

EFFECTS OF FIRST GRADE NON-PROMOTION ON THE
ACHIEVEMENT AND ATTITUDE OF STUDENTS
AT THE THIRD GRADE LEVEL

by

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ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: Effects Of First Grade Non-Promotion On The Achievement And Attitude Of Students At The Third Grade Level

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As indicated by empirical research, non-promotion is a questionable alternative for students not experiencing success in school. However, due to poor design, studies do not clearly support promotion or non-promotion. This study attempts to match non-promoted first grade students with promoted peers with respect to IQ and age and compare their achievement and attitude toward school at a common point in time (the third grade level).

The study reported on herein compared the achievement test scores and attitude regarding the social-emotional and educational aspects of school of third grade students matched according to IQ and age who were promoted and non-promoted at the first grade level. The California Achievement Test (CAT) scores (reading, language, math, and total achievement) were compiled from the level 13, form C of the CAT. The attitude ratings were gathered from responses on an attitude questionnaire designed by the researcher. After compiling the data, a test of

significance (t-test) was used to determine any significant differences between the promoted and non-promoted groups.

The promoted students in this study were significantly stronger in reading vocabulary, language mechanics, overall language skills, math computation, overall math skills and overall achievement. However, there was no significant difference in the achievement of the promoted and non-promoted students regarding phonics, structural analysis, reading comprehension, total reading, spelling, language expression, and math concepts. There was also no significant difference in the attitude toward school of the promoted or non-promoted first grade students at the third grade level.

Promotion/non-promotion decisions require careful consideration. Educators need to be cognizant of what research suggests regarding this issue in order to best serve the students who are being considered for non-promotion.

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my family, who encouraged me throughout the project, and especially to my sister who, although she is going through a serious illness, was determined to see that I completed this task.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
Dedication	ii
Acknowledgments	iii
List of Tables	vi
I. INTRODUCTION	1
Rationale and Significance	2
Statement of Problem	3
Research Questions	3
Assumptions	5
Limitations	5
Definitions	6
Chapter Summary	6
II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	7
Introduction	7
Historical Overview of Promotion and Non-Promotion	8
Studies Analyzing the Effects on Achievement of Promotion and Non-Promotion	11
Retention Study Designs	12
A Meta-Analysis of Retention Studies	14
Longitudinal Effects on Achievement of Promoted/Non-Promoted Students	18
The Effects of Non-Promotion On The Social and Emotional Development of Students	24
A Review of Non-Promotion Criteria Models	31
Alternatives to Non-Promotion	39
Chapter Summary	43
III. METHODOLOGY	45
Introduction	45
Subjects	45
Materials	47
Procedure	49
Statistical Procedures	51
Summary	52

TABLE OF CONTENTS (Continued)

Chapter	Page
IV. ANALYSIS OF THE DATA	54
Introduction	54
Question 1	54
Question 2	56
Question 3	58
Question 4	59
Question 5	60
Question 6	61
Chapter Summary	62
V. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	64
Introduction	64
Review of The Findings	64
Discussion of Conclusions	65
Recommendations	69
Suggestions for Future Research	70
Chapter Summary	71
Appendix	Page
A. Questionnaire Development	72
B. Student Questionnaire	74
C. Letter of Explanation Regarding the Questionnaire	77
References	79

LIST OF TABLES

Table		Page
1	Description of the Promoted and Non-Promoted First Grade Students	46
2	The Means and Standard Deviations for the CAT Reading Raw Scores of Third Grade Students Who Were Promoted and Non-Promoted at the First Grade Level	56
3	The Means and Standard Deviations for the CAT Language Raw Scores of Third Grade Students Who Were Promoted and Non-Promoted at the First Grade Level	57
4	The Means and Standard Deviations for the Math Raw Scores of Third Grade Students Who Were Promoted and Non-Promoted at the First Grade Level	59
5	The Means and Standard Deviations of the CAT Total Battery Achievement Test Scores of Third Grade Students Who Were Promoted and Non-Promoted at the First Grade Level	60
6	The Means and Standard Deviations Between the Responses To The Social-Emotional Questions On The Attitude Questionnaire of Third Grade Students Who Were Promoted and Non-Promoted at the First Grade Level	61
7	The Means and Standard Deviations Between the Responses To The Educational Questions On The Attitude Questionnaire of Third Grade Students Who Were Promoted and Non-Promoted at the First Grade Level	62

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Promotion and non-promotion of students is debated throughout our nation's schools each year. Historically, schools have fluctuated regarding their attitudes toward this issue. In the early 19th century grade repetition was the chosen method of correcting academic difficulties. Approximately one out of every two children was retained at least once during their first eight years in school. This practice continued until the 1930's when social promotion came into practice, allowing most students to pass on to the next grade, be grouped according to ability and provided with remedial assistance (Rose, 1983).

In the 1970's, when a decline in student achievement on standardized achievement tests was noted by educators and minimum competency testing programs began to grow in popularity, the promotion/non-promotion controversy was rekindled. The United States Census Bureau reported that in 1976, over 200,000 eight-year-old students were

enrolled below their modal grade and that the number reached 600,000 in 1978 (Medway, 1985).

Recent surveys of the literature indicate that studies regarding this issue are "biased and have been poorly designed," making it very difficult to base promotion and non-promotion decisions on their results (Jackson, 1975; Holmes, 1984).

Rationale and Significance

Promotion and non-promotion have been an educational issue for over a century, with both having cycles of popularity. Hundreds of articles have been written presenting cases for and against non-promotion and numerous studies have been conducted to clarify the issue, only to produce inconsistent findings and conclusions (Sandoval & Fitzgerald, 1985).

A meta-analysis of existing research overwhelmingly indicates that non-promotion produces negative outcomes for students in regard to academic adjustment, personal adjustment, self-concept, and attitude toward school (Holmes & Matthews, 1984).

With the move toward competency-based education, decisions regarding promotion and non-promotion are being largely based on academic progress and mastery of basic skills (Johnson, 1984). However, researchers who have analyzed the studies regarding promotion and non-promotion have concluded that decisions based on the results of

these studies are questionable. Therefore, carefully designed research in this area is necessary to provide reliable information to assist educators in their decision-making process.

This study attempted to carefully match promoted and non-promoted first grade students according to IQ and age and compare their achievement and attitudes at the third grade level. The results will add to the existing body of knowledge and provide information on whether or not first grade retention is beneficial to the achievement and attitude of children.

Statement of Problem

Promotion and non-promotion of first grade students of matched ability needs to be thoroughly assessed. Studies of this nature, addressing the effects of promotion and non-promotion on matched ability groups at a specified point in their school experience, appear to be nonexistent.

This study will investigate whether or not there are differences between the achievement and attitudes of promoted and non-promoted first grade students of matched ability and age at the third grade level.

Research Questions

This study matched promoted and non-promoted first grade students according to IQ and age and compared their achievement and attitude at the end of the third grade

level in order to address the following research questions:

1. Do third grade students who were promoted or non-promoted at the end of their first year in grade one and matched according to IQ and age differ in reading achievement scores (phonics, structural analysis, vocabulary, reading comprehension) on the Level 13 California Achievement Test?
2. Do third grade students who were promoted or non-promoted at the end of their first year in grade one and matched according to IQ and age differ in math achievement scores (math concepts, math computation, total math) on the Level 13 California Achievement Test?
3. Do third grade students who were promoted or non-promoted at the end of their first year in grade one and matched according to IQ and age differ in language achievement scores (spelling, language mechanics, and language expression) on the Level 13 California Achievement Test?
4. Do third grade students who were promoted or non-promoted at the end of their first year in grade one and matched according to IQ and age differ in total achievement scores (reading, language and math) on the Level 13 California Achievement Test?

5. Do third grade students who were promoted or non-promoted at the end of their first year in grade one and matched according to IQ and age differ in their attitude toward school in respect to social-emotional aspects of their school experience?
6. Do third grade students who were promoted or non-promoted at the end of their first year in grade one and matched according to IQ and age differ in their attitude toward school in respect to educational aspects of their school experience?

Assumptions

The following preliminary assumptions will be made regarding this study:

1. Teachers administering the Attitude Questionnaire will adhere to the directions accompanying the questionnaire.
2. Students will respond to the attitude questionnaire openly, accurately and honestly.

Limitations

The following are limitations of this study:

1. A small non-promoted first grade population during the 1983-84 school year will limit generalizations.
2. The data is limited to the evaluation instruments used by the Board of Education (California

Achievement Test and the Short Form Test of Academic Aptitude).

