



Principal, teacher and parental perceptions of student retention in selected Montana elementary schools
by Donald Gilbert Rath

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education
Montana State University

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Abstract:

The purpose of this study was to: (1) investigate the retention practices of Class I elementary schools of Montana, (2) to determine guidelines and criteria utilized in retention decisions, (3) to identify student characteristics that may lead to retention, (4) to compare teacher, , parent, and administrative perceptions of the retention process, and (5) to develop a proposed promotion and retention policy statement.

The problem was investigated by: (1) a review of the related literature, (2) a survey of the building principals of Class I elementary schools of Montana, (3) selection of three representative elementary school districts for purposes of determining teacher and parental perceptions of student retention, and (4) tabulation, analysis, and comparison of the data collected.

The major results of the study indicated that: (1) males are retained at significantly higher rates than females, (2) perceptions of retained students by parents and teachers are frequently divergent, (3) teachers need to recognize and be aware of special affective and cognitive needs of retained students, (4) the major factor leading to or causing retention is immaturity, (5) most principals, teachers, and parents support retention of students, and (6) a high percentage of schools do not have a formal promotion and retention policy statement establishing guidelines and procedures to be followed in the retention process.

The major recommendations of the study were: (1) that each school district should develop a formal promotion and retention policy statement listing criteria to be considered for retention and the procedures to follow in developing a communications network between the school and the parents, (2) that instrumentation should be utilized for the purpose of identifying and monitoring student characteristics that may lead to retention, (3) counseling services Should be made available to all elementary students, but especially for the counseling of retained students and for further involvement in the retention process, and (4) further studies should be conducted to identify school variables that may lead to student retention and to further identify factors related to teacher and parental perceptions of student retention.

PRINCIPAL, TEACHER AND PARENTAL PERCEPTIONS
OF STUDENT RETENTION IN SELECTED
MONTANA ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS

by
Donald Gilbert Rath

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
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This thesis has been read by each member of the thesis committee and has been found to be satisfactory regarding content, English usage, format, citations, bibliographic style, and consistency, and is ready for submission to the College of Graduate Studies.

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to: (1) investigate the retention practices of Class I elementary schools of Montana, (2) to determine guidelines and criteria utilized in retention decisions, (3) to identify student characteristics that may lead to retention, (4) to compare teacher, parent, and administrative perceptions of the retention process, and (5) to develop a proposed promotion and retention policy statement.

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The major recommendations of the study were: (1) that each school district should develop a formal promotion and retention policy statement listing criteria to be considered for retention and the procedures to follow in developing a communications network between the school and the parents, (2) that instrumentation should be utilized for the purpose of identifying and monitoring student characteristics that may lead to retention, (3) counseling services should be made available to all elementary students, but especially for the counseling of retained students and for further involvement in the retention process, and (4) further studies should be conducted to identify school variables that may lead to student retention and to further identify factors related to teacher and parental perceptions of student retention.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Schools traditionally fulfilled two major functions in our society. They had the responsibility of transmitting knowledge, skills, and attitudes to their students. They also had the responsibility of judging whether or not, or to what extent, students had attained the desired knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Anderson, 1976). Trump (1977) stated that evaluation of student abilities had been based largely on a grading system which emphasized academic competencies and ignored student needs, interests, and actual abilities in other areas. An NEA report (1970) noted that promotion or nonpromotion that was based on a strict grading system was questionable because quite frequently student growth was not considered in the promotion or retention decision and justification for the decision was often based on inadequate evidence. Ahmann stated, "If the philosophy of the school is concerned with the most effective development of the whole pupil, then policies for promotion must be consistent with the criterion of what is best for the pupil." (1963:583)

Trump (1976) and Doll (1966) were critical of the usage of scholastic grades as the major criterion for retention decisions. The emphasis on these extrinsic motivators negated the individual differences and needs of each student. Anderson (1976) said that schools should not completely eliminate the failures but that they

should avoid promoting perceptions of failure on the part of the students by not giving some consideration to the particular circumstances that led to the promotion of nonpromotion decisions.

Statement of the Problem

It is a curious and sad paradox to note that, in a land where education is so highly valued and so much the key to one's personal advancement and society's total growth, approximately one third of those students who started first grade would drop out of school before completing the eleventh grade. These students would drop out not because of a sudden whim or capricious impulse, but because of more or less continuous exposure to failure experiences which reinforced feelings of worthlessness and inadequacy (Hamachek, 1972). In our graded system of instructional organization many pupils faced failure on a regular basis because of their inability to conform to the standards set for them within the schools they attended. It had normally fallen upon the teacher and building principal to make the decision as to whether or not a student would benefit by repeating a grade or by being promoted to the next grade level where he might become even more unhappy and frustrated with his situation. There was considerable disagreement as to the benefits of retention. Because of the discrepancies in the achievement of children who were retained and of those who were promoted, the question was raised as to which was more important—having a child achieve satisfactorily relative to his mental age expectancy, or having a child achieve satisfactorily relative to the achievement of the other children in his class (Chansky, 1964:230).

The fact that student retention has been a matter of serious concern to elementary principals, led the writer to design a study related to the problems of elementary school student nonpromotion.

The problem approached in this study was to survey the entire K-6 population of Class 1 elementary schools in Montana to determine whether school system policies for promotion or retention had been developed. If so, what guidelines for retention were stated in terms of conditions or student characteristics that would result in a decision to retain a student? Biographical and academic case studies of those K-2 elementary school students who had been retained in a previous grade prior to the 1982-83 school year were developed and utilized in three selected Class 1 Montana school districts along with retention scales in order to determine educational, personal, and social characteristics of nonpromotion. A proposed promotion policy statement was also developed based on data found in the review of literature, the survey instruments, and the case study forms.

Importance of the Study

The decision to promote or to retain a student had always been a complex problem and was often difficult to defend or justify (Goodlad, 1963). The word "retention" had fallen into disrepute in some quarters (Horn, 1976) and the value or harm of retention had remained unresolved. The findings were inconsistent and Reiter (1973), Dufay (1966), Trump (1977), Goodlad (1963), and Ames (1977) represented the viewpoint of authorities who generally opposed retention. These educators believed in continuous promotion and developed a philosophy

based upon psychological implications that a child's self-confidence and ultimate school growth was benefited by being assigned to the next grade regardless of performance in class. Other authorities such as Thomas (1965) and Scott (1969) found nonpromotion could have benefits for some pupils but not for all. Immaturity of the students and excessive absences were found to be the most common reasons for retaining a student in a grade for another year (Horn, 1976). The debates continued for many years and conclusive findings were not determined by any study.

Definitive, clearly stated policies for retention were not often available to the elementary school principals who, by necessity, had to deal with recommendations for promotion or nonpromotion each school year. As a consequence to judging whether or not a student had met the achievement criteria for a given school year, the issue of promotion or retention remained a perplexing consideration in most American school systems.

The writer of this paper found that the decision whether to retain or promote a slow learning child was seldom easy. Support from parents, teachers, and administrators was deemed necessary and the situation needed to be handled positively. The negative implication of retention had been identified in numerous studies and were all too obvious: emotional damages, a feeling of inferiority, a failure complex, and social maladjustment. Jackson (1975), Goodlad (1963), and Trump (1977) were only a few of the authorities who referred to specific causes and effects of retention. In their opinions, schools needed

to change their curricular offerings and needed to change teacher attitudes and existing grading standards.

Goodlad (1963) and Bocks (1977) viewed retention as being completely negative in its effect upon students. Goodlad concluded that repeaters did not receive the social approval or acceptance of those students that were regularly promoted. Repeaters were often found to be unfriendly, cruel, and antagonistic in relations with their classmates. They were also revealed to be lacking in self-confidence, self-respect, and general feelings of well-being.

Discussions as to factors leading to retention had long been noted in educational literature. In one early study, Reed provided the following list of causes of nonpromotion:

1. Poor home conditions
2. Physical defects
3. Transferring from another school system
4. Retarded motor development
5. Difficulty with the English language
6. Lack of application of acquired skills
7. Irregular school attendance
8. Late entrance into school
9. Delinquency
10. Too high a school standard
11. Faulty curriculum
12. Lack of flexibility in methods of promotion
13. Lack of student supervision by the parents
14. Laziness on the part of the student
15. Unqualified teachers
16. Too many students in the classrooms
17. Short term attendance
18. Courses of study did not provide for special needs or interests of the students
19. Variability of students
20. Failure by the teacher to provide for the needs of the individual student
21. Inadequate medical inspection and treatment
22. Inadequate formulation of promotion standards
23. Inaccurate methods of measuring results

These statements caused some districts to look at the conditions that led to student retentions in their schools. Decisions were made in some districts that resulted in some policy changes that improved school programs and working conditions for students who were experiencing difficulties. (1927:4-5)

Anderson (1976) reported that most of the failures occurred in schools that used "norm-referenced" grading methods. A predetermined percentage of students were therefore doomed to fail simply because they could not outscore enough of their classmates. Since several studies had indicated that students continued to attain about the same rank in their class or grade over extended periods of time, students in such a grading system continued to fail over the years. Eventually they felt inadequate and saw themselves as being failures.

The question of the relative value of retaining students indicated a need for a study of the retention trends and practices in the State of Montana. As an elementary school principal, the writer believed that there was a need to examine promotion and retention policies in the state. It was the writer's opinion that research in this area would be valuable to teachers and administrators in their decision making process as they would be able to rely on more current and localized information pertinent to the problems of student retention.

General Questions to be Answered

The review of related literature and research provided answers to the following questions:

1. What was the history of student nonpromotion in elementary schools in the United States from 1850 to 1980?

2. What were the major research findings pertaining to nonpromotion of elementary school students in grades K-6?

3. What were some of the controversies concerning student retention?

4. Had school programs been changed or adapted to allow for alternatives to nonpromotion of students?

5. What were some positive and negative aspects of student retention?

6. Had the national trend shown nonpromotion to be more prevalent during the 1970's-1980's than before?

The following questions were answered from data obtained by use of the principal's questionnaire:

1. Were alternate program options available for the students being considered for retention?

2. Did principals feel that perceptions of the relative merits of retention differed between principals and classroom teachers?

3. What were some perceived common causes for students to be retained in Montana Class 1 elementary schools?

4. Did Montana Class 1 elementary schools normally have a formal promotion policy and what were some of the common elements of the promotion policies being used?

5. Based on perceptions of elementary school principals, did retained students achieve improved success and thus "catch up" with their peer group?

6. Did elementary principals feel that retention of students was usually beneficial for the student?

7. Based on perceptions of building principals, what were parental perceptions and attitudes towards a retention decision?

The following questions were also answered from data obtained by use of the principal's questionnaire. The questions were answered through the use of statistical analyses:

1. Was the overall academic achievement level of students independent of the socio-economic make-up of the school community?

2. Was there a statistically significant difference in the proportion of male retentions as compared to female retentions?

3. Was there a statistically significant difference in the proportion of minority students being retained when compared to the proportion of nonminority students being retained?

4. Was there a statistically significant difference in the proportion of male minority students being retained when compared to the proportion of female minority students being retained?

Answers to the following questions were obtained by analyzing and comparing data collected from the principal's questionnaire, case study forms, retention scale, and the parent's check list. The first question was only concerned with teacher and parent perceptions as to the perceived causes of retention.

1. What were the perceived major causes for student retention?

2. Were teachers' perceptions of students' physical development independent of whether the students were retained or regularly promoted?

3. Were the perceptions of a student's physical development independent of whether the perceptions were made by a parent or a teacher?

4. Were teachers' perceptions of students' general health conditions independent of whether the students were retained or regularly promoted?

5. Were the perceptions of students' general health conditions independent of whether the perceptions were made by a parent or a teacher?

6. Were teachers' perceptions of students being happy about going to school independent of whether the students were retained or regularly promoted?

7. Were perceptions about retained students being happy about going to school independent of whether the perceptions were made by a teacher or a parent?

8. Were classroom teachers' perceptions of students' contributions to group discussions independent of whether the students were retained or regularly promoted?

9. Were perceptions of a retained student's contributions to group discussions independent of whether the perceptions were made by a teacher or a parent?

10. Was enthusiasm for learning as perceived by the classroom teacher independent of whether the students were retained or regularly promoted?

11. Were perceptions of a retained student's enthusiasm for learning independent of whether the perceptions were made by a teacher or a parent?

12. Was the perception of a retained student's emotional adjustment independent of whether the perception was made by a classroom teacher or a parent?

13. Was the amount of stress displayed in discussions about school as perceived by the classroom teacher independent of whether the student was retained or regularly promoted?

14. Was the perception of the amount of stress displayed by a retained student independent of whether the perception was made by a classroom teacher or a parent?

15. Was the perception of the way promoted students reacted to retained students independent of whether the perception was made by a classroom teacher or a parent?

16. Was the perception of the way students got along with each other as perceived by the classroom teacher independent of whether the students were retained or regularly promoted?

17. Was the perception of the way the retained students got along with each other independent of whether the perceptions were made by a classroom teacher or a parent?

18. Was the amount of work completed as perceived by a classroom teacher independent of whether the student was retained or regularly promoted?

19. Was the perception of the amount of school work completed by retained students independent of whether the perceptions were made by a classroom teacher or a parent?

20. Was the degree to which students worked up to their ability as perceived by classroom teachers independent of whether the student was retained or regularly promoted?

21. Was the perception of the degree to which retained students worked up to their ability independent of whether the perception was made by a classroom teacher or a parent?

22. Was a person's perception as to whether retention was beneficial to the student independent of whether the person was a parent or a teacher?

23. Was a person's perception as to whether retention was usually beneficial to the students independent of whether the person was a parent, a teacher, or a principal?

24. Was there a statistically significant difference between scores for retained and regularly promoted students as computed from the Retention Scales that had been completed by classroom teachers?

General Procedures

The general procedures followed in this study were as follows:

1. The writer conducted a review of literature and research related to the nonpromotion of elementary school students. This review addressed the history of retention practices from the 1850's to the present and included data cited by authorities which indicated both advantageous and disadvantageous of student retention. Current trends and rationale for promotion or retention of students was examined with a view toward gaining an understanding of the causes and effects of student failure. The review of literature also included data obtained from a computer search of ERIC files under the following descriptors: "academic failure," "holding power," "nonpromotion," and "retention."

2. A survey was developed and administered in all Montana Class I elementary school districts. The survey was designed to gain information about the school district retention policies, ages, grades, and sex of retained elementary students in grades K-6. This survey was also to provide information on the trends and practices regarding student retention in the state of Montana. Respondents were also asked to provide information on the academic, social, and behavioral characteristics of students that were retained with the intent of determining benefits or detriments of retention.

3. Case study reporting forms were developed and utilized in three selected Class I elementary school districts. The purpose of this instrument was to examine and identify specific academic, social, and behavioral characteristics of students that had been retained in grades K-2 prior to school year 1982-83. Additionally, data was

accumulated on relative positive and negative values of retention. This instrument was completed by the classroom teachers and parents who were able to provide current comprehensive information on the students' present characteristics as well as perceptions of the value of nonpromotion.

Data was also gathered on a stratified selection of regularly promoted students in grades K-2 for comparative purposes with an equal number of retained students of the same sex.

4. Information obtained in the case studies was collected and used for the purpose of determining the perceived relative benefits or disadvantageous to students who were retained.

5. All data was reported and summarized with the purpose of developing a proposed retention policy statement which could be utilized by school personnel in matters of student promotion or nonpromotion.

Limitations

The study was limited in the following ways:

1. The materials and references for this paper were gathered from the Montana State University library reference facilities. The review of literature was gleaned from textbooks, periodicals, journals, and ERIC. While any available sources in the Montana State University library were considered, references noted in the Education Index (1970-83) were reviewed. The descriptors used to obtain information were limited to the following: academic failure, holding power, nonpromotion, and retention.

Interlibrary loan facilities were also utilized along with the research and service facilities of the National Association of Elementary School Principals.

2. The survey was limited to grades K-6 in all Class I elementary schools in the state of Montana.

3. This study considered information reflecting retention practices during the 1982-83 school term.

4. The three school districts selected for a more detailed study were chosen to reflect two school systems that were representative of Class I elementary schools with normal achievement ranges and normal population variances and one school system that reflected a high proportion of minority students. In-depth studies of teacher-parent perceptions of retention as well as student characteristics were explored. The case study format being used followed some recommended authoritative guidelines for student data sheets (Rosander, 1977:87-8).

5. The case study forms utilized in the three selected Class I school districts were only used for those students who were enrolled in grades K-2 for the 1982-83 school year.

6. The survey instruments and case study forms were created by the writer of this paper and as such were not standardized. Validation and reliability procedures are reported in Chapter 3.

7. The generalizations drawn from the study were from a limited number of schools and students in the state of Montana and were therefore not intended for universal generalization throughout the United States. Benefits obtained from this study were intended to add to the contemporary field of knowledge concerning the retention of students in

our country and were also intended to be of potential value to the educators in the state of Montana.

Definition of Terms

Certain terms were considered in the following context:

Acceleration. Acceleration is the practice of speeding the fast learner through a subject area or grade to provide more interesting and challenging work for the student (Thomas, 1965:126).

Automatic (Social) Promotion. This practice is based on the desire not to injure the child socially or psychologically (Dufay, 1966:52). The underlying theory is that children will develop more normally and naturally if they are advanced each year along with their peers even though they do not master the academics at that particular grade level (Jarvis, 1966:227).

Class I School District of Montana. This is a classification given to a school district with a population of 6500 or more (School Laws of Montana:75-6503).

Continuous Promotion. This assumes that though children learn at a varying rate, maximum learning takes place when pupils progress steadily through the grades with their peer group (Coffield, 1956). This promotion practice is based on chronological age and is usually synonymous with automatic or social promotion.

ERIC. This is the acronym for the Educational Resources Information Center which is a national information system for providing ready access to lists of educational research materials in the field of education.

Failure. (1) This term when implied in the usage of the infinitive "to fail" refers to the inability of an individual to attain success with respect to a particular goal. In this context it shall mean the lack of movement from one grade level to another. (2) This term when used as a noun shall identify a person who has failed to attain a desired objective. In this context it will be a specific reference to an individual who has not attained success in some endeavor (Anderson, 1976).

Nongraded. This is the organizational practice of dividing the school work into smaller units above the kindergarten level. Pupils move into the next level whenever they have completed the work below that particular level. It also eliminates the term "grade" as it pertains to the placement in the school hierarchy. (Thomas, 1965:119). This term shall also refer to the practice of grading students subjectively rather than with letter grades (Goodlad, 1963).

Nonpromotion. This refers to the practice of allowing a child to spend two consecutive years in the same grade (Horn, 1976). Nonpromotion is also a part of the graded school plan in which educators attempt to sort pupils into achievement levels in order to maintain the graded concept of the elementary school (Elsbree, 1967:227).

Promotion. This is the regular and sequential movement of an individual through predetermined academic and grade areas. This is also described as the process of keeping pupils of like achievement in the same group and "passing" them on to the next grade at the end of the school year (Goodlad, 1963:49).

Retention. Retention is the practice of allowing a child to spend two consecutive years in the same grade (Thompson, 1977:32). In a slightly different context, it is the practice of requiring a student who has been in a given grade level for a full school year to remain at that level for a subsequent school year (Jackson, 1975:613).

Summary

Schools had traditionally fulfilled the functions of transmitting knowledge, skills, and attitudes to their students as well as judging how well the student had attained the desired goals. The evaluation of pupil abilities and the subsequent promotion and/or nonpromotion decisions had caused considerable debate and argument. Student growth and real learning tended to be overlooked and many pupils had developed a failure complex and feelings of inferiority (Anderson, 1976). Findings were often inconsistent and authorities debated the problem of student retention. The causes of nonpromotion were proposed by various authorities but most school principals did not appear to have access to definitive information with which to make accurate promotion or retention recommendations. School district guidelines or policies were frequently unavailable or did not provide specific guidelines (Horn, 1976). Retention decisions had to give strong consideration to the effect of the judgement on the students because of the negative aspects of retention that were cited in numerous articles.

This study attempted to answer questions as to the history of retention practices, research findings, school programs, aspects of retention, and criteria for student retention. Causes, program options,

school policies, and parental perceptions of retention were also addressed.

General procedures for the study included a review of literature, a survey of Class I elementary schools in Montana, development of case study forms, and determination of perceived benefits or disadvantageous of retention.

Limitations of the study concerned the sources to be reviewed, the extent of the school surveys, the narrow range of grades and students involved in the case studies, and the generalizations that could be drawn from the data.

The following terms were defined: acceleration, automatic (social) promotion, Class I elementary school, continuous promotion, ERIC, failure, nongraded, nonpromotion, promotion, and retention.

The next procedure was to conduct a review of related literature and research concerning the retention of elementary students. This will be found in Chapter 2.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

A review of related literature and research was conducted for the purpose of gaining an understanding of the past and present retention practices of America's elementary schools. The chapter is organized as follows: (1) a brief history of school grading and retention practices from the 1850's to the 1970's; (2) criticisms of retention practices and attempts to accommodate individual differences; (3) retained student characteristics; (4) rationale for the nonpromotion of students; and (5) current status and trends of retention practices.

History of Retention Practices

During the second half of the nineteenth century and the first decades of the twentieth, the elementary school was viewed as a series of graded hurdles to be cleared one after the other by participants in a common race. The child who failed to clear a hurdle simply waited, presumably to muster the ability to clear it on his second try a year later. The schools were organized around the structure of having a group of students taught by a single teacher (Lindsay, 1933). This method of instruction was commonly used in the elementary schools of the United States and was known as the "individual method." Lindsay (1933) reported that the schools were generally ungraded and the teacher was frequently engaged in hearing the lessons as they were

recited by the pupils in that class. It could not be argued that the pupils did not receive individual attention as the teachers did attempt to listen to each pupil read, but the lessons were not developed with individual needs as the prime concern. It was expected by the teacher and accepted by the community that each member of a class would be exposed to the same material and each pupil was judged to be a success or failure on the basis of how well he could memorize and recite certain lessons. "The value derived by the students from such a plan of instruction was meager" for most of the students (Lindsay, 1933:6).

This class unit of instruction emerged as a fairly cost-efficient means of educating pupils but it was also an inhibiting form of regimenting. The graded system of progression was in common use with a rigid classification system of graded texts, written examinations, supervised courses of study, division of curriculum into segments, percent markings, and annual promotions (Beggs, 1967).

