 57 percent of those retained were boys. Hauser, Fredrick and

Andrews (2007) reviewed census data for the years between 1996 and 2005. They

reported that "boys are 26 percent more likely to be retained than girls" (p. 99).   In a

sample taken from the National Education Longitudinal Study (NELS 88) it was

observed that boys were retained at a much higher rate than girls, 24 percent for boys and 13 percent for girls (Meisels & Liaw, 1993). Other authors have estimated that boys are twice as likely to be retained as girls (Frey, 2005). Along with the gender gap, there appears to be a difference in the retention rates of White students when compared to their African American and Hispanic counterparts.

Race/ethnicity. A student's chances of being retained appear to be connected to their race/ethnicity. In a review of census data from the 1990s Hauser et al. (2007) reported that African American students had a 31 percent increased likelihood of being retained over their White counterparts. Meisels and Liaw (1993) reported that African American students were retained at a rate of 29.9 percent, Hispanic students at a rate of 25.2 percent and White students at 17.2 percent. Dye and Johnson (2006) reviewed census data on academic performance for students aged 12 to 17, which covered the years between 1994 and 2004. They concluded that African American students were twice as likely to be retained as their White peers. Kaushal and Nepomnyaschy (2009) found that African American students were 6 percent and Hispanic students were 3 percent more likely to have repeated a grade than their White peers. Although different studies have come up with differing numbers on the retention rates of racial/ethnic minorities, it is clear that there is a disparity. The U.S. Department of Education's Civil Rights Office collected data on the retention rates for the 2009-2010 school year. The data were obtained from approximately 85 percent of the public schools in the United States. Their findings indicate that 1 million students were retained in grades K-8 at the end of the 2009-2010 school year (Adams, Robelen & Shah, 2012). This represents 2.3 percent of all students enrolled. The data that was of most concern to the Department of

Education's Civil Rights Office was the disparity between the retention rates of African American, Hispanic and White students. As an example, while African American students make up one-fifth of the student population, 49 percent of the students that were retained in third grade were African American. As a whole, the survey found that African American Students were three times as likely to be retained and Hispanic students twice as likely to be retained as their white counterparts. While gender and ethnicity/race contribute a great deal to the likelihood of being retrained, socio-economic status also plays a part.

Socio-economic status (SES). SES contributes to a student's chances of being retained. One way to measure the socio-economic status of a student is to determine if they are eligible for free or reduced lunches (families falling below the poverty line qualify for free lunches). Alexander et al. (2003) used this metric to assess the SES of the students they were studying. The authors determined that 85 percent of the students retained in their study qualified for free and reduced lunches. Meisels and Liaw's (1993) data from the National Education Longitudinal Study of 1988 (NELS 88) indicated that 33.9 percent of the students retained were from the lowest SES. By contrast, 8 percent of students from the highest SES were retained. Hauser et al. (2007), in a review of census data, came to the conclusion that students in the lowest SES had a 41 percent higher likelihood of being retained than the students in the highest SES. The National Center for Educational Statistics (2010) reported that the retention rate for the poorest students (between 1996 and 2007) was 23 percent, contrasted with non-poor students that were retained at 5 percent. Socio-economic status is an important factor in determining

retention rates. However, there are other factors that must be taken in to account, such as family make-up and learning disabilities.

Family Characteristics. Retained students tend to have poor attendance and greater residential mobility (McCoy & Reynolds, 1999). Their parents are less educated and tend not to be involved in their child's education (Alexander et al., 2003, Jimerson et al., 1997). Students whose mother had not completed high school were retained at a rate of 20 percent. This is in contrast to students whose mother had completed a bachelors degree were retained at a rate of 5 percent (NCES, 2010). Thus, parental education and involvement in their children's schooling has a large impact on the chances that a student will be retained.

In summary, retention is an intervention that disproportionally impacts boys, students from ethnic and racial minorities and the poor. Students that have a parent that is educated and actively involved in their education have a reduced risk of retention.

Retention Policies

In the absence of a national framework for retention decision-making, it is up to each state to determine promotion and retention policies. States have taken a variety of approaches, some specifying requirements for promotion in legislation, some making it a decision for local authorities, and still others creating "promotion gates" (Zinth, 2005). A "promotion gate" is a specific criterion that a student must meet prior to promotion to the next grade. Zinth (2005) identified 12 states that had legislation directing their state boards of education or local education agencies to implement such policies. As of 2005 there were 17 states without formal written policies on retention and promotion decision-making (Zinth, 2005). Many districts follow informal policies with the teacher making

the primary recommendation and informing the parents with assistance from administration (Tanner & Gallis, 1997). As early as the 1980s, researchers were considering different models of decision-making to facilitate more effective and equitable decisions.

Decision-Making Models

In an effort to standardize the retention/promotion decision-making process Light (1977, 1981) and Lieberman (1980) provided specific criteria for the assessment of students. Light (1977, 1981) devised a retention scale which asks teachers to consider 19 categories such as, participation of parents, motivation, attendance and emotional problems. These categories were obtained from a comprehensive literature review of 150 studies. Each item is rated on a five point scale. The instrument provides an overall score, indicating the student's "appropriateness" for retention. Light's Retention Scale (1977, 1981) was found to have limited predictive and concurrent validity (Sandoval, 1982). Lieberman (1980) provided a model using several factors grouped under three headings – Child, Family and School, which should be considered when making retention decisions. For example, "Family" factors include; 1) Frequency of geographic moves, 2) Foreign language spoken in the home, 3) Family attitude toward retention, 4) Siblings (number, attitude toward child), 5) Attitude, advice of family physician (p. 4). The educator would rate each of these factors on a four-point scale: 1) for retention, 2) against retention, 3) undecided, 4) not applicable. Lieberman (1980) stated that his objective in providing the model is to promote rational decision-making by parents and school personnel in order to benefit children.

Educational researchers have proposed a team approach (Stammer and Cooke, 1986) and an approach similar to screening a student for special education (Walker, 1984) to make the retention/promotion decision. The approach advocated by Stammer and Cooke (1986) consists of an educational team meeting frequently to discuss the progress of the student. This team would involve parents and address academic difficulties throughout the school year, providing alternatives. They believed that a team approach would lead to more effective decisions and a reduction in retentions. Similarly, using an approach like that in special education evaluation provides for a more structured decision-making process (Walker, 1984). The special education evaluation process provides for formal (standardized testing, intellectual, academic and behavioral assessments) and informal data (work samples, classroom observation, social/emotional history) gathering, multidisciplinary input (teacher, counselor, parent, nurse, administrator, occupational therapist, speech therapist) and team decision-making. It is the task of the team to consider all aspects of the student and make a decision that is truly in their best interest.

Current decision-making practices. Schnurr and Nickerson (2009) found little information on the retention decision-making process, what they did find indicated most school districts relied on an informal process with the teacher making the initial recommendation. Retention decisions are influenced by a student's classroom performance, social/emotional functioning and standardized assessments with a multidisciplinary team considering the student's progress and the principal making the final decision to retain or promote a student (Jimerson et al. 1997, Rose et al. 1983). Schnurr and Nickerson (2009) raise as a concern the lack of information regarding the

extent to which the developmental and educational histories are addressed in the retention decision-making process. They go on to recommend that school psychologists, because of their training in child development and program evaluation, become more involved in the retention/promotion decision-making process.

Increasing the effectiveness of retention/promotion decisions through the use of evidence-based practice. Mandates within No Child Left Behind (2001) and Individuals with Disabilities Educational Improvement Act (2004) require that educational interventions are scientifically based, which may play a part in reducing the research to practice gap in education (Spencer, Detrich and Slocum, 2012). The research to practice gap implies that the most effective interventions are not being used because educational decisions have not been based on scientific evidence, such as the continued use of retention. Spencer et al. (2012) provide a framework for evidence-based decision-making in education which "integrates (1) the best available evidence, (2) professional judgment, and (3) client values and context "(p.129). Practitioners have a responsibility to find the best available intervention, based on scientific evidence. This allows for flexibility, if there is not a great deal of research or the research appears flawed, a greater emphasis will be placed on progress monitoring to evaluate the effectiveness of the decision. Professional judgment is the filter through which decisions are made. Professional judgment consists of eight competencies: (1) formulating a problem so that it can be treated, (2) clinical decision-making, treatment implementation and progress monitoring, (3) interpersonal skills, (4) continued professional development, (5) evaluation of research, (6) having an understanding of the impact of context on treatment, (7) using available resources, (8) having a sound rationale for treatment (APA Task Force

on Evidence-Based Practice, 2005). Professional judgment is seen as developing from education, experience and ongoing review of research related to practice. It is not based on personal opinion and biases.

The third, and final, aspect of evidence-based decision-making is the thoughtful consideration of client values and contexts. Spencer et al. state that "Client values represent the deeply held ideals of the individual clients, their families, and the broader community" (p. 137). Having the student and parents participate in the decision-making process honors their values and may contribute to the overall success of any intervention that is chosen. The context of the intervention to be implemented must also be taken into account. Contextual factors include; resources (required and available), personnel (training and skill level) and professional development. When considering intervention options, contextual variables such as the availability of resources must be part of the determination.

An ideal decision-making process. The decision whether to retain or promote a student must be made by a multidisciplinary team and the evaluation must be comprehensive in nature.   It would be similar to the Response to Intervention and special education evaluation model. The team would consist of an administrator, teacher(s), school psychologist, school counselor, the school nurse, parents, student and any other individual involved in the student's education. The teacher would be responsible for identifying students who are "at risk" by the end of the first quarter of school. The teacher would bring the student to the attention of the team, invite the parents to the meeting and gather work samples, information from the prior year, standardized testing, attendance, behavior and social interaction, to discuss their concerns. At the meeting, the

concerns and evidence-based interventions would be discussed. Some interventions might include: reduced class size, one-to-one tutoring by an adult during the school day, remedial instruction outside the classroom during the school day, small-group intensive tutoring, remedial instruction before or after school, one-to-one tutoring by an adult before or after school, group counseling or individual counseling. Each team member would be responsible for knowledge of available interventions and their empirical support, in order to make the most effective recommendation. Interventions would be put in place and the team would meet again, in five weeks, to monitor the student's progress. If the student does not demonstrate progress, a second set of interventions will be recommended and the team will monitor the progress of the student, until the end of the first semester. If the student does not respond to those interventions they should be evaluated for a learning disability by the school psychologist. A comprehensive psycho-educational evaluation provides a great deal of information, cognitive scores, academic scores, behavioral ratings, personal, medical and academic history and at times information from occupational and speech therapists. Only after ruling out a learning disability and offering a variety of interventions should the team consider retention. When retention is considered, the empirical evidence should be reviewed along with the specific concerns of the student in order to make the most appropriate decision.

Impact of Retention on Students

In order to gain a better understanding of the impact that retention has on students, Jackson (1975) conducted a review of 30 studies that were done between 1911 and 1973. These 30 studies were separated by research design. The first type of study that was analyzed was the naturalistic design. Students that were retained under normal

retention policies were compared to their counterparts that were promoted. These two groups of students were matched on some variable such as achievement scores, grades, IQ or SES. The naturalistic design approach favored the use of promotion policies when addressing the needs of low achieving or maladjusted students. The second method of study, known at the pretest-posttest design, compares students on academic and adjustment variables, prior to being retained to after they had been retained. This approach produced results in favor of retention. However, Jackson (1975) is quick to point out the flaws in the pretest-posttest design. He states that there is a lack of control of other variables that might contribute to the improvement of retained students such as maturity. He goes on to state that the use of this design might even indicate that the students that were promoted would benefit from retention. The third and final type of study that was analyzed was the experimental design. In these studies students were randomly assigned to the retention or promotion condition allowing the researcher to reduce the chance that there are systematic differences between the two groups. Jackson (1975) only found three studies in the experimental design category. Analysis of these three studies indicated that promoting students was the most effective approach. Jackson's (1975) review of the literature on retention between 1911 and 1973 prompted him to declare that there was no sound scientific evidence in favor of retaining pupils in grade and that further research should be conducted.

A quantitative alternative to the literature review is the meta-analysis. The researcher systematically scores the studies on a particular characteristic (Cone & Foster, 2006). The results of studies that investigate the same subject are grouped statistically which allows evaluation of the characteristics of the group as a whole. The result of the

meta-analysis is the effect size which provides a measure of strength of the relationship between characteristics or variables. Meta-analysis allows for the assessment of the effectiveness of the intervention studied, producing knowledge that can be helpful in decision-making. There are three meta-analysis that have been conducted on the subject of grade retention, Holmes & Matthews (1984), Holmes (1989) and Jimerson (2001).

Holmes and Matthews study. The first meta-analysis was conducted by Holmes and Matthews (1984) using 44 studies, published between 1929 and 1981, on the subject of grade retention. They only used original research studies that addressed the impact of retention on elementary and junior high school students, contained enough data to calculate an effect size and compared retained students to their non- retained peers. The researchers calculated 575 individual effect sizes, an average of 13 effect sizes per study. The average effect size was -.37. This indicates that retained students scored .37 standard deviations below their promoted peers on the outcome measures that were used. The outcome measures included academic achievement (language arts, reading, math, work study skills, social studies and grade point average) personal adjustment (social adjustment, emotional adjustment and behavior), self concept, attitude toward school and school attendance. The effect sizes were similar regardless of if the subjects were initially matched on characteristics such as IQ or achievement scores. Holmes and Matthews (1984) came to the conclusion that "Those who continue to retain pupils at grade level do so despite cumulative research evidence showing that the potential for negative effects consistently outweighs positive outcomes" (p. 232).

Holmes study. Holmes (1989) conducted a second meta-analysis adding 19 new studies which brought the total to 63. Holmes obtained a total of 861 effect sizes from

these studies. He grouped these effect sizes into five groups; academic achievement, personal adjustment, self concept, attitude toward school and attendance. His findings, much like the meta-analysis of 1984, indicated that retention had a negative impact on all five areas of concern.

Holmes (1989) found that out of the 63 studies that he reviewed only nine demonstrated a positive impact of retention. He goes on to state that most of the studies were master's theses or doctoral dissertations and conducted on suburban populations. The students in these studies were also provided intensive interventions during the repeated year which would have an impact on their academic achievement scores. Overall, findings consistently demonstrated a negative impact on the student's academic achievement, personal adjustment and attitude toward school.

Holmes (1989) also reported that the area with the highest negative effect size was academic achievement followed by personal adjustment and attitude toward school. He found that retaining a student in earlier grades did not reduce the negative impact on academic measures. He also reported that the negative effect of retention on academic achievement continues to increase years after the student was retained. Measures of personal adjustment (social adjustment, emotional adjustment and behavior) also demonstrated the negative impact of retention. Holmes (1989) found that there was no significant difference between retained pupils and their promoted peers on attitude toward school measures. However, the retained students demonstrated poorer attendance rates. Holmes again concluded his study by cautioning the individuals in favor of retention that there is no scientific basis for the practice.

Jimerson study. Jimerson (2001) conducted a meta-analysis on 20 studies on the subject of grade retention that were done between 1990 and 1999. The focus of the studies was the academic and social-emotional adjustment outcomes of the students that had been retained. Of the 20 studies reviewed, most matched students by variables such as IQ, gender, achievement, socio-emotional adjustment and socio-economic-status. Most of the studies (14) included students that had been retained kindergarten through third grade. The remaining studies focused on students retained kindergarten through eighth grade. There was no demonstrated difference between the students that had been retained prior to third grade and those who had been retained later in their academic careers. Review of these 20 studies produced an analysis of 175 achievement outcomes and 148 social-emotional outcomes.

Jimerson (2001) reported that out of the 175 achievement outcomes 91 demonstrated statistically significant results. Of these studies nine produced statistically significant results in favor of the retained group and 82 favored the promoted group, meaning that the promoted group had significantly higher outcomes on achievement measures such as attendance, reading skills, language skills and math skills. The remaining 84 studies did not demonstrate a statistically significant difference between the retained or promoted group. The results of this meta-analysis is consistent with the other two meta-analyses conducted by Holmes and Matthews (1984) and Holmes (1989) reflecting statistically significant results in favor of the promoted group (higher scores on academic measures such as reading and math skills).

Jimerson's (2001) meta-analysis also reviewed 16 studies that focused on the socio-emotional outcomes of retained students as compared to their promoted peers. He

found that nine percent of the studies favored the promoted students (higher scores on social-emotional measures); five percent favored the retained students and 86 percent demonstrated no statistically significant difference between the groups. The authors of the 20 studies had differing opinions about the results of their studies. Sixteen of them concluded that grade retention is not the appropriate intervention for students that are struggling emotionally or academically, while four of the authors came to the opposite conclusion, that retention is an effective intervention.

Academic Outcomes of Retention

The academic outcomes of retention have been explored by several researchers. They used several different methods including surveys, propensity score analysis, and longitudinal data gathering to gain an understanding of how retention impacts students in their acquisition of reading and math skills. The effect on high school drop-out and enrollment in post-secondary education has also been investigated. Overall, research has not demonstrated a long term positive impact of retention on academic achievement.

Wu, West and Hughes (2008) used performance on the Woodcock-Johnson III broad math and reading indexes to assess the impact that retention has on achievement in these two areas. They matched retained and promoted students using propensity scores so that the authors believed that there was no difference in achievement between the retained and low-achieving but promoted students. The authors found that being retained in grade decreased the growth rate of mathematical skills in the two years following retention. The growth rate was defined as changes in scores on the mathematical portion of the Woodcock Johnson broad math index. They did not find a difference in the growth rate for reading. The authors believe that their findings are important for three reasons.

