Retention Beliefs and Knowledge of Primary, Elementary, and Middle School Teachers

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to present, compare, and contrast data collected from rural Georgia educators concerning their beliefs and knowledge of the benefits of student retention. This quantitative research study was conducted using survey research using the Teacher Retention Belief and Knowledge Questionnaire (TRBKQ). The beliefs and knowledge of primary teachers, elementary teachers, and middle school teachers were compared and contrasted to determine how these educators were similar and different in their views of retention. According to the research gathered during this study, educators tend to support retention as an effective measure for underperforming students. Educators believe retention helps students close the educational gaps, as well aids students to catch up. Educators do not always know the research associated with retention. However, when it came to beliefs and knowledge, the teacher groups did not always have the same thoughts and practices. As for the factors that influence retention decisions, the teachers ranked academic performance, ability, and social-emotional maturity as the three most important retention factors. All educators ranked home environment and transient student status as the least important factors in deciding to retain a student.

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In the decade of 1990-2000, it is estimated that 2.4 million students were retained (Dawson, 1998). It is estimated that 10% to 25% of all students in American public schools are retained at least once during their school careers (U.S. Department of Education, 2018). Of those students retained, economically disadvantaged and minority students are most commonly held back (Denton, 2001).

The problem of retention is worth examining because it has a huge impact on schools and students (Andrew, 2014). Retention can be a costly venture for schools (Jimerson et al., 2006). Retention can cost American school systems billions of dollars each year (Reschly& Christenson, 2013). Many researchers believe retention is not likely to accomplish the intended outcomes (Byrnes & Yamamoto, 2001). While teachers have the best intentions for students and believe retention will help students, retention does not produce long-term, lasting effects (Byrnes & Yamamoto, 2001). Despite a lack of consensus in the research, grade retention persists in schools (Gottfried, 2012).

Researchers report that educators believe retention is a beneficial practice for students (Shepard & Smith, 1990; Tomchin&Impara, 1992). Reschly and Christenson (2013) stated that educators genuinely believe in the effectiveness of retention so much they continue to retain students despite the research. Most educators and the general public endorse the practice of retention (House, 1991).

While there is considerable research on the topic of retention, there has not been a study conducted with educators in South Georgia regarding their beliefs and knowledge of retention. The purpose of this study was to present, compare and contrast data collected from rural primary, elementary, and middle grades teachers in the South Georgia RESA districts. The researcher identified the most common areas of agreements and disagreement on the educators' beliefs and knowledge on the topic of retention. Moreover, the researcher attempted to determine if primary teachers, elementary teachers, and middle grades teachers have similar beliefs and knowledge on the topic of grade level retention.

Literature Review Summary

Retention data dates back as early at 1911 (Merrick et al., 1998). Although retention has been occurring for a long time, there is substantial evidence against the practice of retaining students. Most studies highlight the negative impacts of retention (Hartke, 1999). Retention is extremely costly for American schools (Jimerson et al., 2006).

The cost of retention equals billions of dollars for the American educational system each year (Reschly& Christenson, 2013). Most studies that examine retention show that retention does not close the achievement gaps or improve student academics (Hartke, 1999). Students who are retained in elementary schools are between two and eleven times more likely to drop out of school than those who are not retained in school (Jimerson et al., 2006). Even with the negative research on retention, many educators still feel strongly about retaining students (Tomchin & Impara, 1992). Teachers often feel that students should be retained under certain circumstances (Tomchin & Impara, 1992). Some teachers believe that an additional year of content can give students a better foundation for success (Lorence& Dworkin, 2006).

Educators typically give common reasons for retaining students which include maturity, academic difficulties, socioeconomic status, and mandating state-testing failure (Dombek& Connor, 2012). Even if teachers know and understand the retention research, they often struggle with the decision to send a student up to the next grade level (Range et al., 2012; Tomchin & Impara, 1992). Researchers report that educators believe retention is beneficial practice for students (Shepard & Smith, 1990; Tomchin & Impara, 1992). Meisels and Liaw (2001) suggested that grade level retention is one of the most prominent examples of noncommunication between American educators' research and practice.

Population

The study's target population was rural primary, elementary, and middle grades teachers who work in South Georgia. The sample for this study included 676 primary teachers, 570 elementary teachers, and 522 middle grades teachers. Of those who initially responded, there were a total of 197 primary teachers, 168 elementary teachers, and 170 middle grades teachers.