The major source for the instructional material presented to the pupils was the text book. The work for each grade was developed into weekly portions with daily lessons that often required rote memorization. Specific items, such as vocabulary words, spelling lists, math facts, or science and social studies terms, were generally placed in a conspicuous place in the classroom, usually on the chalkboard. These served as a guide for both the teacher and the pupil. Advancement through the grades was thus dependent on a proficiency in the knowledge of subject matter incorporated in the existing course of study. This proficiency was often measured by an

examination and many of the larger city schools had set exact times for their promotional examinations by the early 1900's (Lindsay, 1933).

Educators began to speak out against the graded system because of the heavy pupil dropout rates which resulted from too much rigidity in teaching methods and an unbending method of annual promotion (Beggs, 1967). Repeating a grade in school fell into disrepute in many areas. Parents felt that holding a student back in the same grade did not accomplish much. They felt that the slow child tended to get slower and if he was kept from advancing with his age group, additional damage would result psychologically and he would be programmed for even greater failure later in life (Scott, 1969). Regardless of the outcome of these arguments, a substantial number of children were retained during each school year.

Exact retention statistics varied from school to school and a study by Coffield (1956) showed that in the early 1900's some schools had retained as high as 50 percent of their students at some point in their school career. Different studies showed different retention rates and Lindsay (1933) reported a national retention rate of 20 percent while Dufay (1966) gave 16 percent as a retention rate for the beginning of the 1900's. There was a gradual decrease in the standard deviation of ages within a grade after 1918, which suggested that promotion policies were changing. Jackson (1975) reported that retention rates had dropped to approximately 6 percent nationally by the mid 1950's. These early efforts to modify the school retention rates were usually attempts to vary the instructional program within the framework of the graded school. Educators attempted to modify the

instructional practices rather than trying to break down the graded structure. Some educators attempted to alter the adverse effects of grading, especially failing grades; others tried to provide for the differences within groups of children; others designed programs that provided opportunities for individuals to progress through schools at varying rates; and still others examined the teacher training programs and tried to determine how teacher strengths could be utilized to better student advantage and benefit (Beggs, 1967).

The educational practices of this period did not go entirely without some justification. Goodlad said this of the graded programs:

It permitted the convenient classification of unprecedented numbers of pupils pouring into the schools during the second half of the century. It encouraged the division of knowledge into segments to be taught at the various grade levels. Consequently, it simplified the task of preparing needed teachers quickly; teachers were simply taught what they were themselves to teach in a given grade. Man's zeal for efficiency was challenged and he met the challenge vigorously...That so many people agreed so quickly and so generally on distinct learning tasks for each grade level is truly amazing (1963:204).

The writer of this thesis attempted to include a section on the retention practices of the schools in Montana from the 1900's to the present. The State Office of Public Instruction was contacted and retention information was requested from several individuals who had knowledge of and access to enrollment records maintained by the Office of Public Instruction. The Montana Historical Society office in Helena, Montana was also contacted along with several County Superintendents who maintain various student records. In each case there was a dearth of statistics or historical records pertaining to

retention practices in the State of Montana. The researcher could find no definitive statistics or historical records of nonpromotion of elementary school students. This lack of accounting in a very important phase of educational progress pointed to the need for this and other studies that dealt with student retention.

Criticisms of Retention Practices and Attempts to
Accommodate Individual Differences

The high retention rates of the late 1800's and early 1900's slowed the movement of the retained students from grade to grade and often caused class overloads. This made teaching more difficult and often compounded the problems of the slower students. Some school districts attempted to offset this problem by stimulating and accelerating the school programs for the brighter members of the classes so that their progress would not be slowed by an excess of slower students who needed extra help (Lindsay, 1933). Nonpromotion and acceleration thus developed as early administrative techniques for fitting the offerings of the schools to the individual students. This was an initial attempt at providing something extra for the atypical student who needed assistance not available in the normal school curriculum. During the 1900's, school programs did not provide any special curriculum, special materials, or special classes for the slower students and implementation of these additional school services did benefit these pupils whenever schools could provide them (Reed, 1927).

One theory of regulating progress had its origin in the graded system and was built around the idea of dividing larger groups into

smaller instructional groups which would be relatively homogeneous in achievement. Standards were set for each grade and pupils were assigned into those groups. The procedure however led directly to the retention of pupils in a grade until the teacher believed they had reached the standards for the next grade. The theory dominated the promotion of pupils from 1904-1911 when studies showed an excessive retardation and elimination of pupils. Policies were also developed in the early 1900's which specified the amount and quality of work to be completed prior to being promoted to the next grade. Generally these policies reflected a grade based on a percentage of accuracy with 65-70 percent being considered a minimum level of achievement. Pupils falling below 50 percent on final examinations were usually failed and had to repeat the course or grade (Caswell, 1957).

Some policies also reflected the need for teachers and administrators to make promotion or retention decisions based on student well-being. These decisions were based on the abilities of the student in addition to their overall age and size. The intent was to move students through the educational program with a minimum of discouragement and frustration. These policies also took into account the disabilities or lack of abilities in handicapped individuals. It was usually accepted that pupils of limited abilities should be promoted because of their inability to function academically in a normal class setting, therefore retention would simply be a waste of time for them as well as the teacher (Caswell, 1957).

Some schools also attempted to curb the high failing rates of the 1920's by providing for individual differences within the group

structure. This plan was built around the framework of a parallel curriculum which allowed faster students to accelerate while the slower students stayed on the slower track. Courses of study were divided into units of study and each student worked at his own pace. Elements were also developed in some schools to provide classroom aides who were assigned to work with the slower learners. These attempts to help students did reduce the amount of failures in some school districts (Beggs, 1967).

As previously noted, Reed (1927) made a detailed study of the causes of nonpromotion in the 1920's. She listed twenty three specific reasons for the retention of students and made a number of suggestions for changes that should occur if school programs were to be improved. The majority of her recommendations involved changing the school's programs in the areas of materials, curriculum, and attitude toward the students who could not cope within the existing school structure.

Early studies generally criticized the promotion and grading policies of the time but children still moved along in a lock-step pattern in most school systems in the United States. No logical basis existed for the manner in which children were grouped other than the fact that each had supposedly completed some prescribed amount of instruction in a prior year and the assumption followed that the student had a workable skill in the academic areas. Promotion was based primarily on examinations and the entire scheme lacked unity. Each school system had differences in the amount of teacher preparation and training and each system had its own set of grading standards and curricular offerings (Lindsay, 1933).

Some schools attempted to offer a more flexible means of promotion or of retention by reducing the intervals between promotions to quarters or halves of a school year. Jackson (1975) reported that a policy of allowing students to progress on to the next grade while repeating only the one or two courses that he had "failed" was more beneficial than having the student repeat the entire year in the same grade. One of the problems with this method was that the textbook was still the primary educational tool in the 1920's and certain quotas of material still had to be mastered from the texts in order to progress on to the next level. This became an immediate problem when the student moved on to the high school or when he transferred to another school district because he ran the risk of being placed at a level of work that would create a "failing" situation for him.

Two noteworthy attempts to reduce the failure of students took place in the early 1900's. In 1919, the Dalton Plan was introduced in an ungraded school. Essentially, the plan consisted of subjects being divided into academic and vocational groups. The academic subjects were organized sequentially and students worked on an individual basis. The work at each grade level was laid out in a series of related jobs or contracts, each consisting of a number of smaller units. The learning tasks were thus identified for each child and he was permitted to complete his requirements which were determined through a checking conference with his teacher. Each student was allowed to work at this own pace which greatly reduced the pressure on the child and, in turn, reduced the number of failures within a class (Beggs, 1967).

Another innovative attempt comparable to the Dalton Plan was the Winnetka Plan. This plan provided for individual assignments that were performed at the student's own rate. The plan called for a course of study with a morning session and an afternoon session. The "common essentials," or the basic subjects, were taught in the morning session and tests were administered at the appropriate times to check for achievement. The significant factor in the development of both the Dalton and Winnetka Plans was that these were attempts to eliminate the lock-step progression of children through the grades. This conceptual change did have an effect on student achievement and on the grade level organization of many American schools (Beggs, 1967).

Beggs (1967) also noted that other attempts were made to break away from the failure prone situations of the early 1900's. These included some early efforts at team teaching, departmentalization, dual progress programs, and the beginning of specially trained teachers to teach in special areas such as music, art, and physical education. It must be noted that most of these innovations occurred at the high school levels rather than at the elementary levels where frustration and failures continued under the graded systems. Further changes were implemented in the 1930's as nongraded schools made their appearance. These schools were designed and organized to allow students to progress at individual rates. Grades were modified or eliminated altogether so as to help pupils of varying abilities move ahead without the obstruction of a specific grade expectation.

In spite of these developments, most school systems still utilized the more traditional or accepted methods of having a graded structure

for their students. The problems of promotion and retention continued for pupils and school personnel under this plan. Arguments occurred as to which type of promotion or grading policy was best. Proponents of annual promotion stated that annual promotions conformed more often with community customs and that this practice was widely used and therefore made it easier for school systems to accommodate and place students that were new to their schools. Lindsay (1933) also reported that some educators believed that annual promotion allowed for a better utilization of time as a reorganization of students and materials would not occur several times each year. From a social standpoint, it was also felt that annual promotions allowed students of the same chronological age to remain together and provided a more cohesive group relationship.

Semi-annual or quarterly promotion was considered advantageous to schools having a transient school population as it was easier to place students during the school year rather than leaving a student in a position where he couldn't function. This method was also said to be advantageous for students who had to leave school for extended or irregular periods of time due to illness or other uncontrollable events. Other arguments favoring a semi-annual promotion policy included such factors as allowing students to enter in mid-year and not having to repeat an entire year of work and allowing class loads to become more evenly balanced (Beggs, 1967 and Lindsay, 1933).

Another method of measuring student proficiency and ability was to use an intelligence test or an achievement test. This allowed administrators and teachers to group students on the basis of the test

results and promotion or nonpromotion was often decided on that basis. Various grouping plans were developed over the years and it was not the purpose of this writer to describe and/or evaluate the faults or effectiveness of each. The purpose of each of the groupings, however, was basically the same; that is, a means of providing for instruction and a subsequent determination of promotion or nonpromotion for the student.

Retained Student Characteristics

Morris felt that for some children, failure in school was almost a foregone conclusion:

A child begins his school career about age six, a mere baby who is frightened, upset, apprehensive about being away from his mother and a familiar environment. In school he has to compete with the other children and is now under the authority of a strange adult who may or may not be sympathetic to him. If he has not learned to read with speed, comprehension, and retention; if he cannot spell correctly, and if his vocabulary is inadequate; if he has not learned to add, subtract, multiply, and divide in the elementary school, he simply cannot cope. As he progresses into the higher grades he will fall farther and farther behind his classmates (1980:38-40).

Another educator, Donofrio, agreed with Morris and added that "the first and most important step in preventing failure is the repetition of kindergarten" (1977:349).

Educators realized that retained children continued to experience difficulties in achieving academic success and possibly more important, social success as they continued through school. Often, these children felt rejected and did not become an integral part of the school. As their friends and classmates progressed through the grades they found

themselves left behind in a strange and lonely setting. Many times they had little in common with their classmates who were younger and less mature (Trump, 1977).

Many educators firmly believed that the schools must become more humane in all aspects. Goodlad (1963) said that all children, both fast and slow, must not be left standing apart from the group. Each child had to have the recognition of his teachers and peers in order to develop feelings of self-worth and self-esteem. The underlying philosophy was that every child had to achieve success in school in order to develop positive attitudes. Some authorities felt that failure by a pupil fundamentally was a failure by the school, whether brought about by improper classification or by a poor and ineffective teacher and poor teaching techniques which failed to call forth the pupil's best effort (Sister Josephine, 1962).

Experiences in the classroom, however, did not always reinforce positive views for the unsuccessful students, rather it often tended to eliminate those feelings altogether (Kifer, 1977). The first implication then was the need for structuring experiences in the schools so each child would be provided with repeated experiences and opportunities to be successful. Those experiences were those which involved academic achievement in most instances. It was through positive instruction that the student began to view himself as successful or unsuccessful, and if he was successful, he would begin to develop a sense of competence and positive affective traits. Instructional techniques needed to be designed to maximize the probability that each student would feel some sense of accomplishment.

The teachers, when selecting teaching strategies, had to exercise care that they would not choose those activities which would insure that only a few students would feel competent. They needed to aim for those projects and routines within the classroom which would give the majority of students some perceptions of having met success.

Kifer (1977) commented that the history of student success or failure was also the source of the personality development of the child. It was suggested that those activities to which the student was exposed to continually and for extended periods of time were the ones which had the major impact on the students' attitudes toward school. Sandoval (1981) stated that the best predictors of success in a repeated year have been the child's initial progress in the areas of reading, emotional development, and social skills. Even if school curriculum were changed, as long as students were placed in competition with their peers for rewards for cognitive accomplishments and encouraged to differentiate among themselves to gain these rewards, little would be changed in terms of how students would develop views of themselves and of their abilities.

A number of nonpromoted children did show reasonable growth in achievement during the repeated year. But, to offset this, a much larger percentage actually did worse on achievement tests after a year of repetition than they had done when tested just before the impact of failure or the subsequent deadening effect of repetition, destroyed the will to learn and impaired some of the learning that already had occurred. Nonpromotion often resulted in emotional depression and discouragement in the pupil's perception of his own

ability and ultimately in his expectation of further failure. Caught up in a situation where he did not succeed and where continued striving did not lead to accomplishment and satisfaction, the child tended to rationalize his failure and would build up explanatory defense mechanisms (Goodlad, 1963).

In one study, Goodlad (1963) discovered that nonpromotion, low level of school achievement, lethargic school habits, and often intensely negative attitudes towards school and schooling were more common among delinquent boys. In another study, teachers and principals reported more occurrences of stealing, more incidents demanding disciplinary action, and greater resistance to the schools' civic efforts among nonpromoted children. A large proportion of the nonpromoted children wanted to quit school just as soon as the first opportunity to do so presented itself.

It became apparent that nonpromotion was not conducive to the development of pupil feelings of satisfaction and well-being. The question was also raised as to how well nonpromoted children got along with the regular progress students and how did they feel about the adequacy of their self-development. Sandin (1944) explored these questions by comparing nonpromoted pupils with the general population of regularly promoted children. Some of his findings were:

1. Repeaters more frequently preferred to associate with companions from the upper grades.
2. Repeaters, generally speaking, did not receive the social approval or acceptance of the regularly promoted.
3. Repeaters received significantly more ratings as being unfriendly, cruel, and bullying to classmates.

4. Intensive analysis of selected nonpromoted children revealed them to be lacking to an alarming degree in self-confidence, self-respect, and general feelings of well-being.

The nonpromoted children had an alarming picture of social inadequacy. At the beginning of the year, their classmates selected the nonpromoted children more frequently as children they wanted for friends, but also rejected them as friends more frequently.

The nonpromoted children received a high rating for bullying which perhaps resulted from clashes with established leaders among the incoming group. It was also possible that some aggressive children saw the older, nonpromoted children as threats to their own developing leadership abilities. Significant changes did occur by the end of the school year. The nonpromoted children no longer were wanted, even by one another. A tight mutual acceptance among the nonpromoted had broken down completely. This pattern persisted and the nonpromoted children, initially unwanted by many, were even more unwanted by year's end. The promoted group, meanwhile, grew in acceptance to a level of normal expectancy by the end of the year. Their very low level of rejection did not change.

The rejection by their peers increased the nonpromoted children's feelings of inadequacy. More consistently than promoted children, they rated themselves as unwanted and disliked by their peers and as the unhappy victims of quarrels and fights. They seemed, in many instances, to have resigned themselves to lack of success in school and expressed little fear of failure in school work (Sandin, 1944).

Goodlad (1959) conducted a study of social and personal adjustment of children which had been promoted and an equal number of nonpromoted

children. From that study Goodlad concluded that there were differences in social adjustment and personal adjustment between the two groups. The nonpromoted children were found to be more outward-going which might have been advantages had it not been for the fact that rejection contributed to this, rather than acceptance by their peers.

The area of peer group relations clearly favored the promoted children. Nonpromoted children functioned less well than promoted children when they were compared to their own class group. Promoted children were named less frequently than nonpromoted children as persons not desired for very best friends.

The motivating effectiveness of failure had been demonstrated by psychologists and mental hygienists to be very slight in comparison with the motivating power of success. If a student continually experienced failure, very little motivation could come from further failure. Case studies had indicated that the pupil would resign himself to his fate, would conclude that he was not worth much, would often become apathetic, and sometimes hostile.

Failure implied frustration and this often caused the pupil to abandon the desired goal. Numerous studies found that children suffered severe and adverse mental hygiene effects from school failure. Behavior disorders were often attributed to difficulties in school.

Over a period of years, students were believed to have developed a concept of themselves based upon their degree of academic success or failure. Sometimes they shifted the blame from the school and the teachers to themselves. By the end of the primary school (grades 4-6)

the student who consistently succeeded in school often generalized approval of himself and the school. The student who consistently failed often came to view himself with a generally negative self-concept as a learner. Given a sufficient number of unsuccessful learning experiences, almost everyone eventually succumbed to an acceptance of a self-view about learning which was negative or inadequate (Bloom, 1976).

Other problems also developed because of retentions. Children who were not promoted became overage for their grade and became separated from their friends with whom they had usually associated. They were generally more physically mature, were often looked upon as "dummies" by pupils and teachers alike, and frequently experienced continued disapproval and pressure at home (Goodlad, 1963).

It was observed by Goodlad that boys were retained much more frequently than girls. He found that boy retention outnumbered girl retention approximately three to two. Some studies showed twice as many boys being retained as girls. Data also revealed that 70 percent of all retentions occurred in first grade with second grade being the next highest grade for retentions.

The ability range also showed though the average ability of the retained student was not significantly below that of the regularly promoted students, a lack of school aptitude was a major factor in retention decisions. One study pointed out that most of the failing and unsatisfactory grades on papers, projects, reports, and report cards went to the students in the lower one-fourth of the ability distribution. This data would appear to confirm Scott's (1969)

findings that retention was not beneficial to students of low intelligence or for those with learning disabilities.

The situation was summed up by Doll when he said:

"Learning under the control of reward is usually preferable to learning under the control of punishment. Correspondingly, learning motivated by success is preferable to learning motivated by failure. Even though the theoretical issue is still unresolved, the practical outcome must take into account the social by-products, which tend to be more favorable under reward than under punishment." (1974:41)

Rationale for Nonpromotion

Even though a number of authorities (Jones, 1956; Ahmann, 1958; Goodlad, 1963; Trump, 1966; and Reiter, 1973) indicated that retention of students was not beneficial, other studies concluded that retention was not always detrimental. Lindelow stated that the "main consideration is not which grade failed students are placed in, but whether their needs are met wherever they are placed" (1982:473). Russell (1952) found that pupils and parents of pupils who had been retained in a grade showed more negative attitudes toward school than those pupils who had been regularly promoted but that the differences were not great in most instances. Careful selection of the children who were to repeat a grade could help bring about success during and after the year of retention. Lobdell (1952) found that more children benefited from retention than was indicated in current literature. Worth (1959) made similar findings and reported that nonpromotion did not seem to have as adverse an effect on social-personal development as previous research had indicated. His findings showed that the social-

personal development and adjustment appeared to be as good, if not better, than the social-personal adjustment of the regularly promoted students. Stringer reported that "retentions can help a significant proportion of failing children" (1960:370-75) if students were selected carefully. Chase (1968) conducted a study in which she confirmed her original hypothesis that repeating a grade did not create negative social or emotional effects on children when the school failure was based primarily on immaturity. Parents of children who had been retained reported that their children liked school better, felt more confident, were more successful in school were happy, easy to live with at home, and were getting along well with their friends.

Scott (1969) proposed that repeating could have some definite advantages but that it was not a panacea for all of the problems a student might have. She said that repeating would not guarantee success for the child who had low intelligence or who was emotionally disturbed, brain damaged, or perceptually handicapped. Repeating could be expected, however, to provide the extra time needed because of the immaturity and subsequent unreadiness for the work of a grade in question. Repeating, theoretically, should be a solution for the children who were too immature for the work of a certain grade and needed to be older to succeed at the tasks of that level. Thompson also concurred that maturity was a valid reason for retention since the child probably could not succeed in a higher grade. Thompson did cite a criteria for retention by stating that retention should not be referred to in a class or used as a threat; the second year was not to

be a repeat of the first year; and a different teacher should be assigned to the retained student in most cases (1977:32-3).

Scott and Ames (1969) identified immaturity by saying that it might consist of sheer chronological youngness or it might be such behavior and developmental mannerisms significantly below his chronological age expectations. They established the position that retention could have definite benefits for those students who were immature with the stipulation that immaturity should be determined by the child's behavior and not on the basis of his birthday age.

In the traditional school setting, students were expected to achieve at a specified level of academic competence. Children entered school with limited amounts of skill and knowledge and emerged a number of years later with some acquired academic abilities. In the process of gaining this competence, students had numerous opportunities for both successes and failures. Traditionally, the most common way to care for the slow learner was to hold him back to repeat the grade while the peer group was promoted at the end of the school term. Thomas (1965) reported that about 10 percent of the population could be classified as repeaters. Most of those retentions occurred in the first grade (Goodlad, 1963). The retentions were usually based on the assumption that here was a minimum standard of work for each grade level that must be met before the student was allowed to go on to the next grade level.

Repeating a grade was often viewed as an admission that the child was "dumb." Ames (1969) felt that the school was at fault by allowing the student to start at too early an age, although that was not the

only reason for retaining a child. She believed that repeating the child who was simply too immature would give that child the extra time needed to be able to cope with the demands of a specific grade or course. Horn (1976) made similar statements and added that support from all parties, i.e., parents, teachers, administrators, and the student was necessary for retention to be successful.

Goodlad investigated the reasons for promotion or nonpromotion of students and found that a wide range of explanations or causes resulted in the decision to retain a student for another year. The most common reasons cited were:

1. Certain children do not make sufficient academic progress during a given year to profit from the work of the grade above. (This reason, the most commonly presented, often is expressed simply as "lack of achievement.")

2. We cannot go on indefinitely pushing children up. Let's face it: some upper grades and certainly our high schools expect children to measure up. If we don't insist on certain standards now, children will be unprepared for what must inevitably come later.

3. The teacher in the grade immediately above expects children to come prepared; it's just too bad for the children if they are sent up unprepared.

4. Continued inability to do the work of the grade is discouraging and frustrating to the children. They are better off if retained in a grade level where they can gain some success and satisfaction.

5. The presence of slow learners in the class presents a hindrance both to children and to teachers who already are badly overloaded. Retaining slow learners will reduce this problem.