First, the study demonstrated no positive short-term effects for grade retention in a population of first graders, for whom retention would be considered an early intervention. Second, the use of the Woodcock-Johnson III provided a well validated measurement of academic achievement. Third, the study used propensity score analysis to match retained and promoted students from an at-risk sample, providing a strong control for baseline differences (Wu, West & Hughes, 2008).

Silberglitt, Jimerson, Burns & Appleton (2006) conducted a longitudinal study assessing the reading growth trajectory of 147 students from their first grade year to their eighth. The authors compared the reading growth rates of retained students, low achieving but promoted students and a random sample of students. The researchers found that retained students did not demonstrate an enhanced growth rate in comparison to the prior year or when compared to low performing but promoted peers. They came to the conclusion that retention does not have a positive impact on reading skill growth rates, and is not an effective intervention for low achieving students.

Research has demonstrated that retention in elementary school has a long term impact on academic achievement. Mc Coy and Reynolds (1999) found that grade retention was strongly associated with lower achievement in reading and math at the age of 14. Likewise, Jimerson (1999) in a prospective, longitudinal study demonstrated that the level of academic adjustment for retained students was lower than that of similarly achieving but promoted peers. The retained students were more likely to have dropped out of high school by 19 and less likely to have enrolled in post secondary education.

Grade retention and dropout. There has been a great deal of research examining the relationship between grade retention and dropping out of high school. Rumberger

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(1995) examined the relationship between being retained in elementary school and dropping out between 8th and 10th grade. He concluded that retention was the strongest predictor of dropping out, with retained students being 11 times more likely to drop out than their peers. Alexander, Entwisle and Horsey (1997) conducted a 14 year study which demonstrated that retention was part of a long term process of school disengagement which leads to dropping out. Janosz, LeBlanc, Boulerice and Tremblay (1997) examined the impact of school, behavioral, social and personality variables on the decision to drop out. They concluded that a combination of school commitment, school achievement and retention predicted dropping out of high school with retention being the strongest predictor (Janosz et al, 1997). Rumberger and Larson (1998) found that students retained before eighth grade were four times as likely as their non-retained peers to not receive a high school diploma or a graduation equivalent diploma. Jimerson (1999) conducted a 21 year longitudinal study comparing retained students to their similarly achieving but promoted peers. The study found that retained students were "20% to 25% more likely to have dropped out of high school by age 19" (Jimerson, 1999). Research has also demonstrated the impact that retention has on post-secondary education.

Grade retention and post-secondary education. Goldenring-Fine and Davis (2003) examined the impact that retention has on enrollment in post-secondary education. The study focused on retained students that had graduated high school, which the authors termed "persistent". They found that persistent students (those that had been retained at least once but not dropped out of school) enrolled in post-secondary education at half the rate of their non retained peers. Further, the grade in which a student is retained has an

impact on the enrolment in post-secondary education. If a student is retained in middle

school or beyond the chances that the student will attend college is greatly reduced.

Retained students have less access to the social and economic advantages provided by

post-secondary education, such as higher wages and lower unemployment (Goldenring-

Fine & Davis, 2003). In the long term students that have been retained are more likely to

be on welfare, unemployed or in Prison (NASP, 2003).

Social-Emotional Outcomes of Retention

The impact that grade retention has on the behavioral, emotional and social life of

the student has been explored by several researchers. These studies have produced mixed

results with some studies indicating negative repercussions and others reporting a

minimal effect. The effect of retention on externalizing and internalizing behaviors as

well as social issues will be discussed.

Externalizing behaviors are those that direct negative energy outward. They may

come in the form of aggression, defiance and anger. Exploration of retention's effect on

externalizing behaviors has been undertaken by several researchers. A study conducted

in Canada demonstrated the connection between aggression and grade retention (Nagin,

Pagani, Tremblay, & Vitaro, 2004). This longitudinal study was started in the spring of

1984 and continued until 2003. The sample was 1,037 Caucasian French speaking boys

in the lowest socioeconomic areas in Montreal, Canada. The authors found that grade

retention aggravated classroom aggression in students that were retained before the age of

13. Students that were retained after the age of 13 self-reported more violent behavior

outside of the classroom. Overall, the authors found a significant increase in violent

behavior for students that were retained at least once.

Crothers et al. (2010) explored the impact that being old-for-grade has on bullying and victim behaviors using a survey method. The term old-for-grade refers to students that started school late as well as retained students. The researchers hoped to answer two questions: "Do old-for-grade students engage in significantly more relational bullying, verbal bullying and physical bullying compared with age-appropriate-for-grade peers? Are old-for-grade students more likely to play passive or aggressive victim roles compared with age-appropriate-for-grade students?" The researchers used a questionnaire completed by teachers to assess the behavior of 276 students, of which 24% were old-for-grade. Their findings indicated that old-for-grade students were more likely to engage in relational, verbal and physical bullying than their age-appropriate-for-grade peers. They also found that old-for-grade students were the victim of bullying at a higher rate than their age appropriate peers. The authors came to the conclusion that grade retention or delayed school entry, although suggested as an attempt to improve the social and emotional development of a student, may in fact impede the process of socialization and emotional development.

In their longitudinal study examining the impact that grade retention has on students up until the age of 14, McCoy and Reynolds (1999) explored the connection between retention and delinquency. They measured the presence of negative behaviors such as truancy, arson and aggravated assault. This study found that retained students did not have more school reported infractions than their same age peers.

Gottfreson, Fink and Graham (1994) used multiple regression analysis to explore the connection between retention and what they termed "rebellious behavior". They conducted their study on a population of 401 African American sixth and seventh graders

(197 retained and 204 promoted). The students were assessed at the time of retention and 11 months later. The researchers found no evidence of an increase in rebellious behavior at the end of the 11 month period, but did not explore the long term impact that retention has on behavior.

Internalizing problems are defined as the direction of negative energy toward the self. An individual with internalizing problems directs their negative energy toward themselves rather than lashing out at someone else. These problems include anxiety, depression, and withdrawal, eating too much or too little and cutting. Researchers have explored the impact that retention has on internalizing behaviors and have come up with inconclusive results.

Martin (2011) conducted a study in Australia using a sample of 372 adolescents matched by ability, age and gender. He found that being retained in earlier grades had a significant negative impact on the student's self-esteem and academic self-concept as measured by the Self-Description Questionnaire II. Martin (2011) also found an increase in what he termed maladaptive motivation in retained students. Maladaptive motivation is comprised of self-handicapping and disengagement behaviors. However, he did not find that retention had a negative impact on the social life of the students that were surveyed.

Pagani, Tremblay, Vitaro, Boulerice and McDuff (2001) used data from the Quebec Longitudinal Study of Kindergarten Children to assess the effects of retention on academic and behavioral development. Their research indicated a continuous negative impact of retention on anxiety levels of both male and female students. Children that were retained early showed the greatest amount of anxiety. As the children became older

their anxiety amplified. There was a limited amount of anxiety when children were first retained, which grew as the children did. The authors posit that the effect of growing older and becoming more conscious of their peer's perception of them contributed to the rising level of anxiety.

Jimerson et al. (1997) conducted a longitudinal study examining the consequences of early grade retention. Data were gathered throughout elementary school and up until the age of 16. Their results suggest a significant difference between retained and non retained students in the areas of personal and social adjustment in grade six. The students that were retained displayed rankings that were significantly lower on the emotional health/self esteem rankings as compared to their equally low achieving but promoted peers. The emotional health/self esteem ranking measured characteristics of a healthy child which includes the ability to be confident, self assured and engaging. This measure also assessed the peer acceptance and popularity of retained students which indicated that retained students were significantly less popular and socially competent than their peers. Social adjustment is a critical factor of a child's overall educational experience.

The impact of retention on social adjustment has been the subject of several studies. In a review of the current research Jimerson, Pletcher, Graydon, Schnurr, Nickerson, & Kundert (2006) found that retained students have poorer social adjustment, negative attitudes toward school, attendance issues and more difficulties with their peers when compared to low achieving but promoted peers.

Gleason Kwak and Hughes (2007) explored the relationship between retention and peer acceptance in a population of at risk first graders. They posited that grade retention would have a positive impact on peer-rated academic competencies and

sociometric measures of peer acceptance. They gathered information from academic measures, peer and teacher reports of peer acceptance. Their research demonstrated that retained students enjoyed a greater degree of academic competence and peer acceptance the year that they were retained. However, the study did not follow the students to determine the long term impact of retention.

Understanding Beliefs and Knowledge

When examining the beliefs and knowledge of educational professionals it is important to have a clear understanding of the terms. Beliefs can be thought of as "attitudes, values, judgments, axioms, opinions, ideology, perceptions, conceptions, conceptual systems, preconceptions, dispositions, implicit theories, explicit theories, personal theories, internal mental processes, action strategies, rules of practice, practical principals, perspectives, repertories of understanding and social strategy" (Pajares, 1992). Beliefs have a strong affective component; they are based upon feelings rather than facts. Beliefs are very personal and are hard to alter once they have been established. They are based upon personal experiences and perceptions and may be based upon faulty assumptions. In educational research beliefs must be examined because as Pajares (1992) put it "beliefs may be the best indicators of the decisions individuals make throughout their lives" (p.311). When based upon faulty assumptions beliefs can have a negative impact on the educator's ability to make effective decisions. Some authors have come to the conclusion that beliefs have a larger influence than knowledge on how a person will make decisions and ultimately behave (Nespor, 1987). This assumption makes an examination of educator's beliefs critical.

Many authors have attempted to create a clear definition of the differences between belief and knowledge. Knowledge is cognitive in nature and based upon fact (Pajares, 1992). It is acquired through study and research. It can be contrasted with belief in that belief is more evaluative and emotional in nature. Knowledge is not fixed, acquisition of new knowledge challenges what has been known in the past whereas beliefs are more resistant to change. Knowledge requires verification and must be based upon facts that are mutually agreed upon by the group. By contrast, belief systems do not require a group consensus or even internal consistency (Nespor, 1987). Knowledge is based upon logic, reason and open to evaluation. Beliefs are based upon feeling and are more inflexible and resistant to challenge. Further, knowledge can be differentiated into two types, practical and formal.

Practical and formal knowledge have different characteristics and are obtained in different ways. Practical knowledge can be referred to as situated, local, relational and tacit (Fenstermacher, 1994). One acquires practical knowledge from engaging in activities. For example a teacher learns about her craft through the experience of managing her classroom and interacting with different students. Practical knowledge is not generalized, it is situational. Lessons learned managing one classroom may not apply in a different setting. By contrast, formal knowledge is characterized by significance, generalizability and validity (Fenstermacher, 1994). It is the knowledge obtained through research on a particular subject.

Beliefs can have a stronger impact than knowledge when it comes to educational decision making. A great deal of research has been done in an attempt to understand the rationale behind teacher's belief in the effectiveness of retention despite the evidence that

it is not an effective intervention for struggling students. That research will be reviewed, as will the limited research that has been done on the beliefs of school counselors and school psychologists.

Teacher's Beliefs about Retention

With the vast majority of research indicating the negative impact of retention why is it so commonly practiced? One must look into the decision-making process to obtain an answer. In many school districts the primary teacher is the person most likely to make the recommendation to retain a student. Therefore, an examination of teacher beliefs and knowledge on the subject of retention is warranted. Teachers tend to have positive attitudes toward retention despite the amount of evidence that indicates that retention has a negative impact on the student.

Smith and Shepard (1988) conducted a qualitative study, using teacher interview, classroom observation, analysis of documents and parent interviews to ascertain kindergarten teacher's beliefs about the effectiveness of retention. The researchers used data from their interviews with teachers to categorize their belief systems. They divided the teachers into "nativists" and "non-navtivists". The "nativists" believe that the child becomes prepared for school in an "evolutionary, physiologically based unfolding of abilities" (Smith & Shepard, 1988). This process is done in stages and is outside the control of parents and teachers. There are no interventions to assist students that are not prepared for the curriculum; they are just given time to mature. "Nativitst" believe that development takes place in stages and if a child is not at the appropriate stage to acquire a skill there is little a teacher or parent can do to assist the child in developing that skill. The non-nativists believe that development progresses through stages but it can be

influenced by the environment. About half of the teachers in the study were categorized as having nativist beliefs. These beliefs transferred into higher retention rates for those teachers. However, non-nativitst teachers also indicated their belief in the effectiveness of retention as an intervention for struggling students. They did not see many negatives associated with retention, instead believing that it gave the student an opportunity to catch up. They believed that it moved the student from the bottom of the current class to the top of the next, giving them the opportunity to become a leader and keeping them from experiencing a more devastating failure in later grades and preventing them from engaging in inappropriate behavior in the future. The teacher's source of knowledge was categorized as tacit or practical. It was based on their limited experience with students and not on knowledge gained through the research on retention's impact on the social and academic life of the student.

Tanner and Combs (1993) conducted a national survey of 880 teachers to examine their beliefs on retention. The research examined five reasons commonly given to justify the policy of retention: "retention gives a student an extra year to master material that was unlearned the first time in the grade; students who are retained do so well academically in their retained year that their self esteem is enhanced; retention helps to create homogeneous classes by keeping students with the same ability and achievement together in the same grade; the threat of retention motivates students to labor more diligently at their school work; and retention gives the immature student more time to grow and mature thus insuring their success in learning" (p. 70). These five reasons for retention are explored below.

Teachers believe that retention is effective in improving the academic achievement of students that have been retained (Tanner & Combs, 1993). Witmer et al. (2004) conducted a survey examining elementary teacher's beliefs. They found that 77% of teachers surveyed believed that retention is an effective method for ensuring a student's academic success in later grades. In addition Tomchin and Imapra (1992) demonstrated that 67% of teachers held the belief that grade retention was necessary to maintain grade level standards, the same study also indicated that 82% of teachers believe that low achieving students benefit from retention and that retention reduces future academic failure. Patterson (1996) found that teachers believe that retention has long-term educational benefits and increases subject-matter mastery. Pouliot (1999) conducted a study using the TRBQ (Tomchin and Impara, 1992) in Quebec. She found that teachers overwhelmingly agreed with the idea that retention is an effective academic intervention. Research has demonstrated that teachers believe that retention has a positive impact on the academic achievement of retained students (Range et. al, 2012).

The impact that retention has on self-esteem has been explored by a great deal of research. Most of that research has demonstrated that retention has a negative impact on self-esteem. Despite these research findings teachers are divided as to the impact that retention has on student's self-esteem. Witmer et al. (2004) found that 42% of the teachers they surveyed disagreed with the statement "Retaining a child K-2 harms a child's self-concept". Tomchin and Impara (1992) found that 60% of the teachers surveyed agreed that retention does harm a child's self-concept. Patterson (1996) reported that teachers believed that retention does not cause a student to feel negatively about themselves. Pouliot (1999) found that teachers do not believe that retention harms

the self-concept of younger students (K-3) however; there was not a clear consensus on the impact of retention 4th -8th grade. Range et al. (2012) found that teachers strongly agreed that retention in kindergarten increased a child's self esteem.

Students who are not successful in the general curriculum can be labeled as slow learners, delinquent, and incapable of learning. Labeling can be a source of a great deal of pain for struggling students. Overall, teachers do not believe that being retained permanently labels a child (Tomchin and Impara, 1992, Witmer, 2004, Pouliot, 1999).

Researchers have been interested in the impact teachers believe retention has on class wide achievement. With regards to the notion that retention maintains homogeneous classes researchers have consistently found that 52 to 72% of teachers believe that the practice does (Tanner and Combs, 1993, Tomchin and Impara, 1992, Witmer et al., 2004). The belief that retention maintains grade level standards was endorsed by 71 percent of the participants in the survey conducted by Pouliot (1998).

The belief that the threat of retention makes students work harder is also up for debate. Tomchin and Impara (1992) found that teachers believed in the motivating power of retention. Witmer et al. (2004) found that 28% of teachers disagreed with the statement "Knowing that retention is a possibility does motivate students to work harder". Teachers that participated in the survey conducted by Pouliot (1998) indicated a division of opinion with 57 percent agreeing with the premise that retention can be motivating.   Range et al. (2012) found that teachers believed that the threat of retention makes students more motivated to attend school, and their parents more motivated to become involved in their child's education. By contrast Tanner and Combs (1993) found

that teachers strongly disagreed with the notion that the threat of retention is a motivating factor for students.

Some teachers believe that an additional year in a grade gives the student the opportunity to grow and develop. This year gives them the opportunity to experience successful learning. This notion is held by teachers in the lower elementary grades much more than those that teach in the upper elementary grades (Tanner & Combs, 1993). Witmer et al. (2004) found that an overwhelming majority of the teachers surveyed agreed with the statement that "Retention is an effective means of giving the immature child a chance to grow up". Pouliot (1998) found that teachers overwhelmingly agreed with the idea that retention gives a student a chance to catch up in grades K-3 but less agreement when the question is about students in grades 4-8. Some educators believe that a lack of maturity is the cause for learning problems and an additional year gives the student a chance to develop (Beswick, Sloat &Williams, 2008).

Teacher's belief as to the appropriate time to retain a student has also been explored. Patterson (1996) found that a majority of the teachers surveyed agreed with the idea that retaining a student prior to fourth grade is the most effective. Renaud (2013) had similar results with a majority of teachers reporting believing that retention before third grade is effective. Witmer et al. (2004) found that many teachers agreed with the premise that retention at an early grade is ideal. Pouliot (1998) found that 78 percent of the teachers in her sample agreed that a student should be retained before third grade. By contrast, Tomchin and Impara (1992) found that most teachers disagreed with the statement that "if a student is to be retained they should be retained by third grade".