Stratified sampling was used to select the participants for the study. All certified primary, elementary, and middle school teachers in the rural RESA district were sent the survey.

Research Design and Methodology

This descriptive survey research study aimed to examine the retention knowledge and beliefs of primary teachers, elementary teachers, and middle school teachers in rural Georgia. The chosen design allowed the researcher to survey a large number of primary, elementary, and middle school educators from rural Georgia. Primary teachers, elementary teachers, and middle school teachers were compared and contrasted to determine how these educators were similar and different in their retention views.

The researcher used a tool initially developed by Tomchin and Impara (1992) entitled the *Teacher Retention Beliefs Questionnaire* (TRBQ). This instrument was later edited by Witmer et al. (2004) and renamed to *Teacher Retention Beliefs and Knowledge Questionnaire* (TRBKQ) and was used to survey primary, elementary, and middle school teachers in rural Georgia. The TRBKQ survey was chosen and used to gather the beliefs and knowledge of Georgia educators on the topic of retention.

The TRBKQ is comprised of 4 sections. The first section collected demographic information about the educators who participated in the study and was added by the researcher. In the second section of the questionnaire, there are 20 Likert-scale items that gave the researcher information concerning educator beliefs on retention. The third section of the questionnaire asked participants to rank order the factors that influence their decisions about student retention. Finally, the fourth section of the questionnaire gave multiple-choice knowledge questions that tested educator knowledge of retention. A final question in the survey asked educators to select the grade level they believed is the most appropriate for retention.

Research Questions

The following three questions guided this study.

Research Question 1: How do the beliefs of primary teachers, elementary teachers, and middle school teachers differ on the topic of grade-level retention?

$H1_\Theta$: The beliefs of primary teachers, elementary teachers, and middle school teachers on the topic of grade-level retention will not differ.

Research Question 2: How do the beliefs of primary teachers, elementary teachers, and middle school teachers differ regarding factors that influence their decisions to retain students?

$H2_\Theta$: Primary teachers, elementary teachers, and middle school teachers will not differ in their beliefs of the factors that influence their decisions to retain students.

Research Question 3: How does the knowledge base of primary teachers, elementary teachers, and middle school teachers differ on the topic of grade-level retention?

H3$_\Theta$: The primary teachers', elementary teachers', and middle school teachers' knowledge base will not differ on the topic of grade-level retention.

Summary of the Findings

Research Question 1

For belief factor 1, belief on retention policies, the elementary teachers (M = 2.63, SD = .69), on average, had the highest scores. Primary teachers (M = 2.38, SD = .52) had the lowest scores on average. The middle grades teachers' responses (M = 2.50, SD = .66) were in between the elementary and primary teachers.

For belief factor 2, beliefs on behavior and self-concept, the middle grades teachers (M = 3.27, SD = .61) had the strongest feelings amongst the three educator groups. The second strongest feelings towards beliefs on behavior and self-concept came from the primary teacher group (M = 3.02, SD = .58). The elementary teacher group (M = 2.94, SD = .66) had the lowest average on belief factor 2.

For belief factor 3, beliefs on immaturity and motivation, the three educator groups answered the survey questions similarly. The elementary teachers (M = 3.26 SD = .46) reported strongest feelings towards immaturity and motivation while the middle grades teachers (M = 3.09, SD = .44) had the lowest scores.

When examining the data for belief factor 1, there was a significant difference in the beliefs of retention policies between the primary teacher group and the elementary teacher group (p = <.001). There was not a significant difference in the elementary teacher group and the middle grades teacher group (p = .92). There was also not a significant difference in the primary teacher group and the middle grades teacher group (p = .11).

When examining the belief factor 2 data, there was a significant difference in the beliefs of behavior and self-concept beliefs of the primary teacher group and the middle grades teacher group (p = <.001). There was also a significant difference in the elementary teacher group and the middle grades teacher group (p = <.001). There was not a significant difference in the primary teacher group and the elementary grades teacher group (p = .97). There are significant differences between on the thoughts of behaviors and self-concepts beliefs of the primary and middle teacher groups and the elementary and middle grades groups.