6. Immature children, by repeating the grade, will find more suitable playmates and work companions.

7. Promotion of all is unfair to those who have come up to grade standards. These more able students come to resent equal reward for obviously inferior performance. (1963:32)

Thomas listed some other reasons cited by educators who favored student retention:

1. Retention gave the slow learner another chance to master the material of that grade. It was assumed that the student was immature and could benefit by having another year in the same grade.

2. Retention would stimulate the children to work harder because of the threat of not passing on to the next grade.

3. Retention would help maintain the standards of the school because all students would meet a minimum standard of achievement.

4. Retention would reduce the range of differences within a group and would thus provide for a better instructional situation. (1965:32)

Goodlad (1963) noted that teachers often observed that some promoted youngsters did encounter learning and adjustment problems in subsequent years. Nonpromoted children often experienced the same problems but careful program modifications did result in quite satisfactory progress for many of them. The teacher who made a recommendation that a child should be retained had to have good reasons that this particular child would benefit by being in a certain grade for another year. The teacher had to realize that the act of promotion or nonpromotion did not necessarily produce an ideal learning situation and that the student would adjust satisfactorily to that particular situation. Teachers still had to face the fact that at any given grade level, less than half of the children would meet the standards of that grade in various areas of attainment (Koons, 1977). No administrative

or organizational decision by itself would automatically solve the instructional problems of a certain grade or for certain academic subject areas.

Purl indicated that "probably the school practice that most produces failure in students is grading...The only acceptable grades are good ones, and these good grades divide the school successes from the school failures" (1973:168).

Current Status and Trends

Jones stated:

A review of the recent research in promotional theory indicates a wealth of evidence that a pupil should progress with his own age group, and that, scholastically, a pupil will usually achieve more by being promoted than by being retained. The great preponderance of evidence definitely favors promotion over nonpromotion. There is a wealth of evidence that few, if any, of the affirmed benefits attributed to nonpromotion are justified or achieved in practice.

Current literature strongly criticized student retention practices in school systems. Doll (1966) felt that the emphasis on grades as a criteria for promotion interfered with real learning by the student. It placed emphasis on extrinsic rewards and de-emphasized the importance and utility of what was being taught and learned. Grades measured only a narrow range of abilities and created feelings of hostility in many children. Society was largely at fault because of the demand for grades. It seemed that the parents and teachers were often unwilling to accept, see, know, or understand the realities of individual differences.

Trump was particularly critical of grading systems that were used for purposes of promoting or failing students. Trump said there were six basic fallacies in the grading systems used in most school districts:

1. Grades are based on competition. Competition was not necessarily bad but the aspect of competing tended to ignore the basic needs of the individual. The student couldn't win if he was limited in ability.

2. Grades allowed ranking. Trump felt that ranking students was unnecessary because students should be learning what was needed and necessary regardless of their placement in their class.

3. Grades were based on prescribed knowledge and skills. Creativity was often ignored and the ability to apply knowledge to situations was not measured.

4. Grades often ignored unique achievements and special projects produced by the student.

5. Grades were an easy and convenient method of keeping records on student accomplishments. Teachers therefore didn't have to exert themselves to consider other facets of student accomplishment.

6. Grades served the simplistic needs of colleges. (1966:163-5)

An NEA report in 1970 echoed Trump's feelings and cited additional objections to grades. The report said that (1) grades were too variable and subjective, (2) caused unfair competition, (3) were aristocratic-not democratic, (4) tended to preoccupy parents and students, (5) didn't allow for individual differences, (6) caused teachers to emphasize facts that had to be memorized, (7) made students dependent on grades, and (8) created considerable numbers of emotional situations.

Grades were not the only area receiving criticism. Curriculum and school philosophy also attracted attention. Reiter (1973) said:

Unless a youngster is exposed to meaningful learning experiences at a level he is emotionally and mentally prepared to handle, the question of whether or not he is promoted should not become a major issue; promoted or not, he will benefit very little from school curricula. It may well be, then, that educationally disadvantaged students should be promoted providing there is the least evidence of sincere effort.

Grade repetition, particularly in the early grades, not only fails to help the majority of the pupils academically, but, in many cases, creates additional problems. The students are older and larger and their learning ability and learning rate is generally below the class average.

Reiter (1973) therefore felt that promotion appeared to have fewer disadvantages than retention. He found that pupils who repeated one or more grades tended to become discouraged by their conspicuous failure and were no better off at the end of the school year than if they had been promoted. Reiter believed that the crucial issue was how a pupil was treated. The situation called for the treatment of each student as a person of value with appropriate learning tasks in which the student could experience some success. Reiter added:

It is apparent that there is no ready answer to promotion versus nonpromotion. What is important is how the learner is treated. Promoted or retained he is not to be branded a chronic failure, not to be compared with others who are not really his peers, is to be helped and listened to, and should be encouraged and understood rather than "beaten down" more and more at home and at school.

School philosophy was also a factor in the retention policies and practices of schools. Ahmann commented:

If the philosophy of the school is concerned with the most effective development of the pupil, then promotion policies must be consistent with the criterion of "what is best for the pupil." Requiring all pupils, irrespective of their talents and goals, to reach a certain level creates a threat of failure that can create psychological havoc. Failing a student not only frequently fails to attack the cause of the difficulty, but it perpetuates feelings of inadequacy (1958:563-65).

Many schools established standards of proficiency which might have been unrealistic in terms of student abilities or they might be impractical due to a lack of materials and trained personnel. In any case, students often "failed" in school systems through no particular fault of their own. Ahmann (1963) stated that the requirement of meeting certain minimum standards became an impossibility for many students. Because the standards did not allow for the differences in student abilities, a pupil of modest ability was faced with a constant threat of failure and a feeling of inadequacy and insecurity. The inevitable failure by the students did not change the standards, nor did it attack the cause of the deficiency; rather it aggravated the situation further by continuing to fail students. The students' attitudes reflected apathy toward school, boredom with assignments, anxiety with their graded work, belligerence toward their instructors, and hostility toward the whole aspect of school.

Bossing (1980) and McAfee (1981) stated that a "back to the basics" philosophy was partially responsible for an increase in student retention. The minimum competency movement brought renewed vigor on the part of those who favored nonpromotion or retaining students at a particular grade level. There were other educators, however, who questioned whether students should ever be retained while others

proposed that, with proper consideration of available data, retention might be the most suitable choice for some students. Research findings however, continued to prompt doubt as to whether retention was beneficial for students. These findings reported by Miller included:

1. Although the main reason given for retaining a student is lack of subject matter mastery, research shows that retention does not bring significantly greater gains in subject matter mastery.

2. Fear of possible failure does not make students work harder.

3. Greater homogeneity of achievement within a grade level does not result when retention is practiced.

4. The more times the student is retained, the lower will be his self concept.

5. Students retained have more adjustment-socialization difficulties.

6. Teachers and peers tend to develop unfavorable attitudes towards students who have been retained.

7. Low grades and retention may also bring unfavorable attitudes from the child's family.

8. Retention may be justified in the case of a child who has been absent a great deal or for the very immature child (1980:51-155).

Glasser (1966) directed additional criticisms at the school grading structure charging that the schools were at fault for pinning failure labels on the children. The failure oriented approaches identified by Glasser were:

1. Learning. Schools should accept opportunities for students to do assignments involving decision-making situations and critical thinking. Some learning was irrelevant according to Glasser, as it

didn't apply to life situations. He also was critical of tedious and boring homework assignments as being one of several causes of student discontent.

2. Evaluation. Grades were not a good method of evaluating student progress as someone had to be in the lowest grouping. This created a continuous pressure on students to achieve and to do what the teacher expected them to do. Tests were too memory oriented and only the "right" answers counted when the teacher assessed progress.

3. Discipline. Students were put into situations where disciplinary problems were bound to occur. School organization needed to allow for some flexibility of student movement and placement so learning could take place. He also opposed ability grouping as this tended to deprive students from being exposed to the experiences and backgrounds of other students' views. (1969:12-18)

Keepes (1973) studied the learning approaches in the Palo Alto School District and agreed with Glasser's ideas on the mistakes made in the classrooms. He posed the following question:

What made the child so successful and so optimistic prior to entering school? He was successful because he used his brain to solve problems; he was optimistic because he had a lot of fun. When he failed he was not labeled a failure; one way or another he was shown a better way.

Most research on the retention of students indicated that children did not learn more or benefit in their social relationships by being retained. In each of the studies, a number of nonpromoted children did show reasonable growth in achievement during their repeated year. But, to offset this, a much larger percentage actually did worse on achievement tests after a year of repetition than they had done when

tested just before the impact of failure or the subsequent effect of repetition. For many students, the will to learn seemed to be done and, for some, the learning that had previously occurred also seemed to be less than before (Scott, 1969).

Failure implied frustration and the thwarting of the pupil in the achievement of a desired goal. The effects usually were the abandonment of the goal in question or the continued desire to attain that goal with the frustration and pressure of not being able to succeed (Goodlad, 1963). Once identified as a failure, a student found it next to impossible to escape the labeling. It was far easier to alter the image from good to bad than from bad to good. Stigma and humiliation were an integral part of the failure status. Remedial classes often compounded the problems by making the problem more visible. The "failed" students were frequently segregated into special classes, special books, and might be assigned to the least effective teacher (Pink, 1977). In other instances, the child might be labeled as "immature" by a teacher as early as his kindergarten year in school. The child would then be watched to see if he exhibited any possible developmental problems, tested, and then referred to remedial classes or to special education (Bone, 1977). It was quite common that these special classes were actually a teacher convenience inasmuch as it removed a problem student from the regular class for a period of time. This was an advantage for the classroom teacher as it allowed the teacher to move more rapidly through the assigned tasks. It was not a benefit for the child who was sent to the remedial class as they often were not helped to profit from their mistakes, that is, to have the

teacher examine their mistakes and attempt to correct the misunderstandings. Student mistakes were often allowed to accumulate and the students increased their perceptions of themselves as failures (Anderson, 1976).

Many educators held to the belief that schools needed to become more humane in all aspects of school-student relationships. Lindvig (1983) and Hallenbeck (1981) also indicated that students could benefit if schools would develop programs that dealt with affective needs of students and would promote personal as well as academic growth. They contended that pupils must become involved and gain a feeling of worth and relevance to their education. Goodlad (1963) said children should not be left standing apart and should have the recognition of the teachers in developing feelings of self-worth and self-esteem.

Goodlad listed the following reasons for promoting students as an alternative to being failed in their present classroom setting:

1. If the teacher and child have already failed to make the hoped-for progress, the child might just as well move on to another grade and another teacher. (Sometimes, this is stated that the slow-learning child will achieve just as much in the grade ahead as he will by having to repeat the present one.)

2. From the beginning, first grade teachers must deal with a wide range of individual differences. They cannot reduce the range, and so teachers in higher grades must anticipate dealing also with the range as it exists.

3. Grade failure is itself more devastating to the child's adjustment than are his difficulties with the work at hand. Slow learners will have enough problems in school without adding the shame and humiliation of nonpromotion.

4. Since good teaching increases rather than reduces the range of abilities with which a teacher

must deal, retaining a few children at the bottom end is not likely to reduce materially the next teacher's problem of dealing with individual differences. Besides, if each grade retains some children, each grade will carry these into the next year, thus assuring the presence of these slow learners in any case.

5. Chronological age is the best single criterion for determining the placement of a child with other children. Consequently, keeping children of the same age together (therefore promoting them), is the best way to assure appropriate work and play companions for all.

6. Class size and the cost of education are increased when even a small percentage of children is retained.

7. At elementary school levels, where children are called upon to compete regardless of their desire or readiness to do so, educational practices must be adapted to the welfare of the individual, not the child to arbitrary grade standards. Promotion is aligned with such a view. (1966:33-4)

Analysis of the evidence that promotion for most children is preferable to nonpromotion did not solve the problem. Merely promoting the child did not automatically produce learning on the part of the student and social adjustments that were satisfactory to the student and his peers. Careful program modifications were necessary if satisfactory progress was to be made by the student (Dufay, 1966 and Goodlad, 1963).

Other educators who opposed retention drew similar conclusions and developed their own arguments against those authorities who favored retention of students. Elsbree (1967) took issue with five major beliefs of those who favored retention and countered with his own arguments:

1. Retaining students does not help to maintain the standards of the school. Elsbree stated that studies revealed that repetition of grades had no special advantage. Dufay (1966) also found that children who are not promoted do no better than children of like ability who are promoted. Nonpromotion practices did not reduce the range of specific abilities with which the teacher had to cope. The educational gain of the majority of retained students was smaller than that of their matched agemates who were promoted. Some schools with low rates of nonpromotion had higher achievement levels than schools with high rates of nonpromotion. Thomas (1965) reported similar information and added that school achievement levels tended to be higher in all schools that did not fail students on the basis of academic abilities.

2. Retention does not reduce variability and growth rates within grades. Elsbree stated that growth rates varied with the experiences, abilities, and the desires of the individual students. Goodlad (1963) made similar statements and added that the ability ranges within grades would tend to increase as the children became older and had been exposed to other influences outside of the school setting.

3. The threat of nonpromotion did not cause children to work harder. Elsbree said that any learning that took place because of fear was poor learning. He also criticized teachers who taught children by using failure as a threat. Children who were threatened by failure often resigned themselves to failure and became apathetic and hostile toward their teachers, their classmates, and school in general.

4. Slow learners did not catch up by being retained for another year in the same grade. Studies showed that only a small proportion

actually caught up with their peers (Coffield, 1959; Goodlad, 1963; Jarvis, 1966; Koons, 1977).

5. Nonpromotion does not bring about better social adjustment. Elsbree was critical of those who believed that a child would develop better relationships by going through a retention process. He stated that all children are born with differences and these become greater with age, therefore, retaining a child and making him larger and older than his peer group only served to compound the problem. Jarvis (1966) believed that children would develop more normally and naturally if they advanced with their peer group. The normal range of differences within a classroom would necessitate a variety of groupings anyway and retention would not serve a useful purpose. Academically, Jarvis (1966) and Bocks (1977) stated that studies had shown that only 20 percent of the students did better after being retained; 40 percent functioned at approximately the same level as during the previous year; and 40 percent did poorer for a variety of reasons. Koons (1977) was more severe in his usage of data as he said that for every student who might have benefited by being retained, there were two or three who were not helped at all and might have regressed in their performance.

Coffield and Blommers presented the following information from a study conducted on 190 students who had experienced failure after the second grade in school:

1. Failed students only gained approximately six months in educational progress during the repeated year.

2. Failed students gained only one year and three months in educational progress during the two years following their retention.

3. The educational progress of failed pupils was about four to six months less than that of matched promoted pupils.

4. The progress of failed pupils during the two years following failure was not significantly greater than that made by promoted matched agemates during a single year spent in the next higher grade level.

5. The educational progress of seventh grade pupils who experienced failure once was typically on a par with that of matched promoted seventh grade pupils who had spent one year less in school.

6. The educational progress of seventh grade pupils who had experienced failure once was about eight months less than the matched promoted eighth grade pupils who had spent the same number of years in school.

7. The educational progress of seventh grade pupils who had failed once was not affected by the grade in which the failure occurred.

8. The variability of pupil achievement in a school's seventh grade was not affected by the rigidity or leniency of its promotion policy.

9. The general level of achievement of a school's seventh grade class was not significantly affected by the rigidity or leniency of its promotion policy.

10. The percent of overage seventh grade pupils was significantly greater in the schools with rigid promotions. (1959:248-9)

There was little doubt that a pupil who was having serious academic difficulties in one grade was likely to continue having difficulties if he was merely promoted to the next grade. Anderson (1976) suggested that schools should attempt to grade on the basis of the students' attainment of the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that were transmitted to them. This move to a "criterion-referenced" grading system would help to eliminate the continuity of failings

experienced by the bottom 20 percent of the students. All students most certainly would fail certain objectives and succeed on others. This balance between success and failure would help to provide the student with a more realistic set of self-perceptions concerning his skills and abilities.

Schools could also eliminate failing through improved teaching according to Anderson (1976). Alternative instructional methods are based on the belief that a great deal of information could be obtained from the testing instruments. That information could be given to the students in order to help them overcome their errors and misunderstandings. The use of tests in aiding the teaching function of the schools could have at least two benefits. First, more students would be helped to learn. Second, students would see that a single failing did not necessitate the label of failure. Students could see that failing did occur but that it did not need to be permanent or final.

Even with an improvement in the teaching function of the schools, however, some students might fail a grade or a subject. Schools could help those students in several ways. Jones (1981) reported that some schools had developed a program that emphasized retention as a positive approach by a series of in-school programs for students and certified personnel and Bossing (1980) described a transitional or "split-age" procedure of assisting students with academic problems. They could assist them to admit that they had failed with respect to their particular set of goals. Anderson (1976) stated that schools had to remain aware of their dual responsibility to students and to society. Students had the right to quality education, at the same time, society

had the right to know which students were competent and which were not. Disregard of either the public or the students would be considered a disservice to both.

Teachers differed among themselves regarding the relative merits of promotion and nonpromotion. They also worked under differing degrees of pressure regarding the importance of grade standards, and they reacted quite differently to these pressures. The evidence from some research was overwhelming. Promoted slow-learning children achieved at higher levels, were involved less often in aggressive acts toward school and schooling, got along better with their peers, and appeared to have more wholesome feelings of personal worth. It was also noted that upper grade achievement levels were higher in schools that had low nonpromotion rates which was attributed to a lack of pressure and tension on students due to the knowledge that they would be able to achieve at their level. A major area of concern was the factor of tension among the promoted slow learners as some students still had a fear of failure. They expressed worry over their school progress, believed their parents to be similarly concerned, and frequently resorted to cheating as a way of assuring higher achievement marks (Goodlad, 1963). It was obvious that these students would be in need of a tension free school environment and would be able to utilize the services of a school counselor to assist with the elimination of their feelings of insecurity.

The formulation of promotion and retention policies was, in part, necessitated by the inconsistencies of school district curriculum, grading policies, and philosophies. The movement toward individualized

educational programs was also a motivator for the development of these policies. Studies by educators, including Reed (1927), Lindsay (1933), and Goodlad (1959) all referred to a need for consistent promotion policies. Trump (1977) was an advocate and spokesman for the nongraded school and, earlier, Ahmann (1958) had promoted a change in school philosophy to reflect "what was best for the pupil." Policies were developed which reflected an awareness of differences in student abilities and the need for in-depth evaluations of students by school personnel.

Ahmann provided a list of principles that could be used as a basis for a promotion/retention policy:

1. Promotion should be decided on the basis of the individual student.
2. Promotion should be decided on the basis of many factors and should not rest on the assumption that the decision will result in the greatest good for the student.
3. A set of factors should be agreed upon by each teacher and administrator.
4. Criteria for promotion must take into consideration the curriculum offerings and methods of the next grade.
5. It is the duty of the next higher grade to accept the slow learner and to adapt the work to fit their needs.
6. Promotion procedures demand continuous analysis and study of the information contained in pupil cumulative folders. This will allow for program refinements and will minimize guesswork and conjecture (1958:565).

These principles were found in several promotion policies received by the writer of this paper and provided for a more uniform approach to

the dilemma of student retention. Consideration of these factors made teachers and administrators more conscious of the individuality of the student and of the need to provide time and services to the slow learning student. These policies also took into account the special problems of the handicapped students such as the retarded and learning disabled who could not normally conform to the standards of the students in a normal classroom.

Masters (1974) proposed a partial answer to the dilemma of what schools needed to do for students by referring to statements that have been made by many commissions and committees for the past seven decades. The basic goals for American education were:

1. To provide the child with skills in thinking; that is to teach ideas and problem solving strategies, not merely facts.

2. To help the child deal effectively with interpersonal relations in a variety of associations and organizations.

3. To guide the child to achieve self-identity; that is, by filling the child's need for love and self-worth to enable the child to become the best person he is capable of becoming.

Summary

The early elementary school followed a graded plan in which all students were taught from a basic textbook by one teacher. Each student, regardless of ability, was exposed to the same amount of material and had to compete for a grade in his classes and the subsequent promotion to the next grade or retention in the same grade for another year. Retention rates were quite high in the 1850's with individual districts having nonpromotion rates that ranged from 20 to

50 percent (Cauffield, 1956). These rates gradually decreased in ensuing years and the rate had dropped to approximately 6 percent by the 1970's.

Educators did not share a common view towards retention or promotion of slow learning students. The proponents of retaining students cited examples of students who had benefited from retention and used these examples to defend their position on the subject. Russel (1952), Lobdell (1952), Worth (1959), and Stringer (1960) were authorities who believed that retained students did not suffer significant social-personal maladjustments and did not develop unusual negative attitudes toward school. Each of these educators and Scott (1969) agreed that retention was not a guarantee that students' problems would all be solved, but they agreed that retention could be beneficial if the school would provide an individualized program for the students.

Goodlad (1963) and Thomas (1965) listed some other common causes that were used as a basis for student retention. These educators did not condone student retention but they did present argumentation against the practice.

Ahmann (1963) and Glasser (1966) were critical of school standards which did not allow for the differences in students. These writers were also opposed to grading systems which caused students to be placed in a competitive situation. Students would attempt to "please" their teacher in such an atmosphere rather than working on critical thinking projects and other decision-making situations. Teaching and learning approaches needed to be changed and Goodlad (1959) listed some

alternatives to retention. These oppositions to student failure emphasized the need for an awareness and a concern for individual needs and individual differences. Goodlad believed that good teaching was a strong factor in lowering retention rates and in developing a feeling of success in the students.

Promotion policies were developed as a consequence of the inconsistencies of school grading and promotion practices. The development of these policies was based on a set of principles that provided for a more uniform approach to the problem of student retention. These policies reflected an awareness of the differences in the needs and abilities of each student being considered for retention.

Chapter 3 will discuss the procedures to be utilized and followed in this study.

CHAPTER 3

PROCEDURES

The purpose of this study was to investigate the retention practices of Class I elementary schools of Montana. The study also attempted to determine the guidelines and policies that were utilized in retention decisions. Another purpose was to identify those student characteristics that had caused the student to be considered for retention. Biographical and case study forms were also developed to determine effects of retention on students when compared with regularly promoted students in three selected Montana Class I school districts. A retention scale was utilized to assist in the identification of traits leading to nonpromotion along with questionnaires which were completed by school principals, teachers, and parents in order to gain their perceptions of the retention process. Lastly, guidelines for nonpromotion and a proposed retention policy were developed.