The appropriateness of retaining students that receive special education services is one of the questions faced by teachers. The studies that have inquired as to their opinion on the subject have provided contrasting results. Tomchin and Impara (1992) found that 69% of the teachers surveyed disagreed with the statement "students receiving services of a learning disabilities teacher should not be retained". Pouliot (1998) found 75 percent disagreement with that statement. By contrast, Witmer (2004) found that only 9% of the teachers surveyed disagreed with that statement. Renaud (2013) compared teacher's perceptions of retention for students with and without learning disabilities. Students receiving special education services do not need to meet grade-level benchmarks therefore they are socially promoted in larger numbers than their general education peers. However, Renaud (2013) found that teachers who participated in the study were more likely to recommend that a special education student be retained for not having the necessary skills than a general education student. The teachers reported feeling that high stakes testing was one of the reasons they would retain a special education student. They reported feeling responsible for the student's test scores and were concerned about the amount of help the student would be given in the following school year if they were not retained. Overall, the study by Renaud (2013) found that teachers use the same criteria to evaluate the appropriateness of retention for general and special education students, academic achievement and maturity.

The impact that retention has on behavior has been a source of a great deal of research over the past several decades (Jimerson et al., 2006, Crothers et al., 2010, Nagin et al., 2004, McCoy and Reynolds, 1999, and Gottfreson et al., 1994). Teacher's beliefs related to the impact of retention on behavior have also been the subject of several

studies. These studies have demonstrated different results. Pouliot (1999) found that teachers strongly disagreed with the idea that overage children (more than a year older than classmates) demonstrated more behavior issues in grades K-3. The same survey indicated that teachers were evenly divided when the question was addressed toward students grade 4-8, with 56 percent disagreeing with the idea that overage children in grades 4-8 display more behavior problems than their peers. Tomchin and Impara (1992) found that teachers in their sample were divided about students in grade K-3 and agreed strongly with the idea that overage students in grades 4-8 display more behavior problems than their peers. Witmer et al. (2004) found a difference of opinion between grade level teachers. Teachers of K-2 students demonstrated a stronger disagreement to the idea that overage children cause more behavior problems than their peers.

Despite the discrepancy between current research on the impact of retention and teacher's beliefs, most studies have demonstrated that teachers continue to believe in the efficacy of retention. They see it as a viable intervention for students with academic difficulties as well as a lack of maturity. They appear to believe that it can increase motivation, for the student as well as the parent. An exploration of the teacher's level of knowledge will be discussed in the following paragraph.

Teacher's Knowledge about Retention

In order to determine teacher's knowledge of the impact of retention Witmer et al. (2004) added a knowledge component to the Teacher Retention Beliefs Questionnaire created by Tomchin and Impara (1992). The researchers wanted to establish the teacher's level of knowledge on the subject of retention as well as determining if the knowledge was practical propositional. They found that the teachers surveyed had a minimum of

knowledge on the subject, the average score was 30 percent. They also found that the majority of the knowledge obtained by the teachers was from personal experience or from talking to a colleague. Only nine percent of the participants reported that their knowledge on retention came from attending a workshop or reading a journal article on the subject. Most participants indicated that it had been over a year since they had learned anything about retention. Overall, the teachers rated their knowledge of retention to be limited or extremely limited and based on personal experience rather than research.

School Counselor's Beliefs about Retention

The school counselor can have an impact on the decision to retain a student in grade. Many schools have multidisciplinary teams that make the retention decisions. School counselors are often on these teams, so it is valuable to understand their perceptions and knowledge on the subject of retention. However, there has been a limited amount of research done as to the perception of the school counselor on the subject of grade retention.

Kerr (2007) conducted a survey with a population of 137 elementary school counselors in order to ascertain the counselor's perception of retention as an academic intervention. The research indicated that elementary school counselors demonstrated a tendency toward indecision when it came to the subject of grade retention. This indecision was indicated by the fact that 20 percent of the counselors that participated in the survey indicated "undecided" as their response to half of the questions (17 of the 35 items). They were undecided when considering decision-making factors such as the size of the student, attendance, and whether the students being considered for retention should be included in the process. Elementary school counselors demonstrated indecision on

questions regarding the acceptability of promoting students that have not mastered the material and if repeating helps them catch up and master the subject. They also expressed indecision about the implications of retention, such as stifling the desire to learn, diminished self concept and dropping out of school.

Elementary school counselors demonstrated the strongest agreement in their responses to items that reflected a positive attitude toward grade retention (Kerr, 2007). Over 70% of the counselors in the study agreed that the purpose of retention is to prepare students for successful achievement in the next grade and that retention can have a positive impact on academic outcomes. They overwhelmingly agreed that retention provides students with time to grow and mature. They agreed that retention should take place before third grade and that retention in the early grades is less traumatic for the student then would be retention in the intermediate grades. Most of the counselors believed that it is as important to consider the emotional well being as well as the academic achievement of the student they are considering for retention.

The counselors in the study by Kerr (2007) disagreed with statements that reflect negative attitudes toward retention. Most of the counselors disagreed with the idea that students should never be retained. They disagreed with the idea that retention has a negative impact on academic achievement, has a negative impact on student's desire to learn and discourages rather than encourages learning. The counselors in the study did not believe that retention increases behavior problems, or that retained students experience peer rejection. The counselors believed that the final decision to retain a student should not be made by the teacher alone.

Kerr (2007) found that elementary counselors had a great deal of involvement in the retention decision-making process. The elementary counselors reported that their opinions about the decision to retain a student were most directly influenced by the classroom teacher. The second largest influence was having a personal experience of working with a student that had been retained. The counselors reported research to be the third largest source of influence on their decision to retain a student. The opinions of administration and school psychologists were not seen as having much impact on the counselor's perception of retention.

School Psychologist's Beliefs about Retention

Many school districts do not have clearly defined retention decision-making procedures leaving it up to an informal process where teachers make the recommendations and administrators make the final decision (Schnurr, Kundert & Nickerson, 2009). Schools may rely on a team of educational professionals to make the decision and those teams could include the school psychologist. The school psychologist has a unique opportunity to influence the decision making process if given the opportunity to participate. With extensive knowledge about child development and research the school psychologist can provide feedback to the team on the appropriateness of the interventions being attempted. However, it is unclear if school psychologists have accurate information about the impact that retention has on the academic and emotional life of the student as well as the amount of input they are permitted in the decision-making process. One study sought to examine the retention decision-making process, the involvement that school psychologists have in the process and their knowledge and beliefs on the subject.

Schnurr et al. (2009) conducted a study in which they surveyed 250 school psychologists that were randomly selected from the membership of the National Association of School Psychologists. The results of the survey indicated that about half of the school psychologists worked in districts where there was a formal written retention policy. Most of these schools used the team approach to making decisions. The teams usually included teachers, parents and administrators with school psychologists participating in 20 percent of the cases. The criteria used in the decision-making process included grades, teacher recommendations, behavior and parent requests. School psychologist's input included reviewing the developmental history of the child and assessing the appropriateness of the general academic curriculum. School psychologists played a limited role in the decision making process.

Schnurr et al. (2009) also explored the self-perceived knowledge of the school psychologists on the subject of retention. Responses indicated that approximately half of the school psychologists indicated that they had moderate knowledge of the literature. The other half of respondents indicated that they were moderately to very knowledgeable. They also indicated believing that their knowledge was moderately applicable to their position, some feeling that their knowledge was irrelevant because of the policies of the district in which they worked.

Although the school psychologists that were surveyed indicated that they had a great deal of knowledge about the subject of retention, many reported believing myths that have been discredited in the literature. Of the members surveyed 61 percent stated that retention gives the student time to mature. The participants also indicated that retention strengthens academic knowledge of students. However, they did see potential

limitations in the effectiveness of retention. Participants in the study indicated that

retention can pose a great emotional cost to the student. They also believed that retention

contributes to poor long-term outcomes such as dropping out. They also believed that

retention poses a great social cost to the student. Participants reported a belief that

retention delays students from getting the necessary interventions (such as special

education) and comes at a great financial cost to the school district. The study also

examined the role that school psychologists play in the decision-making process.

Most of the respondents to the survey conducted by Schnurr et al. (2009)

indicated that they had a limited role in the retention decision-making practice. The

participants reported providing consultation as their role in the process. They provided

information about the developmental level and maturity of the student as well as

informing teachers and parents of the effects of retention. Over three fourths of the

respondents indicated that they would like to have an increased role. The role that they

were most interested in taking on was the development of programs designed to increase

achievement. Only five percent of the participants in the study indicated that they did not

want to take part in the decision-making process. The authors of the study came to the

conclusion that school psychologist as a whole do not support retention, despite believing

in some of the myths, and would like an increased role in the decision-making process.

Student's Perception of Retention

Penna and Tallerico (2005) conducted a qualitative study, exploring student's

perceptions on retention. They interviewed 24 students that had been retained in grade

and subsequently dropped out of high school. The students reported that the repeated year

was frustrating and at times boring. The teachers assumed that they knew the material

and did not give them individual attention or support. Participants reported rejection from peers, for being "dumb" for having to repeat a grade as well as for being older. This rejection from peers consisted of name calling, mocking, bullying and being picked on. Participants in the study reported that their initial reaction to being retained was rather emotional, feeling anger, denial, disbelief, shame, humiliation and frustration (Penna & Tallerico, 2005). Some of the retained students felt that they were treated unfairly or not given the assistance they needed which lead to a growing level of resentment toward school. Others reported feelings of worthlessness, resignation and withdrawal. Overall, the students reported that being over age for grade led them to drop out of high school. They did not feel that they fit in so they left.

Anderson, Jimerson and Whipple (2005) conducted a study examining children's perception of stressful life events. They had 237 first, third and sixth grade students complete a 20 item questionnaire. For first grade students the top five most stressful life events were: losing a parent, having an operation, getting lost, going blind and having a poor report card. For third graders the five most stressful life events were: losing a parent, parental fighting, being caught in a theft, getting lost, academic retention and going blind. The top five reported stressors for sixth graders were: academic retention, losing a parent, going blind, being caught in a theft and wetting in class.

Summary

Retention has been a controversial issue since the practice began in the 19th century. A great deal of research indicates that there are negative consequences to the policy of retaining low-achieving students in grade. The academic consequences are continued low academic achievement, poor attendance and the greater chance of

dropping out of high school. Retained students have less of a chance of attending post-secondary education than their promoted peers. Retention comes at an emotional cost, with retained students experiencing higher levels of anxiety, depression and withdrawal and lower self-esteem.

Professional educators appear to have mixed beliefs about the effectiveness of retention. Teachers believe that retention gives a student an additional year to grow, reduces the variability of skills in the classroom and enhances the academic achievement of retained students. School counselors demonstrate a great deal of indecision on the subject of retention, but overall their opinion appears to be similar to that of the teachers. School psychologists play less of a role in the decision of whether to retain a student, but appear to feel that retention is not an effective intervention for low achieving students.

Chapter Three

Method

Chapter three will discuss the methodology of the current study. It will describe the research design and the history and development of the instrument used to gather data. It will describe the demographics of the population that participated in the survey and the procedures for collecting data. Finally, data screening procedures and statistical analysis will be discussed.

Research Design

This study used a non-experimental descriptive research design and survey method to assess the knowledge and beliefs of school psychologists and school counselors about grade retention. Descriptive research seeks to describe characteristics of a population, to explicate what is. It is a type of quantitative research that makes descriptions about educational phenomena (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2003). The type of descriptive research that was used in this study is the survey.

According to Nestor and Schutt (2012) survey methods are versatile, efficient and generalizable, making them the most popular form of social research. They go on to state that conducting a survey on a population of interest is both an efficient and productive method of exploring a great variety of research questions. This study has a descriptive design, using a survey to ascertain the perceptions and knowledge of school counselors and school psychologists on the subject of grade retention. In addition to providing information on their beliefs and knowledge about the subject of retention participants were asked to provide the following demographic information: gender, ethnicity, age,

years of experience, educational attainment, current role in the retention decision-making process and preferred role in the decision-making process.

Participants

Participants were obtained through contacting the American School Counseling Association, the Washington State School Psychologists Association, the Georgia School Psychologists Association and personal contact. Participants were also recruited through a blog "Notes from a School Psychologist". Demographic information is in tables one and two below.

Table 1

School Psychologist Demographics

	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Female	319	83.3
Male	64	16.7
Race/Ethnicity		
Black/African American	11	2.9
Native American/American Indian	0	0
Asian/Pacific Islander	4	1.0
Hispanic/Latino	13	3.4
White	349	91.1
Other	6	1.6
Age Group		
20-30	104	27.2
30-39	104	27.2
40-49	73	19.1
50-59	60	15.7
>59	41	10.7
Missing	1	.3
Level of Education		
Master's	100	26.1
Master's + 12	211	55.1
Ph.D.	54	14.1
Missing	18	4.7
Years of Experience		
1-5 Years	126	32.9
6-10 Years	71	18.5
11-15 Years	53	13.8
16-20 Years	32	8.4
>20 Years	69	18.0

	Frequency	Percentage
Grad student/intern	31	8.1
Missing	1	.3
Credentialed School Psychologist		
Yes	349	91.1
No	34	8.9

Note. N = 383

Table 2

School Counselor Demographics

	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Female	92	85.2
Male	16	14.8
Race/Ethnicity		
Black/African American	6	5.6
Native American/American Indian	1	.9
Asian/Pacific Islander	2	1.9
Hispanic/Latino	7	6.5
White	89	82.4
Other	3	2.8
Age Group		
20-30	18	16.7
30-39	30	27.8
40-49	28	25.9
50-59	24	22.4
>59	7	6.5
Level of Education		
Master's	48	44.4
Master's + 12	49	45.4
Ph.D.	5	4.6
Missing	6	5.6
Years of Experience		
1-5 Years	46	42.6
6-10 Years	27	25.0
11-15 Years	18	16.7
16-20 Years	11	10.2
>20 Years	5	4.6
Missing	1	.9
Credentialed School Counselor		
Yes	103	95.4
No	5	4.6

Note. N = 108

Instrument

       Teacher Retention Beliefs and Knowledge Questionnaire **(TRBKQ)** The survey instrument that was used was a revision of the Teacher Retention Beliefs Questionnaire (TRBQ) (Witmer et al., 2004) created by Tomchin and Impara (1992). The TRBQ is made up of three components. The TRBQ consisted of 20 Likert scale questions, assessing teacher's beliefs on the subject of retention. The second component examines the factors that teachers take into consideration when contemplating retention. The third component collected demographic information. Tomchin and Impara (1992) field tested their survey in order to determine how appropriate the questions were for elementary school teachers as well as how long the survey took to complete. From this field test they made several revisions and used the revised survey on a sample of 135 teachers.

       Witmer et al. (2004) revised the TRBQ to include a component on knowledge, renaming it the *Teacher Retention Belief and Knowledge Questionnaire* (TRBKQ). These researches added thirteen multiple choice questions and two open ended questions assessing teacher's practical and propositional knowledge. Content validity for the knowledge portion of the questionnaire was established by obtaining feedback from five professors of education at a small private university. The TRBKQ is the questionnaire that was modified for use with school psychologists and school counselors for the present study. The survey instrument and modifications will be discussed below.

       School Counselor/Psychologist Retention Survey-Part I Demographics. In the school counselor/psychologist survey the participants were asked to complete 6 demographic items. They were asked to identify their educational attainment (Masters, Masters +12, EDS, Doctoral degree). Their gender, (Male/Female) ethnicity (African

American, Native American, Asian/Pacific Islander, Hispanic and White) and age (20-30, 31-39, 40-49, 50-59 and >59). They were asked if they were a certified school psychologist or counselor and to identify their years of experience (1-5, 6-10, 11-15, 16-20 and >20. School psychologists were asked to identify the state or territory in which they practiced. The results of the demographic portion of the survey are in tables one and two above.

School Counselor/Psychologist Retention Survey Part II- Beliefs. In the second part of the survey school counselors and school psychologists were given 20 questions using a four-point Likert Scale to assess their beliefs about grade retention (Agree, Tend to Agree, Tend to Disagree and Disagree). The questions were modified from the TRBKQ created by Witmer et al. (2004). The construct validity of the TRBKQ was established by Haynes (2007). Content validity was established by Tomchin and Impara (1992) by combining past research, interviewing principals and teachers and reviewing school policy. The questions inquired about retention's impact on self-concept, grade level standards and behavior. Gaddis (unpublished manuscript) reports a Cronbach's alpha of .862 a group of school mental health professionals, suggesting good internal consistency reliability. A Factor Analysis was completed and resulted in four factors which will be used to compare the beliefs of the school psychologists and the school counselors. The Belief Factors are discussed below.

Belief Factor One is made up of nine items 1R, 2R, 4R, 5R, 6R, 8R, 10R, 12R and 19R and has a Cronbach's alpha of .819, indicating good reliability. Belief Factor One measures beliefs about retaining a student based upon their characteristics such as motivation and attendance. A school-based mental-health professional obtaining a higher

score on this factor would favor retaining a student they perceive to be immature, behind academically, lacking in maturity and motivation and having little support from their family. Also, high scorers tend to see student characteristics hindering maintenance of academic standards.

Belief Factor Two focuses on the retention of early elementary students (K-3) and issues surrounding labeling and self-concept. A higher score on Belief Factor Two would indicate that a school-based mental-health professional attributed negative outcomes such as labeling and negative self-concept to the practice of grade retention and that the practice is also ineffective in allowing a struggling student to catch up academically. Belief Factor Two is made up of five items # 3,11R, 17, 18 and 20; it has a Cronbach's alpha of .792 which represents good reliability.

Belief Factor Three is made up of three items (14, 9 and 7) and has a Cronbach's alpha of .588. Factor Three focused on beliefs about the impact that retention has on older elementary and middle school students. School- based mental-health professionals obtaining higher scores on this factor appear to perceive few negative outcomes for students that are retained after the fourth grade.