3. The matching of subjects was limited to IQ and age.

Definitions

Non-promotion - The practice of having a student repeat an entire grade just completed (Carstens, 1985).

Social Promotion - The act of promoting a child to the next highest grade level regardless of poor academic performance in the grade just completed.

Chapter Summary

Although non-promotion is not substantiated by the literature available on the issue, many children are retained in the elementary grades each year (Bocks, 1977). Some researchers have also questioned the quality of the data in the vast majority of the retention studies due to lack of control for IQ and achievement of the promoted and non-promoted populations studied (Berliner, 1981).

This study examined the achievement and attitudes of promoted and non-promoted first grade students of matched ability and age to determine if there were significant differences between the groups when they reached the third grade level. Research has not examined the achievement and attitudes of these populations at a common point in time.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

One of the most controversial issues facing education today is student social promotion and non-promotion. However, neither opinion can be clearly supported by empirical research (Reitz, 1989). Summaries of the research regarding this issue do not indicate that non-promotion due to academic difficulties is more beneficial than social promotion (Jackson, 1975; Holmes & Matthews, 1984). A review of forty-four retention studies indicated that research in this area is "biased and poorly designed" (Jackson, 1975). This study attempted to clarify the issue by carefully matching promoted and non-promoted first grade students by ability and age and comparing both groups at the third grade level in regard to academic achievement and attitude.

The following review of literature will provide an overview of the existing body of knowledge on this topic. The review of literature will cover the following areas:

1. Historical overview of promotion and non-promotion;
2. Studies analyzing the effects on achievement of promotion and non-promotion;
3. Studies analyzing the effects on social-emotional development of promotion and non-promotion;
4. A review of non-promotion criteria models; and
5. Alternatives to non-promotion.

Historical Overview of Promotion and Non-promotion

Before the 1900's the common school, which was basically an elementary school, offered an education to all socio-economic classes. All who attended elementary school pursued the same studies and were held to the same standards. There was little concern for individual differences among pupils in regard to goals, abilities or rate of learning. Children were often required to repeat the same grade if they had not met the standards (Kneller, 1967).

By the post-Civil War period, the graded school was thoroughly established. The course of study was carefully planned in detail, grade by grade. Textbook publishers followed suit with whole "graded" series of readers and arithmetic books. Written examinations were the gates between grades and these gates swung open and shut in a scheme of annual promotions (Brubacher, 1966).

The graded school was originally recommended so that a teacher could instruct children of similar age and scholastic attainment. However, educators eventually realized that grading had not achieved the homogeneity as had been anticipated. A number of practices began to appear in the 1890's that attempted to remedy the situation so that students could move more comfortably and quickly through the grades. Quincy, Massachusetts and St. Louis, Missouri school systems tried semi-annual or quarterly promotion. This was to the advantage of the pupils failing promotion for it eliminated the necessity of repeating an entire year's work (Brubacher, 1966).

A New York school system developed a plan known as the "Batavia Plan." This plan addressed the retention issue by placing an assistant in a classroom to work with failing students when a teacher had over fifty students; in a class of under fifty pupils, the teacher was allowed to devote special attention to the failure group (Brubacher, 1966).

In Cambridge, Massachusetts the elementary school was divided into two parallel programs. One program consisted of six years and the other, eight years. Both programs covered the same curriculum, but one faster than the other (Brubacher, 1966).

A variation of the Cambridge plan was attempted in Santa Barbara, California and Baltimore, Maryland. Those systems tried a six-year elementary school organized in

three parallel courses. The average child covered an average curriculum, the slow child a minimum curriculum and the gifted child an enriched curriculum. All students completed the curriculum at the same time but with varying accomplishments (Brubacher, 1966).

The psychological testing movement got under way after World War I. The results of the new intelligence and achievement tests gave educators a renewed confidence in being able to group children homogeneously. The plans were designated as the "XYZ ability grouping." The plans called for curriculum readjustment rather than administrative arrangement. However, this plan was not without its drawbacks because children varied in their own abilities and needed to be regrouped according to the activity (Brubacher, 1966).

In the 1930's social scientists challenged retention of students on the basis of potential adverse effects of retention on the children's social and emotional development. Over the next 30 years "social promotion" allowed students who were retention candidates to be passed on to the next grade, grouped according to ability and provided with remedial assistance (Rose, 1983).

Due to declining achievement test scores noted by educators in the early 1960's, social promotion was seriously questioned by educators (Rose, 1983). The 1970's and 1980's brought a shift in educators' interest in criterion-referenced testing and mastery learning. The

public also began to insist on educational accountability (Sandoval and Fitzgerald, 1985). The Gallup Poll of 1978 indicated that 68% of the respondents favored promotion from grade to grade only if the student could pass an appropriate examination (Niklason, 1984). As a result of competency testing and a public outcry for accountability, non-promotion has once again gained prominence in America's education system.

Studies Analyzing the Effects on Achievement
of Promotion and Non-Promotion

Research on the effects of promotion/non-promotion goes back as far as 1911 (Rose, 1983). Carstens (1985) summarized the findings of studies regarding non-promotion prior to the 1960's as follows:

1. Retained children make no more academic progress than their promoted matched peers, and frequently show decrements in their academic progress following retention.
2. The threat of failure has no beneficial effect on (the achievement of) low achieving children.
3. The personal and social adjustment of promoted children is better than that of retained children.
4. The average level of achievement for all pupils is higher in schools with high promotion rates.

5. A high rate of retention does not reduce the variability of skill levels within a classroom and does not relieve the teacher of the task of providing individual instruction for pupils.
(Carstens, 1985, p. 49)

Retention Study Designs

After reviewing 44 retention studies, Jackson (1975) concluded that research evaluating the effects of non-promotion is biased due to poor design. He states that four types of research designs were employed to investigate the non-promotion issue. Carstens (1985) summarized Jackson's designs (1-3) and one additional design as follows:

1. The first design is a simple uncontrolled comparison between groups in which children who have been retained are compared to their classmates years after their retention. This design is biased towards demonstrating that social promotion is beneficial. Differences between these groups cannot be attributed to retention because pretest (pre-retention) differences probably existed between the groups. Additional factors operating in the interim between the repeated year and the tested year also confound interpretation.

2. The second design is a pre-post testing design, in which retained children are tested before and after their repeated year. This design is biased toward demonstrating that retention is beneficial for all children. Assuming that tested children do gain something during their retained year, one could erroneously conclude that retention was responsible for this gain. There are two major problems with this conclusion: (a) There is no control for other factors which may be responsible for this gain (maturation, regression to the mean, changes in instruction, resolution of emotional difficulties, etc.) and (b) No comparison group is available to determine whether this gain would have occurred under social promotion. Thus, any child could be retained, even a high achiever, and appear to benefit from the experience.
3. The third design is an experimental design, which randomly assigns retention candidates to retention or social promotion treatment groups. This design has only been used three times in this area over the last 60 years, and only once since 1960. This is the only design which allows one to conclude whether or not retention or social promotion has contributed to any between-group differences. (Carstens, 1985, p.50)

4. The fourth design offers the most control and yet is also biased towards demonstrating the relative benefits of social promotion over retention. This design compares retained and promoted children in a particular grade who have been matched on several variables. Because "natural" factors (parental involvement, attractiveness, absence of behavior problems) have been allowed to operate in the retention decision, pretreatment differences between groups are likely to be present, in favor of the promoted children.

A Meta-Analysis of Retention Studies

Holmes (1983), cognizant of Jackson's (1975) concerns regarding the bias of retention studies comparing groups of regularly promoted students with those retained under normal school policies, concluded that some of the research biases may be compensated for in a meta-analysis of existing research. After a systematic search of the literature, Holmes came up with 650 relevant report titles. From this bibliography, 44 studies were selected for the meta-analysis which (a) presented the results of original research of the effects of retention in elementary or junior high school grades, (b) contained sufficient data to allow for the calculation or an estimation of an effect size, and (c) compared a group of

retained pupils with a group of promoted pupils. The results of the meta-analysis indicated that non-promotion had a negative effect on the pupils' academic achievement (language arts, reading, mathematics, work study skills, social studies and grade point average), personal adjustment (social, emotional and behavior), self-concept, attitude toward school, and attendance.

Holmes (1983) did a follow-up meta-analysis using only those studies which had matched with control pupils on the basis of achievement test scores. The selection process produced the following eight studies which Holmes summarized.

Dobbs and Neville (1967) matched 30 once-retained first graders with a group of never-retained second graders on (a) race, (b) sex, (c) socio-economic level, (d) type of classroom assignment, (e) age, (f) mental ability, and (g) reading and arithmetic achievement. Twenty-four of the pairs were followed a second year. Both the reading achievement gain and the arithmetic achievement gain of the promoted group were found to be significantly greater than the gains of the non-promoted group.