The procedures used in this study are organized in this chapter as follows: the first section covers the extent of the review of the related literature and research; the second section deals with the instrumentation and the means of conducting a survey of retention perceptions and practices in the 17 Class I Montana elementary school districts; the third section describes the population to be involved in the utilization of the case study forms, retention scales, and parent check list; the fourth section established the means for developing a

set of retention guidelines and a proposed retention policy; and the final section addressed procedures to be utilized in the analysis of data for each of the preceding elements.

Review of Related Literature and Research

The writer conducted a review of related literature and research pertaining to student retention. The following categories were addressed: (1) a history of elementary school retention practices; (2) criticisms of retention practices and attempts to accommodate individual differences; (3) retained student characteristics; (4) rationale for the nonpromotion of students; and (5) current status and trends of retention practices.

Sources investigated for pertinent information included holdings from Montana State University and interlibrary loan facilities. References listed in the Education Index and ERIC Index for the period of January, 1970 through June, 1981 were examined under the following descriptors: "academic failure," "failure," "holding power," "nonpromotion," and "retention."

Due to an extended time lapse from the examiner's thesis proposal meeting and the thesis defense, it was deemed appropriate to utilize the Education Index to update the review of literature from June, 1981 through February, 1983. Therefore an extensive search of related literature in the Montana State University library was conducted and the Review of Literature Chapter was abridged to include later references.

Survey of Retention Practices

Extent of Survey and Population to be Surveyed. A survey of all Class I elementary school principals in the state of Montana was conducted to ascertain their perceptions of current retention practices and policies. The Montana Education Directory, published by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, was used to identify and locate the schools to be surveyed.

Principal's Questionnaire. The principal's questionnaire (Appendix B) was sent to the elementary principal of each of the schools surveyed and the principals were asked to provide the data requested in the instrument.

The questionnaire requested information on the following items: (1) program options for retained students; (2) principal's perceptions of the relative merits of retention; (3) differences in teacher and principal perceptions as to the relative merits of retention; (4) retention criteria; (5) perceived causes of retention; (6) school or district promotion policies; (7) opinions of the academic success of retained students; (8) opinions as to whether it is usually beneficial to retain students; (9) principals' perceptions of attitudes toward retention; and (10) the socio-economic make-up of the school community and the academic achievement level of the students.

In addition, principals were requested to provide school population data with a breakdown for each grade by sex, the number of students who had been retained in each grade by sex and the ethnic background of each retained student.

The writer considered a number of different styles of questionnaires and survey instruments and finally chose to follow the recommendations for format, procedures, and guidelines suggested by Wiersma (1969:271-88) in developing an instrument which could be utilized to collect data on student retention. The instrument consisted of questions which required descriptive data, questions which allowed the respondents to use check marks to make their selections, and questions which were open-ended. Space was provided, on several of the questions, to allow the respondents to add comments on criteria, causes, program options, and perceptions as they pertained to student retention.

Validity as defined by Kimbel (1978) is the extent to which a measure predicts something important about the object of measurement. Validation of the survey instrument was accomplished in accordance with a statement made by Sax (1968:132) who said, "Content validity is determined by asking a group of experts to rate the extent to which each item on a questionnaire appears to measure some universe of opinion, attitude, or belief." Each question in the survey instrument was reviewed by members of the Montana Northeast Principal's Association who were asked to assess the clarity, appropriateness, and ambiguity of the instrument by completing a three point scale for each question on the instrument.

Reliability as defined by Kimbel (1978) refers to the extent to which a test or other measure performs consistently or the extent to which two measurements of the same things with the same instrument rank these things in the same order. Kimbel also noted that "the most

direct way to determine reliability of any measuring instrument is to measure the same things with it twice and compare the results." For the purpose of this study the writer chose a .60 coefficient of stability to indicate an acceptable level of test-retest reliability as Downie (1970:240) has stated "there is no hard and fast rule that says that any reliability has to be of a certain size before any test or measuring instrument can be useful." The degree of reliability for each item was measured by computing a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient between the two sets of scores for each item. The test-retest method is an accepted method of determining the test stability over a given period of time. It requires administering the same form of the test to the same group with some intervening time interval. The item between the two administrations may be just a few days or several years (Gronlund, 1977:138). The writer of this paper submitted this instrument to the members of the Montana Northeast Principal's Association at a Fall meeting and then resubmitted the instrument after an interval of two weeks. The first submission of the instrument was personally delivered and the second submission was by mail.

Case Study Form. The next procedure in this study was to develop a case study form and to adapt a checking scale instrument for utilization in determining the characteristics of retained students when compared with regularly promoted students. Consent to conduct the study was obtained from the Superintendents of the selected school districts prior to the submission of the case study forms to the teachers and the parents of the retained students. After receiving

consent from the Superintendents, the elementary school principals were also contacted and advised as to the procedures to be followed and case study forms were then provided to each school plus the necessary retention scales. One case study form was then completed by the teacher for each retained student in her room along with a case study form for an equal number of regularly promoted students of the same sex. Letters were also sent to the teachers which provided information as to the purpose and procedures to be followed. This procedure allowed the writer to make a comparison between student characteristics of retained and regularly promoted students pertaining to selected physical and academic classroom categories.

These case study forms requested information on a number of items. General data as to the student's grade and sex and grade in which the student was retained were asked along with questions asking the teacher to indicate whether, in her opinion, retention was beneficial, what the causes of the child's retention were, the student's physical condition, and the student's health condition. A series of ten questions were asked pertaining to some affective and cognitive student characteristics. These questions allowed for a response from one of five scaled value choices. A final question was included which asked the teachers to indicate whether, in their opinion, a student's retention was usually beneficial. This final response was tested for significance by comparing similar responses from parents and principals.

The population involved in this phase of the study was selected from the kindergarten, first, and second grades in three Class I

elementary school systems in Montana. A total of fifty classes were included with an approximate total population of one thousand students. The school systems were selected on the basis of being representative of typical Class I districts in the state of Montana with consideration being given to the numbers of students being retained, the socio-economic make-up of the communities, and the general academic levels of the student populations. Consideration was also given to the number of ethnic students enrolled in the districts as a portion of this study dealt with the numbers of ethnic students being retained in proportion to the non-minority students enrolled in the schools.

Validation of the case study forms was accomplished by following the guidelines recommended by Sax (1968) and by presenting the forms to elementary school teachers in the Fort Peck School, Fort Peck, Montana. In addition to reviewing each item contained in the case study forms, the teachers were asked to assess the appropriateness of the instrument by responding to a series of specific questions. Each question was checked for clarity following the responses from the staff at the Fort Peck School and was retained in the case study form if a minimum of 60 percent of the respondents felt the question was appropriate and clear in structure. The 60 percent level of confidence was based on recommendations made by Sax (1968).

Reliability was determined by utilizing a pre and post testing method (Kimbel:1978). The procedure was to select primary teachers from four Class II elementary schools in northeast Montana: Medicine Lake, Nashua, Poplar, and Scobey. Teachers in these schools were asked to complete a case study form for each retained student in their class

along with a student of the same sex who had been regularly promoted. This allowed for a sample selection of students from areas different than those which would constitute the student populations of the three selected Class I school systems. For the purpose of this study the writer chose a .60 coefficient of stability to indicate an acceptable level of test-retest reliability. This degree of reliability was measured by computing a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient between the two sets of scores (Downie:1970). A copy of the case study form may be found in Appendix F.

Retention Scale. The retention scale utilized in this study is commercially published (H. W. Light: 1977) and can be found in Appendix G. These forms were completed by classroom teachers in conjunction with the case study forms. Each retained student was rated on these scales along with a student of the same sex who had been regularly promoted. The rating scale consisted of a series of nineteen questions which covered a broad spectrum of the student's school experiences. Each question was weighted on a point basis. The writer then attempted to determine if statistically significant differences existed between the attained total scores of the retained students and the regularly promoted students.

The writer was unable to find any information pertaining to validation and reliability of the retention scale. A telephone call was made to the author of the retention scale, Dr. H. Wayne Light, and Dr. Light stated that the intent of the scale was to be an aid in the counseling process for teachers and administrators and as a general guide for a school staff when dealing with retention decisions. He had

drawn the components of the scale from a variety of sources and had utilized current research factors and information as part of his selection criteria and had not established any reliability and validity statistics to the individual questions contained within the scale.

Parent's Check List. The parent's check list (Appendix I) contains identical items to those found on the case study forms which were completed by the classroom teachers. This check list was designed for the purpose of making comparisons between teacher and parent perception of student retention. The items reflected important aspects of retention which were mentioned in current literature. This form was to be completed by the parents of the retained students of the classrooms included in the study. Because the researcher did not initially have access to the students' names, parents' names, and addresses of a majority of the individuals to be involved, a special procedure was followed to collect the data for the parent check list. School principals were asked to contact the parents of retained students to request their cooperation with this portion of the study. Specifically, the parents were asked if they would be willing to talk to researcher on the telephone and answer questions about their child's school retention or if they would prefer to receive the check list in the mail and respond anonymously. They were given the writer's name, occupation, address, and the purpose of this study. They were also assured of complete confidentiality and that no names or other personal information would be released to other parties as a result of this study. Each parent who agreed to cooperate was sent a copy of the

check list. Responses were received by return mail and, in a number of cases, parents were contacted by phone.

Ease of interpretability of the parent's check list was accomplished by submitting the instrument for judgemental analysis to parents in the Glasgow school district whose children are enrolled in the intermediate grades. The parents were asked to assess the degree to which the questions were understandable and able to be completed without confusion and unnecessary effort. The questions were retained if 60 percent of the respondents agreed as to the appropriateness of the questions.

Reliability was established by utilizing parents of retained students in the Glasgow schools. These children were currently enrolled in grades three through six. These parents were generally not involved in the case study procedures of the study for students enrolled in grades K-2. These parents were requested to complete the parent's check list on a pre and post-test basis as recommended by Kimbel (1978) with a two week interval between completion dates. For the purpose of this study the writer chose a .60 coefficient of stability to indicate an acceptable level of test-retest reliability. This degree of reliability was measured by computing a Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient between the two sets of scores (Downie:1970).

Promotion Policy Statement

The promotion policy statement was policy were developed by considering information from the review of related literature and

research as well as data obtained from the surveys and check lists. It is the writer's intent to submit these guidelines and the retention policy to the elementary school principals in the Class I school districts of Montana at a future date. Though the actual implementation of any retention policy requires the official action of the local School Board, the information to be sent to the principals will hopefully provide each school with a common base for the purpose of developing and adopting a policy or operating procedure suitable for their particular school setting. This proposed retention policy statement is contained in Chapter 5.

Analysis of Data

This section states the hypotheses that were tested and describes the treatment of the data obtained from the surveys, retention scales, and check lists.

Statement of Null Hypotheses: The following hypotheses that were tested were based on data contained in the principal's questionnaire and were based on General Questions to Be Answered numbers one through four from that section:

1. Ho: Based on perceptions of building principals, the overall academic achievement level of students was independent of the socio-economic make-up of the community.

2. Ho: There was no statistically significant difference in the proportion of male retentions as compared to female retentions.

3. Ho: There was no statistically significant difference in the proportion of minority students being retained when compared to the proportion of nonminority students being retained.

4. Ho: There was no statistically significant difference in the proportion of male minority students being retained when compared to the proportion of female minority students being retained.

The following hypotheses to be tested were based on an analysis and comparison of data collected from the principal's questionnaire, case study forms, retention scale, and parent's check list.

5. Ho: Teachers' perceptions of students' physical development was independent of whether the students had been retained or regularly promoted.

6. Ho: The perceptions of a retained student's physical development was independent of whether the perception was made by a parent or a teacher.

7. Ho: Teachers' perceptions of students' general health condition was independent of whether the students had been retained or regularly promoted.

8. Ho: The perception of retained students' general health condition was independent of whether the perceptions were made by a parent or a teacher.

9. Ho: Teachers' perceptions of students being happy about going to school were independent of whether the students had been retained or regularly promoted.

10. Ho: The perceptions of retained students being happy about going to school were independent of whether the perceptions were made by parents or teachers.

11. Ho: The contributions to group discussions as perceived by the classroom teacher were independent of whether the students were retained or regularly promoted.

12. Ho: The perceptions of a retained student's contribution to group discussions was independent of whether the perceptions were made by a teacher or a parent.

13. Ho: The enthusiasm for learning as perceived by the classroom teacher was independent of whether the students were retained or regularly promoted.

14. Ho: The perceptions of a retained student's enthusiasm for learning were independent of whether the perceptions were made by a teacher or a parent.

15. Ho: The perceptions of a retained student's emotional adjustment was independent of whether the perceptions were made by a teacher or a parent.

16. Ho: The amount of stress displayed in discussions about school as perceived by the classroom teacher was independent of whether the student had been retained or regularly promoted.

17. Ho: The perceptions of the amount of stress displayed by a retained student was independent of whether the perceptions were made by a classroom teacher or a parent.

18. Ho: The perceptions of the way promoted students react to retained students was independent of whether the perceptions were made by a teacher or a parent.

19. Ho: The perception of the way students get along with each other as perceived by the classroom teacher was independent of whether the students were retained or regularly promoted.

20. Ho: The perception of the way retained students got along with other students was independent of whether the perceptions were made by a parent or a teacher.

21. Ho: The amount of school work completed as perceived by a classroom teacher was independent of whether the student was retained or regularly promoted.

22. Ho: The perceptions of the amount of school work completed by retained students was independent of whether the perceptions were made by a teacher or a parent.

23. Ho: The degree to which students worked up to their ability as perceived by classroom teachers was independent of whether the students were retained or regularly promoted.

24. Ho: The perceptions of the degree to which retained students worked up to their ability was independent of whether the perceptions were made by a parent or a teacher.

25. Ho: A person's opinion as to the benefit of retention to the child was independent of whether the person was a teacher or a parent.

26. Ho: A person's perceptions as to whether retention was usually beneficial to the student was independent of whether the person was a parent, a teacher, or an administrator.

27. Ho: There was no statistically significant difference between scores for retained and regularly promoted students as computed from the Retention Scale completed by the classroom teachers.

Hypothesis one attempted to ascertain whether statistically significant differences existed between building principal's perceptions of the school's socio-economic make-up and their perceived academic achievement level of the students in that school. The chi square statistic was used to test hypothesis one as Downie (1965) noted that the chi square statistic may be used to test the null hypotheses of no significant differences between or among the responses of individuals in two or more groups. Downie also stated that this statistical method was also useful because two or more differences could be evaluated at the same time by the use of contingency tables. The .05 level of significance was considered to be a reasonable level of reducing the possibility of a Type II error. Downie stated that when we wish to make inferences about the population means on the basis of samples, it is the usual procedure to use the .05 or .01 levels of significance. Hypotheses two, three, and four, which pertain to the proportions of male and female retentions, ethnic retentions, and sex of the ethnic retentions, were tested by using the chi square test for the significance of the difference between proportions for independent samples (Ferguson, 1976).

Case Study Forms, Parent's Check List, and Retention Scale

Information obtained in the case study forms and the parent's check list was compared to determine perceptual differences between parents and teachers of retained students. These findings were intended to provide insights into some of the characteristics of retained students and of the perceived advantages and disadvantages of

retention for elementary students. In addition, teachers utilized the case study forms to make comparisons between retained students in their classroom and regularly promoted students. Gay noted:

"Matching is a control technique which is also sometimes used in experimental studies. If a researcher has identified a variable believed to be related to performance on the dependent variable, she or he may control for that variable by pairwise matching of subjects. In other words, for each subject in one group, the researcher finds a subject in the second group with the same or a similar score on the control variable. If a subject in either group does not have a suitable match, the subject is eliminated from the study. Thus, the resulting matched groups are identical or very similar with respect to the identified extraneous variable." (1976:158)

For the purposes of this study, each student that had been retained was matched with a regularly promoted student who was of the same sex at the time of the retention.

The first four questions on the case study form dealt with biographical data. Question five requested teachers to list the major reason for a student's retention. Questions seven and eight and the corresponding hypotheses five, six, seven, and eight dealing with teacher and parental perceptions of students; health and physical development were tested by using the chi square test of independence at the .05 level of significance. Contingency tables were constructed as Ferguson (1976) notes that data may be arranged in the form of contingency tables composed of any number of rows and any number of columns. The expected or theoretical frequencies for each cell was calculated and compared to the actual observed frequencies and a determination was made as to whether or not a significant difference existed. Hypotheses nine through twenty six were also tested by

utilizing the chi square statistic. Data from the case study forms and the parent's check list were also analyzed in contingency tables and tested for significance at the .05 level. Downie (1959) had also indicated that a contingency table was appropriate to determine if the rows and columns were independent of each other.

Hypothesis twenty seven was tested for significance by utilizing a "t test of independence." This hypothesis was developed from the information that was obtained from the retention scale. Generalizations were made from the data obtained from the retention scale and were utilized as an additional source of information of student characteristics contributing to retention. A retention scale was completed for each retained student and a matched promoted student in each of the selected schools in grades K-2.

The title "Retention Scale" as well as the interpretive scored scale at the end of the instrument were removed from the form prior to being completed by the classroom teacher so as not to bias the completion of the instrument.

In an attempt to eliminate errors on the survey instruments, each form returned was hand-checked by the writer for omissions or other errors. Whenever possible, the writer contacted the respondent to obtain clarification for items incorrectly completed. Following the tabulating of the data, the information was transferred to coding sheets at the Computing Center. The data analysis was done by the university computer at Montana State University.

Summary

The purposes of this study were to (1) investigate the retention practices of Class I elementary schools of Montana, (2) to determine guidelines and criteria utilized in retention decisions, (3) to identify student characteristics that caused the student to be retained, (4) to gain teacher, parent, and administrator perceptions of the retention process, and (5) to develop a proposed promotion policy statement.

To accomplish the purposes of this study, the writer reviewed the related literature for the purpose of determining if sources were available which could provide a guide to current trends of retention, student characteristics, and perceived problems of retention. Instrumentation was then developed to determine the retention practices of Class I school districts in Montana and the perceptions of retention among teachers and parents of retained students.

A principal's questionnaire, containing fifteen questions relating to principal perceptions of retention, values of retention, perceived causes of retention, and general data on the school population, was developed and sent to 128 Class I elementary school principals in Montana. Tables were developed to reflect the responses to the questions and four statements of null hypotheses were tested for significant differences.

Case study forms and parent check lists were completed for retained students in kindergarten through grade two. Case study forms were also completed for an equal number of promoted students for purposes of comparison. These forms asked specific questions

pertaining to student characteristics and behavior. Responses were given by completing a check scale format for each question. Eighty two retained students and a matching eighty two promoted students were involved from the three school districts selected for the study. Parent check lists were also sent to the parents of the eighty two retained students for purposes of making comparisons between the perceptions of teachers and the parents of the retained students. Twenty three statements of null hypotheses were developed from these forms and were tested for significance.

The retention scale utilized in the study was a commercially published instrument and consists of nineteen items with eighty possible scaled value responses. The total scaled scores attained by promoted students were compared to scores attained by retained students and tested for statistically significant differences between the two groups of students. The retention scale was used in conjunction with the case study forms and a total of eighty two forms were completed for promoted and retained students.

A retention policy statement was developed by reviewing related literature and the samples of promotion and retention policy statements submitted to the writer by the responding principals. Questions and the responses from the survey instruments also provided a data base for developing a policy statement which included criteria for retention to be considered, procedures to be followed, and parental involvement. The purpose of the instrument was to provide school administrators with a common base for an operating procedure in dealing with the problem of student retention.

Analysis of data was accomplished by displaying responses in descriptive tables. Contingency tables were also developed and tested by utilizing the chi square statistic and the t-test of independence. Each of the twenty seven null hypotheses was tested for statistically significant differences at the .05 level.

The next section of the study will be analysis of data found in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS OF DATA

This chapter deals with the analysis of data based upon the data obtained from the survey instruments. The chapter is organized into the following sections: (1) a description of the instruments utilized in the survey; (2) a compilation of data from the principal's questionnaire; and (3) the statements of null hypotheses with supporting data gained from the instruments utilized in the study.

Instrumentation

Principal's Questionnaire. One hundred twenty eight Class I elementary schools in Montana were initially surveyed. A questionnaire was sent to each elementary school principal requesting general information on the composition of the school's population by grades and sex. Also, several questions were included which pertained to the principal's opinion and perceptions as to the relative merits of student retention. Responses were received from the principals of ninety of the schools surveyed for a return rate of 70 percent. Kerlinger has stated that every effort should be made to obtain a return of 80 percent or more but he also stated that mail returns of 40 to 50 percent were common and the researcher often had to content himself with returns as low as 50 to 60 percent (1965:397). It should

be noted that the writer did send follow-up letters to non-responders in an attempt to get as high a return rate as possible.

Case Study Form. A case study form (see Appendix C) was developed and given to classroom teachers in grades kindergarten through two in three selected school districts. These forms were completed for each retained student that was currently enrolled in those grades. The form asked specific questions pertaining to affective and cognitive student characteristics. Teachers gave their responses to the questions by completing a check scale format for each of the questions on the form. A total of eighty two case study forms were completed by the teachers from the three selected school districts for retained students who were enrolled in grades K-2.

In addition to the case study forms which were completed by classroom teachers for retained students, a case study form was also completed for an equal number of regularly promoted students. This was for the purpose of making comparisons between retained and regularly promoted student characteristics. The promoted students that were selected for comparative purposes were selected by the classroom teachers with the only controlled variable being that the selected students were of the same sex as the retained students in their classrooms.

Retention Scale. A retention scale was utilized in conjunction with the case study forms. This scale was a modified version of the commercial instrument developed by H. W. Light. This instrument contained nineteen categories with a total of eighty possible choices each of which was given a scaled value. Responses were totaled for

each of the retained and regularly promoted students and the scale values were utilized as an additional guideline in making student comparisons.

Parent Check List. The parent check list is an instrument which contains the same items as the case study forms which were completed by the classroom teachers. This form was designed for the purpose of allowing the writer to make comparisons between teacher perceptions and parent perceptions of various student characteristics possibly contributing to a retention decision. Items on the parent check list allowed for parental responses with a scaled value similar to the case study forms. Check lists were provided to the parents of the eighty two retained students identified earlier and sixty nine parents completed and returned the forms for a return rate of 84 percent.

It should be noted that some questions contained in the case study forms and the parent's check lists pertaining to the perception of retained students may have been more clearly stated in reference to the comparisons asked for and, therefore, the conclusions based on related data should be considered in this light. However, this question of misinterpretation did not surface during the validation of the instrument.