Belief factor four consists of two items (15 and 16) and asked the school-based mental health professional to consider whether they believe students who are a year old for their grade cause more behavior problems than those who are age appropriate (in grades K-3 and 4-8). Mental-health professionals with higher scores on Factor Four would perceive that retained students demonstrate more behavior problems than their non-retained peers. Belief Factor Four has a Cronbach's alpha of .876, demonstrating good reliability.

School Counselor/Psychologist Retention Survey Part III- Practice and Sources of Information. Part three asked the school counselor/school psychologist to identify where they obtained their knowledge on retention and how the decision to retain a student is made at their school. Respondents were asked about journal articles, attendance at workshops and personal communication with other professionals. They were asked to describe how extensive their knowledge on the subject was and to what extent they were involved in the decision-making process in their district. They were also asked if they would like more input into the decision and who makes the final decision. The final question asked if there was a mandatory retention policy based on test performance.

School Counselor/Psychologist Retention Survey Part IV- Knowledge. The TRBKQ developed by Witmer et al. (2004) contained 13 multiple choice questions and three open-ended questions to assess teacher's knowledge on the topic of retention. It was developed to assist researchers in understanding the rationale behind the continued use of retention despite the negative impact of the policy. Content validity for the questions was established by obtaining feedback from five professors in the education department of a small private university. For the current study the open ended questions have been excluded. Gaddis (unpublished manuscript) reports a Cronbach's alpha of .714, a group of school mental health professionals which suggests good internal consistency reliability.

Procedures

Selection of Participants. The target population for this study was all practicing school counselors and school psychologists. This study used a purposive method of

sampling. The purposive method of sampling entails soliciting participation from an individual based upon a specific characteristic. In this case the characteristic that was of interest was their status as a school counselor or school psychologist.

Procedure. Permission for this study was obtained from the Institutional Review Board of Northern Arizona University. Dr. Lena Gaddis obtained permission from the American School Counseling Association to conduct the survey with their members.

The school psychologist participants were obtained through several steps. The Georgia Association of School Psychologists and Washington State Association of School Psychologists were contacted and their membership lists were requested. Rather than releasing their membership lists, the organizations agreed to send out the email requesting participation in the survey once they had approved of the research project that was proposed. The organizations were provided a description of the study and a proposed email to be sent to the membership. Both organizations agreed and an email was sent out inviting school psychologists to participate in the survey. The email provided a link which brought the participant to Survey Monkey to complete the survey. Emails were sent to graduates of the school psychology program at Northern Arizona University, as well as former and present supervisors of interns, who were asked to complete the survey and to forward the email to their colleagues. Lastly, an invitation to participate in the survey was posted on a blog called "Notes from a School Psychologist". All participants were given the opportunity to register for a drawing to win one of three Kindles that were given away as an incentive for participating in the survey.

Data Screening

Data were screened before statistical analysis. Specifically the data were reviewed for accuracy, missing data points and errors in entry. It was determined that any respondent with missing data would be deleted. Also, examination for univariate outliers, homogeneity of variance and normality was conducted.

Results of the data screening indicated that there were 383 valid and complete surveys for the school psychologist data and 108 valid and complete surveys for the school counselor data. A total of 73 school psychologist and 34 school counselor surveys were deleted because they were incomplete. It was determined that subjects with two or fewer missing answers on the Knowledge portion of the survey would be retained and 0s would be input into the blank spaces. Thirty participants left one or two questions blank. A blank space was determined to represent an incorrect answer. The data were screened for univariate outliers of whom there were none. Homogeneity of variance was assessed and the assumption was met. However, the data did not meet the assumption of normality. A full explanation of the data screening will be discussed in the results section.

Statistical Analysis

The data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) for windows. A discussion of the statistics that were used to address the research questions follows.

1. What are school counselors' and school psychologists' beliefs about retention?

Descriptive statistics were used to examine the percents, means and standard deviations of survey items by counselors and psychologists. Descriptive statistics are useful in that they describe a large amount of data in just a few indices.

2. Is there a difference in the beliefs of school psychologists and school counselors? A factor Analysis was completed by Dr. Lena Gaddis in order to reduce the data into more manageable factors to be used for comparison of the two groups. As a result of the analysis there were four factors for use in this study. The factor scores of the school psychologists and school counselors were analyzed using ANOVAS and the Mann-Whitney U.

3. How much knowledge to school counselors and school psychologists have about the impact of retention on students? The mean of the total percent correct on the Knowledge portion of the TRBKQ was derived for school counselor participants and for school psychologist participants. Standard deviations and minimum and maximum scores were obtained for this (these) variable(s).

4. Is there a difference between the knowledge of the school counselor and school psychologist? A One Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was used to examine this question. The ANOVA is a statistical technique that is used to determine if there is a difference between two groups.

5. What sources of information (practical v. propositional) do school counselors and school psychologists base their knowledge of grade retention, and is there a difference between to two professional groups. Participants were asked to identify the means which contributes to their obtained knowledge about grade retention and social promotion. The choices were (a) reading journal and attending workshops,

(b) personal experiences with retained students, (c) talking to colleagues, and (d) recent university coursework. For the purposes of this study, a and d above were combined to form a propositional knowledge variable, while b and c together came to constitute a practical knowledge variable.

This question was addressed by address by considering frequency data for each group on each the propositional and practical knowledge variables. The frequencies were compared between school counselor and school psychologists.

Limitations

The current research has limitations. The results of the study may not be generalizable because the sample was not random. Participants were selected from the membership lists of the American Counseling Association, the Georgia and Washington State Association of School Psychologists, and personal contact. An invitation to participate in the study was also posted on a blog.

Summary

The current study used a survey research method to assess school counselor's and school psychologist's perception of retention. Participants were obtained through contacting the Washington State and Georgia Associations of school psychologists and the American School Counselor Association. They were also recruited by a post on a blog and personal contact. The study used a modified version of Witmer's (2004) Teacher Retention Belief and Knowledge Questionnaire. The questionnaire was modified to fit the population of school counselors and psychologists and posted on Survey Monkey. Participants were given the opportunity of winning a Kindle for their participation.

Data were screened and analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences. Data were screened for missing values, errors in entry, univariate outliers, normality and homogeneity of variance. The five research questions were addressed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Factor Analysis was used to establish four factors from the twenty Belief Statements. Cronbach's alpha was used to establish internal consistency of the belief statements and factors.

Chapter Four

Results

The purpose of the current study was to use a survey method to examine the perceptions and knowledge of counselors and school psychologists in regards to the subject of grade retention.

Chapter four will review the demographics and response rate of the sample. Archived data will be used to address the five research questions which follow. What are school counselors' and school psychologists' beliefs about grade retention. Is there a difference between the beliefs of the school counselors and school psychologists? How much knowledge do school counselors and school psychologists have about the impact of retention on students? Is there a difference between the knowledge of the school counselor and school psychologist? What sources of information (practical v. propositional) do school counselors and school psychologists base their knowledge of grade retention, and is there a difference between the two professional groups?

Data Screening

Data collected from Survey Monkey were downloaded into Excel then transferred to the Statistical Program for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The data were collected between October and August of 2012. Prior to analysis the data were screened for missing or incorrectly entered data, assumptions of normality and outliers. The data screening started with a visual inspection for missing items.

School Psychologist Data File. A total of 456 potential participants started the survey. Two potential participants declined consent. Ten others provided consent but discontinued the survey at that point. Sixteen participants completed the demographic

questions and terminated their participation. Two participants stopped at Belief

Statement 11. These 30 potential participants were deleted from the data file.

The next step in screening the data were to delete cases that had not completed the

Knowledge portion of the survey. It was decided that subjects that had not responded to

three or more of the Knowledge questions would be deleted. Subjects that had skipped

two questions or less were retained and a 0 was input into the blank space for an incorrect

answer. It was determined that the skipped questions represented an incorrect answer.

Twenty three potential participants did not complete any of the knowledge questions.

Two subjects stopped at Knowledge question three. Eleven potential participants stopped

at Knowledge question number seven and several participants left more than three

questions blank. All of the above mentioned subjects were deleted due to missing data.

Twenty participants left one question blank. Four participants left two questions

blank. As stated above, participants with two or fewer missing Knowledge items were

retained. The assumption was made that if the participant left the question blank, they

did not know the answer so a 0 was input. Overall, 73 cases were deleted due to missing

data, leaving 383 valid and complete surveys done by school psychologists.

School Counselor Data File. A total of 142 school counselors started the survey.

Three potential participants started the survey but did not respond to any questions. Five

potential participants completed the demographic information and stopped. Three

potential participants completed the Beliefs questions up to number 11. Eleven potential

participants completed the Beliefs questions but did not complete any Knowledge

questions. One potential participant answered the Knowledge question one then stopped.

Two subjects stopped at Knowledge question three. Four potential participants stopped

at the Knowledge question seven. One subject stopped at the Knowledge question number nine. Several other potential participants skipped questions. Finally, four participants skipped one question and two participants skipped two questions. Subjects missing one or two items were retained and a 0 was input into the blank question. It is believed that if they skipped the question they did not know the answer. A total of 34 potential participants were deleted leaving 108 counselor surveys.

The data for the Beliefs portion of the survey was reviewed for outliers using a frequency table. It was determined that all of the data entered was between 0 and 1 and there were no outliers.

The data for the Knowledge portion of the survey was assessed for independence of observations, normality and homogeneity of variance due to the fact that an ANOVA would be conducted. An ANOVA has several assumptions that should be met. One assumption is that the observations are independent, meaning that one participant's score does not influence other's scores. The current data meets that assumption. Morgan et al. (2013) states that "many parametric statistics assume that certain variables are distributed approximately normally" meaning that the frequency distribution would fall along the normal curve. In order to assess the normality of the current data the skewness statistic was reviewed. The skewness statistic demonstrates the degree to which the data varies from normality. A skewness statistic above = 1.0 or below – 1.0 indicates a lack of normality in the data. The skewness statistic for school psychologists Knowledge was -1.015, representing a departure from normality. The skewness statistic for the school counselor Knowledge data was -.010 which indicates normality. However, Morgan et al. (2013) states that "ANOVA are quite robust to violations of normality". So an ANOVA

was used in this analysis. The results of the ANOVA would be impacted by the homogeneity of variance so the Levine statistic was computed. The amount of variance (standard deviation squared) between the two groups was not significant (sig =.212) making the data appropriate for use in an ANOVA.

Findings

Research question one. What are school counselors' and school psychologists' beliefs about retention? This analysis made use of descriptive statistics, examining the percentage of respondents that agreed and disagreed with the 20 belief statements in the survey. Respondents were given the option of selecting from a four-choice Likert-Scale (1= Agree, 2= Tend to Agree, 3= Tend to Disagree, 4= Disagree). These four choices were combined into two (1 =Agree and 2=Tend to Agree were combined into 1= Agree and 3= Tend to Disagree and 4 = Disagree were combined into 2 = Disagree).

Table 3 provides the percentage of school psychologists (N= 383) who agree and disagree with the 20 Belief statements. For the purposes of discussion the school psychologist's beliefs will be categorized as Minimally, Marginally, Moderately and Strongly. For each item, if the split between Disagree/Agree was below 60/40 or 40/60 school psychologists were said to be Minimally. Marginal Disagreement/Agreement is defined as above 60/40 and 40/60. Moderate Disagreement/Agreement is 70/30 or 30/70. Finally, Strong Disagreement/Agreement is defined as above 80/20 or 20/80. The same categorization will be applied to the discussion of the school counselor results.

School psychologists did not support the use of retention as an intervention to prevent future failure, their responses indicated a Strong Disagreement with the statement "retention is an effective means of preventing students from facing daily failure in the

next higher grade" (item #1). However, the school psychologist's response to the last

Belief statement (item # 20) "children should never be retained" was Minimally,

indicating that they believe that there are situations in which retention is acceptable.

Table 3

Percentage of School Psychologists Who Agree and Disagree with Belief Statements

Belief Statements	% Who Agree	%Who Disagree
1. Retention is an effective means of preventing students from facing daily failure in the next higher grade.	12.8	87.2
2. Retention is necessary for maintaining grade level standards.	8.6	91.4
3. Retaining a child in grades K-3 harms a child's self concept.	77.3	22.7
4. Retention prevents classrooms from having wide ranges in student achievement.	24.5	75.5
5. Students who do not apply themselves to their studies should be retained.	9.4	90.6
6. Knowing retention is a possibility does motivate students to work harder.	28.2	71.8
7. Retaining a child in grades 4-8 harms a child's self-concept.	96.3	3.7
8. Retention is an effective means of providing support in school for the child who does not get support at home.	3.7	96.3
9. Students retained once in elementary school (K-4) should not be retained again in elementary school.	96.9	3.1
10. Students who make passing grades, but are working below grade level should be retained.	1.0	99.0
11. Retention in grades K-3 is an effective means of giving the immature child a chance to catch up.	33.2	66.8
12. Retention in grades 4-8 is an effective means of giving	5.0	95.0

Belief Statements	% Who Agree	%Who Disagree
the immature child a chance to catch up.		
13. Students receiving services from a learning support teacher should not be retained.	85.1	14.9
14. If students are to be retained, they should be retained no later than 4th grade.	89.3	10.7
15. In grades K-3 over-age children (more than a year older than their classmates) cause more behavior problems than other children.	40.7	59.3
16. In grades 4-8 over-age children (more than a year older than their classmates) cause more behavior problems than other children.	58.5	41.5
17. Retention in grades K-3 permanently labels a child.	50.9	49.1
18. Retention in grades 4-8 permanently labels a child.	75.5	24.5
19. Children who have passing grades but excessive absences should be retained.	5.7	94.3
20. Children should never be retained.	55.6	44.4

N=383

The school psychologists in this sample disagreed with the idea that retention has

a positive impact on class composition. They strongly disagreed with the idea that

retention is necessary for maintaining grade level standards (item #2). Also, they

demonstrated Moderate Disagreement with the statement "retention prevents classrooms

from having wide ranges in student achievement" (item #4). School psychologists do not

see retention as an effective means of facilitating class wide achievement.

When considering the impact of retention on the student's self concept, the school

psychologists in this sample supported the statement "retaining a child in grades K-3

harms a child's self concept" with Moderate Agreement (item #3). They also believe that retention has an impact on a child's self concept with Strong Agreement with item # 7. When considering issues of labeling, the school psychologists were clear in their opinions. About half disagreed with the notion that retaining a child K-3 permanently labels them (item # 17). By contrast; they reported Moderate agreement with the statement "retention in grades 4-8 permanently labels a child" (item # 18). They appear to believe that retention after fourth grade has a larger impact on the student.

When examining the rationale for retention the school psychologists in the sample had a strong response. When asked if students who did not apply themselves to their studies should be retained (item #5) there was Strong Disagreement. Similarly, when given the statement "students who make passing grades, but are working below grade level should be retained" (item # 10) school psychologists demonstrated Strong Disagreement. In addition, the school psychologists did not believe that attendance should be a factor, expressing Strong Disagreement with the statement "children who have passing grades but excessive absences should be retained" (item # 19). They also expressed Strong Agreement with the idea that students receiving support from a learning teacher should not be retained (item # 13).

In regards to retention and motivation the school psychologists in the sample did not see retention as a motivating factor for struggling students. Their responses indicated Moderate Disagreement with the statement" knowing retention is a possibility does motivate students to work harder" (item #6).

When the school psychologists in the sample were asked about the usefulness of retention as an educational intervention they overwhelmingly disagreed with the Belief

statements. Their response to the statement '"retention is an effective means of providing support in school for the child who does not get support at home" (item #8) was Strong Disagreement. On the question of maturity, Marginal Disagreement with the idea that retention in grades K-3 is an effective means of giving the immature child a chance to catch up (item #11). Further, they expressed Strong Disagreement with the notion that retention in grades 4- 8 is an effective means of giving the immature child a chance to catch up (item #12). While overall school psychologists disagree with retaining a child due to immaturity, more school psychologists tend to believe that retention is an acceptable practice for k-3 students than for those in grades 4-8.

When considering the timing and frequency of retention, the school psychologists in the sample expressed strong opinions. Item # 9 states "students retained once in elementary school should not be retained again in elementary school" to which the school psychologists expressed Strong Agreement. They also reported Strong Agreement with the idea that students should be retained before 4th grade (item # 14). Thus, the school psychologists in the sample appear to believe that if students are to be retained they should not be retained more than once and it should be done before fourth grade.

The survey also addressed issues related to retention and behavior. The school psychologists in the sample appear to Minimally Disagree as to whether retention has an impact on behavior. Their responses can be categorized as Minimally Disagree with the statement "in grades K-3 over-age children (more than a year older than their classmates) cause more behavior problems than other children" (item # 15). Likewise, they Minimally Agreed on the statement that over-age children in grades 4-8 cause more behavior problems than other children (item # 16).

Table 4 provides the percentage of school counselors (N= 108) who agree and disagree with the 20 Belief statements. When the school counselors in the current survey were asked if they believe retention is an effective means of preventing students from facing failure in the next higher grade, their response was Minimally to the statement to that effect (item # 1). The school counselors expressed Moderate Disagreement with the idea that children should never be retained (item # 20). These results indicate that the school counselors in the current survey feel that retention has a place among academic interventions for underperforming students.