Coffield (1954) matched 147 seventh graders that had been retained in either the third, fourth, fifth, or sixth grade with pupils that had never been retained. The matching was effected separately for each achievement area and for the overall composite score of the Iowa Tests of

Basic Skills. Of the 128 analyses made, 43 resulted in a significant difference favoring the promoted pupils, while three resulted in significant differences favoring the retained pupils.

A group of 142 pupils that had been retained one year were matched by Koons (1968) at the completion of the second grade with regularly promoted pupils on the basis of sex, chronological age, and mean grade equivalent score on the Metropolitan Achievement Tests. During the second year of the study, 129 pairs were followed. The mean score of the regularly promoted pupils was markedly higher than the mean score of the retained pupils after the first year of the study. Following the second year of the study, there was only a small difference, not statistically significant, favoring the regularly promoted group.

Mendenhall (1933) matched 53 pairs on Stanford Achievement Test, Form X, scores and chronological age. The pairs consisted of a non-promoted pupil and a specially promoted pupil. The Stanford Achievement Test, Form Y, was administered as a posttest following an additional school year. In each of the nine subtests, the promoted group registered greater gains than the retained group with the exception of the language usage subtest.

Sixth grade pupils enrolled in regular classes that had been retained in either the second or third grade were matched by Millert (1978) with regularly promoted sixth

graders on the basis of scores on the Metropolitan Readiness Test administered in kindergarten. Fifteen pairs were formed. The groups were found statistically equivalent when the mean scores from the reading subset of the Iowa Test of Basic Skills were compared for the two groups.

Thirty-four children who had repeated the second grade during the four-year period (1957-1961) were selected by Skelton (1963) to comprise the non-promoted group. The pupils were matched on the basis of IQ (Otis Quick Scoring), mental age, and chronological age at the time of first entering the second grade and matched on achievement scores (Stanford Achievement Test) at the time of first entering the third grade with pupils who had been regularly promoted to the third grade. The promoted children made greater growth in every area than did the retained pupils, even though the retained pupils were one year older and had been in school one year longer.

Worth (1959) matched 66 non-promoted third graders with promoted low-achieving fourth graders with respect to sex, age, IQ (California Primary) and total achievement (California Primary). In comparing the promoted group to the non-promoted group with regard to gain in academic achievement, Worth obtained significant values on the reading vocabulary, total reading, and arithmetic fundamentals sections of the California Achievement Test and the paragraph reading section of the Gates Advanced

Primary Reading Test in favor of the promoted group. All other sections of the tests showed no significant differences.

Ogilvie (1960) found 40 of these pairs from Worth's (1959) study still surviving after a three-year interval and followed up the comparisons. The promoted group at this time outscored the retained group significantly on seven of the nine sections of the California Achievement Test. The null hypothesis of no difference was accepted with regard to the other two sections of the test (Holmes, 1983, pp. 2-3).

The results of Holmes' meta analysis regarding these eight studies indicate that the non-promoted pupils scored lower on achievement tests in reading, language arts and arithmetic. There seems to be some evidence that in the area of arithmetic achievement the retained pupils will approach the achievement scores obtained by their promoted counterparts at some point in the future.

Longitudinal Effects on Achievement of Promoted/Non-Promoted Students

A three-year study of the effects of retention on elementary students was conducted by the Austin Independent School District Office of Research and Evaluation in 1985. The results indicate that in comparing the academic achievement of elementary retainees and similar students not retained, the promoted students

generally show better gains. However, it was concluded that retention decisions must be made on an individual basis because some students benefit from an additional year in a grade. Following are the results presented in this study according to method, topic and results (Schuyler, 1985, pp. 3-4).

<u>TOPIC, METHOD</u>	<u>RESULTS</u>
1. Retention rates by ethnicity, sex, income, grade (based on school reports, district computer files)	Students more likely to be retained: Hispanics and Blacks, males, free lunch participants, first graders.
2. Retention rates by achievement status [percentile scores on Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS)].	Most retainees were low achievers (84% scored below the 31st percentile). However, only 16% of those scoring at this level were retained.
3. Retainee gains between time recommended for retention and end of retention year [ITBS grade equivalent (GE) scores spring to spring].	On the average, students gained about .85 of a year in reading and .65 of a year in math during the year repeated.
4. Retainee gains compared to grade level averages (ITBS GE scores).	On the average, students remain below grade level after retention but do come close at the primary level (still far behind in intermediate grades).

5. Successful versus unsuccessful retainees-interventions (case study interviews of twelve teachers of retainees). Teachers of successful retainees:
 (1) Identified the source of students' academic problems
 (2) Developed and implemented a plan to address needs
 (3) Persevered and did whatever was necessary to help the students.
6. Achievement of retainees and similar nonretained students after 1, 2, 3 years (students matched on demographic characteristics and pre-assessment achievement, regression analysis for three groups of retainees). On the average, retainees almost always gained significantly less in math and usually less in reading.
7. Characteristics of students who benefit from retention (discriminant analysis). No consistent pattern of characteristics predicted success. Key social factors not on computer files may play a key part.
8. Pattern of achievement before, during, and after retention (ITBS GE scores and gains over a four-year period). In reading, gains improved during retention but then fell slightly. In math, gains decreased during retention and improved with promotion.
9. Success study (based on teacher opinion, parent opinion, and ITBS gains of .8 of a GE year or more in reading). Teachers and parents were more likely to see students as successful compared to ITBS gains. All three sources agreed that child was successful in only 29% of the cases; however, two of three sources agreed in 79% of the cases.

10. Achievement gains in schools with high and low retention rates (ITBS gains of students in schools retaining higher and lower percentages of low achievers, regression) Achievement gains in reading and math did not vary in five of six comparisons. (Schuyler, 1985, pp. 3-4)

The effects of retention based on achievement, student attitude and parent attitude on 20 middle school students who were retained in the third grade were examined by Showers (1984). Through the review of achievement test scores on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) and report cards, she found that the retention did not produce large gains in achievement test scores and report card grades for all subjects. The gains made by several of the students were minimal. Expected gains were based on the criterion of a 20% increase in grades and the 50th percentile in achievement test scores. Showers' results regarding the attitude questionnaires will be discussed later in the review of literature.

Campbell (1987) examined the academic effect of promotion/non-promotion as an intervention strategy for "high risk" first grade students. His study addressed the following two questions:

1. Do non-promoted third graders assigned Chapter I services in reading and mathematics in the first grade differ significantly in reading and mathematics achievement scores on the California

Achievement Test, Levels 11 and 13, from matched students who were promoted?

2. Does the effect of promotion or non-promotion as evidenced by students' reading and mathematics achievement scores vary with race, sex, birth date? (Campbell, 1987, p. 141)

The results of Campbell's study indicate that although the non-promoted group was given another year to learn reading and mathematics skills, students of similar ability scored the same in reading and mathematics by grade three whether they were promoted or non-promoted. When promoted and non-promoted students of matched abilities were examined within subgroups classified by race, sex and birth date, there were two significant findings.

1. There was only one statistically significant difference in any of the subgroupings for verbal or quantitative ability. Promoted students with July-December birth dates scored significantly higher than their non-promoted counterparts on the quantitative ability measure.
2. There was only one statistically significant difference in the academic performance in any of the subgroups for reading and mathematics achievement. Promoted black students significantly outperformed their non-promoted counterparts in mathematics at the third grade

level. However, the difference in mathematics achievement at the third grade level must be discounted in that there was a statistically significant higher expectation for mathematics achievement for this subgroup. (Campbell, 1987, p. 117)

In an attempt to examine the long-term effects of retention in the first two years of the elementary grades, Abidin (1960) compared the achievement of 85 retained pupils and 45 socially promoted students. The data suggest a deterioration in the non-promoted group's academic achievement during the first six grades relative to the promoted group.

A significant difference in reading and math achievement scores favoring the promoted group was identified at the fourth and sixth grade levels. Abidin also noted a decrease in the IQ of the non-promoted group which had a significantly higher IQ than their socially promoted counterparts at the first grade level.

Godfrey (1972) tested 1,200 sixth and seventh grade students in the areas of math and reading. Some of the students had been retained once, some more than once, and one group had never been retained. She found that the students who had never been retained scored the highest and the students who had been retained more than once received the lowest scores in the areas tested.

A study of 100 high school students who had been retained once in the elementary grades was matched with other low-achieving students of the same age who were never retained. The students who had been retained once were doing no better academically than their age peers who had never been retained (Ogden, 1971).