Data Tabulated

Principal's Questionnaire. The principal's questionnaire contained a total of fifteen questions and primarily requested information on the school population. Questions one, two, and eleven

through fifteen are tabulated in the following pages with a narrative describing the data contained in the instrument.

The first question requested the number of years each principal had been employed as a school administrator. The eighty eight principals that responded had a cumulative total of 1231 years of experience for an overall average of nearly fourteen years of experience as a school administrator. The range of experience varied from a low of one year of experience (one principal) to a high of thirty years of experience (one principal). Table 1 reflects the data obtained.

Table 1. Years of Experience.

Number Responding	Total Years of Experience	Average Experience
88	1231	13.89

The second item on the questionnaire considered whether or not any program options were available for those students that were being considered for possible retention. Of the eighty eight responses, eighty three indicated that some program options were either available or were considered for those students thought to be in need of retention and five respondents indicated that no other program options were available or considered. The program options and the number of responses to the different options are listed in Table 2. Some respondents indicated that more than one option was available or considered within their school which accounted for the total of 193 options from the eighty eight responses. The eight responses to a program option not listed in the table were as follows: six for a

trial assignment in the next grade with a review of progress early in the year and two for promotion to the next grade accompanied by a transfer to another teacher and another school for the following school term.

Question number eleven inquired as to the three most common causes of student retention based on principals' experiences. This question allowed for responses to be selected from twelve specific choices. The purpose of this question was to provide the writer with a view to the opinions and perceptions of experienced school administrators as to the most common causes of student retention. Table 3 lists the categories and the responses to each item.

Table 2. Program Options Instead of Retention.

Options	N=193	Responses	Percent
ESEA Title I		51	26.4
Resource Room/Special Ed.		82	42.4
Reassignment to New Teacher		52	26.9
(Other)			
Trial Promotion		6	3.1
Assignment to New School		2	1.0

As noted in the table, the most common factor cited as a reason for student retention was immaturity with 94.3 percent of the respondents choosing that category. This was followed closely by the category of low achievement with 82.9 percent. The writer did not attempt to assign a specific definition or to differentiate between the two major categories.

Table 3. Retention Causes

Retention Causes	N=88	Number of Responses	Percent
Immaturity		83	94.3
Low Achievement		73	82.9
Low Ability Level		26	29.5
Poor School Attendance		26	29.5
Emotional Problems		16	18.1
Poor Attitude		16	18.1
Student Laziness		5	5.6
Delinquency		2	2.2
Poor Peer Relations		0	0.0
Retardation		0	0.0
Other		0	0.0

Question number twelve asked the principals to express an opinion as to what degree the retained students normally achieved academic success and "caught up" with their peer group. Table 4 reflects the principal responses to that question.

Table 4. Do Retained Students Achieve Academic Success

Responses	Number	Percent
Always	0	0.0
Usually	33	37.9
Sometimes	44	50.5
Very Seldom	10	11.4
Never	0	0.0

On the basis of the responses, the writer concluded that principals had a positive perception of the students' ability to achieve academic success following retention. Seventy seven of the eighty seven respondents which represented 88.5 percent of the responses indicated that students would be able to achieve some degree

of academic improvement following a retention. Only 11.4 percent indicated that they felt students very seldom achieved academic success.

Question number thirteen asked the principals if, in their opinion, retention of a student was beneficial and worth the work and effort. Table 5 reflects their responses to this question.

The seventy four positive responses which represented 86 percent of the replies seemed to indicate a perception that retention may have enough positive values to make the work and effort worthwhile by school administrators in terms of ultimate benefit to elementary students.

Table 5. Do Principals Feel Retention Is Worth the Work and Effort

Responses	Yes	Percent	No	Percent
86	74	86	12	14

Question number fourteen asked the principals to indicate which was the one most common parental perception and attitude toward the retention of their child. The respondents were to select from four choices which best described parental reactions to retention. Table 6 reflects their responses.

Table 6. Parental Perception and Attitude to Retention

Responses	N=87	Number	Percent
Generally Agree		72	82.7
Disagree		12	13.7
Don't Really Care		2	2.2
Absolutely Refuse		1	1.1

On the basis of the above responses, the writer assumed that most parents did support the retention of their child as was indicated by the 82.7 percent approval ratio. Only one principal indicated that he had experienced an absolute rejection of a retention recommendation by the child's parents which seemed to indicate that most parents were receptive to a discussion about their child's welfare and were cooperative when the decision was finally made. The writer was unable to determine if the 13.7 percent of parents who did not agree with a retention decision made their decision on the basis of facts provided by school officials or other authorities or if a reconsideration was made at a later date. The writer was also not aware of the particular circumstances or student characteristics which undoubtedly were factors in the parents' disagreement.

Question number fifteen asked the principals to indicate whether their school or school district had a promotion/retention policy statement. Of the eighty seven principals who responded, fifty two schools indicated that a policy or policy statement was followed by the schools in their district. This represented 59.7 percent of the schools that responded. The remaining thirty five schools, or 40.3 percent, indicated that no policy was available from their district. These schools did not indicate what procedure was followed when a student was to be retained or what criteria or student characteristics were evaluated as a part of the process. Table 7 shows the responses to this question.

Statements of Null Hypotheses. This section deals with the statements of null hypotheses which were developed based on the

questions and data contained in the principal's questionnaire, the case study form, the parent check list, and the retention scale. Each hypothesis was subjected to a statistical analysis. Hypotheses one through twenty six were tested by developing contingency tables and utilizing the chi square statistic at the .05 level of significance. Williams indicated that the chi square statistic can be utilized as it is a nonparametric test which compares or contrasts observed factors or conditions with theoretical or alternate sets of frequencies (1979:106). Hypothesis twenty seven was tested by utilizing the t-test of independence at the .05 level of significance. Williams states the t-test is a statistical model that tests the differences or variations between the means of a population (1979:77). In developing the contingency tables, the writer exercised judgement and collapsed a number of cells where observed frequencies of five or less occurred as recommended by Ferguson (1976:201). In those cases where cells were collapsed, the collapsed cell frequencies will be listed, marked with an asterisk, and transferred to another cell of the contingency table. The increased frequency value of a cell will be listed in brackets next to the actual observed frequency.

Table 7. School Policy Statement

Responses	Have A Policy	Percent	Do Not Have A Policy	Percent
87	52	59.7	35	40.3

Null Hypothesis 1 - Based on perceptions of building principals, the overall academic achievement level of students was independent of the socio-economic make-up of the community.

Null hypothesis 1 utilized the data contained in questions three and four of the principal's questionnaire. Question three requested the elementary principals to express an opinion as to the socio-economic make-up of their school community. Question four requested information as to the overall academic achievement level of the students based on standardized test scores and class performance. The data from those questions are displayed in Table 8 and Table 9.

Table 8. School Economic Status

Responses	N=87	Number	Percent
Low Socio-Economic Area (Income Below \$10,000)		21	24.1
Middle Socio-Economic Area (Income From \$10,000 to \$30,000)		57	65.5
Upper Socio-Economic Area (Over \$30,000)		10	11.4

Table 9. School Academic Performance

Responses	N=87	Number	Percent
Low Academic Achievement (Average Scores Below 40%)		1	1.1
Average Academic Achievement (Average Scores Between 40%-60%)		31	35.2
Above Average Achievement (Average Scores Above 60%)		56	63.6
$df=2$ Table value of χ^2 at .05=5.991 Calculated value of χ^2 =18.536			

The information contained in questions three and four was placed in a contingency table and tested by utilizing the chi square

statistic. Since the computed value was greater than the Table value cited in Ferguson, the hypothesis of no statistically significant difference was rejected.

The writer concluded that, on the basis of the rejection of the null hypothesis, school achievement is at least somewhat dependent upon the type of socio-economic environment of the school. The majority of principals working in schools of middle or upper class environments reported a greater academic achievement level than in a lower socio-economic setting. It was not within the scope or intent of this paper to attempt to identify specific school or community characteristics other than the principals' own opinions and perceptions as to what constituted an upper or middle class level of economic status.

It should be noted that the school districts selected for inclusion in the study fell within the middle socio-economic area. Likewise, the schools selected for further inclusion were drawn from districts with perceived average academic achievement.

Null Hypothesis 2 - There was no statistically significant difference in the proportion of male retentions as compared to female retentions. This hypothesis utilized the student enrollment data from questions seven and eight of the principal's questionnaire and is displayed in Table 10 and Table 11.

From the data depicted in Tables 10 and 11, the writer rejected the hypothesis that there was no statistically significant difference in the proportion of male retentions as compared to female retentions. The chi square statistic was applied to the enrollment and retention figures at each grade level and the hypothesis would only have been

retained at the kindergarten and sixth grade levels. At all other levels, including the total enrollment figures, the hypothesis was rejected. The accumulated data showed that boys have been retained at higher disproportionate rates. The writer also attempted to allow for a bias by constructing Table 11 which reflected school enrollments without the minority students included but the null hypothesis was rejected in the same grade levels as in Table 10 which reflected the enrollment for all grades including minority students.

Table 10. Chi Square Comparison of Male and Female Retention-Total Enrollment

Grade	Total Boys	Retained Boys	Total Girls	Retained Girls	χ^2 .05	Calculated Value
Kindergarten	2086	95	1822	63	3.841	2.737
First Grade	2213	160	1984	85	3.841	15.982
Second Grade	2051	113	1888	58	3.841	13.483
Third Grade	1883	88	1828	53	3.841	7.508
Fourth Grade	1927	69	1863	38	3.841	7.646
Fifth Grade	1979	84	1813	44	3.841	9.035
Sixth Grade	<u>2060</u>	<u>53</u>	<u>1981</u>	<u>38</u>	<u>3.841</u>	<u>1.679</u>
Totals	14,199	662	13,179	379	3.841	59.152

Null Hypothesis 3 - There was no statistically significant difference in the proportion of minority students being retained when compared to the proportion of nonminority students being retained.

The writer utilized the population data from the principal's questionnaire to determine if there was a statistically significant difference in the proportion of minority students being retained when

compared to the proportion of nonminority students. Table 12 shows the population data.

Table 11. Chi Square Comparison of Male and Female Retentions-No Minorities

Grade	Total Boys	Retained Boys	Total Girls	Retained Girls	χ^2 .05	Calculated Value
Kindergarten	1953	86	1717	57	3.841	2.583
First Grade	2072	138	1854	65	3.841	19.216
Second Grade	1948	94	1778	50	3.841	10.529
Third Grade	1761	77	1750	47	3.841	6.843
Fourth Grade	1811	59	1748	33	3.841	6.096
Fifth Grade	1859	75	1710	38	3.841	8.958
Sixth Grade	<u>1943</u>	<u>43</u>	<u>1874</u>	<u>33</u>	<u>3.841</u>	<u>.781</u>
Totals	13,347	572	12,431	323	3.841	75.456

Table 12. Nonminority and Minority Retentions

Nonminority Population	Retained Students	Minority Population	Retained Students	χ^2 .05	Calculated Value
25,778	895	1600	146	3.841	114.98

The calculated chi square value of 114.98 exceeded the Table values of 3.841 and the writer therefore rejected the null hypothesis of no significant difference. The writer was able to deduct from the data contained in Table 12 that statistically significant differences existed in the number of minority students being retained. No deduction was made by the writer as to the causes for this difference in retention proportions.

Null Hypothesis 4 - There was no statistically significant difference in the proportion of male minority students being retained when compared to the proportion of female minority students being retained.

Population data from the principal's questionnaire was used to make a determination as to whether or not male minority students were being retained at a statistically higher proportion than female minority students. Table 13 shows the data utilized to test this hypothesis.

Table 13. Minority Population and Number of Retained Students

Male Minority Students	Retained Students	Female Minority Students	Retained Students	χ^2 .05	Calculated Value
852	90	748	56	3.841	3.463

Since the calculated value of 3.463 did not exceed the table value of 3.841 the null hypothesis was accepted.

Hypotheses five through twenty seven were based on questions and data obtained from the case study forms, the parent's check lists, and the retention scales. Eighty two promoted students and eight two retained students are represented in the case study forms and sixty nine parent check lists were returned. The following table reflects the grade levels and sex of the students involved in the study.

Question number five on the case study form (retained students) asks the teacher to cite the major reason the child was retained in a previous grade. The purpose of the question was to give the writer

further information as to the perceptions teachers had as to retention causes. Table 14 lists the categories and the responses to each item.

The writer also asked parents the same question in an attempt to determine parental perceptions as to the reason for their child's retention. This also allowed the writer to make comparisons with principal, teacher and parental perceptions of the reasons for a student's retention. Table 16 lists the responses to this question by the parents of retained children.

Table 14. Student Forms Returned

Source	Grade	Number	Male	Female
Case Study Forms	K	16	8	8
N=82	1	31	20	11
(Promoted Students)	2	35	21	14
Case Study Forms	K	16	8	8
N=82	1	31	20	11
(Retained Students)	2	35	21	14
Parent Check Lists	K	13	7	6
N=69	1	25	19	6
(Retained Students)	2	31	19	12

Based on the responses to the question of principal, teacher, and parental perceptions of the causes for student retention, the writer concluded that the greatest single factor for student retention was immaturity. Principals provided the highest percentage response, 94 percent, to this factor, parents were at 65 percent, and teacher

perception followed closely with 60 percent indicating that immaturity was the major factor. Low achievement was the second most common factor among all three responding groups.

Table 15. Teacher Perceptions of Retention Causes

Retention Causes	N=90	Number of Responses	Percent
Immaturity		54	60.0
Low Achievement		15	16.6
Laziness		9	10.0
Low Ability Level		4	4.4
Health Problems		3	3.3
Poor Peer Relations		2	2.2
Emotional Problems		2	2.2
Poor Attitude		1	1.1
Poor School Attendance		0	0.0
Other		0	0.0

Table 16. Parental Perceptions of Retention Causes

Retention Causes	N=63	Number of Responses	Percent
Immaturity		41	65.0
Low Class Achievement		8	12.6
Health Problems		4	6.3
Low Ability Level		4	6.3
Not Working to Ability		4	6.3
Emotional Problems		2	3.1

Null Hypothesis 5 - Teachers' perception of students' physical development was independent of whether the students had been retained or regularly promoted.

This hypothesis was based on information provided by classroom teachers. A case study form was completed for each retained student in a classroom and another form was also completed for a regularly

promoted student so that comparisons could be made by the writer.

Table 17 displays the data contained in the forms.

Table 17. Chi Square Analysis of Teacher Perceptions of Students' Physical Development

Student Category	Above Average	Per-cent	Average	Per-Cent	Below Average	Per-cent
Retained N=70	54	77.0	15	21.4	1	1.4
Promoted	18	20.9	60	73.1	4	1.8
df=2 Table value of χ^2 at .05=5.991 Calculated value of χ^2 =44.799						

The computed value was 44.799 which exceeded the Table values and therefore the null hypothesis of no significant difference was rejected. The writer made the assumption that retained students' physical development is significant when they are compared to their present peer group due to the extra year of growth and maturity the retained students have had. The teachers' responses of 77 percent of the retained students being above average in physical development seemed to strongly indicate that as a factor in student relationships.

Null Hypothesis 6 - The perceptions of a retained student's physical development was independent of whether the perception was made by parent or a teacher.

The data for hypothesis 6 was obtained by making a comparison between teacher perceptions of a student's physical development and the parental perceptions of their children's physical development. Table 18 displays the data contained in the instruments.

Table 18. Teacher and Parental Perceptions of Retained Students' Physical Characteristics

Student Category	Above Average	Per-cent	Average	Per-Cent	Below Average	Per-cent
Teachers of Retained Students N=70	54	77.0	15	21.4	1	1.4
Parents of Retained Students N=69	9	13.0	55	79.7	5	7.2

df=2 Table value of χ^2 at .05=5.991 Calculated value of χ^2 =57.662

The computed value of 57.662 was higher than the Table value and therefore the writer rejected the hypothesis that no statistically significant difference exists between the perceptions of teachers and parents of retained students regarding physical development. The writer concluded that parents may be somewhat more conservative in terms of equating their child's physical development and they may be somewhat limited in making comparisons or judgements based on numbers of other children in the family or in their neighborhood. Teachers may have more of a scope in their observations due to the greater numbers of students in the building and in their classrooms.

Null Hypothesis 7 - Teachers' perceptions of students' general health condition was independent of whether the students had been retained or regularly promoted.

The data for hypothesis 7 was obtained by comparing teacher perceptions of retained and regularly promoted students' health

conditions. Case study forms were completed for promoted and retained students so that the writer would be able to make comparisons. Table 19 shows the data contained in the forms provided by the teachers.

Table 19. Chi Square Analysis of Teacher Perceptions of Students' Health Condition

Student Category	Above Average	Per-cent	Average	Per-Cent	Below Average	Per-cent
Retained N=82	10	12.1	63	76.8	9	10.9
Promoted N=82	20	24.3	60	73.1	2	2.4
df=2 Table value of χ^2 at .05=5.991 Calculated value of χ^2 =7.814						

The calculated value of 7.814 was greater than the Table value of 5.991 and therefore the writer rejected the null hypothesis that no statistically significant difference existed between teacher perceptions of retained and promoted students' health conditions.

Null Hypothesis 8 - The perception of retained students' general health condition was independent of whether the perception was made by a parent or a teacher.

The data for hypothesis 8 was obtained by comparing parental and teacher perceptions of students' general health condition. This data was contained in the case study forms and the parent's check lists. Table 20 shows the data contained on those forms.

The calculated chi square value of 9.129 exceeded the Table value of 5.991 and therefore the writer rejected the hypothesis of no

statistically significance difference between teacher and parental perceptions of retained students' health condition.

Table 20. Chi Square Analysis of Teacher and Parental Perceptions of Retained Students' Health Condition

Student Category	Above Average	Per-cent	Average	Per-Cent	Below Average	Per-cent
Teachers of Retained Students N=82	10	12.1	63	76.8	9	10.9
Parents of Retained Students N=69	18	26.0	50	72.4	1	1.4
df=2 Table value of χ^2 at .05=5.991 Calculated value of χ^2 =9.129						

Null Hypothesis 9 - Teachers' perceptions of students being happy about going to school were independent of whether the students had been retained or regularly promoted.

The information used for hypothesis 9 was obtained by comparing teacher perceptions of whether students were happy about coming to school regardless of whether they had been retained or regularly promoted. Case study forms were filled out by teachers for retained students and for matching promoted students in the same grades. Table 21 shows the data obtained.

The calculated value of the chi square statistic was greater than the Table value, therefore the hypothesis of no statistically significant difference was rejected.

Table 21. Teachers' Perceptions of Students Being Happy About Going to School

Categories	N=82	Retained Students	Percent	Promoted Students	Percent
Never Happy		13	15.8	0	0.0
Seldom Happy		64	78.0	0	0.0
Sometimes Happy		5	6.0	8	9.7
Often Happy		0	0.0	48	58.5
Always Happy		0	0.0	26	31.7
df=4 Table value of χ^2 at .05=9.488 Calculated value of χ^2 =152.69					

Null Hypothesis 10 - The perceptions of retained students being happy about going to school were independent of whether the perceptions were made by parents or teachers.

The data for hypothesis ten was obtained from the responses of the teachers of the retained students and the parents of the retained students. Case study forms and the parent's check lists were the instruments utilized in gathering the information. Table 22 displays the informations received from the parents and the teachers.

Since the calculated value of the chi square statistic was greater than the Table value, the hypothesis of no statistically significant difference was rejected.

Null Hypothesis 11 - The contributions to group discussions as perceived by the classroom teacher were independent of whether the students were retained or regularly promoted.

The data for hypothesis 11 was obtained by utilizing case study forms for both retained and matched regularly promoted students. The

purpose was to determine if teacher perceptions of student contributions to group discussions was independent of whether the students had been retained or if they had been regularly promoted.

Table 23 shows the tabulated data.

Table 22. Chi Square Analysis of Teacher and Parent Perceptions of Retained Students Being Happy About Going to School

Categories	Teachers of Retained Students N=82	Percent	Parents of Retained Students N=69	Percent
Never Happy	13	15.8	1	1.4
Seldom Happy	64	78.0	0	0.0
Sometimes Happy	5	6.0	10	14.4
Often Happy	0	0.0	24	34.7
Always Happy	0	0.0	34	49.2
df=4 Table value of χ^2 at .05=9.488 Calculated value of χ^2 =133.82				

Table 23. Teacher Perceptions of Students' Contributions to Group Discussions

Categories	N=82	Retained Students	Percent	Promoted Students	Percent
Never Contributes		0	0.0	0	0.0
Seldom Contributes		1*	1.2	0	0.0
Sometimes Contributes		18(19)	23.1	14	17.0
Often Contributes		46	56.0	44	53.6
Always Contributes		17	20.7	24	29.2
df=2 Table value of χ^2 at .05=5.991 Calculated value of χ^2 =2.319					

The calculated value of the chi square statistic did not exceed the Table value, therefore the hypothesis of no statistically significant difference was accepted. The writer could conclude from the data in Table 23 that both retained and regularly promoted students made regular class contributions and participated in other class and group projects.

Null Hypothesis 12 - The perceptions of a retained student's contribution to group discussions was independent of whether the perceptions were made by a parent or a teacher.

The data for hypothesis 12 was obtained by analyzing the responses of the teachers of retained students and the parents of retained students. Case study forms and parent's check lists were the instruments utilized in gathering the data. Table 24 displays the data gathered from those forms.

Table 24. Chi Square Analysis of Teacher and Parent Perceptions of Retained Students' Contributions to Group Discussions.

Categories	Teachers of Retained Students N=82	Percent	Parents of Retained Students N=69	Percent
Never Contributes	0	0.0	0	0.0
Seldom Contributes	1	1.2	4	5.7
Sometimes Contributes	18	21.9	25	36.2
Often Contributes	46	56.0	35	50.7
Always Contributes	17	20.7	5	7.2
df=3 Table value of χ^2 at .05=7.815 Calculated value of χ^2 =9.933				

Since the calculated value of the chi square statistic was greater than the Table value, the hypothesis of no statistically significant difference was rejected.

Null Hypothesis 13 - The enthusiasm for learning as perceived by the classroom teacher was independent of whether the students were retained or regularly promoted.

The data for hypothesis 13 was obtained from data contained in the case study forms for the retained and regularly promoted students. The purpose was to determine if teacher perceptions of students' enthusiasm for learning was independent of whether the student had been retained or regularly promoted. Table 25 shows the data from the case study forms.

Since the calculated value of the chi square statistic did exceed the Table value, the hypothesis of no statistically significant difference was rejected.