Table 4

Percentage of School Counselors Who Agree and Disagree with Belief Statements

Belief Statements	% Who Agree	%Who Disagree
1. Retention is an effective means of preventing students from facing daily failure in the next higher grade.	41.7	58.3
2. Retention is necessary for maintaining grade level standards.	32.4	67.6
3. Retaining a child in grades K-3 harms a child's self concept.	45.4	54.6
4. Retention prevents classrooms from having wide ranges in student achievement.	21.3	78.9
5. Students who do not apply themselves to their studies should be retained.	17.6	82.4
6. Knowing retention is a possibility does motivate students to work harder.	51.9	48.1
7. Retaining a child in grades 4-8 harms a child's self-concept.	81.5	18.5
8. Retention is an effective means of providing support in school for the child who does not get support at home.	20.4	79.6

Belief Statements	% Who Agree	%Who Disagree
9. Students retained once in elementary school (K-4) should not be retained again in elementary school.	81.5	18.5
10. Students who make passing grades, but are working below grade level should be retained.	9.3	90.7
11. Retention in grades K-3 is an effective means of giving the immature child a chance to catch up.	64.8	35.2
12. Retention in grades 4-8 is an effective means of giving the immature child a chance to catch up.	22.2	77.8
13. Students receiving services from a learning support teacher should not be retained.	61.1	38.9
14. If students are to be retained, they should be retained no later than 4th grade.	63.9	36.1
15. In grades K-3 over-age children (more than a year older than their classmates) cause more behavior problems than other children.	27.8	72.2
16. In grades 4-8 over-age children (more than a year older than their classmates) cause more behavior problems than other children.	54.6	45.4
17. Retention in grades K-3 permanently labels a child.	25.9	74.1
18. Retention in grades 4-8 permanently labels a child.	62.0	38.0
19. Children who have passing grades but excessive absences should be retained.	19.4	80.6
20. Children should never be retained.	28.7	71.3

N=108

The school counselors were asked questions regarding the impact of retention on class wide achievement. They expressed Marginal Disagreement with the idea that retention is necessary for maintaining grade level standards (item #2). Likewise,

Moderate Disagreement was demonstrated to the statement "retention prevents classrooms from having wide ranges in student achievement" (item #4). As a whole, the school counselors surveyed did not endorse retention as an effective means of enhancing class composition.

The school counselors were asked to consider the impact that retention has on the self concept of a student. They were divided on the statement "retaining a child in grades K-3 harms a child's self concept" (item #3) with a Minimally Disagreed response. However, they do believe that retaining a child in grades 4-8 has a negative impact on a child's self concept with Strong Agreement with item # 7. When considering issues of labeling, the school counselors again saw a difference between being retained K-3 or 4-8. A Moderate Disagreement was observed with the notion that retaining a child K-3 permanently labels them (item # 17). In addition, they reported Marginal Disagreement with the statement "retention in grades 4-8 permanently labels a child" (item # 18).

The school counselors were asked to consider what they believed to be appropriate reasons for retention. Item # 5 asked if students who did not apply themselves to their studies should be retained to which there was Strong Disagreement. The school counselors had an equally Strong Disagreement to item # 10 which asked if a student that was working below grade level but making passing grades should be retained. Similarly, school counselors did not feel that attendance should be a factor with their responses indicating Strong Disagreement to the statement "children who have passing grades but excessive absences should be retained" (item # 19). The school counselors in the current sample showed Marginal Agreement to the notion that a student receiving help from a learning support teacher should not be retained (item # 13).

When examining the issue of motivation, school counselors Minimally Agreed. Their response to the statement "knowing retention is a possibility does motivate students to work harder" (item #6) was Minimally Agreed. There was not a clear consensus of opinion as to the motivating power of retention.

The school counselor's perception of the efficacy of retention as an educational intervention was also examined by the current survey. The responses of the school counselors indicated Moderate Disagreement with the statement "retention is an effective means of providing support in school for the child who does not get support at home" (item #8). When given the statement "retention in grades K-3 is an effective means of giving the immature child a chance to catch up" (item #11) the school counselors showed Marginal Agreement. By contrast, retaining a student in grades 4-8 was not seen as an effective means of giving them time to mature, with their responses indicating Moderate Disagreement with item # 12.

Regarding the timing and frequency of retention, the school counselors in the current sample Strongly Agree with the notion that students retained once in elementary school should not be retained again in elementary school (item # 9). They also expressed Marginal Agreement with the idea that students should be retained before 4th grade (item # 14). It appears that the respondents in this survey believe that if retention is used it should be early and only once in a student's elementary education.

The school counselors offered a mixed reaction to questions related to retention and behavior. When given the statement "in grades K-3 over-age children (more than a year older than their classmates) cause more behavior problems than other children"

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(item # 15) they expressed Moderate Disagreement. However, when the same question was posed about students in grades 4-8 they Minimally Agreed (item #16).

Research question two. The second research question addressed in this study was "Is there a difference in the beliefs of school psychologists and school counselors?" In order to make the data more manageable and increase understanding of any differences that might exist between the school psychologists and school counselors the four factors of the TRBKQ were used in the following analysis.

A One-Way ANOVA was the statistic of choice; it compares two independent groups on a dependent variable. In order to compute a One-Way ANOVA the data must meet three assumptions. The first is that all observations are independent, meaning that one individual's score does not influence the score of another participant in the survey (the current research meets that criteria). The second assumption is that variances are equal across groups, which is assessed by the Levene's Test. Factors One and Three had significant scores (Sig. < .001) on the Levene's Test (Factor One p = .000, Factor Three p = .000). The third assumption is that the dependent variable is normally distributed. Three of the four belief factors are normally distributed, the Skewness statistic falling between -1 and 1 (Factor 1=.978, Factor 2= .162, Factor 3 = 1.429, Factor 4 = .186).

The means and standard deviations for the four Belief Factors are displayed in table five. Results indicate that there was a difference in means for the school psychologists and school counselors on Belief Factors One, Two, and Three. The mean for Belief Factor One was 13.9347 (SD = 3.537) for school psychologists and 15.842 (SD = 5.135) for school counselors. As for Belief Factor Two, the mean for the school psychologists was 10.947 (SD = 3.403) and the mean for the school counselors was

13.509 (SD = 3.413). Belief Factor Three reported a mean of 4.279 (SD = 1.333) for

school psychologists and 5.972 (SD = 2.016) for school counselors. Higher mean scores

indicate more disagreement with the belief statements that make up the Belief Factors.

Belief Factor Four demonstrated very similar means between the school psychologists

and school counselors. The school psychologists obtained a mean of 5.130 (SD = 1.606)

on Belief Factor Four, very similar to the mean obtained by school counselors which was

5.388 (SD = 1.458). The four Belief Factors and what they measure are discussed below.

Table 5

Means and Standard Deviations for Belief Factors by Group

	School Psychologists			School Counselors			Total		
Factors	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD
Factor 1	383	13.934	3.537	108	17.842	5.135	491	14.794	4.259
Factor 2	383	10.947	3.403	108	13.509	3.413	491	11.511	3.564
Factor 3	383	4.279	1.333	108	5.972	2.016	491	4.651	1.66
Factor 4	383	5.130	1.606	108	5.388	1.458	491	5.187	1.577

Belief Factor One. Belief Factor One assessed the school counselor's and school

psychologist's beliefs about retaining a student based upon personal characteristics such

as motivation and attendance. A higher score on this actor would indicate that the

professional would be in favor of retaining students they perceive to be immature, lacking

academic skill, family support and motivation. They also see student attributes as

impeding maintenance of academic standards.

Preliminary data screening for Belief Factor One indicated that the data met the assumption of normality as indicated by the Skewness Statistic (.978). However, the test of homogeneity of variance was significant (Sig. < .001), Levene Test (p = .000). Due to the violation of the assumption of homogeneity of variances a nonparametric test was used to assess the difference in Belief Factor One between the school psychologists and school counselors. The results of the Mann-Whitney U are displayed in Table 6 and indicated that there was a significant difference between the beliefs of the school psychologists and school counselors on Belief Factor One. The school psychologists in the survey had an average rank of 221.51 and the school counselors had an average rank of 332.86, demonstrating a significant statistical difference in beliefs (Sig. < .001), U=11301.000, r = -.326, p = .000. The effect size (r) is not provided by the SPSS printout. However, Morgan et al. (2013) provides a simple computation; r = z divided by the square root of the total number of participants (-.326 = -8.370 /22.16). The effect size of -.326 represents a medium effect size according to Cohen's conventions (Cohen, 1988).

Table 6

Mann-Whitney U for Belief Factor One

	Group	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Belief Factor One	SP	383	221.510	84837.000
	SC	108	332.860	35948.000
	Total	491		

	Belief Factor One
Mann-Whitney-U	11301.000
Wilcoxon W	84837.000
Z	-7.230
Asymp.Sig.(2-tailed)	.000

Belief Factor Two. Belief Factor Two measured the beliefs of school

psychologists and school counselors regarding issues surrounding labeling and self-

concept for early elementary students (K-3). A higher score on Belief Factor Two

indicates that the school counselor or psychologist believe that students who are retained

K-3 suffer from the stigma of labeling and that it may have an impact on their self-

concept. They also believe that retention is ineffective in allowing a student who has

fallen behind to catch up academically.

A One-Way ANOVA was conducted for Belief Factor Two and the results are

displayed in table five. The Levene's test indicated that the homogeneity of variances on

the dependent variable for Factor Two were approximately equal (Sig < .001) (p = .351).

A statistically significant difference was found between the beliefs of the school

psychologists and school counselors on Belief Factor Two F (1, 489) 47.65, p = .000.

Table 7

One-Way ANOVA for Belief Factor Two

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Belief Factor Two					
Between groups	552.742				
		1	552.742	47.654	.000
Within groups	5671.946				
		489	11.599		
Total	6224.688	490			

Belief Factor Three. Belief Factor Three focused on the school psychologist and

school counselor beliefs in terms of the impact that retention has on older elementary and

middle school students. A higher score on this factor would indicate that the professional

does not believe that there are negative outcomes for students that are retained after the

fourth grade.

Preliminary data screening was conducted and the Skewness Statistic was above 1

(p= 1.429) indicating a lack of normality in the data. Also, the test of homogeneity of

variance was significant (Sig. < .001), Levene Test (p = .000). Due to the violation of the

assumption of normality and homogeneity of variances a nonparametric test was used to

assess the difference in Belief Factor Three between the school psychologists and school

counselors. According to Morgan et al. (2013) nonparametric tests have fewer

assumptions, making them useful when the assumptions of parametric tests are violated.

In this case the Mann-Whitney U will be utilized because the data meets three

assumptions; 1) an underlying continuity from low to high on the dependent variable 2) the data represent independent observations 3) large sample size.

To summarize the results of the Mann-Whitney U (displayed in Table 8) in comparing the mean rank of the school psychologists and school counselors on Belief Factor Three scores, the results were significant (Sig. < .001), z = -8.370, p = .000. The school psychologists in the survey had an average rank of 218.33 and the school counselors had an average rank of 344.14, demonstrating a significant statistical difference in beliefs (Sig < .001), U= 10083.000, r = -.3777, p = .000. The effect size (r) is not provided by the SPSS printout. However, Morgan et al. (2013) provides a simple computation; r = z divided by the square root of the total number of participants. In this study the equation would read -.3777 = -8.370 /22.16. The effect size of -.3777 represents a medium effect size according to Cohen's conventions (Cohen, 1988).

Table 8

Mann-Whitney U for Belief Factor Three

	Group	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Factor Three	SP	383	218.330	83619.000
	SC	108	344.140	37167.000
	Total	491		

	Belief Factor Three
Mann-Whitney-U	10083.000
Wilcoxon W	83619.000
Z	-8.3700
Asymp.Sig.(2-tailed)	.000

Belief Factor Four. Belief Factor Four required the school psychologists and school counselors to consider whether they believe students who are a year old for their grade cause more behavior problems than those who are age appropriate in grades K-8. A higher score on Factor Four would indicate the belief that retained students demonstrate more behavior problems than their non-retained peers.

An ANOVA was computed and the results are displayed in Table nine. The Levene's test indicated homogeneity of variance between the two groups on the dependent variable (p = .217). There was not a statistically significant difference (Sig < .001) between the beliefs of the school psychologists and the school counselors $F(1,479)$ 2.26 p = .133.

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Table 9

One-Way ANOVA for Belief Factor Four

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Belief Factor Four					
Between groups	5.622				
		1	5.622	2.266	.133
Within groups	1213.139				
		489	2.481		
Total	1218.762	490			

Research question three. This question focused on the amount of knowledge that the school psychologists and school counselors have on retention. For this study, the operational definition of knowledge level is percentage correct on the Knowledge portion of the survey. The Knowledge portion of the survey is made up of 13 multiple choice questions focusing on the impact that retention has on students. A summary of the descriptive statistics is provided in Table 10.

Table 10

Descriptive Statistics for the Knowledge Portion of the Survey

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Range	Mean	SD
School Psychologists	383	7.69	100	92.31	67.644	16.738
School Counselors	108	0	92.31	92.31	44.515	23.399

The school psychologists that participated in the survey correctly answered between one and 13 of the Knowledge items. Three participants answered a total of one item correctly (7.69 percent) and one participant answered all 13 (100 percent) correctly. The mean percent correct of the school psychologists was 67.644 percent (SD = 16.738) or 8.796 items correct.

There were 108 valid surveys completed by the school counselors in this sample. They scored between 0 and 92.31 percent. Three respondents obtained a score of 0 percent (0 correct) and two obtained a score of 92.31 percent (12 items correct). The mean score was 44.515 (SD = 23.399) or 5.788 items correct.

Research question four. This question examined the mean level differences of knowledge between school psychologists and school counselors. A One-Way Analysis of Variance was used to determine if there was a difference between the two groups. In order to perform an ANOVA the data must meet several statistical assumptions which include independence of observations, homogeneity of variance and normality (Morgan, Leech, Glockner & Barrett, 2013). The data from the current survey represent independent observations, meaning that one individual's score does not indicate what other's scores are. In other words, the value of a single observation has no relation to other observations. Homogeneity of variance is defined as both groups having equal variances on the dependent variable. The current data meets these criteria based on the results of the Levene Statistic (p = .212) which was not significant at the .001 level. The survey data collected from the school psychologists and school counselors was assessed for normality by examination of the Skewness statistic. Morgan (2013) states that "skewness is an important statistic for understanding whether a variable is normally distributed; it is an index that helps determine how much a variable's distribution deviates from the distribution of the normal curve". In order for a variable to be considered "normal" the Skewness Statistic should fall between -1 and 1 (Morgan, 2013). The Skewness Statistic for the Knowledge portion of the survey for school psychologists was -1.02, for school counselors -.010. Thus, the data collected on the Knowledge scores

for school psychologists does not meet the criteria of normality. However, Morgan et al. (2013) state that "ANOVA are quite robust to violations of normality" and therefore an ANOVA will be used to assess the difference on Knowledge scores between the two groups.

The results of the One Way ANOVA are displayed in table 11. In summary, a statistically significant mean difference (Sig < .05) was demonstrated between the school psychologists and school counselor scores on the Knowledge portion of the survey $F(1, 479) = 176.66$, $p = .000$. This indicates that school psychologists demonstrated significantly higher Knowledge scores, on average, than school counselors in the current sample.

Table 11

One-Way ANOVA for Knowledge Test Scores

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Knowledge test score					
Between groups	45064.396	1	45064.396	133.063	.000
Within groups	165609.871	489	338.670		
Total	210674.267	490			

Research question five. This question addressed the acquisition of knowledge. The school psychologists and school counselors were asked to identify the means by which they acquired their knowledge about grade retention and social promotion. The choices were (a) reading journal and attending workshops, (b) personal experiences with retained students, (c) talking to colleagues, and (d) recent university coursework. For the

purposes of this study, a and d above were combined to form a propositional knowledge variable, while b and c together came to constitute a practical knowledge variable.

Overall, school psychologists were fairly evenly split on their knowledge sources. Their responses indicated that 51 percent obtained their knowledge through a propositional source. While 46.8 percent reported a practical source, 3.1 percent of the data were missing. By contrast, school counselors reported that 10.2 percent obtained their knowledge through propositional means and 84.3 percent obtained it through practical means with 5.6 percent of the data missing.

Summary

The current dissertation study used archived survey data to address the differences in beliefs and knowledge between school counselors and school psychologists on the subject of grade retention. Data were screened and analysis was performed using SPSS. The five research questions were addressed using a variety of statistical techniques including descriptive statistics, ANOVAs and due to the lack of normality of some of the data a non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test was completed. Results indicated that there was a statistically significant difference between the school psychologists and the school counselors on Belief Factors One, Two and Three. For Belief Factor Four no significant difference between the two professional groups was revealed. In addition, a statistically significant difference was found between the knowledge levels of the school psychologists and the school counselors with the school psychologists being significantly higher. The current research also demonstrated a difference between the two professional groups on their source of knowledge, with significantly more school counselors citing practical knowledge as their guide for making decisions about retention.

Chapter Five

Discussion

The purpose of the current study was to assess the beliefs of school psychologists and school counselors on the subject of grade retention. The beliefs of the two professional groups were compared, based on their agreement or disagreement on the 20 Belief Statements from an electronic survey that was distributed over the internet via Survey Monkey. The study also explored the level of knowledge that school psychologists and school counselors have on the subject of grade retention. Participants in the survey were asked to respond to 13 multiple choice items that assessed their knowledge. The results were used to compare the level of knowledge between the two professional groups. Finally, participants were asked to identify how they had obtained their knowledge through propositional or practical means and the data were used to compare the two groups.

The population of interest in this study was school psychologists and school counselors. There were 491 surveys that were valid for use in the study, 383 school psychologists and 108 school counselors. Participants were obtained from the membership list of the American School Counseling Association, the Washington State and Georgia Association of School Psychologists, a blog and personal contacts. The survey consisted of four components, 1) six item demographics, 2) 20 Likert- scale belief statements, 3) practices and sources of knowledge and 4) 13 multiple choice knowledge questions. The survey was administered over the internet via Survey Monkey. Potential participants were sent an email with an invitation and link to the survey. The data were collected and analyzed using inferential and descriptive statistics.