When examining the belief factor 3 data, there were no significant differences between the beliefs of immaturity and motivation of primary teachers and elementary teachers (p = 1.00) or the elementary teacher and middle grades teachers (p = .18). There were significant differences between the primary and middle grades teachers (p = .02) on the beliefs of immaturity and motivation

Research Question 2

When examining the ranking factors data, the primary teacher group data and elementary teacher group data were very similar in their responses. Primary educators (n = 167) ranked academic performance (M = 1.62, SD = 1.41), ability (M = 2.95, SD = 1.88), and social emotional maturity (M = 4.79, SD = 2.06) as the three most important retention factors. Educators ranked home environment (M = 7.95, SD = 1.80) and transient student status (M = 8.28, SD = 1.94) the least important factors in deciding to retain a student.

In the elementary educator data set (n = 155), the teachers ranked academic performance (M = 2.12, SD = 1.74), ability (M = 3.00, SD = 1.98), and social-emotional maturity (M = 4.88, SD = 2.37) as the three most important retention factors. These were the same as the primary educator group: academic performance (M = 1.63, SD = 1.41), ability (M = 2.95, SD = 1.88), and social-emotional maturity (M = 24.79, SD = 2.06).   All three educator groups ranked home environment and transient student status the least important factors in deciding to retain a student.

In the middle grades educator data set (n = 154), the teachers ranked academic performance (M = 2.27, SD = 1.84), ability (M = 3.39, SD = 2.25), and effort being put forth (M = 3.68, SD = 2.18) as the three most important retention factors. The first two were the same as the primary and elementary educator group, but the third factor changed to effort instead of social-emotional maturity.

In the overall sample data set (n = 476), all teachers ranked academic performance (M = 2.01, SD = 1.69), ability (M = 3.11, SD = 2.04), and social-emotional maturity (M = 4.83, SD = 2.21) as the three most important retention factors. All educators ranked home environment (M = 7.85 SD = 1.98) and transient student status (M = 8.24, SD = 2.01) as the least important factors in deciding to retain a student

Primary teachers and elementary teachers and middles grades teachers all ranked academic performance and ability as the top two factors. The primary and elementary teacher groups both agreed that maturity is the third factor, while middle grade teachers thought effort put forth was the third most important factor. All three teacher groups ranked home environment and transient student status as the least important factors when retaining a student.

Research Question 3

On knowledge factor 1, the primary teachers ($M = 2.55$, $SD = .53$) reported the strongest feelings on retention research knowledge followed by the middle grades' teachers ($M = 2.50$, $SD = .57$). Elementary teachers ($M = 2.38$, $SD = .56$) had the lowest overall score for this part of the survey.

On knowledge factor 2, knowledge of retention and social promotion, the elementary teachers ($M = 2.37$, $SD = .66$) had the strongest knowledge base for retention and social promotion followed by the middle grades' teachers ($M = 2.35$, $SD = .68$). The primary teachers ($M = 2.23$, $SD = .70$) showed the least amount of knowledge on retention and social promotion.

On knowledge factor 3, knowledge of student behaviors of retained students, the middle grades teachers ($M = 2.32$, $SD = .49$) had the strongest knowledge base for this question followed by the primary teachers ($M = 2.26$, $SD = .47$). Elementary teachers ($M = 2.20$ $SD = .44$) reported the least amount of knowledge on student behaviors of retained students.

When examining the knowledge factor 1 data, knowledge of retention research, there were significant differences between the knowledge of retention policies with the teacher groups: primary teacher group and elementary teacher group ($p = .03$). There were no significant differences between the elementary teacher group and middle grades teacher group ($p = 1.00$), nor the primary group and middle grades teacher group ($p = .09$).

When examining the knowledge factor 2 data, knowledge of retention and social promotion, there were no significant differences between the knowledge of retention and social promotion with any of the teacher groups: the primary teacher and elementary teacher groups ($p = .31$), the elementary teacher and middle grades teacher groups ($p = 1.00$), and the primary teacher and middle grades teacher groups ($p = .56$). There were no significant differences between any of the teacher groups on the topic of knowledge of retention and social promotion.

When examining the knowledge factor 3 data, knowledge of retained students, there were no significant differences between the knowledge of student behaviors of retained students with any of the teacher groups: the primary teacher and elementary teacher groups ($p = 1.00$), the elementary teacher and middle grades teacher groups ($p = .41$), and the middle grades teacher and primary teacher groups ($p = 1.00$). There were no significant differences between any of the teacher groups on the topic of knowledge of student behaviors of retained students.

