TEACHER BELIEFS REGARDING GRADE RETENTION BASED ON TYPE OF ACADEMIC DIFFICULTIES DEMONSTRATED: A PILOT STUDY

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ABSTRACT

TEACHER BELIEFS REGARDING GRADE RETENTION BASED ON TYPE OF ACADEMIC DIFFICULTIES DEMONSTRATED: A PILOT STUDY

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Academic failure has been shown to be both positively and negatively associated with a variety of different factors including school and classroom influences, home influences, student academic history, and student behavioral history (Casillas et al., 2012; Hattie, 2009; Lucio, Hunt, & Bornovalova, 2011; Marchant, Paulson, & Shunk, 2006; Richman, Bowen, & Woolley, 2004). One common intervention used in response to academic failure is retaining a student in grade. This is a pilot study designed to identify whether teacher beliefs regarding the effectiveness of retaining children differ based on reasons for academic failure and whether these differences are consistent across elementary and secondary level teachers with similar beliefs regarding retention. While 146 participants identified themselves as regular education teachers (from kindergarten to twelfth grade) willing to participate in the study, total scores were obtained for only 53 of these teachers. Participants came from a school district in the Southeastern United States. The teachers were asked to complete a demographic survey, academic failure scenarios, and a retention beliefs survey. One-way between groups ANOVAs were conducted to examine the relationships between grade level taught and retention effectiveness, promotion effectiveness, and overall retention beliefs scores, along with the relationships between total retention and promotion effectiveness scores and each of the Academic Failure

Scenarios. No significant differences in total retention effectiveness scores for the three grade levels existed for the Academic Failure Scenarios. In terms of differences across grade levels on total promotion effectiveness scores for each scenario, a significant difference in total promotion effectiveness scores on the school and classroom scenario existed between middle school and high school teachers, with middle school teachers' ratings being significantly more positive than high school teachers' ratings. Additionally, total retention effectiveness scores were significantly higher for school and classroom influences than academic, home, and behavioral influences. Total promotion effectiveness scores were significantly lower for behavioral influences than school and classroom, home, and academic influences. Finally, high school teachers were found to have more positive retention beliefs than elementary school teachers.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

With the passage of the No Child Left Behind Act in 2001 and an increased emphasis on standards-based reform, greater focus has been placed on schools to be accountable for the educational development of all students. Educators are now required to have every student, regardless of initial academic abilities, meet state academic standards, as measured by end-of-grade academic tests. Educators are pressured, now more than ever, to ensure that every student is able to clearly demonstrate grade-level knowledge and skills. This movement has led researchers to delve deeper into how students learn, what factors contribute to student failure, how to effectively help those students who have fallen behind, and how teachers influence achievement.

A primary means of investigating how teachers influence student achievement is by examining teacher beliefs. It has been demonstrated that beliefs are directly related to the decisions we make (Bandura, 1986; Dewey, 1933; Nisbett & Ross, 1980; Pajares (1992); Rokeach, 1968). Belief in the effectiveness of a practice or instruction methodology strongly influences the likelihood of implementing that practice or method. Examining teacher beliefs about grade retention, especially in regards to the reasons for retention or academic difficulties being demonstrated, can help to understand why teachers make the decisions that they do regarding retaining a child in grade.

Academic achievement plays a vital role in schools; it is the standard by which we determine a student's success or failure. Students who struggle academically tend to be retained in grade and are more likely to drop out of school (Casillas, Robbins, Allen,

Kuo, Hanson, & Schmeiser, 2012; Mac Iver, 2010). The practice of retaining a student in grade (grade retention) dates back to the 1850s, when it was first implemented as an intervention for students who failed to master grade-level curriculum (Beebe-Frankenberger, Bocian, MacMillan, & Gresham, 2004). Research has been conducted for over 30 years investigating the effectiveness of this practice. Research has found grade retention to be an ineffective practice (discussed later in this paper), yet teachers, administrators, and parents continue to endorse the decision to have a child repeat a grade (Beebe-Frankenberger, Bocian, MacMillan, & Gresham, 2004; Hong and Yu, 2007; Jimerson, 1999; Martin, 2009; O'Connor, Notari-Syverson, & Vadasy, 1996; Pagani, Tremlay, Vitaro, Boulerice, & McDuff, 2001). It may be possible that teachers continue to believe that grade retention is an effective intervention due to a combination of their beliefs regarding student learning and academic failure.

For years researchers have been examining how student achievement is impacted by the learning and home environment along with how to affect positive change in student achievement. John Hattie published a book in 2009 reviewing over 800 meta-analyses related to what contributes to student learning. From this analysis, Hattie identified contributions related to student, home, school, teacher, curricula, and teaching approaches. For the purposes of this study, aspects from the student, home, school, and teacher will be investigated. This review of meta-analyses indicated the following significant contributions relevant to this study: (a) student contributions included student background information, attitudes and dispositions, physical attributes, and preschool influences; (b) contributions from the home encompassed socioeconomic status (SES), welfare policies, family structure, and home environment; (c) contributions from the

school involved attributes of schools, types of schools, school compositional effects, classroom compositional effects, school curricula effects for gifted students, and classroom influences; (d) finally, teacher contributions comprised of teacher training programs, teacher subject matter knowledge, quality of teaching, teacher-student relationships, professional development, expectations, labeling students, and teacher clarity. These contributions are the guidelines for the following literature review and study scenarios.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Academic failure has been associated with a number of negative outcomes; including being retained in grade, dropping out of school, premature sexual activity, early pregnancy, crime, violence, and drug use (Casillas et al., 2012; Mac Iver, 2010; Woods, 1994). Historically, teachers have used a variety of different interventions to help students experiencing academic failure. Some of these interventions have been based on solid research while others such as retention in grade have less empirical support (Beebe-Frankenberger, Bocian, MacMillan, & Gresham, 2004; Hong and Yu, 2007; Jimerson, 1999; Martin, 2009; O'Connor, Notari-Syverson, and Vadasy, 1996; Pagani, Tremlay, Vitaro, Boulerice, & McDuff, 2001). Despite this lack of support, teachers continue to make decisions that result in students being retained in grade. This review of the literature will include research on factors related to academic failure, history and effectiveness of grade retention, and teacher beliefs and decision making practices related to grade retention.

Factors Related to Academic Failure

There are a number of risk factors that result in a student failing academically. Lucio, Rapp-Paglicci, and Rowe (2011) describe risk factors as "those attributes or variables that increase the likelihood that people with similar characteristics will develop a problem" (p. 154). A student's environment, specifically his or her family, peers, school, and community, are determinates of the presence (or lack thereof) of risk factors (Richman, Bowen, & Woolley, 2004). Conversely, there are protective factors that reduce the likelihood of developing a problem. What determines a risk or protective factor is

whether or not the student's parents, for example, are involved in the school (protective factor), if the student's peers are involved in criminal activities (risk factor), or if the community values and supports education (protective factor), etc.

The factors related to academic failure have been grouped in various ways by researchers (Casillas et al., 2012; Hattie, 2009; Lucio, Hunt, & Bornovalova, 2011; Marchant, Paulson, & Shunk, 2006).The groups consistently identified include (a) school and classroom influences, (b) home influences, (c) student academic history, and (d) student behavioral history. School and classroom factors also include teacher factors. The factors specifically related to the school include dropout rates, student attendance rates, the size of the school, and school mobility. Teacher factors consist of variables such as student-teacher relationships, time spent on task, and use of direct instruction. Class size, classroom management, classroom cohesion, peer influences, and the presence and treatment of disruptive behaviors are categorized as classroom factors. Home influences include SES, the home environment, parental education, parental involvement, and the time students spend in front of media devices (television, video games, and computers. Student academic history includes previous academic performance, retention, and enrollment in special education services. Student behavioral history includes absenteeism, school misbehavior, failure to complete homework, and academic engagement. Lucio, Hunt, and Bornovalova (2011) concluded that a student's academic achievement is not determined by any one variable; rather it is a mix of factors, relationships, and environments that result in a student failing or succeeding academically.

School, classroom, and teacher influences. School and classroom influences play a major part in a student's success. According to Lucio, et al. (2011) and Casillas et al. (2012) school factors are specific to the school the student attends, the teachers who teach the student, and the classroom the student is instructed in. School factors include dropout rates, student attendance rates, size of the school, and school mobility. Each of these factors plays an important part in understanding a school's and individual student's academic success. Schools with higher average achievement scores are those with low absence rates and dropout rates, smaller class sizes, fewer minority students, lower percentage of students on free or reduced lunch, and higher average reading and mathematics achievement of students in the classroom (Alton-Lee, 2003; Chatterji, 2006; Konstantopoulos, 2005; Maerten-Rivera, Myers, Lee, and Penfield, 2010). According to Alton-Lee (2003), in a review of studies related to student achievement, between 0 to 20 percent of variance in student achievement is attributed to school level variables. Additionally, studies conducted by Chatterji (2006) and Maerten-Rivera, Myers, Lee, and Penfield (2010) found that 13 to 21 percent of the overall variance in achievement scores were accounted for by between-school factors.

There are a number of school level factors to examine when looking at student achievement outcomes, but some of the most important variables stem from the teachers and classrooms. Most of the variance in student achievement is attributed to differences between teachers and classes. Konstantopoulos (2005) concluded that teachers and the classrooms students are assigned to are possibly more important than the actual school they attend. Muijs and Reynolds (2001) reported on previous school effectiveness research showing that when examining student performance, the classes students are in

are much more important than the schools the students attend. This research indicates that the differences between teacher's attitudes, beliefs, and practices play a significant role in the academic success of the students.