Summary of Findings

      School psychologists and school counselor's beliefs about grade retention.
The first research question addressed by the survey was assessing school psychologists
and school counselor's beliefs about grade retention.

      The school psychologists in the current sample strongly disagreed with item #1
"retention is an effective means of preventing students from facing daily failure in the
next grade". This is in contrast to the majority of research that has been done with
teachers and other educational professionals. Haynes (2007) found Marginal agreement
from teachers with item #1 and Tomchin & Impara (1992) found Strong Agreement with
item #1. The TRBKQ was administered to other educational professionals with similar
results. Neuberger (2012) found that experienced teachers enrolled in an educational
leadership program reported Marginal Agreement to item # 1. The school counselors in
the current sample Minimally Disagreed. The difference in the findings between
counselors, teachers and school psychologists may be that the psychologists in the sample
have been exposed to more research on the subject of retention.

      When asked if they believed a child should never be retained (item # 20) the
school psychologists in the sample were more divided in their opinion with 56.5 percent
agreeing with the notion that a child should never be retained. This finding indicates that
43.5 percent of the school psychologists believe that there are situations in which
retention is effective and they do not believe that it should be eliminated as an option.
This appears to contradict the finding that 87.4 percent believe that retention is not an
effective means for preventing a student from facing daily failure in the next grade. It
appears that the school psychologist in the sample believe that there is a purpose for

retention; it is just not clear what they believe that purpose is. The school counselors in the current study disagreed with the statement that a child should never be retained at the rate of 71.3 percent. Past research done with teachers has seen results with even higher rates of disagreement such as 97.6 percent (Tomchin and Impara, 1992), 91.7 percent (Pouliot, 1998) and 94 percent (Witmer, 2004). The difference between the beliefs of the teachers and school psychologists may be that the teachers depend more upon their personal experience for making decisions about retention and the school psychologists have been exposed to more research. The same can be said in relation to the opinions of the school counselors, Kerr (2007) found that the elementary school counselor was influenced by the beliefs of the classroom teacher in regards to the subject of retaining a student.

When asked to consider the impact that grade retention has on class-wide achievement school psychologists disagreed with the notion that retention is necessary for maintaining grade level standards and preventing wide ranges in achievement, as did the school counselors. This finding is similar to that of Witmer et al.(2004) with the majority of teachers in that study disagreeing with the idea that retention reduces skill variation in the classroom. It contrasts the finding by Pouliot (1999) who found that the teachers in the sample agreed with the idea that retention reduces skill variation in the classroom. Okapala (2007) in a survey of kindergarten teachers found that a majority believed in the usefulness of retention in increasing accountability and academic standards. School psychologists in the current sample did not see the merit of retention in fostering class wide achievement. They like the school counselors in the current sample did not seem to believe that retention is helpful in maintaining grade level standards.

When asked about the impact that retention has on self-concept, most school psychologists in the current sample believe that it is harmful. However, more of them appear to believe that it is more harmful after grade four. The school counselors in the sample were evenly divided on the impact on self-concept for students K-3. They had a stronger response when asked about students in grades 4-8 with 78 percent agreeing that retention harms a student's self concept. These findings are in contrast to the results obtained by Tomchin and Impara (1992) who found that teachers in their sample did not believe that retention prior to grade three has an impact on self concept. Tanner and Combs (1993) found that teachers that participated in their survey believed that retention in the early grades does not have an impact on self-concept, but retention in the upper grades can have an impact. Additionally, more participants in the Tomchin and Impara (1992) and Pouliot (1998) study believed that retention impacts a student's self-concept more after fourth grade.

When considering the impact that retention has on labeling students, the school psychologists in the current sample again saw a difference in what age the retention is done. More school psychologists agreed with the idea that retention after fourth grade permanently labels a student, more so than for students in grades K-3. They appear to believe that the later retention is done, the larger the impact. The school counselors in the sample had a similar response, indicating that they did not believe retention in grades K-3 permanently labels a child but having an even split when the question concerns students in grades 4-8. This can be contrasted with findings from research done with teachers which indicated that they did not believe that retention at any age permanently labels a child (Pouliot, 1998, Tomchin and Impara, 1992, Witmer, 2004). Perhaps school

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counselors and school psychologists, with their training in developmental issues of children see a difference at grade level 4, believing that there is more of an impact of labeling issues than do teachers.

The school psychologists and school counselors in the current study were asked about the rationale for retaining students. Neither group believed that a student should be retained because of lack of effort, working below grade level or excessive absences. The research conducted with teachers had mixed results Pouliot (1998) found that teachers strongly agreed that students should be retained for attendance, lack of effort and working below grade level. Witmer (2004) found results more similar to the current study, disagreement with the notion of retaining students for lack of effort, working below grade level and lack of attendance. Further, the school psychologists did not believe that retention is an effective means for giving an immature child the chance to catch up. The school counselors appeared to believe that retention before fourth grade is an effective means for giving an immature child to catch up, but not in the upper grades. The current sample of school psychologists appears to believe that academic progress should be the deciding factor for retention and issues of maturity, effort and absences are not remediated by retaining a student. The school counselors agreed with most points, except for feeling that retention before fourth grade is an effective means for addressing maturity.

Motivation can be a major issue in academic achievement. The school psychologists in the current sample did not see retention as a method to motivate students that are not working up to their potential. These results are similar to those of Tanner and Combs (1993) who found that the teachers that they surveyed disagreed with the notion

that the threat of retention can motivate a student to work harder. The school counselors in the current sample were evenly split on the question of motivation. The school psychologists and school counselors also did not see retention as an effective means of supporting a student that is not getting support from home. These results can be contrasted with those of Tomchin and Impara (1992) who found that teachers in their sample believed that retention is a motivating force however; the teachers in the same sample also believed that retention is not an effective means of giving a student the support that they are lacking in the home.

The school psychologists in the current study overwhelmingly agreed with the idea that a student who is receiving support from a learning support teacher should not be retained. Kerr (2007) had similar results when surveying elementary school counselors, 51 percent agreed with the statement "Students in special education programs should not be retained". This is consistent with the policy established by the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) (IDEA, 2004). The IDEA is a federal law that protects special needs students and guarantees them a free and appropriate public education. Within the law placement of a special needs student is decided by an IEP (individualized education plan) team which meets yearly. The IEP team must justify their rationale for educating a student in anything other than an age-appropriate general education classroom (IDEA, 2004). The school counselors in the current study were more evenly divided in their opinion. By contrast, the research conducted with teachers' demonstrated strong support for retaining students who are receiving learning support services (Tomchin & Impara, 1992, Pouliot, 1998).

The school psychologists and school counselors in the current sample were asked to consider the timing and frequency of retention. Their responses indicated that they believed that retention should take place before fourth grade (if ever) and should only be used as an intervention once. This result is similar to those reported by Pouliot (1998), Tomchin and Impara (1992) found a fairly even division of opinion on the question of the timing of retention.

When asked about the impact that retention has on behavior the school psychologists in the current sample were fairly evenly split. There was not a clear consensus of whether they believed overage children cause more behavior problems than their appropriately aged peers. These results are very similar to those reported by Pouliot (1998) and Tomchin and Impara (1992). The school counselors in the current sample strongly disagreed with the idea that over-aged students in grades K-3 cause more behavior problems. They were evenly split when the same question addressed students in grades 4-8. Perhaps the school counselors believe that the age at which a student is retained has an impact on their behavior and being retained after fourth grade can increase the chances that there will be a behavior problem.

Research question two. The second question that was addressed in the current study was "Is there a difference between the beliefs of the school psychologist and school counselor". Gaddis (unpublished manuscript, 2015) conducted a Factor Analysis using data from the TRBKQ that were completed by school-based mental-health professionals. The Factor Analysis garnered four factors that were used to compare the differences in beliefs between the school counselors and school psychologists.

Belief Factor One. The analysis of the data revealed a statistically significant difference between the scores of the school psychologists and school counselors. The school counselors scored higher which indicates that they may have a greater tendency to be in favor of retaining students for such characteristics as being immature, lacking motivation and having little support from their family than do the school psychologist. The analysis indicates that the school counselors see lack of attendance as an issue that might warrant retention in grade whereas the school psychologists do not see the threat of retention having an impact on student attendance.

As compared to the school psychologists, the school counselors believe that the threat of retention can be a motivating factor in the academic life of a student. The school counselors in the current sample would be in favor of retaining students they perceive to be immature, lacking academic skill, family support and motivation. They also see student attributes as impeding maintenance of academic standards that immature students can have a negative impact on a whole classroom and retention can play a part in remediating the problem.

School counselors see retention as having more of an impact on students who do not have family support than the school psychologists believe exists. The school counselors in the current sample see more positive outcomes for retaining students with specific characteristics than do the school psychologists. These results are similar to findings by Kerr (2007) who found that elementary counselors that participated in a study on retention agreed that immature students benefit from retention and that an additional year in grade gives the immature child to grow. However, counselors in the same study disagreed with the idea that students should be retained based on attendance. They also

disagreed with the premise that the threat of retention can be a motivating factor. Schnurr et al. (2009) found that the school psychologists that they surveyed believed that retention gives immature students time to grow but did not believe students should be retained because of attendance.

Belief Factor Two. Analysis of Belief Factor Two demonstrated a statistically significant difference between the two groups which suggests school psychologists are more likely to attribute negative outcomes to the practice of grade retention than do school counselors. These negative outcomes include labeling, negative self concept and a delay in providing appropriate interventions to struggling students. School counselors are less likely to believe that there is a stigma attached to being retained early in elementary school, that the retained child suffers peer and adult rejection and that the feeling stays with them throughout their academic career when compared to school psychologists. Similarly, school counselors minimize the impact grade retention on students' self-concept more so than school psychologists. This finding can be contrasted to the findings by Kerr (2007), whose results indicated a relatively equal number of elementary school counselors agreeing and disagreeing with the notion that retention has a negative impact on a student's self-concept. In that study, they did not seem to have a strong opinion whereas in this study the school counselors had a more positive impression of retention. In the same survey, 26 percent of the respondents indicated "undecided" to the statement "retention has a detrimental effect on students' self concept."   Schnurr et al. (2009) found that the school psychologists in their survey agreed with the idea that retention poses an emotional cost to a student as well as a social cost (being removed from peer group).

Belief Factor Three. Analysis of Belief Factor Three resulted in a statistically significant difference between the school psychologists and school counselor's beliefs, indicating that the school counselors believe that retention results in fewer negative outcomes for students in grades 4-8 than school psychologists perceive. For example, the school psychologist may believe that being retained after fourth grade leads to a lower self-concept for students in 4-8 and/or the impact of labeling is larger in the student's life. It can also mean that school psychologists believe that the academic impact is greater, and that students may experience a lack of self-confidence in their academics because of their retention after grade four more so than do school counselors.

Belief Factor Four focused on the impact of retention on behavior. There was not a statistically significant difference demonstrated between the school psychologists and the school counselors in the current sample. The groups appear to have similar beliefs when it comes to behavior and retention.

Research question three. Research question three examined the amount of knowledge that school psychologists and school counselors have on the subject of retention. Past research has demonstrated that teachers have a limited knowledge base on the subject of retention. Witmer et al. (2004) found that the average score of the teachers surveyed was 30 percent. Neuberger (2011) found that teachers in leadership preparation programs demonstrated an average score of 38 percent. The educational professionals in the current sample demonstrated higher scores than past research has seen. The school psychologists in the current sample obtained an average score of 67.59, significantly higher than the results of studies on teachers. This may be attributed to the exposure of school psychologists to research on the subject of retention. The school counselors in the

current study obtained an average score of 42.03 percent. This score is higher than those

obtained by teachers, but still demonstrates a minimal level of knowledge.

Throughout the course of the literature review, it became clear that a great deal of

the research that was being done on the issue of retention was conducted by school

psychologists. It appears as though retention has been more of a concern for the school

psychologist than the school counselor in the recent past, which may explain the

difference in knowledge levels. However, Kerr (2007) found that the elementary

counselors that participated in a survey had a great deal of involvement in the retention

decision-making process. It appears that the counselors are participating in the decision-

making process without a full understanding of the implications of the decisions that they

are helping to make.

Research question four. Research question four explored the differences in

levels of knowledge between the school psychologists and school counselors. A One

Way ANOVA was conducted to compare the average scores of school psychologists and

school counselors on the Knowledge portion of the survey. A significant difference was

demonstrated with school psychologists displaying significantly higher Knowledge

scores, on average, than the school counselors. These results are interesting because both

the school psychologist and school counselor professional organization have released

policy statements in regards to retention and social promotion. Both statements are very

similar, with the organizations opposing both social promotion and retention and

advocating for early intervention. Therefore, it would be expected that the two

professional groups would have similar levels of knowledge, if they are being influenced

by their professional organizations. These results indicate that school counselors have significantly less knowledge than school psychologists on the subject of retention.

There may be a number of explanations for the differences in levels of knowledge between the school psychologists and the school counselors. Awareness of the issues is perhaps the most pertinent at this time. The National Association of School Psychologists issued a policy statement in 2005, while the American School Counselor Association adopted theirs as recently as 2012. In addition, a search of the term "grade retention" using the Academic Search Complete Database for the years 2005 to 2015 produced one peer reviewed article from school counselor journals and 17 from school psychology journals. It might well be hypothesized that the school psychologists are more cognizant of the issues related to grade retention and may have a better understanding of the negative implications for students.

A second possibility is that school psychologists are more aware of alternatives to retention such as programs like Response -to-Intervention (RTI) than are school counselors. A great deal of research has been conducted on RTI models, with one study finding 47% decrease in the retention rate after implementation of an RTI program (Murray, Woodruff & Vaughn, 2010). There have been other alternatives to retention suggested such as extending the school day, summer school, tutoring, intensive reading programs taught by trained tutors, flexible schedules to allow for more reading instruction, decreased class size, and individualized learning plans. (Range et al., 2012).

The school psychologist and school counselors in the current study appear to have somewhat different beliefs when it comes to retention. However, when compared to other groups such as teachers (Witmer et al., 2004), administrators (Range et al., 2009)

and parents (Jimerson, 2001) they are more knowledgeable and informed in the issues related to grade retention. This provides these educational professionals the unique opportunity to provide information to other school personnel, provide suggestions, alternatives, and consult in the decision-making process. At times the school counselor will be better versed in the issues related to retention than the school psychologist in the building, and times when the opposite is true. Open communication between these two professionals is in the best interest of the students and families they serve.

Research question five. The final research question explored the different methods used by school counselors and school psychologists to obtain knowledge on the subject of retention. Respondents were asked to indicate if they had obtained their knowledge through propositional (research, study) or practical (experiential) means.

As stated in Chapter One, this study takes an epistemological approach to defining knowledge. This study is concerned with examining what knowledge is, how it is acquired and to what degree something can be known. Epistemology seeks to define knowledge and its relationship to truth, belief and justification. It is concerned with two types of knowledge factual or propositional knowledge, which consists of a theoretical comprehension of abstract arguments in the sciences (Fenstermacher, 1994). The second is practical knowledge, the knowledge of how to do something, having a particular skill gained from personal experience.

Results indicated that approximately half of the school psychologists in this study reported they had obtained their knowledge through professional development or study, while the other half indicated that they had obtained their knowledge through informal means such as the experience of working with retained students. By contrast, the school

counselors in the survey indicated that over 84 percent obtained their knowledge through practical means. The difference in the Knowledge scores might be attributed to the two different approaches of obtaining information. The school psychologists appear more focused on research and the school counselors seem to focus more on personal experience. These results are similar to those reported by Witmer (2004) who found that over sixty percent of the teachers surveyed indicated that their knowledge was from talking to a colleague or personal experience with retaining student.

The reliance on practical knowledge can be a challenge to improving the educational outcomes for struggling students. Practical knowledge is personal in nature and dependent upon experience and context, it can be tied to emotion (Fenstermacher, 1994). Practical knowledge is gained through experience, trial and error, doing what feels right. It allows for creative problem solving and personal reflection in the decision-making process (Fenstermacher, 1994). However, when educational decisions are made based on faulty assumptions it can impede the progress of the very students it is supposed to help. Practical knowledge can be compared to belief systems in that there does not need to be an inherent logic or internal consistency to the belief and it does not necessarily have to stand up to challenges for the individual to continue believing. Thus, the continued reliance on retention as an intervention even as research has proven detrimental effects for several decades.

Practical knowledge plays a role in the development of the professional; however it should be combined with propositional knowledge in order to be the most effective. Propositional knowledge comes in the form of ongoing research into the professionals' discipline. Research over the past several decades has clearly demonstrated a negative

impact for those students who are retained in grade. However, it is still used as an intervention based upon the recommendations of educational professionals who appear to be lacking in propositional knowledge. It is important that the professional organizations representing the school psychologists, school counselors and other educational professionals in charge of making retention decisions fully inform their members about the repercussions of such decisions. Providing research based knowledge to their members without disrespecting or disregarding the practical knowledge that the members currently have will be a challenge. It is up to the professional organizations to increase the knowledge of their members.

Limitations

There are several factors which may impact the findings of this dissertation.

1. The sample was obtained through contacting professional organizations. Those not affiliated with professional organizations may have different characteristics than individuals that are, affecting the generalizability of the data. This may have created a sampling bias.

2. The sample was limited to those that responded to the invitation to participate; they may have more of an interest in the subject than the general population of school counselors and school psychologists. This impacts the generalizability of the data to a larger population.