Limitations of the Study

One limitation was that this study was limited to only Georgia teachers in a rural South Georgia. Retention is a nation-wide issue, but this study only focused on educators from this small region of the United States. This study could be expanded state-wide or even nation-wide to determine the beliefs and knowledge of all teachers across the United States. A nation-wide study would give a better understanding of retention practices across the country.

Another limitation of this study was the use of perception data. This study only involved self-reported, teacher perception data on the issue of grade-level retention. It did not analyze any academic data or student data. The data only focused on the perceptions of the teachers. It did not consider data from parents or students.

Another limitation was this study only involved data from primary teachers, elementary teachers, and middle school teachers from rural South Georgia districts. The study did not collect data from high school educators or administrators. Since this study only focused on rural Georgia teachers, this information is not generalizable to the general population.

Discussion

Summary of Findings

The findings from this research indicate that the teacher groups had similar beliefs and knowledge when it comes to the topic of retention. It depends on the belief factor or knowledge factor as to which educator groups have similar responses. There did not seem to be any patterns in the data. Educators tend to have similar responses when it comes to the factors for retention. However, when it comes to beliefs and knowledge, the teacher groups all tend to agree and disagree on a number of factors.

In the beliefs data section, teachers most strongly agreed that retention is an effective strategy for preventing students from failure in the next grade level. They tended to believe that retention was an effective means of preventing students from facing daily failure in the next higher-grade level. They tended to believe that retention in grade 6-8 could hurt a child's self-esteem, and they believed that students should be retained if they fail two of the three major subject areas. Teachers most strongly disagreed with the statement that children should never be retained. They also disagreed with the statement that retention in K-5 permanently labels a child.

In the data set in which all teachers chose the most common factors for retention, the teachers ranked academic performance, ability, and social-emotional maturity as the three most important retention factors. All educators ranked home environment and transient student status as the least important factors in deciding to retain a student.

For the knowledge section of the survey, there were eight multiple-choice questions that tested teacher knowledge about grade level retention. On four of the eight questions, most educators did not choose the preferred answer. On the remaining four questions, between 24% and 40% of educators did not choose the preferred answer for those knowledge questions.

Comparison of Findings to Literature

The findings of this research are similar to those of other studies that have been conducted on this topic of retention. In a study conducted by Range et al. (2012), educators and administrators were surveyed on the effectiveness of retention. There were only slight, but no significant differences, on the aspects of retention. The study found that even when teachers do know the research associated with retention, they still remain strong supporters for retention (Range et al., 2012). Thomas (2018) explained that teachers were not bothered by the negative research on retention, and they still use retention as an intervention for struggling students. In a study by Haynes (2007), teachers believed students should be retained to help them meet grade-level standards. Additionally, educators believed there are benefits to retaining students, especially at-risk students before Grade 3 (Haynes, 2007).

Patterson (1996) reviewed teacher perception data from educators in 11 states. The educators favored retention practices. The study indicated most educators believed the benefits of retention outweigh the negative effects of retention.

In yet another study by Parker (2001), results of the student reported 89% of the teachers believed retaining students was an effective practice. Most of the teachers believed students who were at the bottom of the class could rise to the top of the class after a year of retention (Parker, 2001).

In the study by Larsen and Akmal (2007), middle school educators agreed that students should be retained earlier in education, but still retained students who struggled with content. Additionally, educators believed retention was not an effective strategy, and most educators were unsure of the research concerning retention (Larsen & Akmal, 2007). These findings were consistent with the data and research for this study. Middle grades teachers tended to know more surrounding the research with retention, but they still recommended retention when student motivation and content gaps were prevalent.

When comparing this study to the 2012 study by Range et al., this study did find significant differences in the educator's beliefs and knowledge of retention. Additionally, both this study and the Range et al. (2012) study found that educators are strong supporters of retention. Both this study and the Thomas (2018) study found that educators still use retention as an intervention for struggling students. Educators from this study and the Haynes (2007) study both agreed students should be retained to help them meet grade-level standards; they also believed there are benefits to retaining students, especially at-risk students before third grade.