Classroom factors include the size of classes, classroom management, classroom cohesion, disruptive behaviors in the classroom, and peer influences (Hattie, 2009). Unlike school size, there is much dispute regarding the effectiveness of smaller class sizes. Those for smaller class sizes argue that positive outcomes include increased achievement outcomes, improved conditions for teachers, less retentions, more individualized instruction, better instruction quality, less classroom disruptions, fewer incidences of misbehavior by students, and higher student engagement (Chatterji, 2006; Finn & Achilles, 1996; Hattie, 2009; Maerten-Rivera, Myers, Lee, & Penfield, 2010; Nye, Hedges, & Konstantopoulos, 2002). Some studies examining the relationship between class size and academic achievement have found statistically significant differences between the academic performances of students in small classes compared to students in large classes, across all academic areas (Chatterji, 2006; Finn & Achilles, 1996; Maerten-Rivera, Myers, Lee, & Penfield, 2010; Nye, Hedges, & Konstantopoulos, 2002). Despite these arguments and individual studies, an extensive analysis of meta-analyses regarding class size indicate small class sizes do not significantly impact student learning (Hattie, 2009). According to Hattie's analysis, studies supporting smaller class sizes "are more related to teacher and student work-related conditions" while opposing studies cite the small overall effects small classes have on student learning (p. 86).

Classroom factors also include classroom management, classroom cohesion, disruptive behaviors exhibited in class, and peer influences (Hattie, 2009). Hattie's meta-

analysis revealed well managed classrooms are positively correlated with achievement (d= 0.52) and engagement (d= 0.62). Teachers, who are able to identify and act on potential behavioral problems, while maintaining emotional objectivity, have the greatest potential to promote a well-managed classroom. Teachers who have and employ effective disciplinary interventions also are more likely to have well-managed classrooms.

Hattie (2009) also found a positive stable relationship between achievement and the following classroom variables: classroom cohesion, class climate, the number of disruptive behaviors, and peer acceptance. Classroom cohesion is the idea that everyone involved in the classroom, the teacher and the students, are working toward the same goal of positively furthering knowledge. Class climate variables which optimize student learning include: goal directed behaviors, positive interpersonal relationships, and social support. Disruptive behaviors exhibited by students in the classroom are negatively correlated with student achievement.

Finally, teacher effectiveness is associated with between 5 and 20 percent of the variance in achievement (Hattie, 2009). According to Harker and Nash (1996), in New Zealand, the school level factors accounted for 5 – 10% of the variance across mathematics, English, and science, but the teacher students were assigned to mattered significantly. Hattie (2009) reported that teacher related factors consist of teacher-student relationships, time on task, and direct instruction. Teachers who have better relationships with their students have classrooms with more engagement, higher levels of respect, less behavioral issues, and better achievement outcomes. However, it is estimated that students only spend 50% of their time engaged in classroom activities.

Home influences. Influences from home play a vital role in the academic achievement of a student. Hattie (2009) identified the following as home influences: a family's socioeconomic status, parental education, parental involvement, and time spent in front of media devices. Additional home influences include a family's minority status. According to research, the most prominent home influence is the SES of the student and their parents.

Research indicates SES strongly influences GPA. According to Hattie (2009) SES is strongly related to academic achievement (d = 0.57). A student's SES is directly related to the resources available to him or her at home. A common measure of SES is the percentage of students receiving free or reduced lunches. Sirin (2005) conducted a meta-analysis of 58 studies between 1990 and 2000, and found that achievement was strongly related to students on free or reduced lunches (an effect size of d= 0.66). Maerten-Rivera, Myers, Lee, and Penfield (2010) found students on free or reduced lunch tend to perform below their peers not receiving free or reduced lunch. Konstantopoulos (2005) found that students attending high SES schools obtained higher achievement scores than students attending low SES schools.

SES is one of the most significant correlates of a student's reading achievement (Chatterji, 2006; Marchant, Paulson, & Shunk, 2006). Specifically, Chatterji (2006) found that children whose SES fell at the lowest quartile (the lowest 20%) performed -1.019 standard deviations below everyone else. Even broadening the definition to the lowest two quartiles (the lowest 40%), resulted in a significant difference between low SES students and their higher SES peers (-0.61 standard deviations). Nye, Hudges, and Konstantopoulos (2002) reported low SES students performed significantly lower on tests

of reading and mathematics in kindergarten through 3rd grade. Additionally, retained students are more likely to be from low SES families (Guevremont, Roos, & Brownell, 2007).

Another factor linked with SES is parental education. Parental education often is difficult to ascertain, although it has been found extremely valuable in predicting student achievement (Marchant, Paulson, & Shunk, 2006). The meta-analysis completed by Sirin (2005) found the effect size between achievement and parental education was d= 0.60, which was similar to the effects between achievement and parental income and occupation (d= 0.58 and d= 0.56, respectively). Marchant, Paulson, and Shunk (2006) found the percentage of parents with a college education to be significantly related to high achievement scores among students. In a longitudinal study of 106 students, from kindergarten to 11th grade, Jimerson and Dalton (2001) found older retained students "had mothers with lower levels of education who placed less value on educational attainment" (p. 337). Additionally, the lowest performing retained students at 7th and 9th grade had mothers with lower levels of education who valued education less compared to the higher performing retained classmates. SES and parental education are highly associated.

The impact parental involvement has on education varies across studies. Parental expectations have been found to have a positive effect on student achievement, while lack of parental involvement (in some form) has been found to have a negative effect on student achievement (Hattie, 2009). Based on the research synthesis conducted by Hattie (2009), parents with high aspirations and expectations for their child's educational career are associated with higher achievement outcomes, while parental supervision (through

homework surveillance, punishing for poor grades, and restricting time with friends and television) have a negative impact on academic achievement aspirations of adolescents.

Another home influence related to achievement is the amount of time students spend in front of media devices (Lucio, Hunt, & Bornovalova, 2011). The meta-analysis conducted by Hattie (2009) indicated a small negative relationship between the time spent watching television and academic achievement. There appears to be a positive effect between watching up to two hours of television and academic achievement, but a negative effect between watching more than two hours of television and academic achievement.

The minority status of the family is another important factor related to academic achievement. There is a historical difference between the achievement of white students and minority students. Lee (2002) reported a narrowing of the achievement gap between Whites and minorities during the 1970s and the first half of the 1980s, but this progress slowed significantly during the 1990s. A study conducted by Lucio, Hunt, and Bornovalova in 2011 using a regression analysis, found the following trend in GPAs (from highest to lowest): Asian students, White students, Multiracial students, Hispanic students, American Indian/Alaska Native students, and Black students.

Higher academic achievement scores are associated with populations composed of lower percentages of Black and Hispanic students (Marchant, Paulson, & Shunk, 2006). Studies have shown minority students perform lower on tests of achievement and struggle more academically compared to White students (Bacharach, Baumeister, & Furr, (2003); Chatterji, 2006; Maerten-Rivera, Myers, Lee, & Penfield, 2010; Marchant, Paultson, & Shunk, 2006; Richman, Bowen, & Woolley, 2004). Both Chatterji (2006)

and Marchant, Paulson, and Shunk (2006) reported minority students (Black and Hispanic) perform significantly lower than their White peers on tests of reading achievement. Furthermore, Nye, Hudges, and Konstantopoulos (2002) reported minority students performed significantly lower on tests of reading and mathematics in kindergarten through 3rd grade. In terms of retention, minority students tend to be retained more than their peers (Bali, Anagnostopoulos, & Roberts, 2005). In Texas, during the 2000-01 school year, 72.5% of retained students were Hispanic or African American, although Hispanic and African American students only made up 54.3% of the total population (Bali, Anagnostopoulos, & Roberts, 2005).

Each of the previously mentioned home influences has been shown to be related to student academic achievement. All facets of a student's environment should be considered when examining the academic achievement of a student. Educators must consider whether students are academically behind because of home influences outside of the teacher's control. Is the lack of academic support from parents a result of limited resources at home, level of parental involvement, the parent's own knowledge, or cultural/language barriers? Ultimately, are the students struggling academically because of home factors and not because of ability, behaviors, or school factors?

Student academic history. Academic factors include a student's previous academic performance, if the student has been retained, or receives special education services. A student's academic performance history is a strong predictor of whether that student will graduate or drop out of school (Rumberger & Lim, 2008). Past academic achievement has been identified as the strongest predictor of future academic success and retention; retention being one of the most highly correlated factors related to student

dropout (Bost & Riccomini, 2006; Casillas et al., 2012; Hattie, 2009; Mac Iver, 2010; Murray & Naranjo, 2008; Rumberger & Lim, 2008). Lucio, Rapp-Paglicci, and Rowe (2011) identified the number of grades repeated as one of six factors that have a significant relationship with cumulative GPA.

What a student has learned from the previous year of schooling or at home has a significant effect on how well they will perform during their current year of education (Hattie, 2009). In addition, previous achievement predicts success from entrance into school throughout adulthood. DeBaz (1994) conducted a meta-analysis examining the effects between science achievement and prior achievement, finding that nearly 50% of the time, prior achievement leads to future achievement gains. Additionally, Chatterji (2006) indicated that a child's previous reading achievement has a significant impact on the following grades performance.

Teachers must consider whether a student's academic difficulties are a result of a history of academic struggles, if a student has only recently demonstrated difficulties, and if the student is able to build on previous knowledge and succeed in the future. Teacher's expectations for a student coming into their classroom are likely to be affected by the student's previous performance because achievement has been shown to one of the strongest predictors of future academic success. Their beliefs about the student's future achievement also are likely to be affected. It is likely that if a teacher is getting a student who has a history of academic struggles, but has not been retained, the teacher may be more inclined to retain that student in order to give them the opportunity to "catch up". Additionally, if a teacher has a student who is only recently struggling, the teacher may

provide that student with more attention in order to give him or her the push needed to succeed or attribute his or her struggles with outside variables.

Student behavioral history. A number of behavioral factors have been associated with academic failure. Among these are academic engagement, absenteeism, school misbehavior, and completion of homework assignments (Casillas et al., 2012; Lucio, Hunt, & Bornovalova, 2011). Lucio, Rapp-Paglicci, and Rowe (2011) found attendance and school behavior to be two of six factors strongly associated with cumulative GPA.

Academic engagement has received significant attention over the past 10 to 15 years. According to Furrer and Skinner (2002), engagement consists primarily of engaging in goal-oriented task and being actively involved. Marks (2000) defined engagement as a psychological process involving "the attention, interest, investment, and effort students expend in the work of learning" (p. 155). Some examples of this would be participating in discussions, asking questions, answering questions, and taking notes. Students who are academically engaged are more likely to learn, find learning rewarding, graduate, and pursue higher education (Marks, 2000). Disengagement has been linked to school failure and dropout (Hirschfield & Gasper, 2010; Marks, 2000). In the study conducted by Marks (2000) on academic engagement across grade levels (primary to high school), results indicated engagement in academics decreases as students' progress through school. Hirschfield, and Gasper (2010) conducted a study on fifth through eighth grade students examining the relationship between engagement and delinquency. Emotional and behavioral disengagement were positively associated with misconduct;

additionally, misconduct was associated with a decrease in cognitive engagement. A student can only be engaged in school if she or he attends school.