Jackson (1975) resolved the following regarding the promotion/non-promotion issue:

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

The Effects of Non-Promotion On The Social and Emotional Development of Students

Research indicates that grade retention can have negative effects on the social-emotional development of a child as well as in the academic areas. Goodlad (1954)

concluded that repeating a grade is detrimental to the social and personal development and is ". . . associated with undesirable school attitudes and behavior."

An examination of the effect of failure on the self-concept of elementary school students was made by White in 1973. He found that with each grade repeated the self-concept of the student decreased regardless of the sex of the student.

An investigative study of social and personal adjustment was conducted by Goodlad (1952). When comparing children who repeat grades and children who are promoted, he concluded that non-promoted students had difficulty making satisfactory social adjustments. The promoted groups were considerably more disturbed personally over their school progress and their home security.

Afinson (1941) compared two matched groups of repeaters and nonrepeaters of junior high school age to examine their personal and social adjustment toward school, home and peers. The results indicated that nonrepeaters had significantly fewer problems in social and personal adjustments.

Morrison (1956) examined the sociometric status of children to determine how well over-age children were accepted by their peers. One hundred and seventy-seven fifth and sixth grade children were asked to respond to three questions by giving the names of three classmates in

response to each question. The children were asked to choose three friends for play, for committee work, and to take home to a party. The results indicated that the over-age children were found to have a significantly lower choice status than their peers.

To determine the social acceptability of three age groups in sixth grade classrooms (under-age, at-age, and over-age pupils), Bodian (1954) used the weighted scores of a four-criteria sociometric test. He concluded that the over-age group had a lower social acceptance than their at-age or under-age classmates. Data indicated that over-age pupils enjoyed a higher degree of social status when placed together in a class. The data indicated that over-aged students were ignored in classroom activities and actively disliked by their classmates.

Brundage (1956) gathered the names of all the high school students in Whitehall, Ohio School District who had been retained at least once during their school life. Students and parents were asked to respond to a questionnaire to determine how each group perceived the retention. Responses indicated that parents and students felt that school work was about the same or better after retention. Parents felt that retention did not make much difference in the number of friends; however, many of the students felt they had more friends after being retained. The students overall felt rather strongly about retention, and a large number said it bothered them a great deal.

Parents felt there were few emotional problems due to the retention. Students, more often than parents, thought that the retention was not a good move; however, more than half the students and parents thought the retention was for the best.

Through the use of a parent and student questionnaire, Showers (1984) evaluated the attitudes of 20 middle school students and their parents regarding a retention which occurred at the third grade level. The information gained through the questionnaire indicated that there were far too many negative responses to justify the non-promotions.

When explaining how non-promotion affects a child's self-concept, Niklason (1984) indicates that measured changes in personality following retention have not been dramatic and that parents and teachers have been of the opinion that retention does not damage a child's self-concept. However, when children in grades four through six have rated being retained they view it as a highly stressful event, placing it 3rd out of 20 items on a Child Stress Scale, with losing a parent being number 1 and going blind number 2.

Not all research indicates that non-promotion results in a poor self-image. Finlayson (1977) did a longitudinal study of the effect of non-promotion upon the self-concept of pupils in the primary grades. The study followed students through the 1973-74 and 1974-75 school years.

All first grade students in selected schools in two suburban Philadelphia school districts were used during the first year of this study. Students used in the second year were 25 non-promoted students, 25 borderline students selected because of mental ability and teacher judgment, and 25 randomly selected promoted students.

Finlayson used the FACES scale to measure self-concept. The results indicate that after non-promotion the non-promoted group of students continued to increase their self-concept scores significantly, while the scores for the borderline and promoted groups dropped slightly but not significantly during the second year of the study. At the end of the second year the self-concept scores of the promoted and non-promoted groups were nearly identical. The non-promoted group had a mean score of 15.16 and the promoted group's mean score was 15.20.

Supplemental information regarding the non-promoted children in Finlayson's study was gained through the use of questionnaires completed by the classroom teachers and parents and parent interviews conducted in the homes. The following is the information gained from the questionnaires and interviews.

Selected findings on non-promotion and self-concept from the teachers' perspective were:

1. Approximately 75% of the pupils recommended for non-promotion were viewed by their teachers as

manifesting a positive self-concept prior to the fact of non-promotion.

2. Teachers viewed the self-concepts of the children recommended for non-promotion as either remaining stable or becoming more positive during the first school year in every case.
3. Twenty-one (84.0%) of the 25 non-promoted children were viewed by their teachers as manifesting a positive self-concept in the classroom after non-promotion.
4. Teachers viewed the self-concepts of the non-promoted children as either remaining stable or becoming more positive in 95% of the cases during the repeated school year. (Finlayson, 1977, p. 207)

A questionnaire and an interview conducted in the parents' homes revealed the following:

1. More than half of the responding parents (58.3%) stated that their child liked school more than he had the previous school year.
2. More than half of the non-promoted youngsters (54.2%) were viewed as going to school more easily (without complaining) than last school year.
3. An overwhelming majority (79.2%) of parents viewed their non-promoted child as being more

confident and successful in school during the repeated school year than the year before.

4. Well over half (62.5%) of the non-promoted pupils were perceived as being happier youngsters during the non-promoted school year than before.
5. Twenty-two (91.7%) of the 24 families interviewed reported that there was no stigma attached to the fact of non-promotion for their child.
6. Parents feel that the fact of non-promotion does affect the way their youngster feels about himself. They believe this effect to be a positive one. Confidence, maturity, and readiness are characteristics ascribed to the non-promoted child during the "repeating" school year.
7. Given the non-promotion situation and decision a second time, most parents said that they were in favor of non-promotion for their child and would make the same decision. (Finlayson, 1977, p. 207)

Finlayson concluded that non-promotion does not appear to be a practice that negatively influences self-concept. He suggests that further research may need to be done to examine what actually does influence self-concept in our schools.

A Review of Non-Promotion Criteria Models

The practice of non-promotion of students is once again gaining popularity in the United States. School districts are adopting programs which require students to meet certain academic achievement levels before being promoted to the next grade. The National Education Association (NEA) conducted a survey in 1982 regarding minimum-competency promotion policies. One-third of the 2000 teachers surveyed reported that the students in their schools are not promoted until they reach a satisfactory level of academic achievement. In 1960 the results of a similar NEA survey indicated that one percent of 816 school systems retained students based on academic achievement alone (Niklason, 1984).

With the rise of non-promotion of students in the United States, several criteria models for non-promotion have been developed. Several of these models have been summarized by Walker (1984) as follows:

Goodlad's criterion model (1954) for non-promotion gave assistance to school personnel who were involved in retention decisions. His criteria model suggests the following:

1. Examine each case critically and individually.
2. Improve teachers' and principals' knowledge of the effects of retention.
3. Analyze local data related to retention to establish local "norms."

4. Create basic guidelines using these norms and be sure to revise them periodically.
5. Emphasize study habits, task approach skills, and not achievement test scores.
6. Use the concept of gain scores as objective criteria in estimating the success or failure of a retention program.
7. Promote socially only if the child is doing the best he can with his or her ability.
8. Ask yourself, will this retention "benefit" the child?

Lieberman's decision-making model (1980) for non-promotion evaluates the decision on a number of factors. He suggests that the following variables be considered by those involved in this process:

"Child" factors to consider are:

1. Physical disability
2. Physical size
3. Academic potential
4. Psycho-social maturity
5. Neurological maturity
6. Self-concept
7. Level of independence
8. Grade placement
9. Chronological age
10. Previous retention
11. Nature of problem

12. Sex
13. Chronic absenteeism
14. Basic skill competencies
15. Peer pressure
16. Child's attitude toward retention

"Family" factors include:

1. Frequency of geographic moves
2. Foreign language spoken in the home
3. Family attitude toward retention
4. Siblings (number, attitude toward child, etc.)
5. Attitude, advice of the family physician

"School" factors that should be considered include:

1. School attitudes toward retention
2. Principal's attitudes
3. Teacher's attitudes
4. The availability of special education services
5. The availability of other programmatic options

Each of Liberman's factors are rated on the following

4-point scale:

1. for retention
2. against retention
3. undecided
4. not applicable. (Walker, 1984, p.4)

Light (1981) developed a retention scale based on the following 19 categories. The instrument is administered in 10 to 15 minutes using a 5-point scale for each item.