Table 25. Teacher Perceptions of Students' Enthusiasm for Learning

Categories	N=82	Retained Students	Percent	Promoted Students	Percent
Never enthusiastic		0	0.0	0	0.0
Seldom enthusiastic		10	12.1	0	0.0
Sometimes enthusiastic		22	26.8	20	24.3
Often enthusiastic		42	51.2	40	48.7
Always enthusiastic		8	9.7	23	28.0
df=3 Table value of χ^2 at .05=7.815 Calculated value of χ^2 =17.39					

Null Hypothesis 14 - The perceptions of a retained student's enthusiasm for learning were independent of whether the perceptions were made by a teacher or a parent.

The data for testing this hypothesis was obtained by gathering the data contained in the case study forms for retained students and the parent's check lists. Table 26 displays the data gathered from those forms.

Because of the calculated value of the chi square statistic was greater than the Table value, the hypothesis of no statistically significant difference was rejected.

Null Hypothesis 15 - The perceptions of retained students' emotional adjustment were independent of whether the perceptions were made by a parent or a teacher.

The data used to test this hypothesis was obtained by comparing the responses of teachers of retained students and the responses of parents of retained students. Table 27 reflects the responses from the teachers and parents.

Since the calculated value of the chi square statistic was less than the Table value, the hypothesis of no statistically significant difference was retained. The writer concluded that on the basis of the data provided by both teachers and parents of retained students, students do not have any significant emotional problems in school as a result of the retention.

Null Hypothesis 16 - The amount of stress displayed in discussions about school as perceived by the classroom teacher was independent of whether the students had been retained or regularly promoted.

Table 26. Chi Square Analysis of Teacher and Parent Perceptions of Retained Students' Enthusiasm for Learning

Categories	Teachers of Retained Students N=82	Percent	Parents of Retained Students N=69	Percent
Never Enthusiastic	0	0.0	0	0.0
Seldom Enthusiastic	10	12.1	5	7.2
Sometimes Enthusiastic	22	26.8	11	15.9
Often Enthusiastic	42	51.2	34	49.2
Always Enthusiastic	8	9.7	19	27.5
df=3 Table value of χ^2 at .05=7.815 Calculated value of χ^2 =9.608				

Table 27. Chi Square Analysis of Teacher and Parent Perceptions of Retained Students' Emotional Adjustment

Categories	Teachers of Retained Students N=82	Percent	Parents of Retained Students N=69	Percent
Very Poor	0	0.0	0	0.0
Poor	8	9.7	3	4.3
Average	24	28.2	14	20.2
Good	25	30.4	24	34.7
Very Good	23	28.0	28	40.5
df=3 Table value of χ^2 at .05=7.815 Calculated value of χ^2 =4.628				

The purpose of this hypothesis was to ascertain whether retained or regularly promoted students exhibited a significant amount of stress in their discussions about school. Data was collected from the

classroom teachers on the case study forms and is reflected in Table 28.

Table 28. Teacher Perceptions of Students' Stress in School Discussions

Categories	N=82	Retained Students	Percent	Promoted Students	Percent
Never		0	0.0	18	21.9
Seldom		1	1.2	60	71.9
Often		20	24.3	3	3.6
Very Often		45	54.8	1	1.2
Always		16	19.5	0	0.0
df=4 Table value of χ^2 at .05=9.488 Calculated value of χ^2 =146.71					

Because the calculated value of the chi square statistic was greater than the Table value, the hypothesis of no statistically significant difference was rejected. It appeared to the writer that retained students definitely exhibit more stress than their regularly promoted classmates as perceived by their classroom teachers. The total of 73 percent of retained students that exhibit stress very often or always should be of concern to all parties concerned.

Null Hypothesis 17 - The perceptions of the amount of stress displayed by a retained student was independent of whether the perceptions were made by a classroom teacher or a parent.

The information for this hypothesis was provided by teachers and parents of retained children for the purpose of determining whether there were differences in the perceptions of stress. The data provided

by the case study forms and the parent's check list is displayed in Table 29.

Table 29. Chi Square Analysis of Teacher and Parent Perceptions of Stress Displayed by Retained Students

Categories	Teachers of Retained Students N=82	Percent	Parents of Retained Students N=69	Percent
Never	0	0.0	21	30.4
Seldom	1	1.2	38	55.0
Often	20	24.3	9	13.0
Very Often	45	54.8	0	0.0
Always	16	19.5	1	1.2
df=4 Table value of χ^2 at .05=9.488 Calculated value of χ^2 =118.26				

Because the calculated value of the chi square statistic was greater than the Table value, the hypothesis of no statistically significant difference was rejected. It was the opinion of the writer that, based on the data, there is a wide discrepancy in the perceptions of teachers and parents in the amount of stress being displayed by the retained students in school. Teachers perceived 73 percent of the students displaying stress very often or always while 85 percent of the parents perceived stress as being never to seldom.

Null Hypothesis 18 - The perceptions of the way promoted students reacted to retained students was independent of whether the perceptions were made by a teacher or a parent.

The purpose of this hypothesis was to compare teacher and parent perceptions of the way regularly promoted students and retained students reacted to each other. Data from the case study forms and the parent's check lists is listed in Table 30.

Table 30. Chi Square Analysis of Teacher and Parent Perceptions of the Way Promoted Students React to Retained Students

Categories	Teachers of Retained Students N=82	Percent	Parents of Retained Students N=69	Percent
Very poor	10	12.1	1	1.4
Poor	54	65.8	0	0.0
Good	14	17.0	29	42.0
Very Good	3	3.6	26	37.6
Excellent	1	1.2	13	18.8
df=4 Table value of χ^2 at .05=9.488 Calculated value of χ^2 =94.70				

Because the calculated value of the chi square statistic was greater than the Table values, the hypothesis of no statistically significant difference was rejected. Only 17 percent of the teachers of retained students felt that student reaction was in the good category as opposed to 42 percent of the parents. It was also noted that almost 78 percent of the teachers felt that the promoted students reacted in a poor or very poor way to the retained students while only 1.4 percent of the parents had the same perceptions.

Null hypothesis 19 - The perception of the way students get along with each other as perceived by the classroom teacher was independent of whether the students were retained or regularly promoted.

The purpose of this hypothesis was to gain an additional perception of the interaction between retained and promoted students. Classroom teachers completed case study forms for retained and promoted students and the data is tabulated and displayed in Table 31.

Table 31. Teacher Perceptions of How Retained and Promoted Students Get Along

Categories	N=82	Retained Students	Percent	Promoted Students	Percent
Very Poor		0	0.0	0	0.0
Poor		0	0.0	0	0.0
Good		26	31.7	3	3.6
Very Good		32	39.0	25	30.4
Excellent		24	29.2	37	45.1
df=2 Table value of χ^2 at .05=5.991 Calculated value of χ^2 =20.17					

Because the calculated value of the chi square statistic exceeded the Table value, the hypothesis of no statistically significant difference was rejected. The data indicates that the promoted students had a higher percent in the excellent category and a considerably smaller percent in the good category which would seem to show that the promoted students got along better than the retained students.

Null Hypothesis 20 - The perception of the way retained students got along with other students was independent of whether the perceptions were made by a teacher or a parent.

This hypothesis was designed to measure the differences in the perceptions of parents and teachers of the way retained students got along with other students. Data was tabulated from the case study forms for the retained students and from the parent's check list and is listed in Table 32.

Table 32. Chi Square Analysis of Teacher and Parent Perceptions of the Way Retained Students Get Along with Other Students

Categories	Teachers of Retained Students N=82	Percent	Parents of Retained Students N=69	Percent
Very Poor	0	0.0	0	0.0
Poor	0	0.0	4	5.7
Good	26	31.7	26	37.6
Very Good	32	39.0	28	40.5
Excellent	24	29.2	11	15.9
df=3 Table value of χ^2 at .05=7.815 Calculated value of χ^2 =8.035				

Because the calculated value of the chi square statistic was greater than the Table value, the hypothesis of no statistically significant difference was rejected.

Null Hypothesis 21 - The amount of school work completed as perceived by a classroom teacher was independent of whether the student was retained or regularly promoted.

The intent of this hypothesis was to determine if teacher perceptions of completed school work was independent of whether the students were retained or if they had been regularly promoted. Case study forms were utilized for both groups and the data is displayed in Table 33.

Table 33. Teacher Perceptions of Work Completed by Retained and Promoted Students

Categories	N=82	Retained Students	Percent	Promoted Students	Percent
Never on Time		0	0.0	1*	
Seldom on Time		3	3.6	5(6)	7.3
Sometimes on Time		32	39.0	10	12.1
Usually on Time		36	43.9	38	46.3
Always on Time		10	12.1	29	35.3
df=3 Table value of χ^2 at .05=7.815 Calculated value of χ^2 =22.60					

Because the calculated value of the chi square statistic was greater than the Table value, the hypothesis of no statistically significant difference was rejected. The writer noted by an examination of the data that promoted students completed a higher percentage of their work. The writer did not attempt to make any inferences as to the accuracy or neatness of the work.

Null Hypothesis 22 - The perceptions of the amount of school work completed by retained students was independent of whether the perceptions were made by a teacher or a parent.

Data was obtained from the case study forms for the retained students and from the parent's check list in an attempt to determine if perceptions varied between teachers and parents in the amount of school work being completed by the retained students. Table 34 lists their responses.

Table 34. Chi Square Analysis of Teacher and Parent Perceptions of the Amount of School Work

Categories	Teachers of Retained Students N=82	Percent	Parents of Retained Students N=69	Percent
Never on Time	0	0.0	0	0.0
Seldom on Time	3	3.6	4	5.7
Sometimes on Time	32	39.0	11	15.9
Usually on Time	36	43.9	44	63.7
Always on Time	10	12.1	10	14.4
df=3 Table value of χ^2 at .05=7.815 Calculated value of χ^2 =10.90				

Because the calculated value of the chi square statistic was greater than the Table value, the hypothesis of no statistically significant difference was rejected. The data indicated that parental perceptions of the amount of work being completed by their child was significantly higher than the perceptions that teachers had of the amount of work being completed on time

Null Hypothesis 23 - The degree to which students worked up to their ability as perceived by classroom teachers was independent of whether the students were retained or regularly promoted.

The purpose of this hypothesis was to determine whether teacher perceptions varied in the degree to which students worked up to their abilities. Case study forms were utilized for both promoted and retained students and the data is listed in Table 35.

Table 35. Teacher Perceptions of the Degree to Which Students Worked Up to Their Ability

Categories	N=82	Retained Students	Percent	Promoted Students	Percent
Very Poor		1*	1.2	0	0.0
Poor		9(10)	12.1	5	6.0
Average		15	18.2	20	24.3
Good		43	52.4	39	47.5
Excellent		13	15.8	19	23.1
df=3 Table value of χ^2 at .05=7.815 Calculated value of χ^2 =4.278					

Since the calculated value of the chi square statistic was less than the Table value, the null hypothesis of no statistically significant difference was retained.

Null Hypothesis 24 - The perceptions of the degree to which retained students worked up to their ability was independent of whether the perceptions were made by a parent or a teacher.

The purpose for this hypothesis was to determine if parental perceptions differed from teacher perceptions in judging the degree to which retained students worked up to their abilities. Data was collected from the case study forms for retained students and from the parental check lists and is displayed in Table 36.

Because the calculated value of the chi square statistic was less than the Table value, the null hypothesis of no statistically significant difference was retained.

Table 36. Chi Square Analysis of Teacher and Parent Perception of the Degree to Which Retained Students Worked Up to Their Ability

Categories	Teachers of Retained Students N=82	Percent	Parents of Retained Students N=69	Percent
Very Poor	1*	1.2	0	0.0
Poor	10(11)	13.4	5	7.2
Average	15	18.2	24	34.7
Good	43	52.4	34	49.2
Excellent	13	15.8	6	8.6
df=3 Table value of χ^2 at .05=7.815 Calculated value of χ^2 =6.889				

Null Hypothesis 25 - A person's opinion as to the benefit of retention to the child was independent of whether the person was a teacher or a parent.

The purpose of this hypothesis was to determine if a significant difference existed in the perceptions of the benefits of retention to the child. Data was obtained from the case study forms used for the retained students and from the parent's check lists used by the parents of the retained students. The data is listed in Table 37.

Because the calculated value of the chi square statistic exceeded the Table value, the hypothesis of no statistically significant difference was rejected. The writer noted that over 73 percent of the

parents surveyed responded to the question by indicating their perception of retention ranged from very beneficial to extremely beneficial which would indicate a strong support of the benefits of retention to their child. It was also noted that classroom teachers did not appear to perceive retention as having the same benefits as their percentages did not range as high as that of the parents.

Table 37. Chi Square Analysis of Teacher and Parent Perceptions of the Degree to Which Retention Was a Benefit to Students

Categories	Teachers of Retained Students N=82	Percent	Parents of Retained Students N=69	Percent
Not Beneficial	4	4.8	1	1.4
Of Little Benefit	7	8.5	3	4.3
Some Benefit	30	36.5	14	20.2
Very Beneficial	34	41.4	30	43.4
Extremely Beneficial	7	8.5	21	30.4
df=4 Table value of χ^2 at .05=9.488 Calculated value of χ^2 =15.46				

Null Hypothesis 26 - A person's perceptions as to whether retention was usually beneficial to the student was independent of whether the person was a parent, a teacher, or an administrator.

The purpose of this hypothesis was to test whether the benefits of student retention were independent of whether they were a parent, a teacher, or an administrator. Data was computed from the case study forms, the parent's check lists, and the principal's questionnaire and is displayed in Table 38.

Because the calculated value of the chi square statistic exceeds the Table value, the hypothesis of no statistically significant difference was rejected.

Table 38. Chi Square Analysis of Teacher, Parent, and Administrator Opinion of Retention

Responders	Retention Is Beneficial	Percent	Retention Is Not Beneficial	Percent
Teachers N=82	80	97.5	2	2.5
Parents N=69	63	91.3	6	8.6
Principals N=86	74	86.0	12	14.0
df=2 Table value of χ^2 at .05=5.991 Calculated value of χ^2 =7.211				

Null Hypothesis 27 - There was no statistically significant difference between scores for retained and regularly promoted students as computed from the retention scale completed by the classroom teachers.

The data for hypothesis 27 was obtained from the retention scale which was completed by the classroom teachers for each retained student and a matching regularly promoted student. The retention scale consisted of nineteen specific items with a total of eighty possible responses developed on a scaled score basis. The scaled values were totaled for each completed form and a t-test of independence was utilized to determine if a statistically significance difference

existed between retained and regularly promoted students. The data is displayed in Table 39.

Table 39. Retention Scale-Raw Scores for Retained and Promoted Students

Category	Retained Students Raw Scores	Frequency	Promoted Students Raw Scores	Frequency
10-31 Points Good Retention Candidate (H. W. Light:1981)	15	1	21	1
	17	1	23	1
	21	1	25	1
	22	2	27	3
	24	2	28	2
	25	2	29	3
	26	5	30	2
	27	5	31	1
	28	7	32	3
	29	9	33	4
32-40 Points Fair Retention Candidate	30	13	34	4
	31	5	35	4
	32	6	36	2
	33	6	37	4
	34	4	38	8
	35	7	40	4
	36	1	41	7
41-47 Points Marginal Retention Candidate	37	4	42	3
	38	1	43	6
			44	5
			45	6
			46	4
48-71 Points Poor Retention Candidate			47	1
			48	1
			50	1
			59	1

df=163 Table value of t at .05=1.96 Calculated value of t =8.987

Because the calculated value of the t-test statistic was greater than the Table value, the hypothesis of no statistically significant difference was rejected. The writer noted that all of the scaled raw score values of the retained students ranked in the "good" or "fair retention candidate" category. Some promoted students did attain

higher scaled values but a number of regularly promoted students also ranked in the "good retention candidate" category which might suggest that the retention scale should not be used as an absolute model for a retention guide in the public schools.

Discussion

Principal's Questionnaire. The following is a review of the major findings from data contained in the principal's questionnaire.

1. School achievement does appear to be dependent on the socio-economic school environment. Data from the questionnaire revealed that the schools ranked as having the highest socio-economic level also performed at a higher academic level. Principals ranked 76.9 percent of the schools in the middle to upper economic levels and a total of 98.9 percent rated the academic achievement of the schools at average to above average based on standardized test scores.

2. Males are retained at higher proportions than girls. Nearly 5 percent of all boys included in the survey had been retained as compared to less than 3 percent of the girls enrolled.

3. Minority students are retained at a higher proportion than nonminority students. Nonminority students are retained at a rate of 3.4 percent while minority students are retained at a rate of 9.1 percent.

4. Male minority students are not retained at a statistically significant rate when compared to female minority students.

Case Study Forms-Teacher Perceptions of Retained and Promoted Students.

The following is a review of the major findings from the data contained

in the case study forms which were completed by teachers for retained and regularly promoted students.

1. Teachers viewed retained students as being above average in their physical development. The retained students were rated as being above average by 77 percent of the teachers as compared to only 21 percent for the regularly promoted students.

2. Teachers perceived promoted students as being generally healthier than their retained classmates and ranked nearly 11 percent of the retained students in the below average category as compared to just over 2 percent for the promoted students.

3. According to teachers' responses, retained students are more unhappy than promoted students. Teachers ranked no-one in the upper categories of the scale but ranked 93 percent of these retained students in the never happy or seldom happy category while 90 percent of the promoted students were placed in the often to always happy group.

4. Teachers perceived promoted students as being more enthusiastic about learning. Seventy six percent of promoted students were rated as often or always enthusiastic and none were rated as being seldom enthusiastic. Only 60 percent of retained students were in the top categories and 12 percent were ranked as being seldom enthusiastic.

5. Teachers perceived 98 percent of the retained students as being stressful in school. No promoted student was placed in the always stressful category and only 1.2 percent were in the very often stressful range.

6. Teachers viewed retained students as not being able to get along with others as well as promoted students. Promoted students were ranked higher in the excellent range with only 3 percent of the promoted students being in the lower categories as compared to 26 percent of the retained students.

7. Teachers perceived retained students as having difficulty in completing their work on time. Only 12 percent of the retained students were rated as always completing their work while 35 percent of the promoted students were in the same category.

8. There was no statistically significant difference in the contribution to group discussions by retained or promoted students.

9. There was no statistically significant difference in the degree to which retained and promoted students worked up to their ability.

Teacher and Parent Perceptions of Retained Students. The following is a review of data from the case study forms and parent's check lists which were completed by teachers and parents of the retained students.

1. Teachers and parents had different views of students physical development. About 80 percent of the parents indicated their child was in the average category of physical development while 77 percent of the teachers ranked the students in the above average category.

2. Parents felt their children were healthier. Twenty six percent rated their children in the above average category as compared to 12 percent by the teachers and only 1.4 percent of the parents rated

their children as being below average in the health category while teachers were closer to 11 percent.

3. Parents viewed their children as being happy about going to school as only 1.4 percent ranked their children in the never happy or seldom happy range. Views were almost completely opposite the responses of the teachers as teachers rated 93 percent in the unhappy range. Parents rated those same students at over 83 percent in the upper range of being happy.

4. Teachers were more positive than parents in their perceptions of students contributing to group discussions by indicating that nearly 21 percent of the retained students always contributed while only 7 percent of the parents ranked their children similarly.

5. Parents rated over 76 percent of their children as being often or always enthusiastic while teachers only ranked 60 percent in that same category. Teachers also perceived 10 percent of the students as being in the seldom enthusiastic range as compared to 5 percent of the parents' perceptions.

6. Parents did not perceive their students as having a lot of stress in school. Only 14 percent of the parents placed their children in the often or always stressful range as opposed to 98 percent by the teachers.

7. Parents felt other promoted students got along well with their children with a 56 percent ranking in the very good to excellent range. Teachers, however, only gave a 4 percent ranking for the same students and rated 77 percent of the students in the poor to very poor category.

8. Parents perceived nearly 6 percent of their children as having some poor relationships with others while none of the teachers ranked them that low. Teachers did view 29 percent of retained students as being in the excellent range as opposed to only 16 percent by parents.

9. Parents perceived 78 percent of their children as usually or always completing their work on time. Only 56 percent of the teachers gave a similar ranking.

10. Parents viewed retention as being more beneficial than teachers. Seventy three percent of the parents indicated retention was very or extremely beneficial but only 49.9 percent of the teachers placed students in that rank.

11. Differences in teacher and parent perceptions of a student's emotional adjustment was not statistically significant.

12. There was no statistically significant difference in teacher or parent perceptions of the degree to which students worked up to their ability.

Summary

The analysis of data from the survey instruments was accomplished by the utilization of the chi square statistic for hypothesis one through twenty six and with the t-test of independence for hypothesis twenty seven. Both tests were checked for significance at the .05 level and it was determined that statistically significant differences existed in twenty two of the twenty seven null hypotheses. Tables were developed to reflect the responses to the specific questions contained in the survey instruments. Three of the four hypotheses based on data

contained in the principal's questionnaire and nineteen of the twenty three hypotheses developed from the case study forms and parent's check lists were rejected.

Population data from the principal's questionnaire indicated that males are retained at significantly higher rates than females. It was further noted that minority students are also retained at significantly higher rates than nonminority students but, in that category, there was no statistically significant difference in the proportion of male minority students retained when compared to female minority students.

The rejection of nineteen null hypotheses based on the case study forms and parent's check lists was an indication that perceptions of retained students by parents and classroom teachers are frequently divergent. There appeared to be a need of additional communication and clarification of student achievement and behavior between the two groups. The frequent rejection of the null hypotheses based on teachers' perceptions of retained and promoted students was also significant and pointed toward a need by teachers to recognize that the retained students may require some special considerations and observations by their teachers. Peer relationships also need to be observed and situations leading to conflicts or misunderstandings need to be monitored by teachers to help in creating and maintaining an atmosphere conducive to optimum building of student self esteem by the retained students.

Tables were also developed to show other data from the survey instruments pertaining to student retention. The primary factor leading to or causing retention according to parents, teachers, and

administrators was immaturity. All respondents reflected this opinion with 94 percent to 60 percent of the responses being in agreement that immaturity was the major consideration given to a possible child's retention.

Data from the surveys also revealed that 86 percent of the elementary principals favored retention and felt it was beneficial to students but only 59 percent of the principals indicated that their school or school district had a formal policy establishing the guidelines and procedures to be followed. It would appear that a policy would provide a more consistent approach to the problem of student retention and would add to the assurance that the retention recommendation was in the best interests of the child.

The next section of this study will be proposal for a retention policy statement. This will be found in Chapter 5.