Attendance has shown a strong association with academic achievement (Dekalb, 1999; Epstein & Sheldon, 2002; Finn, Fish, Scott, 2008; Gottfried, 2009; Paredes & Ugarte, 2011; Roby, 2004). Dekalb (1999) indicated that academic performance is negatively impacted by absenteeism. Paredes and Ugarte (2011) found that being absent nine days during a school year could reduce performance by approximately a quarter of a standard deviation on mathematics tests. A study on attendance and its association with achievement outcomes among 86,000 elementary and middle school students revealed an individual's attendance rate is significantly associated with GPA and other achievement measures, such as standardized tests (Gottfried, 2009). Roby's 2004 study of 3,171 Ohio schools indicated a strong positive relationship between student achievement and average attendance. Roby also examined the relationship between student achievement and the attendance averages of the top and bottom three schools in each of the six urban districts. A statistically significant difference was found among four of the six urban school districts, with the three schools with the highest attendance averages performing significantly better on tests of achievement than the three schools with the lowest attendance averages. Finally, Jimerson (2001) found retained students had lower attendance rates, before being retained, than promoted students.

Students exhibiting significant behavior problems perform below their peers and are at risk for academic failure and future dropout (Breslau, Breslau, Miller, & Raykov, 2011; Finn, Fish, & Scott, 2008; Lee, 2006). Students who perform well early in their educational career, exhibit fewer behavior problems during early education and continue

to exhibit fewer problems later in their educational career (Lee, 2006). Numerous studies have been conducted examining the relationship between misbehaviors and academic achievement. Finn, Fish, and Scott (2008) collected data from 24,599 students from 8th grade through age 26. Misbehavior was most commonly associated with male students and students from low income homes and as misbehaviors increased in severity and number, students test scores and grades lowered. Students exhibiting three or more misbehaviors were more likely to drop out of school. Additionally, students with two or more misbehaviors were significantly more likely to pursue, persist, and complete postsecondary education compared to students with three or more misbehaviors. Breslau, Breslau, Miller and Kaykov (2011) examined the behavior problems of 823 students, following them from age 6 to 17. While controlling for intelligence, maternal characteristics, and family and community environments, results indicated that behavior problems at ages 6 and 11 were associated with lower achievement scores in math and reading at age 17. Furthermore, students who exhibited persistent behavior problems from age 6 to 11, had lower math and reading scores at age 17 than students who exhibited behavior problems only at age 6 or age 11.

As with the other factors related to academic achievement, teachers should examine the relationship between a student's behavioral history and academic struggles. Behavioral factors have a direct influence on student achievement. If a student is not engaged in the classroom, has excessive absences, or acts out in class, the student cannot possibly be learning. Students, who are not physically or mentally present in the classroom and are not practicing academics outside of school, are more likely to struggle.

Teachers must identify whether or not students struggling academically are struggling because of behavioral issues or because of lack of a academic or intellectual deficit.

Retention as an Intervention for Academic Failure

History. Jackson (1975) defined grade retention as "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" (p. 613). This is done with the belief that by providing a student with an additional year of the same material, he or she will develop the academic skill set he or she were previously unable to develop and will be successful in the future (Silberglitt, Appleton, Burns, & Jimerson, 2006). Grade retention has been used since the 1850s as an intervention for students who have failed to master grade-level curriculum (Beebe-Frankenberger, Bocian, MacMillan, & Gresham, 2004). It was during the 1850s that the public schools in the United States switched to graded classes that were instituted "on the premise that achievement would be enhanced if the curriculum were graded by year in school" (Beebe-Frankenberger, Bocian, MacMillan, & Gresham, 2004, p. 204).

Retention was developed as an intervention for children based on two assumptions. The first assumption was that a child's maturation level is the reason for his or her poor performance and the child has the ability to catch up if he or she is given more time (Beebe-Frankenberger, Bocian, MacMillan, & Gresham, 2004). The second assumption was that grade retention was instituted under the belief that the threat of being retained will motivate a child to work harder to avoid repeating a grade (Beebe-Frankenberger, Bocian, MacMillan, & Gresham, 2004). The main idea is that by providing the student with an additional year of the same material, he or she will learn more academically.

Effectiveness research. The primary focus of retention is academic achievement (Leckrone and Griffith, 2006; Tanner & Galis, 1997). If a student were performing well academically in his/her current grade and received passing grades in all classes, the question of retention rarely would arise. A student's lack of academic achievement is usually what starts the retention conversation. Research indicates that retention has a negative effect on: academic achievement across all subjects, work-study skills, and GPA (Hattie, 2009; Hughes, Chen, Thoemmes, & Kwok, 2010; Moser, West, & Hughes, 2012). Additionally, promoted students, even when matched academically, experience more long term positive effects, including better scores on social and emotional adjustment scales, better behavior at school, high self-concepts, and better attitudes toward school (Hattie, 2009; Jimerson, 2001). Furthermore, retained students are at a heightened risk of dropping out of school (Hattie, 2009).

Studies indicate that while there appears to be positive short-term achievement gains during the retained year, these positive effects quickly disappear. A 2012 study conducted by Moser, West and Hughes, used propensity scores to identify and match at-risk retained and promoted students. Propensity scores were used in this study to ensure that two groups have an equal probability of a certain outcome on the basis of baseline variables. Propensity scores were described as "the estimated probabilities of being assigned to the treatment group" (p. 2). The study showed initial achievement advantages in the areas of reading and math for students who were retained during their second year of first grade instruction, compared to the promoted students' first grade scores. However, by fifth grade, the retained students performed slightly lower on math and reading than their promoted peers (Moser, West, & Hughes, 2012). A study conducted by

Dombek and McDonald (2012) matched retained and promoted students on school, gender, and fall Letter-Word Identification and Picture Vocabulary scores. At the beginning of the school year, both the retained and promoted students were performing below grade level. At the end of the school year retained students experienced less skill gains in word reading and passage comprehension compared to their matched-promoted peers.

Students who are retained typically perform below their same-grade peers. Hong and Yu (2007) conducted an unmatched study of repeating kindergarten students and promoted first grade students and found repeating kindergarten students performed lower than their promoted peers in the academic areas of reading and mathematics. According to Hong and Yu (2007), retained students would have benefited more from being promoted and receiving the next grade levels reading and math instruction, rather than repeating a grade level twice and receiving the same instruction over again. Hughes, Chen, Thoemmes, and Kwok (2010) examined statewide reading test data on Florida students and found the majority of students who were retained in 3rd grade continued to perform below their grade-level peers at 5th grade. Ferguson, Jimerson, and Dalton (2001) conducted a study following 106 students from kindergarten to 11th grade. At 7th and 9th grade, nine out of the ten lowest GPAs were attained by retained students. Meisels and Liaw (1993) found students who were retained had significantly lower grades and test scores than students who never were retained. Additionally, their results indicated the retained students were five to seven times more likely to have learning problems and to be placed in special education.

There are numerous reported negative outcomes associated with retention. Martin (2009) completed a study which indicated students who were old for their grade experienced higher levels of disengagement, lower performance scores, and lower homework completion rates. Conversely, students who were young for their grade experienced higher performance scores, higher homework completion rates, lower absentee rates, and valued school more. Pagani et al. (2001) reported retained students, compared to non-retained students, experienced higher levels of anxiety and inattentiveness in later grades. Additionally, it has been found that grade retention at the elementary level reduces the likelihood of post-secondary education by approximately 85% (Jimerson, Anderson, & Whipple, 2002). In addition, students who are retained experience decreases in relationships with their peers, self-esteem, and emotional functioning, in addition to experiencing an increase in classroom disengagement, higher absences, and more skipping of classes (Leckrone & Griffith, 2006). Studies of retention have shown overall mean achievement effects ranging from d=-0.15 to -0.39 (Hattie, 2009).

Teacher beliefs. It is widely held and accepted that beliefs are the best indicators of the decisions humans make (Bandura, 1986; Dewey, 1933; Nisbett & Ross, 1980; Rokeach, 1968). This is applicable to teachers as well; the beliefs teachers have affect their classroom teaching, how they manage the classroom environment, and their acceptance of new practices. By studying teacher beliefs about a specific idea or school practice, such as retention, researchers can gain more insight into why the practices of retaining a student in grade are used by educational professionals.

Pajares (1992) wrote an entire article synthesizing teachers' beliefs and educational research. Based on his research on the topic, he came up with list of assumptions that can be made when studying teachers' educational beliefs: (a) beliefs are formed early and persevere; (b) humans develop belief systems that help us define and understand the world; the earlier a belief is placed in a belief system, the harder it is to change that belief; (c) we hold on to beliefs based on incorrect knowledge (even when we know it); and (d) beliefs are essential in defining behaviors and organizing information (Pajares; 1992). Finally, and most importantly, our beliefs strongly influence our perceptions and affect our behaviors (Pajares; 1992).

Many teachers believe retention is an acceptable practice for students who are socially immature, lack basic skills, or have not mastered grade level curriculum (Stipek & Byler, 1997; Smith and Shepard, 1988; Tomchin & Impara, 1992; Whitmer, Hoffman, & Norris, 2004). Smith and Shepard (1988) conducted interviews with kindergarten teachers to examine their beliefs about retention. Every teacher interviewed felt students lacking in ability or maturity would benefit from repeating the grade. Stipek and Byler (1997) interviewed 60 teachers, 44 felt retaining a student or delaying the entry of a student in school to be acceptable for socially immature students. A number of other teachers in the study also believed students who lack specific skills should be retained or should delay entry in school. Many teachers also believe a student's lack of academic success is a result of the student's lack of effort or home factors which are out of the teacher's control (Tomchin & Impara, 1992). Teachers have reported the following benefits to retention: providing the student with an additional year to master previously un-mastered material; success experienced in the second year of a grade will give the

student's self-esteem the boost they need; repeating students are in a class of other students with similar abilities, which produces homogeneous classrooms; threatening a student with retention makes them work harder; and providing immature students another year to mature and maturity makes learning more successful (Smith & Shepard, 1988; Tanner & Combs, 1993; Tomchin & Impara, 1992).