The items are as follows:

1. Student's Age

For the student who is more than one year older than his classmates, retention may cause more problems than it solves. Research shows that when the student is significantly older, he/she is more likely to develop a negative self-concept, and the likelihood of dropping out of school in the future increases substantially.

2. Present Grade Placement

Kindergarten and first grade appear to be the best times to consider retention. Retention in second and third grades may also be of benefit to some students since it is important that students develop their basic academic foundation in these grades. When students are retained past the third grade, there is often a social stigma attached to 'failing,' and considerations of other factors should be carefully weighed when deciding to retain the student.

3. Brothers and Sisters

When retention would place the student in the same grade as a brother or sister, established family patterns of interaction and status may be disrupted. As the grade level gap widens between children, the chance of family problems caused by grade retention seems to become less.

4. Family Moves

If the student has attended more than four schools in the past three years, it is doubtful that retention will solve the academic problems resulting from this pattern of frequent changes in friends and teachers.

5. School Attendance

While retention can be beneficial for the student who has been absent from school for a long period of time due to illness, the student who is often truant will not generally attend school more regularly after retention. For children who refuse to attend school even after disciplined, professional advice should be sought.

6. History of Behavior Problems

A student with behavior problems or a history of delinquency is very likely also to have learning problems. When retained, these students are likely to become even more antisocial. Students without such problems are better candidates for retention.

7. Student's Sex

Because girls mature a year or so earlier than boys and are physically larger, boys are somewhat better candidates for retention. Differences in physical size become very apparent in the

adolescent years when children are most sensitive to standing out from the crowd.

8. Knowledge of English Language

If a student is unable to communicate in English and does not seem interested in acquiring new language skills, grade retention will not solve this problem. A bilingual student who is acquiring English may benefit from retention since the extra year of language enrichment will prepare him for the increased language demands of the next grade.

9. Physical Size

Children give great importance to physical size and generally think that a larger child is older. A large child who is retained may appear out of place, while a child who is smaller than others his age will have a better chance of benefiting when retained.

10. Previous Retention

When the question of a second retention is raised for a student, other avenues of assistance should be considered. Students who are retained more than once become very anxious about their physical size and age in relation to their classmates.

11. Parents' School Participation

Parents' interest and help with school problems is a powerful force in determining if a child benefits from retention. If the student's parents support the school staff and are involved in school activities, the child stands a better chance of benefiting from retention.

12. Student's Life Experiences

If the student has had a limited opportunity for social or cultural stimulation, retention may be helpful during the primary grades. This will offer the child an opportunity to absorb new experiences and information. Children who have had many enriching experiences are less likely to benefit from retention.

13. Level of Intelligence

The student with average intelligence is more likely to benefit from retention than students who have below average intelligence. A slow learning child is likely always to trail behind his/her classmates in school whereas a gifted child can be expected to catch up when advanced to the next grade.

14. History of Learning Disabilities

Even children with above average intelligence may be having severe difficulties in school if they have a learning disability. Students' records

need to be carefully examined to determine whether a learning disability exists. If a disability is present, intensive remedial efforts, aimed at overcoming the disability, should be planned. These efforts are more likely than retention to benefit the student.

15. Student's Attitude About Possible Retention

Many children will view retention as an opportunity to break the failure cycle and like the idea of starting the year at the top of their class. If the student becomes anxious and feels threatened when discussing retention, the chance of his benefiting is poor.

16. Student's Interest in School Work

For students who refuse to complete academic assignments, retention will serve no useful purpose. In fact, a disinterested and hostile student, when retained, is likely to become more hostile and may become a truant.

17. Immature Behavior

Immaturity has traditionally been considered a sound reason for retaining a student. The student who is physically and socially immature often benefits from a second year in kindergarten. At this age the impact of grade retention on the child's self-concept is not severe. Generally, however, a child who is

capable academically will do better if promoted, even if he is somewhat immature.

18. Emotional Problems

The student without emotional problems is the better candidate for grade retention. When a student is often upset and cannot concentrate on his schoolwork, repeating his grade with young children will not solve his underlying problems. For such a child, advice should be sought from the school psychologist. (Reitz, 1975-1985, pp. 209-210)

Walker (1984) contends that retention decisions need to be weighed carefully, not only for the child's sake but also for the school's. He points out that although the courts have deferred to school officials on promotion/non-promotion decisions, there is an increasing tendency to look more closely at:

1. Decisions based on limited, inflexible criteria;
2. the school's procedures for challenging the accuracy of retention decisions;
3. any disproportionate retention incidence involving minority groups. (Walker, 1984, p. 5)

Alternatives to Non-Promotion

Researchers have indicated an overwhelming case to banish non-promotion of students. However, possible solutions to the problem, whether alternative programs or

screening techniques, need to be made available so recommendations can be made for the children in question.

Goodlad (1954) presents arguments for both promotion and non-promotion and concludes that neither is the answer. He came to the conclusion that elimination of grade barriers would do away with the fantasy that all children should make the same gains by June of each school year; therefore, the question of whether to promote or not promote would be nonexistent.

The transition room placement of young children considered unready for the regular first grade experience was reviewed and evaluated by Gredler (1984). The following conclusions were indicated after a thorough search of the literature was performed:

1. Analysis of the research studies of transition rooms raises questions about the degree of educational "payoff" obtained with such programs. Research indicates that transition room children either do not perform as well or at most are equal in achievement levels to transition room-eligible children placed in regular classrooms.
2. Attitudes of school personnel toward the transition room generally are favorable; yet few, if any, schools have gathered any data to *indicate the educational status of children so placed.* statements of faith from school personnel abound. Few programs maintain

effective monitoring systems to indicate the progress of the children.

3. Although a small teacher/student ratio often exists in the transition room, some research indicates that less time is devoted to academic activities than is given to children who are eligible for the transition room but are placed in the regular class. (Gredler, 1984, p. 469)

Kilby (1984) reported on a junior first grade program devised by a principal in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. The children went through a process which involved the following: (1) the kindergarten teacher's referral, (2) individualized testing, and (3) parental consent. The goal of the program was to provide a solid foundation for the participants. Evaluation of the program indicated a positive impact in three areas: (1) reading achievement, (2) special education placement, and (3) grade repetition. Reading scores on fourth grade achievement tests indicated that the program participants exceeded those of their *classmates* and the class which preceded them by one year. *Children who attended the junior first grade program were placed in learning disability programs significantly less frequently than those students who did not attend the program. It was also found that junior first grade participants repeated grades significantly less than those who did not attend the program.*

A treatment and screening program for failing children was devised by Stringer (1960). She investigated cases where children were non-promoted and socially promoted. Results indicated that if parents are willing and able to consistently help their children, then social promotion is usually successful; however, if parents are not capable or willing to help their children, then retention would be advisable. It was found that after the parents of socially promoted children saw the success of their children during the second year, parental assistance declined as did the progress of the child during the third year.

Oliver (1980) compared the progress of children who attended a full-day kindergarten as opposed to those who attended a half-day kindergarten program. He found that more time was spent per week on pre-reading activities in the full-day kindergarten (9.75 hours vs. 6.98 hours). Results of the pre-reading activities indicated a higher level of performance in reading readiness skills for the full-day kindergarten class. Some of the areas assessed were letter recognition, letter name sounds, writing letters from dictation and matching syntax. It was also interesting to note that the boys given pre-reading instruction in phonics scored as high as the girls on the phonics inventory post test in both kindergarten situations.

In spite of preventive measures to identify and assist "high risk" students, retention seems to be a very prominent part of our education system. Walker (1984) suggests the following as a possible alternative:

An alternative worth considering would be to treat children referred for retention in the same fashion as those who are referred for exceptional programming. Such a mandate would automatically eliminate much of the subjectivity that appears to exist in retention decisions. Children recommended for retention would have to be screened by multi-disciplinary teams using the guidelines set forth in Public Law 94-142. Parental involvement and due process would be assured as well as accountability via the Individual Educational Plan (I.E.P.) process.

(Walker, 1984, p. 5)

Walker concludes that perhaps legal action is long overdue in regard to the non-promoted student.

Chapter Summary

This review has shown how the issue of promotion and non-promotion has been cyclic over the last two centuries. Recent reviews of studies have indicated that research is not conclusive regarding this topic. Various strategies have been suggested as alternatives to non-promotion; however, they have not been widely used in lieu of

retaining a student. As a result of the public demand for accountability and minimum competency promotion policies, several criteria models have been developed to assist those making decisions regarding the non-promotion of a student. The ongoing debate of promotion and non-promotion examined in this review reveals the need for further research of well-designed studies regarding the non-promotion of students.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

It was revealed in the review of literature that the vast majority of retention studies should be questioned due to "bias and poor design" (Jackson, 1975). This study attempted to carefully match promoted and non-promoted first grade students according to IQ and chronological age, and compare their achievement and attitude at the third grade level. The following presents the organization and methodology of this study.