CHAPTER 5

PROMOTION AND RETENTION OF STUDENTS

One of the major objectives of this paper was to determine whether school administrators had access to a formalized school policy or some other type of guide which would provide a procedure to be followed in the proposed retention of elementary school students. A research of the literature failed to produce a workable document although a variety of material did exist expounding the positive and negative aspects of retention. The survey of Class I elementary schools of Montana indicated that 59 percent of the school principals operated with some type of a school policy which specified in general terms the actions and procedures to be followed in a retention recommendation. The remaining 41 percent of the school principals indicated that their district did not have any formalized policy statement and apparently each of these administrators functioned in a discretionary manner subject to their own particular educational training and experience.

In an attempt to provide uniformity to the often difficult process of student retention, the writer requested the principals to provide a copy of their district's promotion/retention policy for the purpose of determining the guidelines and parameters presently being utilized by school principals in Montana. Policy statements that were received contained a variety of guidelines, criteria, and procedures to be followed though each policy was somewhat similar in the statement or

implication that student achievement and welfare were paramount. Retention policy statements were also received by the writer from sources outside the state of Montana through services provided by the National Association of Elementary School Principals. These documents were surveyed and a policy and procedure was developed for the purpose of being considered by administrative personnel as a standard which could be utilized in the retention process. The writer exercised his judgement based on his review of the literature and the responses to the survey instruments in developing the following guide.

Promotion and Retention Statement

It is the function of the school to provide an environment suitable for the learning of specific skills by its students. Occasionally a student may experience an inability to achieve at a desired level of proficiency and it may be deemed advisable to retain that child in the same grade for another year. It is assumed that factors and conditions exist whereby the child can be expected to have a high probability of success in the ensuing school year. Though the intent of student retention is to provide for an extra opportunity to achieve success, it should be noted that surveys on the effect of student retention do not provide for an obvious conclusion or guarantee regarding its merits.

The classroom teacher has the primary responsibility for initially identifying and determining that a student may be in need of an additional year at the same grade in school. The teacher shall confer and consult with the building principal as soon as the student has been

identified as a potential retention candidate. Consideration should be given to the long range welfare of the student, rate of progress of the student, physical and emotional health of the child, and alternate remedial program options that may be available. Specific criteria to be considered in retention include the following categories contained in Light's Retention Scale (1981):

1. School attendance
2. Intelligence
3. Present level of academic achievement
4. Physical size
5. Student's age
6. Siblings
7. Previous retention
8. History of learning disabilities
9. Student's attitude toward retention
10. Parent's attitude toward retention
11. Parent's school participation
12. Motivation to complete school tasks
13. History of delinquency
14. Present grade placement
15. Knowledge of the English language
16. Transiency
17. Emotional problems
18. Immature behavior

When it is evident to the teacher and principal that retention of a student is advisable, parents should be contacted immediately by the

teacher or the principal and requested to attend a conference. The purpose of the conference should be to provide an explanation to the parents of their child's current academic standing in relationship to the group and his or her own individual ability as well as the discussion of any related problems and possible alternatives. Every effort should be made by school personnel to gain full support of the parents involved so that a decision to retain is mutually agreeable. In no case should a parent be initially contacted as late as the third nine weeks grading period and no parent should ever have retention announced late in the school year without any previous contact. The final decision should be a joint decision involving the teacher, the parents or guardian, and the building principal.

There may be instances when the parents do not agree with the recommendation to retain their child and request that the child be advanced to the next grade. There should not be any conditional promotions. However, if the parents are not in agreement with the retention suggestion, the teacher should request a signed statement from the parents indicating they do not agree that their child should be retained. The statement should be signed by the parents and teacher, dated, and filed in the child's cumulative folder. If the parents refuse to sign a statement to that effect, the teacher should make a documented statement, sign it, and place it in the child's cumulative folder. The school principal should also sign these documents and should make every effort to gain a parental signature. It should be understood by all parties involved, that the School District retains the right of final decision on retention.

It is further recommended that a retained student should be reassigned to a different teacher for the following school year unless special situations or requests indicate that the child should be reassigned to the same teacher. If it is deemed as being in the child's best interests, the principal and the child's parents may agree to reassign the student to another school. The parents should be kept informed on a regular basis as to the child's progress during the school year in which the child has been retained. If it is determined that the academic level is still too difficult, the child's program should be individualized and referral made to support services such as Title I and Resource Room.

As a general rule, a student should be retained only once in the primary grades. In unusual circumstances a student may be retained more than once but only after a psychological evaluation has taken place to assist in determining the appropriate placement and program.

The formation of this policy was not intended to limit or prohibit a school district from developing their own instrument and exercising judgement in handling retention situations. The instrument does incorporate suggestions and data from current literature, responses to the survey instruments, a pool of retention policy statements, and a commercial retention scale. Time lines and procedures are not fixed and can be modified to suit a particular situation.

Summary

A research of related literature failed to produce a well accepted procedural policy statement on retention. A survey of Class I

elementary schools of Montana indicated that only 59 percent of the school principals operated with some type of school policy which specified procedures to be followed in a retention recommendation. The remaining principals indicated they did not have a policy statement and apparently handled the problem of retention on the basis of training and experience.

The writer surveyed a variety of promotion and retention policy statements being utilized by some Class I school districts. In addition, the writer utilized questions and responses contained in a commercial copy of Light's Retention Scale in developing the Promotion and Retention Statement.

The rejection of nineteen null hypotheses based on the case study forms and parent's check lists was an indication that perceptions of retained students by parents and classroom teachers are frequently divergent. There appeared to be a need of additional communication and clarification of student achievement and behavior between the two groups. The frequent rejection of the null hypotheses based on teachers' perceptions of retained and promoted students was also significant and pointed toward a need by teachers to recognize that the retained students may require some special considerations and observations by their teachers. Peer relationships also need to be observed and situations leading to conflicts or misunderstandings need to be monitored by teachers to help in creating and maintaining an atmosphere conducive to optimum building of student self esteem by the retained students.

Tables were also developed to show other data from the survey

Tables were also developed to show other data from the survey instruments pertaining to student retention. The primary factor leading to or causing retention according to parents, teachers, and administrators was immaturity. All respondents reflected this opinion with 94 percent to 60 percent of the responses being in agreement that immaturity was the major consideration given to a possible child's retention.

Data from the surveys also revealed that 86 percent of the elementary principals favored retention and felt it was beneficial to students but only 59 percent of the principals indicated that their school or school district had a formal policy establishing the guidelines and procedures to be followed. It would appear that a policy would provide a more consistent approach to the problem of student retention and would add to the assurance that the retention recommendation was in the best interests of the child.

The next section of this study will be Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations. This will be found in Chapter 6.

CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

Schools had traditionally fulfilled the functions of transmitting knowledge, skills, and attitudes to their students as well as judging how well the students had attained the desired goals. The evaluation of pupil abilities and the subsequent promotion and/or nonpromotion decisions had caused considerable debate and argument. Student growth and real learning tended to be overlooked and many pupils had developed a failure complex and feelings of inferiority. Findings were often inconsistent and authorities debated the problem of student retention. The causes of nonpromotion were proposed by various authorities but most school principals did not appear to have access to definitive information with which to make accurate promotion or retention recommendations. School district guidelines or policies were frequently unavailable or did not provide specific guidelines. Retention decisions had to give strong consideration to the effect of the judgement on the students because of the negative aspects of retention that were cited in numerous articles.

This study attempted to answer questions as to the history of retention practices, research findings, school programs, aspects of retention, and criteria for student retention. Causes, program

options, school policies, and parental perceptions of retention were also addressed.

General procedures for the study included a review of literature, a survey of Class I elementary schools in Montana, development of case study forms, and a determination of perceived benefits or disadvantageous of retention.

Limitations of the study concerned the sources to be reviewed, the extent of the school surveys, the narrow range of grades and students involved in the case studies, and the generalizations that could be drawn from the data.

The following terms were defined: acceleration, automatic (social) promotion, continuous promotion, ERIC, failure, nongraded, Class I elementary school, nonpromotion, promotion, and retention.

A survey of the literature related to student retention revealed that the early American school followed a graded plan in which all students were taught from a basic textbook by one teacher. Each student, regardless of ability, was exposed to the same amount of material and had to compete for a grades in his classes. Subsequent promotion to the next grade or retention in the same grade for another year was completely dependent upon his ability to attain passing scores.

Retention rates were quite high in the 1850's with individual districts having nonpromotion rates that ranged from 10 to 50 percent. These rates gradually decreased in ensuing years and the retention rate had dropped to approximately 6 percent by the 1970's.

Educators did not share a common view towards retention or promotion of slow learning students. The proponents of retaining students cited examples of students who had benefited from retention and used these examples to defend their position on the subject. Russel (1952), Lobdell (1952), Worth (1959), and Stringer (1969) were authorities who believed that retained student did not suffer significant social-personal maladjustments and did not develop unusual negative attitudes toward school. Scott (1969) and other educators agreed that retention was not a guarantee that students' problems would all be solved, but they felt that retention could be beneficial if the school would provide an individualized program geared to the ability of the students.

Goodlad (1963) and Thomas (1965) listed some other common causes that were used as a basis for student retention. These educators did not condone student retention and presented arguments against the practice.

Ahmann (1963) and Glasser (1966) were critical of school standards which did not allow for the differences in students. These writers were also opposed to grading systems which caused students to be placed in a competitive situation. Students would attempt to please their teacher in such an atmosphere rather than working on critical thinking projects and other decision-making situations. Teaching and learning approaches needed to be changed and Goodlad (1950) listed some alternatives to retention. These oppositions to student failure emphasized the need for an awareness and a concern for individual needs and individual differences. Goodlad believed that good teaching was a

strong factor in lowering retention rates and in developing a feeling of success in the students.

Promotion policies were developed as a consequence of the inconsistencies of school grading and promotion practices. The development of these policies was based on a set of principles that provided for a more uniform approach to the problem of student retention. These policies reflected an awareness of the differences in the needs and abilities of each student being considered for retention.

Following the review of related literature, instrumentation was then developed to determine the retention practices of Class I school districts in Montana and the perceptions of retention among teachers and parents of retained students.

A principal's questionnaire, containing fifteen questions relating to principal perceptions of retention, values of retention, perceived causes of retention, and general data on the school population, was developed and sent to 128 Class I elementary school principals in Montana. Tables were developed to reflect the responses to the questions and four statements of null hypotheses were tested for significant differences.

Case study forms and parent's check lists were also developed and utilized by the teachers and parents of retained students in grades kindergarten through grade two. Case study forms were also completed for an equal number of promoted students for purposes of comparison. These forms asked specific questions pertaining to student characteristics and behavior. Responses were given by completing a check scale format for each question. Eighty two retained students

and a matching eighty two promoted students were involved from the three school districts selected for the study. Parent check lists were also sent to the parents of the eighty two retained students for purposes of making comparisons between the perceptions of teachers and the parents of the retained students. Twenty three statements of null hypotheses were developed from these forms and were tested for significance.

The retention scale utilized in the study was a commercially published instrument and consists of nineteen items with eighty possible scaled value responses. The total scaled score attained by promoted students were compared to scores attained by retained students and tested for statistically significant differences between the two groups of students. The retention scale was used in conjunction with the case study forms and a total of eighty two forms were completed for promoted and retained students.

Guidelines for a retention policy statement were developed by reviewing related literature and the samples of promotion and retention policy statements submitted to the writer by the responding principals. Questions and the responses from the survey instruments also provided a data base for developing a policy statement which included criteria for retention to be considered, procedures to be followed, and parental involvement. The purpose of the instrument was to provide school administrators with a common base for an operating procedure in dealing with the problem of student retention.

Analysis of data was accomplished by displaying responses in descriptive tables. Contingency tables were also developed and tested

by utilizing the chi square statistic and the t-test of independence. Each of the twenty seven null hypotheses was tested for statistically significant differences at the .05 level.

The analysis of data from the survey instruments was accomplished by the utilization of the chi square statistic for hypothesis one through twenty six and with the t-test of independence for hypothesis twenty seven. Both tests were checked for significance at the .05 level and it was determined that statistically significant differences existed in twenty two of the twenty seven null hypothesis. Tables were developed to reflect the responses to the specific questions contained in the survey instruments. Three of the four hypotheses based on data contained in the principal's questionnaire and nineteen of the twenty three hypotheses developed from the case study forms and parent's check lists were rejected.

Population data from the principal's questionnaire indicated that males are retained at significantly higher rates than females. It was further noted that minority students are also retained at significantly higher rates than nonminority students but, in that category, there was no statistically significant difference in the proportion of male minority students retained when compared to female minority students.

The rejection of nineteen null hypotheses based on the case study forms and parent's check lists was an indication that perceptions of retained students by parents and classroom teachers are frequently divergent. There appeared to be a need of additional communication and clarification of student achievement and behavior between the two

groups. The frequent rejection of the null hypotheses based on teachers' perceptions of retained and promoted students was also significant and pointed toward a need by teachers to recognize that the retained students may require some special considerations and observations by their teachers. Peer relationships also need to be observed and situations leading to conflicts or misunderstandings need to be monitored by teachers to help in creating and maintaining an atmosphere conducive to optimum building of student self esteem by the retained students.

Tables were also developed to show other data from the survey instruments pertaining to student retention. The primary factor leading to or causing retention according to parents, teachers, and administrators was immaturity. All respondents reflected this opinion with 94 percent to 60 percent of the responses being in agreement that immaturity was the major consideration given to a possible child's retention.

Data from the surveys also revealed that 86 percent of the elementary principals favored retention and felt it was beneficial to students but only 59 percent of the principals indicated that their school or school district had a formal policy establishing the guidelines and procedures to be followed. It would appear that a policy would provide a more consistent approach to the problem of student retention and would add to the assurance that the retention recommendation was in the best interests of the child.

A research of related literature failed to produce a well accepted procedural policy statement on retention. A survey of Class I

elementary schools of Montana indicated that only 59 percent of the school principals operated with some type of school policy which specified procedures to be followed in a retention recommendation. The remaining principals indicated they did not have a policy statement and apparently handled the problem of retention on the basis of training and experience.

The writer surveyed a variety of promotion and retention policy statements being utilized by some Class I school districts. In addition, the writer utilized questions and responses contained in the survey instruments, information found in the review of literature, and data contained in a commercial copy of Light's Retention Scale in developing the Promotion and Retention Statement.

CONCLUSIONS

The review of literature and an analysis of data contained in the survey instruments made possible the following conclusions:

1. Educators have always been concerned over the problems of student retention. Retention rates were as high as 50 percent in some school districts in the mid 1800's but retention rates have gradually dropped to a rate of approximately 6 percent by the 1970's. The trend has changed from an inflexible graded structure to more of an individualized program and other school options.

2. Critics of student retention have frequently cited problems dealing with the student's loss of self esteem, physical growth, social maladjustment, and lack of academic improvement as reasons to develop individualized programs and policies of continuous progress through the

grades. Proponents of retention, however, have also stated that some children are in need of an extra year to gain in confidence and to have increased opportunities for success. Some studies have shown considerable student growth in the academic and social areas following retention.

3. The review of literature did not support the proposition that student retention was a guarantee of future success. Neither did the literature reveal that retention was so degrading that the student tended to give up, become insecure, and fail to perform. Individual variances were determined to be factors that led to the success or failure of the retention process.

4. Alternate programs of instruction were available to students in most elementary schools in Montana. Students being considered for retention were often provided with modified programs, tutorial help in programs like Title I or Resource Room, or assignment to other teachers and materials.

5. Perceptions of the causes of retention were consistent between parents, teachers, and principals. Each group rated immaturity as the most common cause with low achievement beings the second most common factor.

6. Many elementary schools of Montana do not have a formal district promotion and retention policy which delineates the procedures to be followed in a retention recommendation. Survey responses indicated 59 percent of the schools did have a policy statement of some type by 41 percent did not have any type of formal guideline to follow.

7. School principals felt that retained students usually did benefit from retention and that most students did achieve some success and caught up with their peer group. The degree of success attained by students was not constant and perceptions varied among teachers, principals, and parents. Principals, however, felt that the work and effort involved in completing the retention process was worth the effort in terms of ultimate benefit to the student.

8. Parents, teachers, and principals generally favored student retention. A high percentage of teachers and parents felt that retention was necessary for the student to progress in the following year although perceptions varied as to the degree of success and progress made by the students.

9. School achievement does appear to be dependent on the socio-economic school environment. Data from the questionnaire revealed that the schools ranked as having the highest socio-economic level also performed at a high academic level. Principals ranked 76.9 percent of the schools in the middle to upper economic levels and a total of 98.9 percent rated the academic achievement of the schools at average to above average based on standardized test scores.

10. Males are retained at higher proportions than girls. Nearly 5 percent of all boys included in the survey had been retained as compared to less than 3 percent of the girls enrolled.

11. Minority students are retained at a higher proportion than nonminority students. Nonminority students are retained at a rate of 3.4 percent while minority students are retained at a rate of 9.1 percent.

12. Male minority students are not retained at a statistically significant rate when compared to female minority students.

13. Teachers viewed retained students as being above average in their physical development. The retained students were rated as being above average by 77 percent of the teachers as compared to only 21 percent for the regularly promoted students.

14. Teachers perceived promoted students as being generally healthier than their retained classmates and ranked nearly 11 percent of the retained students in the below average category as compared to just over 2 percent for the promoted students.

15. According to teachers' responses, retained students are perceived as being less happy than promoted students. Teachers ranked no-one in the upper categories of the scale but ranked 93 percent of these retained students in the never happy or seldom happy category while 90 percent of the promoted students were placed in the often to always happy groups.

16. Teachers perceived promoted students as being more enthusiastic about learning. Seventy six percent of promoted students were rated as often or always enthusiastic and none were rated as being seldom enthusiastic. Only 60 percent of retained students were in the top categories and 12 percent were ranked as being seldom enthusiastic.

17. Teachers perceived 98 percent of the retained students as being stressful in school. No promoted student was placed in the always stressful category and only 1.2 percent were in the very often stressful range.

18. Teachers viewed retained students as not being able to get along with others as well as promoted students. Promoted students were ranked higher in the excellent range with only 3.6 percent of the promoted students being in the lower categories as compared to 31.7 percent of the retained students.

19. Teachers perceived retained students as having difficulty in completing their work on time. Only 12 percent of the retained students were rated as always completing their work while 35 percent of the promoted students were in the same category.

20. There was no statistically significant difference in the contribution to group discussions by retained or promoted students.

21. There was no statistically significant difference in the degree to which retained and promoted students worked up to their ability.

22. There was no statistically significant difference in teacher or parent perceptions of the degree to which students worked up to their ability.

23. Teachers and parents had different views of students' physical development. About 80 percent of the parents indicated their child was in the average category of physical development while 77 percent of the teachers ranked the students in the above average category.

24. Parents felt their children were healthier. Twenty six percent rated their children in the above average category as compared to 12 percent by the teachers and only 1.4 percent of the parents rated

their children as being below average in the health category while teachers were closer to 11 percent.

25. Parents viewed their children as being happy about going to school as only 1.4 percent ranked their children in the never happy or seldom happy range. Views were almost completely opposite the responses of the teachers as teachers rated 93 percent in the unhappy range. Parents rated those same students at over 83 percent in the upper range of being happy.

26. Teachers were more positive than parents in their perceptions of students contributing to group discussions by indicating that nearly 21 percent of the retained students always contributed while only 7 percent of the parents ranked their children similarly.

27. Parents rated over 76 percent of their children as being often or always enthusiastic while teachers only ranked 60 percent in that same category. Teachers also perceived 10 percent of the students as being in the seldom enthusiastic range as compared to 5 percent of the parents' perceptions.

28. Parents did not perceive their students as having a lot of stress in school. Only 14 percent of the parents placed their children in the often or always stressful range as opposed to 98 percent by the teachers.

29. Parents felt other promoted students got along well with their children with a 56 percent ranking in the very good to excellent range. Teachers, however, only gave a 4 percent ranking for the same students and rated 77 percent of the students in the poor to very poor category.

30. Parents perceived nearly 6 percent of their children as having some poor relationships with others while none of the teachers ranked them that low. Teachers did view 29 percent of retained students as being in the excellent range as opposed to only 16.5 percent by parents.

31. Parents perceived 78 percent of their children as usually or always completing their work on time. Only 56 percent of the teachers gave a similar ranking.

32. Parents viewed retention as being more beneficial than teachers. Seventy three percent of the parents indicated retention was very or extremely beneficial but only 49.9 percent of the teachers placed students in that rank.

33. Differences in teacher and parent perceptions of a student's emotional adjustment was not statistically significant.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Each school district should develop a formal promotion and retention policy statement listing criteria to be considered for retention, procedures to be followed, and listing the personnel to be involved.

2. School curriculums should be structured so as to allow for alternate program placement for students having academic difficulties.

3. Schools should develop inservice programs to identify student characteristics leading to retention, to provide a common data base for teachers, and to develop alternate programming procedures.

4. In light of the varying perceptions of the retained child, schools should develop and instigate a more thorough communications network between the school and the parent.

5. Instrumentation should be purchased or developed for the identification and monitoring of student characteristics that may lead to retention.

6. Although counseling services should be made available to all elementary students, these services are deemed to be especially needed for retained students and/or students being considered for retention. Therefore, input from counseling services should be sought and considered throughout the school term with the hopes of improving student adjustment to retention and improvement of home-school communication.

7. Preparation institutions should endeavor to provide course work which will acquaint future teachers with perceptions of individual differences and individual needs.

8. Future studies should be conducted to identify specific school variables that may lead to or contribute to student retention.

9. Further studies should be conducted to identify specific factors related to teacher and parental perceptions of student retention.

10. Additional studies should be conducted to consider achievement gains and other related data in terms of the merits of student retention.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

COVER LETTER TO PRINCIPALS OF CLASS I SCHOOL DISTRICTS

DATE

Name of Principal _____
School District _____
City, Montana 59____

Dear _____:

I am an elementary teacher in the Glasgow School system and I am attempting to complete a doctoral program at Montana State University in Bozeman, Montana. As you know, one of the many concerns and problems for an elementary principal is the annual decision whether to retain or promote certain students in their schools. As a part of my program at Montana State University, I am currently attempting to determine the principal, teacher, and parent perceptions of student retention and the student characteristics that may lead to student retention. This study has received consent from the Montana State University Department of Elementary Education and Dr. Gerald Sullivan, Professor of Education, is supervising the project.