Many teachers believe retention has few negative effects (Smith & Shepard, 1988; Tomchin & Impara, 1992). Teachers in Smith and Shepard's study (1988) felt there were a few minor and temporary negative effects to retaining a student. The teachers in this study had a hard time identifying the struggles a repeating student may have, but the parents identified these as feeling like a failure, differences in physical size, missing old classmates, being teased, being bored in class during the repeated year, and being overconfident and careless in their school work (Smith & Shepard, 1988). Tomchin and Impara (1992) found all teachers, no matter what grade they taught, believed retention to be an acceptable practice. In Tomchin and Impara's study (1992), 67% of the teachers interviewed felt retention was necessary to maintain grade level standards. Additionally, Tomchin and Impara (1992) compared the scores of K-3 teachers with 4-7 teachers and found no significant differences in retention beliefs. A more recent study conducted by Witmer, Hoffman, and Norris (2004) found seventy-seven percent of teachers surveyed felt retention was an effective means for preventing academic failure. It is likely that teachers only see the positive effects of retention, specifically the positive academic gains the student makes in the teacher's class the following year. These teachers are seeing the initial impact the additional year in their classroom has on a retained student's achievement and not the long-term impact (Tanner & Galis, 1997). Teachers do not

follow the students during the next couple of years or track the student's achievement in ensuing grades.

While many studies have found that most teachers believe retention is an effective and acceptable means for preventing academic failure, there are some differences based on the grade taught. The differences may be due to the commonly known fact that students in kindergarten through third grade are learning to read and after third grade, students are reading to learn (Hughes, Chen, Thoemmes, & Kwok, 2010). The effectiveness of retention is endorsed by teachers in lower grades (K-2) more than teachers in higher grades (Tomchin & Impara, 1992; Whitmer, Hoffman, & Norris 2004). Some of the fourth through seventh grade teachers did not believe in the positive outcomes associated with retention, but felt there were not many other alternatives for students who were performing below grade level or were immature (Tomchin & Impara, 1992). Tomchin and Impara also found teachers who taught kindergarten through third grade believe: (1) retention was necessary for a student to experience future academic success; (2) some children needed longer to learn and the curriculum did not allow for this; and (3) immature students should be retained. Whitmer, Hoffman, and Norris (2004) found more third and fourth grade teachers, compared to kindergarten through second grade teachers, believed retention was necessary to maintain standards and was necessary for students who do not put forth the necessary effort in academics. Third and fourth grade teachers also indicated over-age students, those who are retained in grade, display more behavioral problems, while the kindergarten through second grade teachers did not endorse this.

Retention decisions. The decision to retain a student is not taken lightly and is generally not made by a single individual. Factors leading to the selection of grade retention as an intervention are poor academic performance, emotional/behavioral problems, and high rates of absences (Beebe-Frankenberger, Bocian, MacMillan, & Gresham, 2004; Jimerson, 1999, 2001). Dombek and McDonald (2012) report retention is selected as an intervention for students who: fail "to meet grade level expectations on high-stakes assessments, [demonstrate an] inability to make adequate progress in one or more content areas or poor performance in one or more content areas, and immaturity or age" (p. 568). Additional factors influencing retention decisions include: ability, self-esteem, and effort put forth by a student (Tomchin & Impara, 1992; Whitmer, Hoffman, & Norris, 2004).

Retention decisions, while initially viewed as occurring locally, are affected by state and national policies (Peterson & Hughes, 2010). The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 instituted that every student meet grade level requirements (No Child Left Behind [NCLB], 2002). Each state is responsible for creating tests to evaluate student skills. Over the past 20 years, states have been responsible for implementing promotion policies in which many states, including, Wisconsin, Texas, and California, have enacted "no social promotion" policies (Bali, Anagnostopoulos, and Roberts, 2005). Consequently, states who have implemented these policies also have seen an increase in retention rates (Hughes, Chen, Thoemmes, & Kwok, 2010). While some states have decreed an end to social promotion, they have given school districts considerable leeway in determining the specific criteria for school level promotion and retention. At the school level, the decision to retain a student is based on academic data and other available data (Peterson and

Hughes, 2010). Typically, the teachers who work with a student make the final decision to retain or promote a student (Witmer, Hoffman, & Norris, 2004). Tanner and Galis (1997) wrote: “the teacher is the single most important person in the conclusion to retain” (p. 108).

CHAPTER THREE: PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

Academic failure has been shown to be associated with a variety of different factors including school and classroom influences, home influences, student academic history, and student behavioral history (Casillas et al., 2012; Hattie, 2009; Lucio, Hunt, & Bornovalova, 2011; Marchant, Paulson, & Shunk, 2006; Richman, Bowen, & Woolley, 2004). One common intervention used in response to academic failure is retaining a student in grade. However, research on the practice of grade retention has clearly shown no long-term academic benefits associated with retention and there are a number of negative outcomes associated with retention. Despite this research, teachers continue to believe retention is effective and do not acknowledge the negative outcomes (Stipek & Byler, 1997; Smith and Shepard, 1988; Tomchin & Impara, 1992; Whitmer, Hoffman, & Norris, 2004). Teacher beliefs regarding retention influence their decisions regarding whether or not to retain a child. What is less clear is whether these beliefs regarding the effectiveness of retention vary depending on the factors related to the child's academic failure. This is a pilot study designed to identify whether teacher beliefs regarding the effectiveness of retaining children differ based on reasons for academic failure and whether these differences are consistent across elementary and secondary level teachers with similar beliefs regarding retention.

Hypotheses

1. Based on research by Tomchin and Impara (1992), there will be significant differences between elementary, middle, and high school level teachers in beliefs of the effectiveness of retention across all reasons for academic failure with elementary level teachers having more positive beliefs regarding effectiveness than middle or high school level teachers.

2. Conversely, based on research by Tomchin and Impara (1992) and Whitmer, Hoffman, and Norris (2004), there will be significant differences between elementary, middle, and high school level teachers in beliefs of the effectiveness of promotion across all reasons for academic failure with elementary level teachers having more negative beliefs regarding effectiveness than middle or high school level teachers.

3. Based on research by Beebe-Frankenberger, Bocian, MacMillan, and Gresham (2004), Konstantopoulos (2005), Pajares (1992), Stipek and Byler, (1997), Smith and Shepard (1988), Tanner and Galis (1997), and Tomchin and Impara (1992) there will be significant differences in teachers' effectiveness ratings of retention for students based on different factors related to their academic difficulties, with effectiveness scores being higher when the academic difficulties are related to school and classroom influences, student academic history, and student behavioral history, compared to when the academic difficulties are related to home influences.

4. Conversely, based on research by Beebe-Frankenberger, Bocian, MacMillan, and Gresham (2004), Konstantopoulos (2005), Pajares (1992), Stipek

and Byler, (1997), Smith and Shepard (1988), Tanner and Galis (1997), and Tomchin and Impara (1992) there will be significant differences in teachers' effectiveness ratings of promotion for students based on different factors related to their academic difficulties, with effectiveness scores being lower when the academic difficulties are related to school and classroom influences, student academic history, and student behavioral history, compared to when the academic difficulties are related to home influences.

5. Based on research by Tomchin and Impara (1992) and Whitmer, Hoffman, and Norris (2004), there will be significant differences between elementary, middle, and high school level teachers in ratings of the effectiveness of retention while controlling for retention beliefs across all reasons for academic failure with elementary level teachers having more positive beliefs regarding effectiveness even when controlling for overall retention beliefs.

6. Based on research by Tomchin and Impara (1992) and Whitmer, Hoffman, and Norris (2004), there will be significant differences between elementary, middle, and high school level teachers in ratings of the effectiveness of promotion while controlling for retention beliefs across all reasons for academic failure with elementary level teachers having more negative beliefs regarding effectiveness even when controlling for overall retention beliefs.

CHAPTER FOUR: METHOD

Participants

The participants in this study were from a school district in the Southeastern United States. This district includes 27 schools and over 17,000 students. There are approximately 7,800 elementary students, 3,800 middle school students, and 5,000 high school students. Fifty-percent of the students in this district are African-American, 35% are White, 9% are Hispanic, and 5% are Multi Racial. This district employs over 2,000 people, 1176 of which are full-time teachers. The district includes approximately 557 elementary, 253 middle, and 366 high school teachers. Of their teachers, 400 have advanced degrees and 100 are teachers with National Board Certification.

The regular education teachers in this district, kindergarten through twelfth grade, were asked to participate in this study. Of the 194 surveys that were started, 146 of the participants identified themselves as regular education teachers willing to participate in the study. Of these 146 respondents, a total retention effectiveness score, total promotion effectiveness score, or a retention beliefs score was obtained for 53 of these teachers. Forty-one teachers responded to every retention effectiveness item on each of the four scenarios, 43 teachers responded to every promotion effectiveness item on each of the four scenarios, and 42 teachers responded to every item on the Teacher Retention Beliefs Questionnaire. While 43 teachers completed the entire Teacher Retention Beliefs Questionnaire, only 29 of these teachers completed the entire questionnaire and all retention effectiveness ratings.

Of the 53 teachers who completed all aspects of this survey, there were 25 elementary level teachers (K-5); 9 middle school teachers (6-8); and 19 high school teachers (9-12). In terms of highest educational degree earned, 52 individuals responded with 59.6% of the participants holding a bachelor's degree (31 teachers) and 40.4% (21 teachers) having a master's degree. Of the 52 participants who responded to the National Certification question (Have you obtained National Certification?) only 15.4% of the teachers had obtained National Certification. Eight of the participants identified themselves as male teachers and 45 of the participants identified themselves as female teachers. The breakdown for number of years of experience was as follows (52 participants responded to this item): 7 teachers (13.5%) had one to three years of experience, 6 teachers (11.5%) had four to six years of experience, 4 teachers (7.5%) had seven to nine years of experience, and 35 (67.3%) teachers had 10 or more years of experience. The researcher tried to get the overall retention rates by grade level for the school district involved in this study, but after multiple attempts, the overall retention rates were not obtained.