Subjects

Fifteen non-promoted first grade students and 15 promoted first grade students from the 1983-84 school year *were selected for this study*. All of the students were from regular education programs. *The non-promoted students were first-time repeaters and there was no curriculum intervention planned for the repeated year.* The students were matched according to IQ and

chronological age. The students came from a Maryland county which is made up of rural farm areas, small towns and a county seat. The socio-economic level of the school districts from which the students were selected ranges from lower middle to upper middle class. Information regarding the subjects used in this study is provided in Table 1.

Table 1

Description of the Promoted and Non-Promoted First Grade Students

Student ID	*Status	**SES	Sex	DoB	Age	IQ
01	P	LM	M	10/24/77	6-7	86
01	NP	M	M	11/21/77	6-6	86
02	P	M	F	11/25/77	6-6	96
02	NP	M	F	12/16/77	6-5	96
03	P	M	M	02/08/77	7-4	97
03	NP	M	M	02/13/77	7-4	97
04	P	LM	M	11/02/77	6-7	113
04	NP	M	M	10/02/77	6-8	113
05	P	LM	F	06/24/77	6-11	115
05	NP	M	M	06/13/77	7-0	115
06	P	M	M	08/11/77	6-10	91
06	NP	M	M	07/19/77	6-10	91
07	P	LM	F	02/27/77	7-3	91
07	NP	LM	F	02/21/77	7-3	91
08	P	M	F	08/26/77	6-10	92
08	NP	M	M	08/07/77	6-11	92
09	P	M	M	06/03/77	7-0	96
09	NP	M	M	07/28/77	7-2	96

10	P	LM	F	11/18/77	6-6	98
10	NP	UM	M	12/24/77	6-5	98
11	P	LM	M	12/01/77	6-6	108
11	NP	M	M	11/17/77	6-6	108
12	P	UM	M	10/11/77	6-8	115
12	NP	M	M	11/13/77	6-7	115
13	P	LM	M	12/14/77	6-6	111
13	NP	M	F	11/01/77	6-7	111
14	P	UM	M	07/25/77	6-16	101
14	NP	M	M	08/23/77	6-9	101
15	P	M	M	11/08/77	6-7	104
15	NP	M	F	11/13/77	6-7	104

*Status - P = Promoted

NP = Non-promoted

**SES - Socio-Economic Status of the School District's Population - LM = Lower Middle
- M = Middle
- UM = Upper Middle

***Age - End of First Grade (1983-84)

Materials

Three instruments were used to collect the data needed for this study: the second grade Short Form Test of Academic Aptitude, the Level 13, Form C of the California Achievement Test, and a student attitude questionnaire.

Short Form Test of Academic Aptitude (SFTAA): The SFTAA is a standardized test used to measure the academic aptitude of students. The effectiveness of each item on the test was determined by item analysis and suggestions received from examiners who participated in the tryout testing. Used in conjunction with the CAT, individual achievement can be compared with expected achievement.

California Achievement Test (CAT): The CAT's have been used as an assessment instrument for the past forty-five years. The tests are designed for measuring, evaluating, and analyzing school achievement in the basic content areas of reading, language, and mathematics. The standardization sample was selected from public and private schools. The populations were stratified according to geographic region, enrollment, community type, and type of private school. Provisions were made to proportionately represent minority groups of children. The final standardization sample consisted of 203,684 pupils from schools in 36 states (Bryan, 1978). Reliability was established through the use of the Kuder-Richardson Formula 20 estimate of reliability. Verification of validity can be gained from tables of interrelations and from evidence that item difficulties decrease as grade level increases (CAT, 1978).

Questionnaire: A student attitude questionnaire was developed to determine how promoted and non-promoted students of similar abilities felt about school. (See Appendices A & B.) The attitude questionnaire was designed by the researcher of this study and reviewed by educators associated with elementary age students (two classroom teachers, a statistician and a university professor). *After complying with the educators' suggestions, and revising accordingly, the questionnaire was administered to a third grade class which was not used*

in the study. Administering the questionnaire to a trial population was done to assure that the statements on the questionnaire could be understood by third graders. The test-retest method for estimating reliability was used, establishing a reliability coefficient of .92. To assure consistent administration of the questionnaire, guidelines were established and distributed to each third grade teacher. (See Appendix C.)

Procedure

Several steps were followed in order to gain the necessary information to complete the study. Students were identified, CAT and SFTAA scores were collected for the students, and the attitude questionnaire was given to all third grade students for two consecutive years.

Student Identification: During the 1985-86 school year, the 1983-84 non-promoted first grade students in the elementary schools of a Maryland county were identified by each school principal. The IQ and chronological age for each of these non-promoted students were recorded from the student's second grade SFTAA results. In order to locate promoted students of identical IQ and a birthdate within one month's range of each non-promoted student, the second grade SFTAA results were recorded for all first grade students promoted during the 1983-84 school year. All the students that were promoted at the end of their first grade year who had IQ scores that matched the students who

were non-promoted at the end of their first grade year were identified. The age was recorded for each promoted student who was identified as an IQ match. The non-promoted students were matched with a promoted student who had an identical IQ score and a birthdate within the same month.

CAT Data Collection: The third grade CAT results in the following categories--(1) Phonics, (2) Structural Analysis, (3) Vocabulary, (4) Reading Comprehension, (5) Total Reading, (6) Spelling, (7) Language Mechanics, (8) Language Total, (9) Math Computation, (10) Math Concepts, (11) Math Total, and (12) Battery Total--were collected in the spring of 1986 for the first grade students that were promoted at the end of the 1983-84 school year. The CAT results were collected in the spring of 1987 for the first grade students that were non-promoted at the end of the 1983-84 school year. Mean scores from the CAT's were compared through the use of a t-test comparing scores for third grade students that were promoted and non-promoted in the first grade.

Attitude Questionnaire: During the spring of 1986, the student attitude questionnaire was administered to all third grade students in each classroom of a Maryland county. *Questionnaires for selected promoted students* were identified and the responses were recorded. In the spring of 1987 the attitude questionnaire was administered to all of this county's third grade students.

Questionnaires for selected non-promoted students were identified and the responses were recorded. A t-test was performed to compare the mean scores of the social-emotional questions and the educational questions for the third grade students of matched ability and age that were promoted and non-promoted at the first grade level.

Statistical Procedures

The t-test, comparing the achievement and attitude of third grade students of matched ability and age who were promoted and non-promoted at the first grade level, was used to test the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis I - There is no statistically significant mean difference in reading achievement test scores between third grade students of matched ability and age who were promoted or non-promoted at the first grade level.

Hypothesis II - There is no statistically significant mean difference in language achievement test scores between third grade students of matched ability and age who were promoted or non-promoted at the first grade level.

Hypothesis III - There is no statistically significant mean difference in math achievement test scores between third grade students of matched ability and age who were promoted or non-promoted at the first grade level.

Hypothesis IV - There is no statistically significant mean difference in total achievement test scores between third grade students of matched ability and age who were promoted or non-promoted at the third grade level.

Hypothesis V - There is no statistically significant mean difference in the social-emotional responses regarding school on an attitude questionnaire between third grade students of matched ability and age who were promoted or non-promoted at the first grade level.

Hypothesis VI - There is no statistically significant mean difference in the educational responses regarding school on the attitude questionnaire between third grade students of matched ability who were promoted or non-promoted at the first grade level.

Summary

A t-test was used in this study to compare achievement test scores and responses on a retention questionnaire regarding attitude toward school between third grade students of matched ability and age who were promoted and non-promoted in the first grade. The students were selected from the 1983-84 first grade population of public schools in a Maryland county. The students were matched according to IQ scores obtained from second grade SFTAA scores and chronological age. Third grade CAT results were used to compare achievement of promoted and non-promoted students at the third grade

level and a questionnaire was administered to compare student attitude for the same groups.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the achievement and attitude of third grade students of matched ability and age who were promoted and non-promoted at the first grade level. The findings of the study are organized and presented according to the achievement tests and question categories examined. An independent t-test was used to compare third grade students of matched ability and age who were promoted or non-promoted at the first grade level with respect to achievement test scores and responses on an attitude questionnaire. Each question posed in this study is restated and answered according to the analysis of the data collected.

Question 1

1. Do third grade students who were promoted or non-promoted at the end of their first year in grade

one and matched according to IQ and age differ in reading achievement scores (phonics, structural analysis, vocabulary, reading comprehension) on the Level 13 California Achievement Test?