3. The sample was drawn from the American School Counseling Association, the Georgia Association of School Psychologists, the Washington State Association of School Psychologists, a blog and personal contact. This may limit the generalizability of the results, the school counseling sample was

national and the school psychologist sample was limited to Washington State, Georgia and Arizona.

4. The study was conducted via Survey Monkey, on the internet. Thus restricting participation to those who are comfortable using the internet, which may have different characteristics than those who do not prefer use of the internet. This can result in a lower response rate and a form of sampling bias (Gall et al., 2003).

5. The sample size was adequate (493) and larger than most studies using the same survey. The response rate was low, 10.27 percent for the school counselor's portion of the population and a response rate was not able to be determined for the school psychologists. "A review of the published social research literature suggests that a response rate of at least 50 percent is considered adequate for analysis and reporting. A response of 60 percent is good; a response rate of 70 percent is very good." (Groves, 2006). Although the response rate was low, current practitioners of surveys are challenging the idea that a low response rate is necessarily an indication of non-response bias, and point to several articles indicating that some surveys with low response rates have resulted in lower sampling biases than studies with higher response rates (Groves, 2006). However, for maximum generalizability a higher response rate is most desirable.

Recommendations for Practice

As compared to teachers and administrators, school psychologists and school counselors are rather informed on the subject of retention. Becoming more involved in the decision-making process, at the school, district and even state level would allow the educational professional to become more involved in their community.

School counselors and school psychologists are in the unique position of acting as an advocate for students. In order to become the most effective advocate, they must be well informed on the position they are advocating for. The current research has demonstrated that there is still a gap between current research on the subject of retention and the beliefs that are held by educational professionals. The results for the school psychologist's portion of the survey indicate that their beliefs are more similar to what research has indicated about the impact of retention on students than those of the counselors but they could still use some improvement.

Overall, school psychologists demonstrated beliefs that were fairly consistent with current research that is being done on the academic implications of retention. However, increasing their knowledge on retentions' impact on self-concept, motivation and issues related to maturity would enhance their ability to advocate for their students most effectively.

Similar to past studies conducted on teachers, the current study indicates a lack of propositional knowledge on the subject of retention. Although the school psychologist in the sample obtained a higher score than the school counselors (67% for the school psychologists v. 42% for the school counselors) their score did not demonstrate a thorough knowledge of the implications of retention. Therefore, it is recommended that

university programs in school counselor and school psychologist preparation inform their students of the current research and educate them on the many alternatives to retention. A focus on research based interventions is warranted in order to address the gap between research and beliefs. This focus should continue throughout the professional's career with continuing education and professional development.

The current findings also indicate that professional development and instruction may not be the most effective method of changing beliefs. The school counselors in the survey indicated by a vast majority that they obtained their knowledge through personal experiences and discussion with colleagues. This finding indicates that the approach to changing the beliefs must be more personal. The developing counselor should be given the opportunity to see an effective program in practice by touring schools that have provided strong alternatives to retention. They could interview the team members and gain a personal perspective from their experience with struggling students. Beliefs are very difficult to change once they are ingrained so school districts and university programs should work at change through both the personal and professional level.

It is further recommended that school districts begin to collect data on retention rates and the decision-making process for retention. This would have a large impact on the beliefs, knowledge and policy making. Data should be collected on the reasons for retention, interventions and behavioral issues. The data should be shared among districts and at the state level. The educational policy makers should have access to the data and this may have an impact on the policies that are created. A climate of research based interventions would be created and may foster a change in perspective.

School psychologists and school counselors may wish to become more involved in the decision-making process, on their school campuses and in their community. They may wish to advocate for the students on their caseloads by informing administrators and teachers about the implications of retention. They may also choose to become politically active and work with state legislators to ensure that they have the most up to date research information, and that that information is applied accurately.

Implications for Further Study

It is recommended that the study be replicated using a national data-base for the school psychologists such as the National Association of School Psychologists membership list. In order to gain more participants in addition to electronic distribution, the survey should be distributed as a hard copy through the mail.

Further investigation is warranted into the impact that mandatory retention policies are having on educator beliefs. The "Move on When Reading" policy in Arizona, Iowa, Florida and 10 other states may be a subject of further inquiry. How does the policy influence educator's beliefs on the subject of retention? Do they accept the policy because they have faith in the educational decision-makers or is the policy being challenged? Again, data needs to be collected as to the efficacy of the interventions that are in place for the students that are being retained. Are they being retained and facing the same curriculum, are there additional supports, interventions, extended school year or tutoring in place? Have interventions been attempted prior to the retention?

Researchers might also want to obtain the point of view of the parents of low performing students. Parental education level and involvement are indicators of retention, meaning a student that has a highly involved and educated parent is less likely

to be retained (Alexander et al., 2003, Jimerson et al., 1997). Therefore, it would be helpful to gain the perspective of the parent and enlist their assistance in the educational progress of their student.

Additional studies with school psychologists and school counselors could explore some of the "whys?' behind the current beliefs that seem to be entrenched within the professions. For example, 64 percent of the school counselors in the current sample believe that retention is an effective means for giving the immature child a chance to catch up, despite the fact that several studies such as Temple, Ou & Reynolds (2001) in the Chicago Longitudinal Study found that retained students were one to two years behind their similarly low-achieving but promoted peers. Perhaps the researchers could design a multiple choice questionnaire highlighting the common beliefs in order to form a better understanding of the rationale for their longevity.

Summary of Discussion

The purpose of the current study was to explore school psychologists and school counselor's beliefs and knowledge on the subject of retention. The current study found results similar to those of past researchers who focused on teachers that the educational professionals believe that retention is a valid intervention to assist failing students. Results for school psychologists differed from the school counselors, with considerably less support for retention from the school psychologists. However, they still believe that there is a place for retention in the educational intervention options.

Results of the Knowledge portion of the survey indicate that there is a significant difference in the knowledge level of the school psychologists and the school counselors, with the school psychologists scoring higher. This indicates that the school counselors

should increase their research-based knowledge. Recommendations were made for increasing the knowledge base of both groups through personal and professional means.

Recommendations for further research with a larger sample size were made, as well as suggestions for studies with parents. School psychologists and school counselors should be given the opportunity for professional development on the subject of retention and the effects of that development should be assessed trough research.

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Appendix A
Institutional Review Board (IRB) Approval

**NORTHERN
ARIZONA
UNIVERSITY**

Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research	Northern Arizona University PO Box 4087 Flagstaff, AZ 86011-4087	928-523-4340 928-523-1075 fax www.research.nau.edu/vpr/IRB

To: Dr. Lena Gaddis
From: Paula Garcia McAllister
Approval Date: March 9, 2012

Project: Beliefs and Knowledge of School Psychologists and School Counselors about Grade Retention
Project Number: 12.0260
Review Category/ies: 2) Surveys

Your research protocol has been approved by the Human Subjects Committee/Institutional Review Board (IRB) at NAU under the category of EXEMPT. This category means that your IRB approval for this project does not have an expiration date, so periodic renewal of approval is not necessary unless there are changes in your project that affect the status.

If your project **changes** in any way, you must file a Research Amendment form available at https://www.research.nau.edu/compliance/irb/forms.aspx PRIOR TO implementing any changes. You may not implement the changes until you have written approval for the change from the IRB, unless the change is necessary to eliminate immediate hazards to participants. Failure to do so will result in noncompliance and possible suspension or termination of your research project.

Any unanticipated problems or unexpected **adverse events** must be reported to the IRB within 5 business days (within 24 hours for serious adverse events) of your becoming aware of the event by filling out an Adverse Reaction or Event Reporting form (also available at website above).

As you conduct your research, please remember that:
1. Participants are volunteers or are involved in regular educational programs; they are free to withdraw from the research at any time without penalty.

2. Unless you are using existing data, participants must be informed of the research project through written or oral explanation and must sign or approve electronically or verbally an informed consent form (for minors and children the parent or guardian must sign).

3. Unless the participants agreed to an alternative arrangement, the participants' anonymity and confidentiality must be protected. They should not be able to be identified through the responses. The presentation of the data should not put them at risk of any negative consequences. Access to the data is specified and restricted by the researcher and the department.

Additional IRB information may be found at https://www.research.nau.edu/compliance/irb/index.aspx.

Appendix B
School Psychologist Retention Survey

Gaddis: School Psychologists Retention Survey

Greetings

Hello and welcome. I would like to thank you for your consideration in completing the following survey. The practices of social promotion and grade retention continue to be prevalent practices in our schools, with the latter becoming the preferred strategy. Your participation will assist in determining what factors contribute to decisions to socially promote or retain students who are experiencing academic and/or behavioral problems. The Institutional Review Board, which oversees all research with human participants, has approved this study. You will find and informed consent on the following page. Please read the form carefully and decide if you would like to participate. As an incentive for your participation, you may enter a drawing for an opportunity to win 1 of 3 Kindles. Again, thank you for your consideration.

Dr. Lena Gaddis

Informed Consent

Educational Psychology, NAU Box 5774, 523-1895

Project Title: Beliefs and knowledge of school psychologists and school counselors regarding grade retention

Dear Participant

You are being asked to participate in a project conducted through the Department of Educational Psychology at Northern Arizona University by Lena Gaddis that involves research. The researcher is required to receive your informed consent before you participate in this project.

Below you will find a detailed explanation of this research to include (1) the purpose of the project; (2) what you will be asked to do and how long your participation will last; (3) how your personal information, if collected, will be kept confidential; (4) if you will receive any compensation; (5) the possible risks; and (6) potential benefits of participation.

Your participation in research is voluntary. If you choose not to participate, there are no penalties or loss of benefits or services that you are otherwise entitled. If you decide to participate and then withdraw or skip a question there are also no penalties or loss of benefits or services. Whether or not you choose to participate in this project will have no effect on your relationship with NAU now or in the future.

Please read the following explanation and contact Dr. Gaddis regarding clarity or concerns (see contact information below). Feel free to ask questions to help you understand the project.

After any questions you may have are answered and you decide to participate in the research, please check the "yes" box, which will take you to the beginning of survey.

1. PROJECT PURPOSE: The project will examine School Psychologists' and and School Counselors' perceptions and knowledge about the practice of grade retention.

2. EXPLANATION OF PROCEDURES: Once you consent to participate (see above), you will be respond to a series of survey questions and provide demographic information. This will take between 10 and 15 minutes.

3. CONFIDENTIALITY: No identifying information will be requested from you except for your name and e-mail address if you wish to be entered into the drawing for an incentive in the form of a chance to win one of three Kindles. At the end of the survey, you may provide your name and e-mail address if you wish to be entered in the drawing. Your name and e-mail will in no way be connected with the survey responses and will be destroyed once the drawing is completed. This information will be used exclusively for this purpose of distribution of incentives.

4. COMPENSATION: If you so choose, you will be entered into a drawing to win one of three Kindles. If your name is chosen during the drawing, you will be contacted via e-mail and asked to provide your mailing address so that the prize can be shipped to you.

5. BENEFITS: Participants may become more aware of the issues related to practice of grade retention in K-12 settings. Also, the results will inform university instructors and administrative supervisors as to how training and dissemination of information about the topic impacts beliefs and practice regarding the practice of grade retention.

6. RISKS: There are no apparent risks connected with participation. Please discontinue the survey should you become uncomfortable and/or contact Dr. Gaddis regarding any concerns.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Northern Arizona University Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research. Contact the Human Research Protections Office at 928-523-4236 if you have any questions about: (1) the conduct of the project, or (2) your rights as a research participant, or (3) a research-related injury. Any other questions about the research project should be directed to:

Lena R. Gaddis, Ph. D.
Box 5774
Flagstaff, AZ 86011
928-523-1895 / lena.gaddis@nau.edu

I have read the above information about "Beliefs and knowledge of School Psychologists and School Counselors regarding grade retention" and have been given an opportunity to ask questions. By choosing "yes" below, I am giving my consent to participate.

◯ Yes, I agree to participate in this project.

◯ No, I choose not to participate in this project.

Demographics - 7 Items

Gaddis: School Psychologists Retention Survey

What level of education have you completed?

( ) Master's degree

( ) Educational Specialist Degree or equivalent (60+ semester hours)

( ) Doctoral degree

Other (please specify)

[   ]

Please identify gender

( ) Male

( ) Female

Please identify ethnicity

( ) African American

( ) American Indian/Native American

( ) Asian/Pacific Islander

( ) Hispanic

( ) White

( ) Other (please specify)

[   ]

What is your age?

( ) 20-30

( ) 31-39

( ) 40-49

( ) 50-59

( ) >59

Are you a certified or credentialed school psychologist?

( ) yes

( ) no

Beliefs Items 1-11

For the following, please select the response choice that best reflects how you feel about each of the statements, using the following scale:

(1) AGREE
(2) TEND TO AGREE
(3) TEND TO DISAGREE
(4) DISAGREE

	Agree	Tend to Agree	Tend to Disagree	Disagree
Retention is an effective means of preventing students from facing daily failure in the next higher grade.	○	○	○	○
Retention is necessary for maintaining grade level standards.	○	○	○	○
Retaining a child in grades K-3 harms a child's self-concept.	○	○	○	○
Retention prevents classrooms from having wide ranges in student achievement.	○	○	○	○
Students who do not apply themselves to their studies should be retained.	○	○	○	○
Knowing that retention is a possibility does motivate students to work harder.	○	○	○	○
Retaining a child in grades 4-8 harms the child's self-concept.	○	○	○	○
Retention is an effective means of providing support in school for the child who does not get support at home.	○	○	○	○
Students retained once in elementary school (K-4) should not be retained again in elementary school.	○	○	○	○
Students who make passing grades, but are working below grade level should be retained.	○	○	○	○
Retention in grades K-3 is an effective means of giving the immature child a chance to catch up.	○	○	○	○

Beliefs Items 12-24

Gaddis: School Psychologists Retention Survey

For the following, please indicate the number of the response choice that best reflects how you feel about each of the statements, using the following scale:
(1) AGREE
(2) TEND TO AGREE
(3) TEND TO DISAGREE
(4) DISAGREE

	Agree	Tend to Agree	Tend to Disagree	Disagree
Retention in grades 4-8 is an effective means of giving an immature child a chance to catch up.	◯	◯	◯	◯
Students receiving services from a learning support teacher should not be retained.	◯	◯	◯	◯
If students are to be retained, they should be retained no later than 4th grade.	◯	◯	◯	◯
In grades K-3, over-age children (more than a year older than their classmates) cause more behavior problems than other children.	◯	◯	◯	◯
In grades 4-8, over-age children (more than a year older than their classmates) cause more behavior problems than other children.	◯	◯	◯	◯
Retention in grades K-3 permanently labels a child.	◯	◯	◯	◯
Retention in grades 4-8 permanently labels a child.	◯	◯	◯	◯
Children who have passing grades but excessive absences should be retained.	◯	◯	◯	◯
Children should never be retained.	◯	◯	◯	◯
Elementary school students who do not meet standards on the state's proficiency test (i.e., high-stakes test) should be retained	◯	◯	◯	◯
Middle school students who do not meet standards on the state's proficiency test (i.e., high-stakes test) should be retained	◯	◯	◯	◯
High school students who do not meet standards on the state's proficiency test (i.e., high-stakes test) should not receive a high school diploma	◯	◯	◯	◯

Practice and Sources of Information - 9 Items

Please check the one that most contributes to how you have obtained your knowledge about grade retention and social promotion.

◯ Reading journal articles and attending workshops

◯ Personal experiences with retained students

◯ Talking to colleagues

◯ Recent university coursework

◯ Other (please specify)

Gaddis: School Psychologists Retention Survey

Have you read journal articles or other literature that discussed grade retention practices?

( ) Yes

( ) No

If yes, approximately how many have your read

[   ]

Have you attended workshops that included grade retention as a topic?

( ) Yes

( ) No

How would you describe your knowledge of the research and information about grade retention and its effects on students?

( ) Thorough and extensive

( ) Moderate, but not extensive

( ) Somwhat limited

( ) Extemely limited

How often are you involved in the decision making process with regards to grade retention of students at your school?

( ) Almost always

( ) Often

( ) Sometimes

( ) Never

Would you like to have more involvement or input into decisions about grade retention?

( ) Yes

( ) No

Why or why not?

[   ]

If you are involved in the decision making process, what is your role? (check all that apply)

- [ ] Consultant to teacher
- [ ] Consultant to administrators
- [ ] Consultant to parents
- [ ] Provide information regarding the practice to parties involved
- [ ] Take part in the final decision
- [ ] I am not involved in the decision making process

Other (please specify)

Who is involved in retention/promotion decisions at your school? Mark all that apply.

- [ ] Classroom Teacher
- [ ] Special Education Teacher
- [ ] School Administrator
- [ ] Parents
- [ ] I don't know who is involved

Other (please specify)

Does your state have a manditory retention policy based on students' performance on its high-stakes test?

- ( ) Yes
- ( ) No
- ( ) I don't know

Knowledge Items 1-7

What is the current educational position on retention and social promotion?

- ( ) Schools should keep both social promotion and grade retention.
- ( ) Schools should end both social promotion and grade retention.
- ( ) Schools should end social promotion and keep grade retention.
- ( ) Schools should keep social promotion and end grade retention.

Gaddis: School Psychologists Retention Survey

Whether a student is promoted or retained, what does the majority of the current research say about the long-term effects on students' academic achievement?

( ) Retention does not effectively increase academic achievement among low-achieving students.

( ) Social promotion does not effectively increase academic achievement among low-achieving students.

( ) Neither social promotion nor retention effectively increase academic achievement.

( ) Both social promotion and retention effectively increase academic achievement.

According to the current research, how will Steven, a first grader, most likely feel when he hears that he is going to be retained?

( ) He will be indifferent towards the decision.

( ) He will feel relieved because now he can "catch up" on his basic skills.