Materials

An online survey for all of the regular education teachers to take in this district was created using Qualtrics (2013), which is software used by researchers and companies to collect data. There were three parts to this online survey. The first part asked each teacher to provide background information (see Appendix A). Each participant was asked to report his or her number of years of experience in the education profession, his or her gender, his or her highest educational degree obtained, the grade he or she currently teaches, and if he or she had obtained National Certification.

The second part of the online survey asked the participants to complete an adaptation of the Teacher Retention Beliefs Questionnaire (TRBQ) (Appendix B). This instrument was designed by Tomchin and Impara (1992) in order to measure teachers' explicit beliefs about grade retention. This instrument consists of twenty Likert-scaled items. Tomchin and Impara field-tested this instrument prior to their use of it for their study to determine the instruments appropriateness for teachers of grades K-7. Tomchin and Impara reported that revisions were made based on comments and data received during the field testing, although no reliability data for this instrument was reported. The TRBQ also was used by Witmer, Hoffman, and Nottis (2004) in a study about the difference between teacher beliefs and knowledge about grade retention. For this study, changes to the questionnaire include changing the response items from a four choice (agree, tend to agree, tend to disagree, and disagree) Likert-scale, to a five choice (strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree) Likert-scale. The addition of Neutral was done to allow for the indication of neutrality or lack of opinion for or against the statement. The three major subject areas in item 9 were changed to match the districts wording from "(reading, communications, or math)" to "(reading, writing, or math)". Finally, in accordance with the districts terminology, "a learning disabilities teacher" on item 13 was changed to "an Exceptional Children's teacher".

The Teacher Retention Beliefs Questionnaire (TRBQ) was administered to all participants and a total score was derived from the following scoring procedure. Negatively worded items were reverse scored, while all other items were scored according to each participant's numerical response. A total score was obtained for each participant by adding together the responses on all 20 items. The total scores could range

from 20, the lowest possible score, indicating that the participant is very pro retention to 100, the highest score possible, indicating that the participant is very anti retention.

While reliability was not provided in previous research using the TRBQ, reliability for this study was determined using a Cronbach alpha analysis. The Cronbach alpha coefficient for the 20 items on the Teacher Retention Beliefs Questionnaire survey was 0.90.

Finally, the last part of the online survey was the Academic Failure Scenarios (Appendix C). These scenarios were developed by the researcher in this study. Each scenario is based on one of the four overall factors associated with academic failure as identified in the review of the literature including school and classroom influences, home influences, student academic history, and student behavioral history. The participants were asked to evaluate the short and long term effectiveness of retention based on a seven point scale ranging from very ineffective to very effective on the following areas: academic performance, behavioral/emotional performance, social/peer interactions, self-concept/self-esteem, overall effectiveness ("If you were to retain this student in grade, how effective would that retention be in the following areas?"). The participants then were asked to follow the same procedure in regards to the following question: "If you were to promote this student in grade, how effective would that promotion be in the following areas?"

These scenarios were pilot tested with a panel of five experienced teachers in Southern Ohio to determine the validity of each scenario. These teachers' grade levels ranged from second to sixth grade. The number of years the teachers taught at that grade level ranged from 2 to 12 years. Total teaching experience ranged from 2 to 32 years.

This pilot test required each teacher to read each of the four scenarios and identify which academic failure factor the scenario represented. On the scenario designed to reflect the school and classroom influence, four of the five teachers identified this scenario as representing school and classroom influences, while one teacher indicated student academic history. All five teachers indicated the home influences scenario as representing variables associated with home influences. Three of the five teachers indicated the third scenario as pertaining to the student academic history variable, while one teacher indicated school and classroom influences and one indicated student behavioral history. On the student behavioral history scenario, four teachers indicated this scenario as such, while one felt that the scenario was most closely aligned with the student academic history variable. When asked if there were any pieces of information in any of the scenarios that made it difficult to discern which scenario was represented, the teachers did not provide the researcher with any ways to improve the scale. Thus, no changes were made to the Academic Failure Scenarios. One teacher wrote that the scenarios looked good and that if he or she made a mistake it was because of his or her lack of knowledge about each variable. Reliability for the scenarios as a whole was conducted using Cronbach Alpha. The Cronbach alpha coefficient for the 80 items on the Scenarios survey was 0.935. The Cronbach alpha was obtained through placing each scenario item into SPSS and running a reliability analysis using the alpha model.

Procedures

Initial contacts were made with the head of the Exceptional Children Department and the Assistant Superintendent of the school system where this research project was completed. Information was provided regarding this study (Appendix D) and permission

from the Assistant Superintendent and Superintendent was granted. After permission to work with the school was granted, the researcher emailed a representative of the school a link to the survey, a cover letter to include in the email to the teachers (Appendix E), and proof of IRB approval. The school representative then forwarded that link to the teachers in the district. This was done to ensure the privacy of the teachers and to ensure that no identifying information about the participants was shared with the researcher. To ensure the highest response rate possible, on the day after the teachers were emailed the survey, teachers were informed of the study during mandatory meetings (district-wide) on the last day of school by their respective principals.

Those teachers who followed the link were brought to the first page of the survey (Appendix F). The first page of the survey provided information about the researcher and a brief introduction to the study. The researcher made it clear that participation was voluntary, that participants could exit the survey at any time, that responses would be confidential, and that there were no foreseeable risks to them by completing the survey. Additionally, the researcher's contact information, in both the form of an email address and phone number was provided if any of the participants had questions or concerns. The participants were then prompted to choose from one of the following options: "I am a regular education teacher and I agree to participate in this study" or "I do not wish to participate in this study or I am not a regular education teacher". If they indicated that they were a regular education teacher and agreed to participate in the study, they were taken to the survey (Appendices A, B, and C). If they chose not to participate in the study or were not a regular education teacher, they were taken to the final page of the survey,

which thanked them for their time and informed them that their responses had been recorded.

CHAPTER FIVE: RESULTS

Data was collected through Qualtrics and exported to SPSS (v. 19). All analyses were completed through SPSS. Of the 196 surveys started, 146 respondents identified themselves as regular education teachers willing to participate in the study, but the results below reflect the 53 teachers who completed every retention effectiveness item, promotion effectiveness item, or all items on the Teacher Retention Beliefs Questionnaire.

Academic Failure Scenarios

The following analysis was conducted in response to the first hypothesis, which predicted significantly more positive retention effectiveness beliefs across all reasons for academic failure at the elementary level compared to the middle or high school levels. Total retention scores were calculated by adding each of the short and long term retention ratings together for each scenario. A one-way between groups ANOVA was conducted to explore the impact of grade level on total retention effectiveness scores as measured by the four Academic Failure Scenarios. Subjects were divided into three groups according to regular education grade level taught (Group 1: elementary school teacher; Group 2: middle school teachers; Group 3: high school teachers). Only participants who completed every retention effectiveness question on the Academic Failure Scenarios were included in these analyses. No statistically significant difference in total retention effectiveness scores for the three grade levels existed for Scenario A [F (2, 38) = 1.71, $p = 0.20$], Scenario B [F (2, 38) = 1.99, $p = 0.15$] Scenario C [F (2, 38) = 2.08, $p = 0.47$], or Scenario D [F (2, 38) = 2.86, $p = 0.07$]. The means and standard deviations of the total

retention scores for each scenario across the different grade levels are provided in Table 1.

Table 1

Total Retention Effectiveness Scores for Academic Failure Scenarios across Grade Levels

Scenario	Grade Level	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Range
A: School and Classroom Variables	Elementary (K-5)	20	40.85	15.04	10 – 62
	Middle (6-8)	8	40.88	8.98	25 – 54
	High (9-12)	13	49.77	15.80	10 – 70
	Total	41	43.68	14.63	10 – 70
B: Home Influences	Elementary (K-5)	20	35.05	14.35	10 – 52
	Middle (6-8)	8	33.13	14.46	12 – 60
	High (9-12)	13	45.38	20.13	10 – 70
	Total	41	37.95	16.82	10 – 70
C: Student Academic History	Elementary (K-5)	20	34.25	14.91	10 – 64
	Middle (6-8)	8	45.75	6.63	40 – 60
	High (9-12)	13	42.00	18.23	10 – 70
	Total	41	38.95	15.37	10 – 70
D: Student Behavioral History	Elementary (K-5)	20	35.90	16.18	10 – 57
	Middle (6-8)	8	26.75	17.73	10 – 60
	High (9-12)	13	45.08	18.75	10 – 70
	Total	41	37.02	18.10	10 – 70

Differences across grade levels on total promotion effectiveness scores for each of the four scenarios was examined in response to the second hypothesis which predicated elementary level teachers would have more negative beliefs regarding promotion effectiveness than middle or high school level teachers. Total promotion scores were calculated by adding each of the short and long term promotion ratings together for each scenario. Only participants who completed every promotion effectiveness question of the Academic Failure Scenarios were included in these analyses. A one-way between groups

ANOVA was conducted. Again, subjects were divided into three groups according to grade level taught (Group 1: elementary school teacher; Group 2: middle school teachers; Group 3: high school teachers).

A statistically significant difference at the $p < 0.05$ level in total promotion effectiveness scores for the three grade levels in Scenario A: F (2, 40) = 3.55, p = 0.04 was found. The actual difference in mean scores between the groups was relatively large with a calculated effect size of 0.15, using eta squared. Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for middle school teachers (M = 42.78, SD = 12.75) was significantly higher than high school teachers' mean score (M = 29.93, SD = 10.16). The total promotion effectiveness scores for elementary school teachers (M = 34.21, SD = 11.79) did not differ significantly from the total promotion scores for either middle or high school teachers. No statistically significant difference at the $p < 0.05$ level in total promotion effectiveness scores for the three grade levels existed for Scenario B [F (2, 40) = 2.09, p = 0.14], Scenario C [F (2, 40) = 1.09, p = 0.35], or Scenario D [F (2, 40) = 1.28, p = 0.29]. The means and standard deviations of the total promotion scores for each scenario are displayed in Table 2.