There was one significant difference indicated between third grade students of matched ability and age who were promoted or non-promoted at the first grade level regarding reading vocabulary. The promoted students were significantly superior to the non-promoted third graders in this area ($\bar{x}_1 = 10.6667$, $\bar{x}_2 = 7.8000$, $t = 2.25$, $p = .032 < .05$); therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected (see Table 2).

Table 2

The Means and Standard Deviations for the CAT Reading Raw Scores of Third Grade Students Who Were Promoted and Non-Promoted at the First Grade Level

Reading Categories	Group	Number of Students	Mean	S.D.	t	P
Phonics	Promoted	15	12.4667	3.523	1.94	.062
	Non-Promoted	15	10.0667	3.240		
Structural Analysis	Promoted	15	7.2000	2.305	0.37	.712
	Non-Promoted	15	6.8667	2.588		
Vocabulary	Promoted	15	10.6667	3.716	2.25	.032*
	Non-Promoted	15	7.8000	3.234		
Comprehension	Promoted	15	17.9333	6.397	1.08	.287
	Non-Promoted	15	15.3333	6.726		
Reading Total	Promoted	15	48.2667	13.874	1.67	.107
	Non-Promoted	15	40.0667	13.085		

* - significance

p - < .05

Question 2

2. Do third grade students who were promoted or non-promoted at the end of their first year in grade one and matched according to IQ and age differ in math achievement scores (math concepts, math

computation, total math) on the Level 13
California Achievement Test?

There was a significant difference between the math computation and math total scores of third grade students of matched ability and age that were promoted and non-promoted at the first grade level. The promoted group was stronger in math computation ($\bar{x}_1 = 14.4667$, $\bar{x}_2 = 9.6667$, $t = 2.35$, $p = .026 < .05$) and had a better understanding of math on the whole ($\bar{x}_1 = 38.73333$, $\bar{x}_2 = 29.2000$, $t = 2.36$, $p = .026 < .05$); therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected (see Table 3).

Table 3

The Means and Standard Deviations for the Math Raw Scores of Third Grade Students Who Were Promoted and Non-Promoted at the First Grade Level

Math Categories	Group	Number of Students	Mean	S.D.	t	P
Math Computation	Promoted	15	14.4667	4.926	2.35	.026*
	Non-Promoted	15	9.6667	6.207		
Math Concepts	Promoted	15	24.2667	7.186	1.74	.092
	Non-Promoted	15	19.5333	7.680		
Math Total	Promoted	15	38.7333	9.520	2.36	.026*
	Non-Promoted	15	29.2000	12.440		

* - significance
p - < .05

Question 3

3. Do third grade students who were promoted or non-promoted at the end of their first year in grade one and matched according to IQ and age differ in language achievement scores (spelling, language mechanics, and language expression) on the Level 13 California Achievement Test?

Two areas were identified which indicated a significant difference between third grade students of matched ability and age who were promoted and non-promoted at the first grade level regarding language mechanics and a total language score. The promoted students showed a greater understanding of language mechanics than did the non-promoted students ($\bar{x}_1 = 12.3333$, $\bar{x}_2 = 9.6667$, $t = 2.19$, $p = .037 < .05$). There was also a greater understanding of the total language area among the promoted students at the third grade level ($\bar{x}_1 = 30.7333$, $\bar{x}_2 = 24.6667$, $t = 2.31$, $p = .029 < .05$); therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected (see Table 4).

Table 4

The Means and Standard Deviations for the CAT Language
Raw Scores of Third Grade Students Who Were Promoted and
Non-Promoted at the First Grade Level

Language Categories	Group	Number of Students	Mean	S.D.	t	P
Spelling	Promoted	15	13.8667	3.226	1.72	.096
	Non-Promoted	15	12.0667	2.434		
Language Mechanics	Promoted	15	12.3333	3.352	2.19	.037*
	Non-Promoted	15	9.6667	3.309		
Language- Expres- sion	Promoted	15	18.4000	4.102	2.02	.054
	Non-Promoted	15	15.0000	5.085		
Language Total	Promoted	15	30.7333	6.892	2.31	.029*
	Non-Promoted	15	24.6667	7.490		

* - significance

p - < .05

Question 4

4. Do third grade students who were promoted or non-promoted at the end of their first year in grade one and matched according to IQ and age differ in total achievement scores (reading, language and math) on the Level 13 California Achievement Test?

There was a significant difference between the total achievement battery scores between third grade students of matched ability and age who were promoted and non-promoted at the first grade level ($\bar{x}_1 = 131.6000$, $\bar{x}_2 = 106.0000$, $t = 2.22$, $p = .035 < .05$); therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected (see Table 5).

Table 5

The Means and Standard Deviations of the CAT Total Battery Achievement Test Score of Third Grade Students Who Were Promoted and Non-Promoted at the First Grade Level

Category	Group	Number of Students	Mean	S.D.	t	P
Battery Total	Promoted	15	131.6000	30.981	2.22	.035*
	Non-Promoted	15	106.0000	32.261		

* - significance
p - < .05

Question 5

- Do third grade students who were promoted or non-promoted at the end of their first year in grade one and matched according to IQ and age differ in their attitude toward school in respect to social-emotional aspects of their school experience?

There was no significant difference between the responses of third grade students of matched ability and age who were promoted and non-promoted at the first grade level regarding their responses to questions related to social-emotional aspects of school; therefore, the null hypothesis was accepted (see Table 6).

Table 6

The Means and Standard Deviations Between the Responses To The Social-Emotional Questions On The Attitude Questionnaire Of Third Grade Students Who Were Promoted and Non-Promoted at the First Grade Level

Question Category	Group	Number of Students	Mean	S.D.	t	p
Social-Emotional Questions	Promoted	15	3.7857	0.459	-0.02	.981
	Non-Promoted	15	3.7905	0.640		

* - significance
p - < .05

Question 6

6. Do third grade students who were promoted or non-promoted at the end of their first year in grade one and matched according to IQ and age differ in their attitude toward school in respect to educational aspects of their school experience?

There was no significant difference between third grade students of matched ability and age who were

promoted and non-promoted at the first grade level regarding their responses to questions related to educational aspects of school; therefore, the null hypothesis was accepted (see Table 7).

Table 7

The Means and Standard Deviations Between the Responses To The Educational Questions On The Attitude Questionnaire Of Third Grade Students Who Were Promoted and Non-Promoted at the First Grade Level

Question Category	Group	Number of Students	Mean	S.D.	t	P
Educa- tional Questions	Promoted	15	3.6889	0.642	0.49	.631
	Non- Promoted	15	3.5778	0.610		

* - significance

p - < .05

Chapter Summary

The results of this data analysis indicate several areas of significant difference when examining the achievement of third grade students of matched ability and age who were promoted and non-promoted at the first grade level. The comparison of CAT raw scores indicated that the promoted students had a greater understanding of reading vocabulary, language mechanics, overall language skills, math computation, overall math skills and a higher overall achievement. However, both promoted and non-

promoted students reflect reasonably positive attitudes toward school. The attitude questionnaire did not indicate any significant difference in the promoted and non-promoted students' outlook regarding the social-emotional or educational aspects of school.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

This investigation was undertaken to examine the achievement and attitude of third grade students of matched ability and age who were promoted and non-promoted at the first grade level. This chapter includes a review of the findings, discussion of conclusions, recommendations, and suggestions for further research.

Review of The Findings

The purpose of this study was to compare the achievement and attitude of third grade students of matched ability and age who were promoted and non-promoted at the first grade level. Hypotheses were tested between promoted and non-promoted students for reading, language, math, total achievement and social-emotional and educational attitudes toward school. The t-test procedure was used to examine the significance of the differences between the two groups.

Significant differences were found between the two groups for reading vocabulary, language mechanics, overall language skills, math computation, overall math skills, and overall achievement. The promoted group was more proficient in these areas. No significant differences were found for phonics, structured analysis, comprehension, total reading, spelling, language expression, math concepts, and social-emotional and educational attitude toward school.

Discussion of Conclusions

The uniqueness of this study is the careful match of promoted and non-promoted first grade students by IQ and age and the comparison of *achievement test scores and attitude* at a common point in time (the third grade level). In all, this meant a collection of data over a three-year period of time.