( ) He will feel like he is being punished.

( ) He will feel happy because he will be the leader in the class.

In general, what does the current research say about an extra year in kindergarten, pre-kindergarten programs, and/or transitional first programs?

( ) Students do not experience any benefits from these extra-year programs.

( ) Students become more mature as a result of these extra-year programs.

( ) Students benefit in academic achievement in these extra-year programs.

( ) Students experience higher self-esteem from these extra-year programs.

According to current research, which student is most likely to drop out of school?

( ) John who was held back one time in elementary school.

( ) Brian who has been held back once in elementary school and once in middle school.

( ) Matt who has been performing below average throughout his school career, but has never been retained.

( ) David who was recommended for retention but was promoted to the next grade level.

In general, what does the majority of the current research say about grade retention and academic gains?

( ) Academic gains are not noticed until three or four years after retention.

( ) Any academic gains made during the repeated year increase over time.

( ) Retained students make more academic gains than those who are promoted.

( ) Any academic gains made during the repeated year fade over time.

Gaddis: School Psychologists Retention Survey

According to current research, which student is most likely to be retained?

◯ Brad, a White male, who is young for his grade and whose family have low socioeconomic status (SES).

◯ Jerome, an African-American male, who is young for his grade and whose family have low SES.

◯ Maria, a Hispanic female, whose primarily language is not English and whose family have high SES.

◯ Lisa, a White female, who is the smallest and youngest in her class and whose family have high SES.

Knowledge Items 8-13

What does the current research suggest when comparing the behavior of students who have been retained or socially promoted with students who have NOT been retained or promoted?

◯ Grade retention is not associated with children's behavior problems.

◯ Grade retention is associated with decreased rates of behavior problems.

◯ Grade retention is associated with increased rates of behavior problems.

◯ Social promotion is associated with increased rates of behavior problems.

In general, what does the majority of the current research say about retention and school drop out rate?

◯ Students who are retained are more likely to drop out of school.

◯ There is no correlation between being retained and dropping out of school.

◯ Students who are retained are less likely to drop out of school.

◯ Students are likely to drop out of school only if they have been retained more than once.

Tricia, Jen, Michelle, and Julie are all struggling academically. According to current research, which student would you expect to perform better academically three or four years from now?

◯ Jen who was retained at the end of the year.

◯ Michelle who was recommended for retention but was promoted to the next grade.

◯ Tricia who was retained due to parent request.

◯ Julie who was retained due to social immaturity.

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Gaddis: School Psychologists Retention Survey

In general, what does the majority of research say about peer relatedness and retention in the elementary grades?

○ Students will more often pick the retained student for help with academics, but not as a play partner.

○ Students will more often pick the retained student as a play partner, but not for help with academics.

○ Retained students are not treated differently by their peers in elementary school.

○ Promoted students experience rejection by their peers more often than retained students do.

In general, what does the majority of research say about retention and students' self-concepts?

○ Children in kindergarten and first grade are unaffected because of their age.

○ Retention produces more positive effects than negative effects on students' self-concepts.

○ Retention has no effect on students' self-concepts.

○ Retention produces more negative effects than positive effects on students' self-concepts.

According to current research, which student will most likely be causing the most behavior problems in the elementary grades?

○ Scott who is age appropriate for his grade and was never retained.

○ Paul who is young for his grade due to his summer birthday.

○ Jessica who is age appropriate for her grade, but was promoted to the next grade.

○ Kristin who is old for her grade due to being retained.

Second Chance

If you have come to this page in error and would like to participate in the survey, please choose yes below.

If you have come to this page in error and would like to participate in the survey, please choose yes below.

○ Yes, take me to the beginning.

○ No, I'm done.

Drawing for Gift Certificate

Gaddis: School Psychologists Retention Survey

If you would like to be entered in the drawing for a Kindle, please include your name and e-mail address below. Three kindles will be awarded. If your name is chosen, you will be contacted via e-mail for shipping information. Your name and e-mail will in no way be connected to your survey information.

Thank You

Thank you for your time. If you have any questions regarding this research project please contact:

Lena R. Gaddis, Ph. D.
Box 5774
928-523-1895 / lena.gaddis@nau.edu

Appendix C
School Counselor Retention Survey

Gaddis: School Counselor Retention Survey

Greetings

Hello and welcome. I would like to thank you for your consideration in completing the following survey. The practices of social promotion and grade retention continue to be prevalent practices in our schools, with the latter becoming the preferred. Your participation will assist in determining what factors contribute to decisions to socially promote or retain students who are experiencing academic and/or behavioral problems. The Institutional Review Board, which oversees all research with human participants, has approved this study. You will find and informed consent on the following page. Please read the form carefully and decide if you would like to participate. As an incentive for your participation, you may enter a drawing for an opportunity to win 1 of 3 Kindles. Again, thank you for your consideration.

Dr. Lena Gaddis

Consent Form Header

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Gaddis: School Counselor Retention Survey

Project Title: Beliefs and knowledge of school psychologists and school counselors regarding grade retention

Dear Participant

You are being asked to participate in a project conducted through the Department of Educational Psychology at Northern Arizona University by Lena Gaddis that involves research. The researcher is required to receive your informed consent before you participate in this project.

Below you will find a detailed explanation of this research to include (1) the purpose of the project; (2) what you will be asked to do and how long your participation will last; (3) how your personal information, if collected, will be kept confidential; (4) if you will receive any compensation; (5) the possible risks; and (6) potential benefits of participation.

Your participation in research is voluntary. If you choose not to participate, there are no penalties or loss of benefits or services that you are otherwise entitled. If you decide to participate and then withdraw or skip a question there are also no penalties or loss of benefits or services. Whether or not you choose to participate in this project will have no effect on your relationship with NAU now or in the future.

Please read the following explanation and contact Dr. Gaddis regarding clarity or concerns (see contact information below). Feel free to ask questions to help you understand the project.

After any questions you may have are answered and you decide to participate in the research, please check the "yes" box, which will take you to the beginning of survey.

1. PROJECT PURPOSE: The project will examine School Psychologists' and and School Counselors' perceptions and knowledge about the practice of grade retention.

2. EXPLANATION OF PROCEDURES: Once you consent to participate (see above), you will be respond to a series of survey questions and provide demographic information. This will take between 10 and 15 minutes.

3. CONFIDENTIALITY: No identifying information will be requested from you except for your name and e-mail address if you wish to be entered into the drawing for an incentive in the form of a chance to win one of three Kindles. At the end of the survey, you may provide your name and e-mail address if you wish to be entered in the drawing. Your name and e-mail will in no way be connected with the survey responses and will be destroyed once the drawing is completed. This information will be used exclusively for this purpose of distribution of incentives.

4. COMPENSATION: If you so choose, you will be entered into a drawing to win one of three Kindles. If your name is chosen during the drawing, you will be contacted via e-mail and asked to provide your mailing address so that the prize can be shipped to you.

5. BENEFITS: Participants may become more aware of the issues related to practice of grade retention in K-12 settings. Also, the results will inform university instructors and administrative supervisors as to how training and dissemination of information about the topic impacts beliefs and practice regarding the practice of grade retention.

6. RISKS: There are no apparent risks connected with participation. Please discontinue the survey should you become uncomfortable and/or contact Dr. Gaddis regarding any concerns.

This project has been reviewed and approved by the Northern Arizona University Institutional Review Board (IRB) for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research. Contact the Human Research Protections Office at 928-523-4236 if you have any questions about: (1) the conduct of the project, or (2) your rights as a research participant, or (3) a research-related injury. Any other questions about the research project should be directed to:

Lena R. Gaddis, Ph. D.
Box 5774
Flagstaff, AZ 86011
928-523-1895 / lena.gaddis@nau.edu

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I have read the above information about "Beliefs and knowledge of School Psychologists and School Counselors regarding grade retention" and have been given an opportunity to ask questions. By choosing "yes" below, I am giving my consent to participate.

◯ Yes, I agree to participate in this project.

◯ No, I choose not to participate in this project.

Demographics - 6 Items

What level of education have you completed?

◯ Master's degree

◯ Master's degree + 12 semester hours or 21 quarter hours

◯ Doctoral degree

Other (please specify)

[   ]

Please identify gender

◯ Male

◯ Female

Please identify ethnicity

◯ African American

◯ American Indian/Native American

◯ Asian/Pacific Islander

◯ Hispanic

◯ White

◯ Other (please specify)

[   ]

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What is your age?

( ) 20-30

( ) 31-39

( ) 40-49

( ) 50-59

( ) >59

Are you a certified or credentialed school counselor?

( ) yes

( ) no

How many years of experience as a school counselor do you have?

( ) 1-5 years

( ) 6-10 years

( ) 11-15 years

( ) 16-20 years

( ) >20 years

( ) I am currently a graduate student or intern

Beliefs Items 1-11

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For the following, please select the response choice that best reflects how you feel about each of the statements, using the following scale:

(1) AGREE
(2) TEND TO AGREE
(3) TEND TO DISAGREE
(4) DISAGREE

	Agree	Tend to Agree	Tend to Disagree	Disagree
Retention is an effective means of preventing students from facing daily failure in the next higher grade.	○	○	○	○
Retention is necessary for maintaining grade level standards.	○	○	○	○
Retaining a child in grades K-3 harms a child's self-concept.	○	○	○	○
Retention prevents classrooms from having wide ranges in student achievement.	○	○	○	○
Students who do not apply themselves to their studies should be retained.	○	○	○	○
Knowing that retention is a possibility does motivate students to work harder.	○	○	○	○
Retaining a child in grades 4-8 harms the child's self-concept.	○	○	○	○
Retention is an effective means of providing support in school for the child who does not get support at home.	○	○	○	○
Students retained once in elementary school (K-4) should not be retained again in elementary school.	○	○	○	○
Students who make passing grades, but are working below grade level should be retained.	○	○	○	○
Retention in grades K-3 is an effective means of giving the immature child a chance to catch up.	○	○	○	○

Beliefs Items 12-24

Gaddis: School Counselor Retention Survey

For the following, please indicate the number of the response choice that best reflects how you feel about each of the statements, using the following scale:

(1) AGREE
(2) TEND TO AGREE
(3) TEND TO DISAGREE
(4) DISAGREE

	Agree	Tend to Agree	Tend to Disagree	Disagree
Retention in grades 4-8 is an effective means of giving an immature child a chance to catch up.	◯	◯	◯	◯
Students receiving services from a learning support teacher should not be retained.	◯	◯	◯	◯
If students are to be retained, they should be retained no later than 4th grade.	◯	◯	◯	◯
In grades K-3, over-age children (more than a year older than their classmates) cause more behavior problems than other children.	◯	◯	◯	◯
In grades 4-8, over-age children (more than a year older than their classmates) cause more behavior problems than other children.	◯	◯	◯	◯
Retention in grades K-3 permanently labels a child.	◯	◯	◯	◯
Retention in grades 4-8 permanently labels a child.	◯	◯	◯	◯
Children who have passing grades but excessive absences should be retained.	◯	◯	◯	◯
Children should never be retained.	◯	◯	◯	◯
Elementary school students who do not meet standards on the state's proficiency test (i.e., high-stakes test) should be retained	◯	◯	◯	◯
Middle school students who do not meet standards on the state's proficiency test (i.e., high-stakes test) should be retained	◯	◯	◯	◯
High school students who do not meet standards on the state's proficiency test (i.e., high-stakes test) should not receive a high school diploma	◯	◯	◯	◯

Practice and Sources of Information - 9 Items

Please check the one that most contributes to how you have obtained your knowledge about grade retention and social promotion.

◯ Reading journal articles and attending workshops

◯ Personal experiences with retained students

◯ Talking to colleagues

◯ Recent university coursework

◯ Other (please specify)

_____

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Have you read journal articles or other literature that discussed grade retention practices?

◯ Yes

◯ No

If yes, approximately how many have your read

[   ]

Have you attended workshops that included grade retention as a topic?

◯ Yes

◯ No

How would you describe your knowledge of the research and information about grade retention and its effects on students?

◯ Thorough and extensive

◯ Moderate, but not extensive

◯ Somwhat limited

◯ Extemely limited

How often are you involved in the decision making process with regards to grade retention of students at your school?

◯ Almost always

◯ Often

◯ Sometimes

◯ Never

Would you like to have more involvement or input into decisions about grade retention?

◯ Yes

◯ No

Why or why not?

[   ]

If you are involved in the decision making process, what is your role? (check all that apply)

☐ Consultant to teacher

☐ Consultant to administrators

☐ Consultant to parents

☐ Provide information regarding the practice to parties involved

☐ Take part in the final decision

Other (please specify)

[   ]

Who is involved in retention/promotion decisions at your school? Mark all that apply.

☐ Classroom Teacher

☐ Special Education Teacher

☐ School Adminitrator

☐ Parents

Other (please specify)

[   ]

Does your state have a manditory retention policy based on students' performance on its high-stakes test?

◯ Yes

◯ No

Other (please specify)

[   ]

Knowledge Items 1-7

What is the current educational position on retention and social promotion?

◯ Schools should keep both social promotion and grade retention.

◯ Schools should end both social promotion and grade retention.

◯ Schools should end social promotion and keep grade retention.

◯ Schools should keep social promotion and end grade retention.

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Whether a student is promoted or retained, what does the majority of the current research say about the long-term effects on students' academic achievement?

- ( ) Retention does not effectively increase academic achievement among low-achieving students.
- ( ) Social promotion does not effectively increase academic achievement among low-achieving students.
- ( ) Neither social promotion nor retention effectively increase academic achievement.
- ( ) Both social promotion and retention effectively increase academic achievement.

According to the current research, how will Steven, a first grader, most likely feel when he hears that he is going to be retained?

- ( ) He will be indifferent towards the decision.
- ( ) He will feel relieved because now he can "catch up" on his basic skills.
- ( ) He will feel like he is being punished.
- ( ) He will feel happy because he will be the leader in the class.

In general, what does the current research say about an extra year in kindergarten, pre-kindergarten programs, and/or transitional first programs?

- ( ) Students do not experience any benefits from these extra-year programs.
- ( ) Students become more mature as a result of these extra-year programs.
- ( ) Students benefit in academic achievement in these extra-year programs.
- ( ) Students experience higher self-esteem from these extra-year programs.

According to current research, which student is most likely to drop out of school?

- ( ) John who was held back one time in elementary school.
- ( ) Brian who has been held back once in elementary school and once in middle school.
- ( ) Matt who has been performing below average throughout his school career, but has never been retained.
- ( ) David who was recommended for retention but was promoted to the next grade level.

In general, what does the majority of the current research say about grade retention and academic gains?

- ( ) Academic gains are not noticed until three or four years after retention.
- ( ) Any academic gains made during the repeated year increase over time.
- ( ) Retained students make more academic gains than those who are promoted.
- ( ) Any academic gains made during the repeated year fade over time.

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According to current research, which student is most likely to be retained?

◯ Brad, a White male, who is young for his grade and whose family have low socioeconomic status (SES).

◯ Jerome, an African-American male, who is young for his grade and whose family have low SES.

◯ Maria, a Hispanic female, whose primarily language is not English and whose family have high SES.

◯ Lisa, a White female, who is the smallest and youngest in her class and whose family have high SES.

Knowledge Items 8-13

What does the current research suggest when comparing the behavior of students who have been retained or socially promoted with students who have NOT been retained or promoted?

◯ Grade retention is not associated with children's behavior problems.

◯ Grade retention is associated with decreased rates of behavior problems.

◯ Grade retention is associated with increased rates of behavior problems.

◯ Social promotion is associated with increased rates of behavior problems.

In general, what does the majority of the current research say about retention and school drop out rate?

◯ Students who are retained are more likely to drop out of school.

◯ There is no correlation between being retained and dropping out of school.

◯ Students who are retained are less likely to drop out of school.

◯ Students are likely to drop out of school only if they have been retained more than once.

Tricia, Jen, Michelle, and Julie are all struggling academically. According to current research, which student would you expect to perform better academically three or four years from now?

◯ Jen who was retained at the end of the year.

◯ Michelle who was recommended for retention but was promoted to the next grade.

◯ Tricia who was retained due to parent request.

◯ Julie who was retained due to social immaturity.

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In general, what does the majority of research say about peer relatedness and retention in the elementary grades?

( ) Students will more often pick the retained student for help with academics, but not as a play partner.

( ) Students will more often pick the retained student as a play partner, but not for help with academics.

( ) Retained students are not treated differently by their peers in elementary school.

( ) Promoted students experience rejection by their peers more often than retained students do.

In general, what does the majority of research say about retention and students' self-concepts?

( ) Children in kindergarten and first grade are unaffected because of their age.

( ) Retention produces more positive effects than negative effects on students' self-concepts.

( ) Retention has no effect on students' self-concepts.

( ) Retention produces more negative effects than positive effects on students' self-concepts.

According to current research, which student will most likely be causing the most behavior problems in the elementary grades?

( ) Scott who is age appropriate for his grade and was never retained.

( ) Paul who is young for his grade due to his summer birthday.

( ) Jessica who is age appropriate for her grade, but was promoted to the next grade.

( ) Kristin who is old for her grade due to being retained.

Second Chance

If you have come to this page in error and would like to participate in the survey, please choose yes below.

If you have come to this page in error and would like to participate in the survey, please choose yes below.

( ) Yes, take me to the beginning.

( ) No, I'm done.

Drawing for Gift Certificate

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If you would like to be entered in the drawing for a Kindle, please include your name and e-mail address below. Three Kindles will be awarded. You will be contacted via e-mail if your name is chosen in order to get shipping information. Your name and e-mail address will in no way be connected to your survey information.

Thank You

Thank you for your time. If you have any questions regarding this research project please contact:

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