Table 2

Total Promotion Effectiveness Scores for Academic Failure Scenarios across Grade Levels

Scenario	Grade Level	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Range
A: School and Classroom Variables	Elementary (K-5)	19	34.21	11.79	10 – 50
	Middle (6-8)	9	42.78	12.75	25 – 60
	High (9-12)	15	29.93	10.16	10 – 46
	Total	43	34.51	12.13	10 – 60
B: Home Influences	Elementary (K-5)	19	33.79	10.91	10 – 50
	Middle (6-8)	9	35.11	11.15	20 – 50
	High (9-12)	15	27.20	10.58	10 – 46
	Total	43	31.77	11.12	10 – 50
C: Student Academic History	Elementary (K-5)	19	34.26	12.40	10 – 52
	Middle (6-8)	9	35.22	10.12	20 – 49
	High (9-12)	15	29.00	12.23	10 – 50
	Total	43	32.63	11.94	10 – 52
D: Student Behavioral History	Elementary (K-5)	19	29.16	14.55	10 – 70
	Middle (6-8)	9	32.44	12.44	10 – 46
	High (9-12)	15	23.80	12.63	10 – 42
	Total	43	27.98	13.59	10 – 70

A one-way repeated measures ANOVA was conducted in response to hypothesis three, which predicated lower retention effectiveness scores when academic difficulties were related to home factors compared to difficulties related to school and classroom factors, student academic history, and student behavioral history. The means and standard deviations are presented in Table 3. A significant effect for the scenarios was found [Wilks' Lambda = 0.76, F (3, 38) = 4.09, p = 0.01, multivariate partial eta squared = 0.24]. Pairwise comparisons show retention effectiveness scores were significantly higher for Scenario A compared to Scenarios B, C, and D.

Table 3

Total Retention Effectiveness Scores across Academic Failure Scenarios

Scenario	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Range
Scenario A (School and Classroom)	41	43.68	14.63	10 – 70

Scenario B (Home)	41	37.95	16.81	10 – 70
Scenario C (Academics)	41	38.95	15.37	10 – 70
Scenario D (Behavioral)	41	37.02	18.10	10 – 70

An additional one-way repeated measures ANOVA was conducted in response to hypothesis four, which predicted lower promotion effectiveness scores for when academic difficulties are related to school and classroom influences, student academic history, and student behavioral history, compared to when the academic difficulties are related to home influences. The means and standard deviations are presented in Table 4. Again, a significant effect for the scenarios was found [Wilks' Lambda = 0.78, F (3, 40) = 3.79, p = 0.02, multivariate partial eta squared = 0.22]. Pairwise comparisons show significantly lower promotion effectiveness scores for Scenario D compared to Scenarios A, B, and C.

Table 4

Total Promotion Effectiveness Scores across Academic Failure Scenarios

Scenario	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Range
A (School and Classroom)	43	34.51	12.13	10 – 60
B (Home)	43	31.77	11.12	10 – 60
C (Academics)	43	32.63	11.94	10 – 64
D (Behavioral)	43	27.98	13.59	10 – 70

Retention Beliefs Survey and Academic Failure Scenario Survey Interactions

A total retention score was obtained for all participants who completed the entire Teacher Retention Beliefs Questionnaire, which appeared in the survey after the Academic Failure Scenarios. Fifty-seven teachers participated in this portion of the

survey and only 42 teachers responded to every item on the Teacher Retention Beliefs Questionnaire. Total scores for these 42 respondents ranged from 28 to 96, with a mean score of 57.67.

A one-way between groups ANOVA was conducted to explore the relationship between elementary, middle, and high school teachers' general retention beliefs. Subjects were divided into three groups according to grade level taught (Group 1: elementary school teacher; Group 2: middle school teachers; Group 3: high school teachers). There was a statistically significant difference at the $p < 0.05$ level on the Teacher Retention Beliefs Questionnaire for the three grade levels: F (2, 39) = 7.75, $p < 0.01$. The actual difference in mean scores between the groups was rather large. The effect size, calculated using eta squared, was 0.28. Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey HSD test indicated that the mean score for elementary school teachers (M = 63.25, SD = 12.11) was significantly higher than high school teachers' mean score (M = 48.23, SD = 12.40). The Tukey HSD test "accurately maintains alpha levels at their intended values" (Stevens, 1999). Middle school teachers (M = 58.89, SD = 11.16) did not differ significantly from either elementary or high school teachers. Descriptive statistics for total retention scores are shown in Table 5.

Table 5

Retention Beliefs Scores across Grade Levels

Grade Level	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Range
Elementary (K-5)	20	63.25	12.11	38 – 96
Middle (6-8)	9	58.89	11.16	45 – 79
High (9-12)	13	48.23	7.79	28 – 58

A one-way between groups analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was conducted in regard to hypothesis five, which projected elementary teachers would have more positive beliefs regarding retention effectiveness even when controlling for overall retention beliefs. Participant's scores on the Teacher Retention Beliefs Questionnaire were used as the covariate in this analysis. Before running the ANCOVA, the researcher found no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity, homogeneity of variances, homogeneity of regression slopes, and reliable measurement for the covariate. After adjusting for the retention beliefs scores, there was no significant difference between the three grade levels on total retention effectiveness scores on the four scenarios [F (2, 25) = 0.21, p = 0.81, partial eta squared = 0.02]. There was a large relationship between the retention beliefs scores and total retention effectiveness scores, as indicated by a partial eta squared value of 0.64. ANCOVA results are displayed in Table 6.

Table 6

Retention Beliefs & Total Retention Effectiveness ANCOVA Results

	"Unadjusted"		"Adjusted"		
Grade Level	Mean	SD	Mean	SE	Number of Cases
Elementary	134.60	52.31	151.10	10.12	15
Middle	146.29	44.08	151.91	14.13	7
High	204.86	62.94	163.87	16.07	7
Total	154.38	59.13			29

The sixth hypothesis predicted elementary level teachers would have more negative beliefs regarding promotion effectiveness even when controlling for overall retention beliefs. In response to this hypothesis, another one-way between-groups ANCOVA was conducted with participants' retention beliefs scores used as the covariate. Before running the ANCOVA, the researcher found no violation of the assumptions of normality, linearity, homogeneity of variances, homogeneity of regression slopes, and reliable measurement for the covariate. After adjusting for the retention beliefs scores, no significant differences existed between the three grade levels on total promotion effectiveness scores for the scenarios [F (2, 28) = 1.854, p = 0.18, partial eta squared = 0.117]. There was a large relationship between the retention beliefs scores and total promotion effectiveness scores, as indicated by a partial eta squared value of 0.32. ANCOVA results are displayed in Table 7.

Table 7

Retention Beliefs & Total Promotion Effectiveness ANCOVA Results

	"Unadjusted"		"Adjusted"		
Grade Level	Mean	SD	Mean	SE	Number of Cases
Elementary	132.36	40.61	118.32	9.51	14
Middle	147.13	38.28	144.01	11.54	8
High	96.30	36.71	118.44	11.94	10
Total	124.78	42.78			32

CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION

Before discussing the results, it is important to recognize this study's significant limitations. The first being overall response rate. The school district in this study employs approximately 1000 full-time regular and special education teachers. Roughly 20% of the teachers (203 regular and special education teachers) followed the link to the survey, but only half of those teachers identified themselves as regular education teachers and completed the first survey item (96 teachers). One reason for such a small response rate is likely due to the survey being sent to teachers on the last day of the school. Reminders to complete the study were not sent out because the participants were not required to be at the schools or check school emails. The teachers were informed of the study during a mandatory meeting on the last day of school. Additionally, middle school teachers had lower response rates than elementary and high school teachers. One reason for this might be that middle school teachers do not have as strong of opinions regarding retention compared to elementary and high school teachers. Another reason may have been that the researcher had a personal relationship with elementary and high school level teachers, but no real contact with middle school teachers.

One particularly evident limitation was the response rate drop off of respondents throughout the study. Of the 96 participants that started the survey, almost half as many participants finished the survey (57). The survey had a total of 20 items per scenario (4 scenarios) and 20 items on the Teacher Retention Beliefs Scale, which is a total of 100 items. Additionally, the survey allowed participants to leave a page without filling in every item. Many teachers left one to two items per page blank, which did not allow for

total retention effectiveness scores, promotion effectiveness scores, or overall retention belief scores to be obtained for every participant.

In addition, since the researcher created the scenarios, the researcher piloted a handful of regular education teachers to determine the appropriateness of each scenario. Teachers in this pilot did not include a lot of feedback. One teacher indicated that the scenarios looked good and that if he or she made a mistake it was because of his or her lack of knowledge about each variable. If this were true for other participants, this could have potentially impacted the responses of the teachers and may be a reason more significant differences were not found.

Future studies should have a start and end date for the survey, requiring participants to complete the study over a specified length of time (two to four weeks). Reminders should be sent out weekly to the participant pool. Future studies should begin with a presentation by the researcher or member of the researching team providing a brief summary of the study and including an educational proponent reviewing each academic failure influence (school and classroom, home, academic, and behavioral) before surveying the participants. The presentation could end with informing possible participants that some sort of reward/prize would be given to those who complete the entire study, possibly being entered into a drawling for a gift card. In terms of the actual survey, it is recommended that promotion items (a total of 50) not be included in the scenarios, given the causal relationship between retention and promotion beliefs (if you endorse retention as effective, it is expected that you would not endorse promotion to also be effective for the same scenario). The survey should be designed so that no items are

left unfilled. As a case study, some of the following results should be considered in relation to future research.

One goal of this study was to examine the differences between teachers by grade level and their ratings of the effectiveness of retention and promotion based on reasons for academic failure. Results of this study did not support the hypothesis that elementary level teachers would have more positive beliefs regarding effectiveness than middle or high school level teachers. Teachers across all grade levels consistently rated retention as being effective for all reasons for academic failure.