This researcher could not locate other studies which matched promoted and non-promoted first grade students by IQ and age and compared the students' achievement test scores and attitude at a common point in time beyond one year after the retention. Some studies examined students matched by IQ and age; however, the retention took place at various grade levels throughout the elementary years (Holmes, 1983; Schuyler, 1985, Showers, 1984; Abidin, 1960; Godfrey, 1972; and Ogden, 1971). Dobbs and Neville (1967) matched first grade promoted and non-promoted

students and followed their achievement for two years after the retention; however, the achievement of the promoted and non-promoted students was not examined at a common point in time.

Most research examining the social-emotional aspect of retention usually gathered a population from students retained throughout the elementary grades or a particular grade beyond the first grade level (White, 1973; Goodlad, 1952; Afinson, 1941; Morrison, 1956; Bodian, 1954; Brundage, 1956; Niklason, 1984; and Showers, 1984). Finlayson (1977) evaluated the self-concept of non-promoted first grade students and promoted second graders; however, he did not evaluate the self-concept of the two groups at a common point in their school years.

The findings of this study suggest that promotion allows for more improvement in the achievement of first grade students than non-promotion in the areas of reading vocabulary, language mechanics, overall language skills, math computation, overall math skills and overall achievement. There were no areas of achievement where non-promoted first grade students showed significant improvement over the matched promoted students; however, no significant differences were found when comparing the achievement of the two groups in phonics, structured analysis, comprehension, total reading, spelling, language expression, and math concepts. These findings are supportive of much of the research regarding promotion and

non-promotion in that grade retention does not improve student achievement over that of social promotion.

(Holmes, 1983; Schuyler, 1985; Showers, 1984; Abidin, 1960; Godfrey, 1972; Ogden, 1971; Holmes & Matthews, 1984; Jackson, 1975). However, this study did not find evidence to support research which indicates that grade retention is detrimental to a student's attitude toward school. There was no significant difference between the promoted and non-promoted students regarding their attitude toward social-emotional or educational aspects of school.

Research indicates that if retention is unavoidable, do it early or not at all (Walker, 1984). Lieberman (1980) points out the importance of psychosocial and neurological maturity in order for students to be successful in school. Lieberman suggests that a child who is demonstrating characteristics considered to be normal in younger children should be considered for retention in order to be given additional time to develop. Some of the behaviors he states which might indicate immaturity are thumbsucking, inability to delay gratification, inability to take turns, short attention span, a demonstrably greater interest in all forms of play and fantasy activities, hyperactivity, gross motor deficits, fine motor coordination difficulties, language and articulation problems, distractibility, and perceptual disturbances. Lieberman suggests that maturity deserves extremely

important consideration in school entry and retention decisions.

Since the students studied were of similar age and IQ and were retained at an early age, the question arises as to why the promoted group would perform better in certain areas of achievement than the non-promoted group which had an additional year to improve. There are certain factors that may be responsible for the differences found between the promoted and non-promoted groups; however, these factors are very difficult to measure or control. They include factors such as maturation, instructional differences, emotional influences, parental involvement, physical factors, or differences in behavior (Carstens, 1985).

Walker (1984) suggests that for the non-promoted student there is the danger of developing a negative self-fulfilling prophecy on the part of the child's peers, teachers, principals, and perhaps parents. For the child, Walker indicates that school may be viewed as a place where he/she is perceived as inferior. On the other hand, the promoted child's peers, teachers, principals and parents may have high expectations for his/her performance due to the fact that he was thought to have done well enough in first grade to be promoted to second. Harris and Sipay (1980) state that "there have been frequent claims that teachers' attitudes toward pupils influence teacher expectations and thus how they treat and instruct

pupils, which in turn determine how well the pupils achieve." (Harris & Sipay, p. 121)

Regardless of the findings, the non-promotion of a child should be dealt with on an individual basis utilizing one of the multifactored retention models. Lieberman (1980) indicates that these models are extremely useful in the retention decisionmaking process. He states that they are designed to ". . . promote rational decisionmaking on the part of the school personnel and parents with regard to retention. If it is useful, the ultimate beneficiaries will be the children." (Lieberman, p. 44)

Recommendations

The findings and conclusions of this study have implications for decisions regarding the promotion and non-promotion of students as follows:

1. A need for educators to be cognizant of what research has to say regarding this issue and aware of criteria to be considered when making a retention decision.
2. A need for school curriculum to meet the needs of students and not measure students on whether or not they meet the requirements of the curriculum at a specific grade level.
3. A need to evaluate classroom staffing in order to supply the assistance necessary to adjust the

curriculum to meet the needs of students (strategically placed instructional assistants and resource personnel working in a classroom rather than the resource room).

4. A need to look at alternative school organization to better meet the needs of students who do not function in the traditional grade-by-grade organization (transition class, junior first grade, all-day kindergarten, and non-graded primary units).

As implied by the effective schools movement, all students should be expected to work up to their potential. In order to accomplish this goal, education needs to adjust the curriculum and staff and consider alternative school organization plans to meet the needs of students as they move through the grades.

Suggestions For Future Research

This study attempted to clarify some of the confusion surrounding the promotion/non-promotion issue. However, further research is indicated as follows:

1. A continuation of the present study following the fifteen students through post-graduation.
2. A replication of this study using a larger population and matching students on a greater number of attributes.

3. A study regarding kindergarten students who were promoted and non-promoted.
4. Repeating the present study, grouping students according to IQ (below average, average, and above average) to clarify if non-promotion benefits any of these groups.
5. Studies examining the effects on student achievement and attitude of various school organization plans (year-round schools, transition classes, junior first grade, all-day kindergarten, and a non-graded primary unit).

Chapter Summary

According to the findings of this study, the non-promotion of first grade students does not improve their achievement when compared to a matched group of first grade promoted students at a common point in time (the third grade). There was no difference in attitude between the two groups (promoted and non-promoted) when considering the social-emotional and educational aspects of school. As indicated by the review of literature, educators need to be aware of what research says about the effects of non-promotion (educationally and emotionally) in order to make decisions which best serve students being considered for non-promotion.

Appendix A

Questionnaire Development

Questionnaire Development

The following steps were observed when developing the attitude questionnaire used in this study:



















































1. Purpose of the questionnaire was established.
2. Questions were developed through a brainstorming activity involving a group of educators.
3. Questions were categorized as social-emotional or educational.
4. Questions were examined for clarity and readability on the third grade level.
5. A five-point scale was selected to evaluate each question.
6. Educators and a statistician reviewed the questionnaire.
7. The questionnaire was given to a pilot group of third grade students.
8. The questionnaire was reevaluated, refining and deleting questions.
9. The test-retest method was used to establish the reliability of the questionnaire.
10. Guidelines were established to assure consistent administration of the questionnaire.

Appendix B

Student Questionnaire

Student Questionnaire

Please place an X on the response which is most accurate.

1. I like to go to school.     
2. School is important to me.     
3. I miss school during the summer.     
4. I like my teacher.     
5. I think my teacher likes me.     
6. I think I do well in school.     
7. I get to do special things in school.     
8. School is boring.     
9. The school day is too long.     
10. I think I could get better grades in school.     

11. I like the children in my class. 😊 😊 😐 😞 😞
12. I like myself. 😊 😊 😐 😞 😞
13. I think the children in my class like me. 😊 😊 😐 😞 😞
14. I am invited to my classmates' parties. 😊 😊 😐 😞 😞
15. I learn new things in school. 😊 😊 😐 😞 😞
16. I like reading. 😊 😊 😐 😞 😞
17. I like math. 😊 😊 😐 😞 😞
18. I like to read at home. 😊 😊 😐 😞 😞
19. My schoolwork is hard. 😊 😊 😐 😞 😞
20. My homework is easy. 😊 😊 😐 😞 😞

Appendix C

Letter of Explanation


Regarding the Questionnaire


Dear Third Grade Teacher:


Thank you for administering this questionnaire to your class. The following are several guidelines you will need to follow.


1. Have the children place their first and last names and the name of their school at the top of the questionnaire.
2. Tell the children that they are going to respond to some questions which will tell how they feel about school.
3. Place the following example on the chalkboard to explain to your students how they are to respond to the statements on the questionnaire.


I like recess. 

 - It's great (strongly agree)

 - It's OK (agree)

 - Sometimes I like it (moderately agree)

 - I don't really like it (disagree)

 - It's terrible (strongly disagree)

4. Pass out the questionnaires to your students.
5. Indicate to the children that they are to complete the questionnaire on their own. Tell them to raise their hands if they have a question.

Please return to Mary Stong, Uniontown Elementary School, as soon as possible.

(This study will investigate the attitude and achievement of promoted and non-promoted first grade students at the third grade level.)

Thank you for your help!

Sincerely,

Mary E. Stong

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