My study includes surveying all Class I elementary school principals in Montana to determine current statewide trends, practices, and policies presently being utilized in retention decisions. This is only one part of my study and your cooperation in completing and returning the Principal's Questionnaire promptly will be appreciated.

The code on the form is only for the purpose of ascertaining that all forms have been completed and returned to me. Let me assure you that no school district will be identified and that the data will be used only in grouped statistics.

Thank you for your cooperation in this research study. I appreciate your willingness to spend the time necessary to complete the Questionnaire. I will gladly send you the results of my findings when the study is completed. A stamped, self-addressed envelope is enclosed for your convenience.

Sincerely,

APPENDIX B

PRINCIPAL'S QUESTIONNAIRE

1. How many years have you been employed as a school administrator (principal, vice-principal, superintendent)?

____(1)years

2. When an elementary student is being considered for retention, are other program options available as an alternative to retention?

____(1)yes ____ (2)no

Please indicate the program options, if any, that are available to a student being considered for retention.

- ____(3)ESEA Title I
____(4)Resource Room/Special Education
____(5)Reassignment to another teacher
____(6)Other (please specify)

3. In your opinion, what is the socio-economic make-up of your school community?

- ____(1)low socio-economic area
 (average family income below \$10,000)
____(2)middle class socio-economic area
 (average family income between \$10,000-\$30,000)
____(3)upper class socio-economic area
 (average family income above \$30,000)

4. Based on standardized test scores and overall class performance, what is the overall academic achievement level of the students that attend your school?

- ____(1)low academic achievement
 (average student scores are below 40%)
____(2)average academic achievement
 (average student scores are between 40%-60%)
____(3)above average academic achievement
 (average student scores are above 60%)

5. Which response would best describe your feelings toward retention of students in the elementary school?

- ____(1)students should never be retained
____(2)student retention should be a last resort
____(3)more students should be retained

6. Which response would best describe the attitude of your teaching staff toward student retention?

☐ (1) students should never be retained
☐ (2) student retention should be a last resort
☐ (3) more students should be retained

7. Enter the total number of students enrolled in your school by grade and sex.

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Sex of Students</u>	
kindergarten	____(1)boys	____(2)girls
first grade	____(3)boys	____(4)girls
second grade	____(5)boys	____(6)girls
third grade	____(7)boys	____(8)girls
fourth grade	____(9)boys	____(10)girls
fifth grade	____(11)boys	____(12)girls
sixth grade	____(13)boys	____(14)girls

8. Indicate the number of students that have been retained in a grade prior to the current school year. Include those students who were retained in a different school or school system.

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Sex of Students</u>	
kindergarten	____(1)boys	____(2)girls
first grade	____(3)boys	____(4)girls
second grade	____(5)boys	____(6)girls
third grade	____(7)boys	____(8)girls
fourth grade	____(9)boys	____(10)girls
fifth grade	____(11)boys	____(12)girls
sixth grade	____(13)boys	____(14)girls

9. Please indicate the number of ethnic (Indian, Oriental, Mexican, etc.) students enrolled in your school.

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Sex of Students</u>	
kindergarten	____(1)boys	____(2)girls
first grade	____(3)boys	____(4)girls
second grade	____(5)boys	____(6)girls
third grade	____(7)boys	____(8)girls
fourth grade	____(9)boys	____(10)girls
fifth grade	____(11)boys	____(12)girls
sixth grade	____(13)boys	____(14)girls

10. How many of the minority students listed above have been retained in a grade prior to the current school year?

<u>Grade</u>	<u>Sex of Students</u>	
kindergarten	____(1)boys	____(2)girls
first grade	____(3)boys	____(4)girls
second grade	____(5)boys	____(6)girls
third grade	____(7)boys	____(8)girls
fourth grade	____(9)boys	____(10)girls
fifth grade	____(11)boys	____(12)girls
sixth grade	____(13)boys	____(14)girls

11. Based on your experiences, check the three most common causes of retention?

- | | |
|----------------------------|--------------------------------|
| ____(1)immaturity | ____(7)emotional problems |
| ____(2)low achievement | ____(8)low ability level |
| ____(3)retardation | ____(9)poor school attendance |
| ____(4)poor attitude | ____(10)delinquency |
| ____(5)health problems | ____(11)student laziness |
| ____(6)poor peer relations | ____(12)other (please specify) |

12. In your opinion, does the retained student normally achieve academic success and "catch up" with his peer group?

____(1)Always ____ (2)Usually ____ (3)Sometimes
 ____ (4)Very Seldom ____ (5) Never

13. In your opinion, is retention of a student usually beneficial to the student and worth the work and effort of the retention?

____(1)Yes ____ (2)No

14. What is the one most common parental perception and attitude toward retention of their child?

____(1)generally agree ____ (3)don't really care
____ (2)disagree ____ (4)absolutely refuse

15. Does your school or school district have a promotion/retention policy statement? If possible, please enclose an available copy.

____(1)Yes ____ (2)No

APPENDIX C

COVER LETTER TO SUPERINTENDENTS OF SELECTED DISTRICTS

DATE

Name of Superintendent
School District
City, Montana 59____

Dear _____:

I am an elementary principal in the Glasgow School system and I am presently attempting to complete a doctoral program at Montana State University in Bozeman, Montana. As you know, one of the many concerns and problems for an elementary principal is the annual decision to retain or promote certain students enrolled in their schools. As a part of my program at Montana State University, I am currently attempting to determine the principal, teacher, and parent perceptions of student retention and the student characteristics that may lead to student retention. This study has received consent from the Montana State University Department of Elementary Education and Dr. Gerald Sullivan, Professor of Education, is supervising the project.

In order for this study to become a reality, I need your support and the participation of the elementary principals and selected teachers in your school system. My study on this matter involves several different procedures. My first procedure is to conduct a statewide survey of all Class I elementary schools in Montana to determine trends and practices of individual schools and school systems regarding nonpromotion of students. My second procedure involves the selection of three Class I elementary school districts for a more in-depth study of teacher and parental perceptions of retention. More specifically, teachers and parents in the three selected districts will be involved in completing Case Study Forms and a check scale for each student who has been retained and is currently enrolled in kindergarten, first grade, or second grade. Certain students in these grades who have been regularly promoted will also be selected and teachers will also complete Case Study Forms and check scales for them so that comparisons can be made as to any differences that exist between retained and promoted students. Parental check lists will be completed by parents of retained students and will be matched and compared with the Case Study Forms that have been completed by the teachers to determine if any differences exist in their perceptions of the causes and value of retention.

Naturally, one administrative concern would be the amount of work required of the classroom teacher and building principals. This study will only include kindergarten, first and second grade teachers. The classroom teacher would be asked to complete a Case Study Form and check scale for each retained student in the class. The teacher would

also be asked to complete forms for an equal number of regularly promoted students so that comparisons can be made of student characteristics and attitudes. These forms are filled out by using check marks and do not involve any lengthy written statements.

I would need the assistance of the building principal for the last portion of my study. Because of confidentiality, I would not initially have access to the names of the retained students and their parents. It would be necessary for the principal or the school secretary to contact the parents of these students to request their cooperation. They would be assured of confidentiality and that no names would be used in the study. I am planning to contact the cooperating parents by telephone or personal visitation at a time and place of their choosing. Prior to the visit or call, a copy of the Parent Check List would be mailed to their home address so they would have the opportunity to consider the questions on the form. This Parent Check List is similar to the Case Study Forms that are to be completed by the teachers and will allow me to make comparisons between teacher and parental perceptions on student retention.

Let me assure you that no schools, teachers, principals, parents, or students will be identified and all data will be used only in group statistics. I feel that a study of this type will add to the contemporary knowledge of retention and its effect on students. It will also provide information on promotion policies and practices being used in Montana. As an ultimate objective, this study will provide data so that comprehensive guidelines can be developed and utilized in the decision making process of retention or promotion of elementary students.

I sincerely hope that you will see the merit of this study and that you will allow your schools to participate. I will be happy to send you a copy of my findings as well as the retention guidelines that were developed upon completion of my study. I am enclosing a response checklist and a stamped, self-addressed envelope for your response.

Sincerely,

APPENDIX D

COVER LETTER TO PRINCIPALS OF SELECTED DISTRICTS

DATE

Name of Principal
School
City, Montana 59__

Dear _____:

I have recently been in contact with (Name, Superintendent of (Name) Public Schools regarding the conducting of field research in your school district. (Name) has consented to the research and I am notifying you that I will be contacting you in the near future to give you specific details as to procedures to be followed.

The area of research concerns the retention of students in the same grade for another year, student characteristics that may lead to retention, and the administration, teachers', and parental perceptions of student retention.

In order for this study to become a reality, I need your support and the participation of the elementary principals and selected teachers in your school system. My study on this matter involves several different procedures. My first procedure is to conduct a statewide survey of all Class I elementary schools in Montana to determine trends and practices of individual schools and school systems regarding nonpromotion of students. My second procedure involves the selection of three Class I elementary school districts for a more in-depth study of teacher and parental perceptions of retention. More specifically, teachers and parents in the three selected districts will be involved in completing case study forms and retention scales for each student who has been retained and is currently enrolled in kindergarten, first grade, or second grade. Certain students in these grades who have been regularly promoted will also be selected and teachers will complete case study forms for them also so that comparisons can be made as to any differences that exist between retained and promoted students. Parental check lists for their retained children will be matched with the case study forms completed by the teacher to determine if any differences exist in their perceptions of the value of retention.

Naturally, one administrative concern would be the amount of work required of the classroom teacher and building principals. This study will only include kindergarten, first, and second grade teachers. The classroom teacher would be asked to complete a case study form and a retention scale for each retained student in her class. She would also be asked to complete forms for an equal number of regularly promoted students so the comparisons can be made of student characteristics and

attitudes. These forms are filled out by using check marks and do not involve any lengthy written statements.

I would need the assistance of the building principal for the last portion of my study. Because I would not initially have access to the names of the retained students and their parents, it would be necessary for the principal or his secretary to contact the parents of these students to request their cooperation. They would be assured of confidentiality and that no names would be used in the study. I am planning to contact the cooperating parents by telephone or personal visitation at a time and place of their choosing. Prior to the visit or call, a copy of the parent check list would be mailed to their home address so they would have an opportunity to consider the questions on the form. This parental check list is similar to the case study forms that are to be completed by the teacher and will allow me to make comparisons between teacher and parental perceptions on retention.

I feel a study of this type will add to the contemporary knowledge of retention and its effects on students. It will also provide information on promotion practices and policies being used in Montana. As an ultimate objective, this study will provide comprehensive guidelines which can be utilized in the decision making process of retention or promotion of elementary students.

I will be happy to send you a copy of my findings upon completion of the study.

Sincerely,

APPENDIX E

COVER LETTER TO TEACHERS

Dear Teacher:

I am an elementary teacher in the Glasgow schools and I am currently attempting to complete a doctoral study at Montana State University at Bozeman, Montana. My study deals with principal, teacher, and parental perceptions of student retention, The values or detriments of retention, and with student characteristics that may lead to retention. This study has received consent from the Montana State University Department of Elementary Education and Dr. Gerald Sullivan, Professor of Education, is supervising the project.

In order to complete this study, I need your cooperation and participation. Specifically, I need you to complete the following:

1. Fill out a Case Study Form and the accompanying retention check scale for any students enrolled in your classroom who have been retained at some point in their school career.
2. Fill out a Case Study Form and a check scale for an equal number of regularly promoted students of the same sex as the retained students. Select these regularly promoted students randomly. This data will be used to make comparisons between retained students and regularly promoted students.
3. Return the completed forms to your principal.

Thank you for your cooperation in this study. I appreciate your willingness to spend the time necessary to complete the forms.

Sincerely,

Don Rath
Glasgow, Montana

APPENDIX F

CASE STUDY FORM

Please answer the following questions in the spaces provided.

1. What is the child's present grade placement?

____(1)kindergarten ____ (2)first ____ (3)second

2. In which grade was the child retained?

____(1)kindergarten ____ (2)first ____ (3)second

3. What is the child's sex?

____(1)male ____ (2)female

4. Is the child a minority student (Indian, Oriental, etc)?

____(1)yes ____ (2)no

5. What was the one major reason for the child's retention?

____(1)immaturity ____ (6)emotional problems

____(2)low class achievement ____ (7)low ability level

____(3)poor attitude ____ (8)poor school attendance

____(4)health problems ____ (9)not working to ability

____(5)poor peer relations ____ (10)other (please specify)

6. What is the child's present general health condition?

____(1)above average ____ (2)average ____ (3)below average

Please check the appropriate category for each question below

1. To what degree does the child feel happy about going to school this year?
☐ almost never ☐ seldom ☐ sometimes ☐ often ☐ almost always
2. Does the child contribute to the group in a positive manner?
☐ never ☐ seldom ☐ sometimes ☐ often ☐ very often
3. Is the child enthusiastic about what he is learning?
☐ never ☐ seldom ☐ sometimes ☐ often ☐ very often
4. To what degree did the child make a good emotional adjustment to repeating the grade?
☐ very poor ☐ poor ☐ average ☐ good ☐ very good
5. Is there an absence of stress in his classroom responses?
☐ never ☐ seldom ☐ often ☐ very often ☐ always
6. How have other children reacted to the child repeating the grade?
☐ very poor ☐ poor ☐ good ☐ very good ☐ excellent
7. How does the child get along with other children?
☐ very poor ☐ poor ☐ good ☐ very good ☐ excellent
8. Does the child complete his school work on time?
☐ never ☐ seldom ☐ sometimes ☐ usually ☐ always
9. To what degree is the child working up to his ability?
☐ very poor ☐ poor ☐ average ☐ good ☐ excellent
10. Has repeating the grade been helpful to the child?
☐ not beneficial ☐ of little benefit ☐ some benefit
☐ very beneficial ☐ extremely beneficial
11. In your opinion, is retention of students usually beneficial?
☐ yes ☐ no

APPENDIX G

RETENTION SCALE

Name of Student _____

Date of Birth _____ Present Grade _____

School _____ Teacher _____

Date _____

DIRECTIONS: Read each item and circle the number following that item which best describes the student's situation.

1. SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

- Student misses more than 25 days of school in nine months.....0
 Student misses 11 to 25 days of school.....2
 Student misses 3 to 10 days of school.....4
 Student misses 3 days of school or less.....5

2. INTELLIGENCE

- Student's intelligence is within normal range.....0
 Student's intelligence is in the lower 10 percent.....4
 Student's intelligence is in the upper 10 percent.....4
 Student's intelligence is in the lower 2 percent.....5
 Student's intelligence is in the upper 2 percent.....5

3. PRESENT LEVEL OF ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

- Student is one year behind grade level in all areas.....0
 Student is more than one year behind in all areas.....3
 Student is at grade expectancy only in reading but one year behind in other areas.....4
 Student is at or above grade level in reading and spelling.....4
 Student is at or above grade level in all areas.....5

4. PHYSICAL SIZE

- Student is much smaller than others the same age.....0
 Student is only slightly smaller than most others the same age....2
 Student is the same physical size as others.....4
 Student is larger than others the same age.....5

5. STUDENT'S AGE

- Student's birthday falls in the last half of the calendar year
 (July 1st through December 1st and is in the younger half of his present class.....0
 Student's birthday falls in the first half of the calendar year
 and is in the older half of his present class.....2
 Student is one year older than the students in his present class..4

- Student is more than one year older than the students in his present class.....5
6. SEX OF STUDENT
- Student is a boy in kindergarten through third grade.....0
- Student is a girl in kindergarten through third grade.....2
- Student is a boy in fourth through twelfth grade.....4
- Student is a girl in fourth through twelfth grade.....4
7. SIBLINGS
- Student has no brothers or sisters living in the same household...0
- Student has a brother or sister more than three grade levels above or below student's present grade level.....2
- Student has a brother or sister two grade levels above or below present grade level.....3
- Student has a brother or sister one grade level above student's present grade.....4
- Student has a brother or sister at same grade level or one grade level below student's present grade level.....5
8. PREVIOUS RETENTION
- Student has never been retained and started school at the expected age.....0
- Student has been held out of kindergarten and started school one year later than other children his age.....3
- Student has had one or more grade retentions.....5
9. HISTORY OF LEARNING DISABILITIES
- Student has been evaluated by a psychologist or other professional and it is clear that they are no learning disabilities.....0
- The teacher feels there is no evidence of a learning disability...2
- The teacher feels that the child has a mild learning disability...4
- Student has been evaluated by an educational psychologist and found to have a learning disability.....5
10. STUDENT'S ATTITUDE ABOUT POSSIBLE RETENTION
- Student requests retention to "learn what as missed".....0
- Student seems disinterested in whether he should be retained or not.....3
- Student requests retention but insists that he get the same teacher next year.....3
- Student agrees to retention only after parent persuasion.....3
- Student does not want retention but agrees that he is behind in his school work.....4
- Student gets upset if the subject of retention is approached.....5
11. PARENT'S SCHOOL PARTICIPATION
- Parents always attend school conferences and are actively involved in their child's education.....0
- Parents usually attend teacher conferences but rarely are involved in other school activities.....2
- Parents attend very few teacher conferences.....3

- Parents never attend teacher conferences and are hostile to the overall school program.....5
12. MOTIVATION TO COMPLETE SCHOOL TASKS
 Student spends at least 80 percent of class time working on school assignments, even though some may be too difficult.....0
 Student works on those tasks that interest him.....1
 Student is disinterested in school but will work if encouraged....3
 Student is disinterested in school and needs one-to-one help to complete assignments.....4
 Student will avoid school related tasks even if offered individual help.....5
13. HISTORY OF DELINQUENCY
 Student has no history of antisocial behavior.....0
 Student occasionally has difficulty following school rules.....2
 Student often has problems on the playground and in the classroom.....3
 Student has a history of discipline problems in the classroom, playground, and community, but has not had contact with law enforcement.....4
 Student has a history of discipline problems in the classroom, playground, and community, and has had contact with law enforcement.....5
14. KNOWLEDGE OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE
 Student has good communication skills using English language.....0
 Student has very limited use of the English language but is acquiring new skills quickly.....2
 Student is not bilingual and had poor English language skills....3
 Student has little or no knowledge of the English language and is not acquiring new skills.....5
15. PRESENT GRADE PLACEMENT
 Student is in kindergarten.....0
 Student is in first grade.....1
 Student is in second or third grade.....2
 Student is in fourth to sixth grade.....4
 Student is in seventh to twelfth grade.....5
16. TRANSIENCY
 Student has attended one school since kindergarten.....0
 Student has attended two or three schools in the past three years.3
 Student has attended four to six schools in the past six years....4
 Student has attended seven or more schools in the past three years.....5
17. EMOTIONAL PROBLEMS
 Student does not exhibit behavior sometimes seen in emotionally disturbed children (i.e. distractible, overactive, nervous, cries often, etc.).....0
 Student exhibits behavior sometimes seen in emotionally

disturbed children (i.e., distractible, overactive, nervous, cries often, etc.).....4

18. EXPERIMENTAL BACKGROUND

Student comes from a background that offers almost no opportunity for social or cultural stimulation.....0

Student has minimal experience with the community and gets little experience in non-school related activities.....3

Student has had many stimulation experiences (i.e., foreign travel, summer camp, church groups, scout, etc.).....4

19. IMMATURE BEHAVIOR

Student associates with children two years or more younger than his actual age.....0

Student associates with children one year younger than his actual age.....1

Student associates with children his age.....3

Student associates with students older than his age.....5

TOTAL _____

APPENDIX H

COVER LETTER TO PARENTS

DATE

Dear Parent:

I am an elementary teacher in the Glasgow school system and I am attempting to complete a doctoral program at Montana State University in Bozeman, Montana. This study has received consent from the Montana State University Department of Elementary Education, and Dr. Gerald Sullivan, Professor of Education, is supervising the project. As a part of my research study, I am trying to determine principal, teacher, and parent perceptions of student retention and I am hoping to identify some student characteristics which may lead to retention.

In order to complete this study, I need your cooperation and participation. Let me assure you that your responses will be kept confidential. No names will be used and it is not my intent to find fault with any parents or teachers or schools. I am only trying to determine how parents feel about retention and how it has helped or hindered their child.

I am enclosing a copy of the Parent's Check List. Please complete the questions in your spare time and return and Check List in the enclosed envelope.

Sincerely,

Don Rath
36 Robertson Court
Glasgow, Montana 59230

APPENDIX I

PARENT'S CHECK LIST

Please answer the following questions in the spaces provided.

1. What is your child's present grade placement?

____(1)kindergarten ____ (2)first ____ (3)second

2. In which grade was your child retained?

____(1)kindergarten ____ (2)first ____ (3)second

3. What is your child's sex?

____(1)male ____ (2)female

4. Is your child a minority student (Indian, Oriental, etc)?

____(1)yes ____ (2)no

5. What was the one major reason for your child's retention?

____(1)immaturity	____(6)emotional problems
____(2)low class achievement	____(7)low ability level
____(3)poor attitude	____(8)poor school attendance
____(4)health problems	____(9)not working to ability
____(5)poor peer relations	____(10)other (please specify)

6. What is your child's present general health condition?

____(1)above average ____ (2)average ____ (3)below average

Please check the appropriate category for each question

1. Does your child feel happy about going to school?
___(1)never ___(2)seldom ___(3)sometimes ___(4)often ___(5)always
2. Does your child make positive contributions to the class?
___(1)never ___(2)seldom ___(3)sometimes ___(4)often ___(5)always
3. Is your child enthusiastic about what he is learning?
___(1)never ___(2)seldom ___(3)sometimes ___(4)often ___(5)always
4. To what degree did your child make a good emotional adjustment to repeating the grade?
___(1)very poor ___(2)poor ___(3)average ___(4)good ___(5)very good
5. Is there any stress in your child's classroom responses?
___(1)never ___(2)seldom ___(3)sometimes ___(4)often ___(5)always_
6. How have classmates reacted to your child being retained?
___(1)very poor ___(2)poor ___(3)average ___(4)good ___(5)excellent
7. How does your child get along with other children?
___(1)very poor ___(2)poor ___(3)average ___(4)good ___(5)excellent
8. Does your child complete his school work on time?
___(1)never ___(2)seldom ___(3)sometimes ___(4)often ___(5)always_
9. To what degree is your child working up to his ability?
___(1)very poor ___(2)poor ___(3)average ___(4)good ___(5)excellent
10. Has repeating the grade been helpful to your child?
___(1)not beneficial ___(2)of little benefit ___(3)some benefit
___(4)very beneficial ___(5)extremely beneficial
11. In your opinion, is retention of students usually beneficial?
___(1)yes ___(2)no

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