Likewise, results of this study did not support the hypothesis that elementary level teachers would have more negative beliefs regarding effectiveness than middle or high school level teachers. Although, a significant difference was found between middle school teachers and high school teachers with middle school teachers ratings of the effectiveness of promotion as more positive than high school teachers. It is pertinent to note that there were 15 high school teachers and 19 elementary teachers, and only 9 middle school teachers. Perhaps a larger more encompassing sample would have obtained different results. Tomchin and Impara (1992) found that students from higher grade levels were more likely to be promoted. From these findings, it seems reasonable to infer that teachers, who are more likely to promote students, would be more likely to promote due to beliefs that promotion is more effective then retention. Again, previous studies did not include high school teachers, thus the relationship between high school teachers and elementary or middle school teachers have not been explored.

This study also examined the differences in total retention and total promotion effectiveness scores across the Academic Failure Scenarios. The researcher anticipated

retention effectiveness scores to be lower for home influences than other influences. While retention was rated as being significantly less effective when home influences were involved than when school and classroom influences were involved, this was not true for academic or behavioral influences. In fact, retention was rated as being significantly more effective for school and classroom influences than all other influences.

The primary difference between the school and classroom scenario and the other three scenarios is that the student in this scenario recently moved to the teacher's school. The student attended a different school described as having limited resources, lack of teacher interest, high rate of school mobility, and behavioral misconduct issues. It is likely that teachers' retention effectiveness ratings were higher for this scenario because the participants viewed the academic difficulties experienced by the student as being a result of factors outside of the control of the student, the teacher, and his or her current school. Teachers in this study may have felt that the student's academic difficulties were a result of his or her environment and not his or her abilities. With this perspective, if provided the same grade level material again, in what the teachers perceive as a more successful learning environment, it is considered that the student would have better results. Participants may have viewed factors related to the home environment as out of their control, but not something that could be changed; thus, the retention of this student would not positively affect future academic performance. Similarly, teachers may have felt that a student with a history of academic difficulties, who had made attempts to improve performance, would not benefit from retention. In terms of behavioral issues, research suggests teachers view retention as an effective method for immature students because retention provides the student with an additional year to mature and as a result, is

be better equipped to learn provided an extra year to mature. It is surprising that the retention effectiveness ratings for this scenario were not similar to, if not higher than the ratings of the first scenario.

The total promotion effectiveness scores for behavioral factors related to academic difficulties were significantly lower than the total promotion effectiveness scores for any other reason for academic difficulty. This was not an anticipated outcome. Teachers possibly felt that a student was more likely to benefit from promotion when the reasons for his or her academic difficulties were outside of the student's control.

Interestingly, difficulties pertaining to school and classroom influences resulted in higher retention and promotion effectiveness ratings compared to all other reasons for academic failure. Although, teachers' retention effectiveness ratings were significantly higher for school and classroom difficulties compared to all other reasons for academic failure, teacher's promotion effectiveness ratings were not significantly higher for school and classroom influences compared to all other reasons for academic failure. Additionally, teachers' average retention effectiveness ratings were much higher than their average promotion effectiveness ratings for this scenario (43.68 compared to 34.51). It was expected that if teachers rated the effectiveness of retention as high for a student with academic difficulties relating to the school and classroom, that teachers would rate the effectiveness of promoting that student as the opposite (lower effectiveness ratings). Results indicate that teachers believe either retaining or promoting a student due to school and classroom factors can have a positive impact on the student's academic performance. Retention was rated as least effective in the scenario emphasizing difficulties related to the home; indicating the retention of these students would not result

in significant improvements in academic performance. Surprisingly, the promotion effectiveness ratings for a student with poor home influences were not any higher than the retention ratings. It appears that teachers do not believe a student with poor home influences can see improvements in academic performance through retention or promotion. Promotion was rated as least effective when the academic problems were linked to behavioral factors; indicating the promotion of these students is unlikely to significantly improve academic performance. Again, teachers did not believe a struggling student presenting with behavioral issues will see improvements in academic performance through promotion or retention.

Another one of this study's goals was to examine the impact grade level taught has on retention beliefs. In contrast to research by Tomchin and Impara (1992) and Whitmer, Hoffman, and Norris (2004), higher grade level teachers had more positive retention beliefs than lower grade level teachers. Specifically, high school teachers had significantly more positive retention beliefs than elementary school teachers. The difference between the highest and lowest scores for high school teachers' scores on the Teacher Retention Beliefs Questionnaire ranged from 28 to 58 (a difference of only 30), while elementary teachers' scores ranged from 38 to 96 (a difference of 58). Elementary school teacher's scores ranged from positive to negative retention beliefs while, high school teacher's scores ranged from positive retention beliefs to neutral retention beliefs. No high school level teachers total retention beliefs scores fell in the negative retention beliefs range. Elementary school scores followed a more normal distribution, while high school scores were positively skewed.

Differences between previous studies and this study may be due to the fact that the TRBQ was only administered to kindergarten through seventh grade teachers by Tomchin and Impara (1992) and Whitmer, Hoffman, and Norris (2004). Neither of these studies surveyed teachers from grades eight through twelve, so there was no comparison data for the retention beliefs of high school level teachers for this study. Research by Martinez and Vandergrift (1991) indicated the retention of high school level students occurs to prevent the graduation of students who have not yet mastered the basic skills necessary for success after high school. Similar to research by Tomchin and Impara, no significant differences between the responses of elementary school teachers and middle school teachers were found in this study.

Finally, the relationship between total retention and promotion effectiveness scores based on grade level taught while controlling for retention beliefs was examined. Results indicated that while controlling for retention beliefs, no significant differences existed between the effectiveness ratings on retention or promotion by grade level taught. Overall, it appears that retention beliefs are strongly correlated with retention and promotion effectiveness ratings.

CHAPTER SEVEN: REFERENCES

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CHAPTER EIGHT: APPENDICES

Appendix A: Demographic Questionnaire

Please read each question carefully and indicate which option applies.

1. What grade level do you currently teach?
    a. Elementary (K-3) _____
    b. Middle (4-8) _____
    c. High (9-12) _____
2. Highest educational degree earned: __ Bachelor's __ Master's
3. Have you obtained National Certification? __ Yes __ No
4. Sex: __ Male __ Female
5. How many years of experience do you have as a teacher?
    a. _____ 1-3 years
    b. _____ 4-6 years
    c. _____ 7-9 years
    d. _____ 10+ years

Appendix B: Teacher Retention Beliefs Questionnaire

Instructions: Please respond to each of the following statements as they apply to you and your experiences teaching. Choose only one answer.

Items	1= Strongly Agree 2= Agree 3= Neutral 4= Disagree 5= Strongly Disagree
1. Retention is an effective means of preventing students from facing daily failure in the next higher grade.	1 2 3 4 5
2. Retention is necessary for maintaining grade level standards	1 2 3 4 5
3. Retaining a child in grades K-3 harms the child's self-concept	1 2 3 4 5
4. Retention prevents classrooms from having wide ranges in student achievement	1 2 3 4 5
5. Students who do not apply themselves to their studies should be retained	1 2 3 4 5
6. Knowing that retention is a possibility motivates students to work harder	1 2 3 4 5
7. Retaining a child in grades 4-7 harms the child's self-concept	1 2 3 4 5
8. Retention is an effective means of providing support in school for the child who does not get support at home	1 2 3 4 5
9. Students who do not make passing grades in 2 of the 3 major subject areas (reading, writing, or math) should be retained	1 2 3 4 5
10. Students who make passing grades, but are working below grade level, should be retained	1 2 3 4 5
11. Retention in grades K-3 is an effective means of giving an immature child a chance to catch up	1 2 3 4 5
12. Retention in grades 4-7 is an effective means of giving an immature child a chance to catch up	1 2 3 4 5
13. Students receiving services of an Exceptional Children's teacher should not be retained	1 2 3 4 5
14. If students are to be retained, they should be retained no later than third grade	1 2 3 4 5

15. In grades K-3, overage children (more than a year older than their classmates) cause more behavior problems than other children	1 2 3 4 5
16. In grades 4-7, overage children cause more behavior problems than other children	1 2 3 4 5
17. Retention in grades K-3 permanently labels a child	1 2 3 4 5
18. Retention in grades 4-7 permanently labels a child	1 2 3 4 5
19. Children who have passing grades but excessive absences should be retained	1 2 3 4 5
20. Children should never be retained	1 2 3 4 5

Appendix C: Academic Failure Scenarios

A. It is April and a student has recently moved into your school district and has been assigned to your classroom. You have noticed that this student is significantly behind in all academic areas. After some investigation, you find out that the student's previous school had over 1,000 students in a building that was supposed to hold only 900 students, limited resources were available, there were high rates of school mobility, and behavioral misconduct was an issue. This student's mother also reported that the teachers at this school did not seem to take an interest in her child.

1. If you were to RETAIN this student in grade, how effective would that RETENTION be in the following areas?

Short Term Effectiveness (1 – 2 Years)					
	Academic Performance	Behavioral/ Emotional Performance	Social/Peer Interactions	Self-Concept/ Self Esteem	Overall Effectiveness
Very Ineffective					
Ineffective					
Somewhat ineffective					
Neither Ineffective Nor Effective					
Somewhat effective					
Effective					
Very Effective					

Long Term Effectiveness (2+ Years)

	Academic Performance	Behavioral/ Emotional Performance	Social/Peer Interactions	Self-Concept/ Self Esteem	Overall Effectiveness
Very Ineffective					
Ineffective					
Somewhat ineffective					
Neither Ineffective Nor Effective					
Somewhat effective					
Effective					
Very Effective					

2. If you were to <u>PROMOTE</u> this student in grade, how effective would that <u>PROMOTION</u> be in the following areas?

Short Term Effectiveness (1 – 2 Years)					
	Academic Performance	Behavioral/ Emotional Performance	Social/Peer Interactions	Self-Concept/ Self Esteem	Overall Effectiveness
Very Ineffective					
Ineffective					
Somewhat ineffective					
Neither Ineffective Nor Effective					
Somewhat effective					
Effective					
Very Effective					

Long Term Effectiveness (2+ Years)					
	Academic Performance	Behavioral/ Emotional Performance	Social/Peer Interactions	Self-Concept/ Self Esteem	Overall Effectiveness
Very Ineffective					
Ineffective					
Somewhat ineffective					
Neither Ineffective Nor Effective					
Somewhat effective					
Effective					
Very Effective					

B. It is April and a student in your class who is significantly behind in all academic areas. This student is performing below his/her peers in all academic areas. The student comes from a low income home where there is not much educational support. The student reports that at home, they spend most of their time watching television or playing video games with neighbor children. The parents of this student would like to see their child graduate from high school, but are not adamant about this. The student's parents never completed high school or obtained a GED themselves.

1. If you were to RETAIN this student in grade, how effective would that RETENTION be in the following areas?

	Short Term Effectiveness (1 – 2 Years)				
	Academic Performance	Behavioral/ Emotional Performance	Social/Peer Interactions	Self-Concept/ Self Esteem	Overall Effectiveness
Very Ineffective					
Ineffective					
Somewhat ineffective					
Neither Ineffective Nor Effective					
Somewhat effective					
Effective					
Very Effective					

Long Term Effectiveness (2+ Years)					
	Academic Performance	Behavioral/ Emotional Performance	Social/Peer Interactions	Self-Concept/ Self Esteem	Overall Effectiveness
Very Ineffective					
Ineffective					
Somewhat ineffective					
Neither Ineffective Nor Effective					
Somewhat effective					
Effective					
Very Effective					

2. If you were to <u>PROMOTE</u> this student in grade, how effective would that <u>PROMOTION</u> be in the following areas?

Short Term Effectiveness (1 – 2 Years)					
	Academic Performance	Behavioral/ Emotional Performance	Social/Peer Interactions	Self-Concept/ Self Esteem	Overall Effectiveness
Very Ineffective					
Ineffective					
Somewhat ineffective					
Neither Ineffective Nor Effective					
Somewhat effective					
Effective					
Very Effective					

Long Term Effectiveness (2+ Years)

	Academic Performance	Behavioral/ Emotional Performance	Social/Peer Interactions	Self-Concept/ Self Esteem	Overall Effectiveness
Very Ineffective					
Ineffective					
Somewhat ineffective					
Neither Ineffective Nor Effective					
Somewhat effective					
Effective					
Very Effective					

C. It is April and there is a student in your class who is significantly behind in all academic areas. This student has consistently demonstrated poor academic performance all school year and the student perceives him/herself as doing poorly. The student has received near failing grades despite attempts to do better. Homework is consistently completed and turned in on time, but done incorrectly with little signs of improvement. Intensive academic interventions have been provided to the student with only limited progress. This student's report card indicates a history of academic struggles and a recent decline in grades over time with current grades primarily in the D range. There is the chance that this student will receive some failing grades on the next report card.

1. If you were to <u>RETAIN</u> this student in grade, how effective would that <u>RETENTION</u> be in the following areas?

	Short Term Effectiveness (1 – 2 Years)				
	Academic Performance	Behavioral/ Emotional Performance	Social/Peer Interactions	Self-Concept/ Self Esteem	Overall Effectiveness
Very Ineffective					
Ineffective					
Somewhat ineffective					
Neither Ineffective Nor Effective					
Somewhat effective					
Effective					
Very Effective					

Long Term Effectiveness (2+ Years)					
	Academic Performance	Behavioral/ Emotional Performance	Social/Peer Interactions	Self-Concept/ Self Esteem	Overall Effectiveness
Very Ineffective					
Ineffective					
Somewhat ineffective					
Neither Ineffective Nor Effective					
Somewhat effective					
Effective					
Very Effective					

2. If you were to <u>PROMOTE</u> this student in grade, how effective would that <u>PROMOTION</u> be in the following areas?

Short Term Effectiveness (1 – 2 Years)					
	Academic Performance	Behavioral/ Emotional Performance	Social/Peer Interactions	Self-Concept/ Self Esteem	Overall Effectiveness
Very Ineffective					
Ineffective					
Somewhat ineffective					
Neither Ineffective Nor Effective					
Somewhat effective					
Effective					
Very Effective					

Long Term Effectiveness (2+ Years)					
	Academic	Behavioral/	Social/Peer	Self-	Overall

	Performance	Emotional Performance	Interactions	Concept/ Self Esteem	Effectiveness
Very Ineffective					
Ineffective					
Somewhat ineffective					
Neither Ineffective Nor Effective					
Somewhat effective					
Effective					
Very Effective					

D. It is April and you have a student in your class who is significantly behind in all academic areas. This student is frequently absent or tardy to school. When in your class, the student rarely takes notes, doesn't complete school work, is inattentive during instruction, doodles, and does not participate in class discussions. This student does not follow classroom rules, misbehaves, and is sent out of class due to these behaviors. This student often fails to complete homework. The student does not spend much time studying or working on homework at home despite support from the parents.

1. If you were to RETAIN this student in grade, how effective would that RETENTION be in the following areas?

Short Term Effectiveness (1 – 2 Years)					
	Academic Performance	Behavioral/ Emotional Performance	Social/Peer Interactions	Self-Concept/ Self Esteem	Overall Effectiveness
Very Ineffective					
Ineffective					
Somewhat ineffective					
Neither Ineffective Nor Effective					
Somewhat effective					
Effective					
Very Effective					

Long Term Effectiveness (2+ Years)

	Academic Performance	Behavioral/ Emotional Performance	Social/Peer Interactions	Self-Concept/ Self Esteem	Overall Effectiveness
Very Ineffective					
Ineffective					
Somewhat ineffective					
Neither Ineffective Nor Effective					
Somewhat effective					
Effective					
Very Effective					

2. If you were to <u>PROMOTE</u> this student in grade, how effective would that <u>PROMOTION</u> be in the following areas?

Short Term Effectiveness (1 – 2 Years)					
	Academic Performance	Behavioral/ Emotional Performance	Social/Peer Interactions	Self-Concept/ Self Esteem	Overall Effectiveness
Very Ineffective					
Ineffective					
Somewhat ineffective					
Neither Ineffective Nor Effective					
Somewhat effective					
Effective					
Very Effective					

Long Term Effectiveness (2+ Years)

	Academic Performance	Behavioral/ Emotional Performance	Social/Peer Interactions	Self-Concept/ Self Esteem	Overall Effectiveness
Very Ineffective					
Ineffective					
Somewhat ineffective					
Neither Ineffective Nor Effective					
Somewhat effective					
Effective					
Very Effective					

Appendix D: Survey Proposal

Sean Clymer
4917 Kristie Falls
Columbus, Ohio 43221

May 3, 2013

Dr.Connie Luper
Nash-Rocky Mount Public Schools
930 Eastern Avenue
Nashville, NC 27956
cluper@nrms.k12.nc.us

Dear Dr. Luper,

I am currently a graduate student at Western Carolina University working towards completing my thesis requirement in order to graduate in the summer of 2013. I had the opportunity of completing my internship requirement with Nash-Rocky Mount Public Schools during the 2010-2011 school year. I gained a great deal of experience while working at Baskerville Elementary and Rocky Mount High School under the supervision of Julian Martinez and Carolyn Eggers.

I am looking to complete a survey of all regular education teachers employed by Nash Rocky Mount Public Schools. I hope to gain the insight of teachers along with a better understanding of teachers' beliefs regarding grade retention and academic failure. If given the opportunity to survey the regular education teachers at Nash Rocky Mount Public Schools, I would need to gain some demographic information about the regular education teachers available to complete my survey. I need to know how many regular education teachers there are at each grade and what the districts retention policies are. There will not be any identifying data collected or reported regarding the teachers, schools, or the district in my thesis. In order to gain the best research possible, I would like to gain information from all regular education teachers at all grade levels across the district.

I have already created an online survey for the regular education teachers at Nash Rocky Mount Public Schools to complete online using survey software from Qualtrix. I will be able to send a link to you or to IT for your or them to forward to your teachers. By sending the survey out this way, the emails of the Nash Rocky Mount Public School teachers will never be viewed by me, thus ensuring the confidentiality of those employed by NRMPS. The survey will include demographic information of those surveyed (what grade the teacher teaches, the teachers highest education degree obtained, if the teacher has obtained National Certification, the teachers gender, and the number of years of teaching experience the teacher has), a twenty item retention survey, and four academic failure scenarios. The survey will only take the teachers a few minutes to complete.

I am available to meet with you or anyone who has questions about the survey. I understand that the end of the year is an exceptionally busy time, but the last two weeks of school are when I would like for the distribution and completion of my survey to be completed. I am will to commit my time and energy to facilitate this goal.

Additionally, I am happy to provide and present NRMPS with a report on the data and information I obtain from this study. This information could provide insight into how teachers in your district think about student academic failure and the practice of retention.

I realize that you and your staff are very busy and I hope to hear from you soon. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Sean Clymer
School Psychology Graduate Student
Western Carolina University
smclymer1@catamount.wcu.edu

Appendix E: Study Cover Letter

Hi,

I am Sean Clymer, a school psychology graduate student at Western Carolina University. I was fortunate enough to complete my internship year at Nash Rocky-Mount Public Schools during the 2010-2011 school year at Baskerville Elementary and Rocky Mount High School.

I need your help to complete my thesis requirement for graduation. I am examining teacher beliefs in regards to grade retention and academic failure in a surveys of regular education teachers at all grade levels (elementary, middle, and high school).

Below you will find a link to my survey. I understand that this school year is nearly over and that your time is extremely valuable, but please take the time (5-10 minutes) to complete this study and allow me to graduate and get into the schools with educators like yourself to make a difference in student's lives.

Appendix F: Survey Cover Letter

My name is Sean Clymer. I am a school psychology graduate student at Western Carolina University.

I am conducting research to better understand teacher beliefs regarding retention and academic failure. I am interested in how beliefs about retention and academic failure vary across grades taught (elementary, middle, and high). Surveys will be sent to all regular education teachers (K-12) in this district.

This survey will take approximately 10 to 15 minutes. Your participation is voluntary. You may exit the survey at any time or decline to answer any question you choose. Your responses will be held strictly confidential. There are no foreseeable risks to you by completing this survey.

If you have any questions please discuss them with me. You may contact me at 614-949-3986 or through email at smclymer1@catamount.wcu.edu. If you have any questions or concerns about your treatment as a participant in this study, you can reach the Chair of the Western Carolina University Institutional Review Board through WCU's Office of Research Administration at 828-227-7212.

Please select one of the following options below.

__ I am a regular education teacher and would like to participate in this study

__ By selecting this option, you are indicating that you are not a regular education teacher or do not wish to participate in this study.