Parker (2001) reported 89% of teachers believing retention as an effective practice, while this current study reported 66% of educators believing retention is an effective practice. In both studies, a majority of teachers support retention. In the study by Larsen and Akmal (2007), the majority of educators were unsure of the research concerning retention. Similarly, this study reported that the majority of educators did not choose the correct answer to the knowledge questions.

Results

For RQ1, the teachers indicated that retention was an effective way to help immature students in grades K-5 a chance to catch up. Educators believed retention was an effective means of preventing students from facing daily failure in the next grade level. Additionally, educators thought retention in grades K-5 is an effective means of giving the immature child a chance to mature. Since Piaget's and Vygotsky's theories address scaffolding and maturity, educators should be exposed to information about maturity and scaffolding for students.

For RQ2, the teachers believed academic performance, ability, and maturity are the most common factors for retaining a student. Again, these responses are consistent with the theories of Piaget and Vygotsky. These theories are foundational for educators, and it appears these thought processes are fundamental for teachers when they consider retaining students.

For RQ3, 87% of educators responding to knowledge question #4 about keeping students an extra year in kindergarten chose the incorrect response. Further, 67% of educators chose the incorrect response about grade retention and academic gains on knowledge question #6. Most educators believed more scaffolding as well as time to mature could help a student academically. These thoughts align with the theories of Piaget and Vygotsky.

Implications

The results of this research are important because they are similar to other perception data studies. The implications of this research could have an impact on future research or decisions on educational policy. Despite the limitations mentioned earlier, there were strengths in this study. The study was comprised of strong data collected from a large sample of rural Georgia educators. The survey instrument was reliable and valid, and the data analysis procedures were robust and strong. These data can and should be used to make educational decisions on the topic of grade-level retention. The results of this study can and should be used to change retention policies in Georgia.

The study could help change and influence policy makers, teachers, and teacher preparation programs, as well as early intervention programs.

Lawmakers and educational leaders should use these data to expand this study state-wide. More current studies need to be conducted on grade level retention. If retention is not helpful for students, laws need to be changed. Georgia recommends retention for students in Grades 3, 5 and 8 when the students do not pass the end-of-grade state assessments. If research data do not validate this practice, then retention laws need to be changed. The state and national governments must stop spending millions of dollars on retention if this is not an effective practice. The monies could be diverted to other programs that can help close the gaps for our students who are not on grade level.

Since educators believe retention is a successful practice, as supported by this study and other studies, professional development opportunities about retention data should be provided to teachers. Educators need to know and understand the research regarding student retention in schools. They need to know and understand the long-term effects of retention, as well as the negative ramifications associated with retention. Teachers need to be given a toolbox of strategies, as well as support in how to best help struggling students.

Teacher preparation programs need to emphasize and teach young, upcoming teachers the research associated with retention. They need to know and understand the current literature and data associated with grade-level retention.

Instead of spending money on re-teaching, states need to focus monies on early intervention programs that could be the key to filling gaps early. Strong preschool programs, as well as early screening practices, could help identify and help early learners who may have deficits.

Conclusions

- Teachers most strongly believed that retention is an effective mean of preventing students from failure in the next grade level.
- Educators believed that retention was an effective means of preventing students from facing daily failure in the next grade level.
- Rural Georgia educators believed that retention in grade 6-8 could hurt a child's self-esteem.
- Teachers believed students should be retained if they fail two of the three major subject areas.
- Teachers most strongly disagreed with the statement that children should never be retained. They also disagreed with the statement that retention in K-5 permanently labels a child.
- The teachers ranked academic performance, ability, and social-emotional maturity as the three most important retention factors.
- All educators ranked home environment and transient student status as the least important factors in deciding to retain a student.
- When examining teacher knowledge, the majority of educators chose the wrong answer on four of the eight knowledge questions.
- On the remaining four questions, between 24% and 40% of educators chose the wrong answer for those knowledge questions.

Recommendations for Further Research

Further research is needed on the topic of grade level retention. This study should be expanded to include other RESA districts, as well as other states. A larger population would yield more data with more generalizable results. This study could be expanded nationwide to determine the beliefs and knowledge of all teachers across the United States. A nationwide study would give a better understanding of retention practices across the county.

Another consideration for future research is to see the parents', students', and administrators' perceptions of retention for a complete look at all of the stakeholders involved in the retention process. Since education involves more than teachers and students, this study could be expanded to include all of the stakeholders. This would help give a more complete picture of the retention process.

Additionally, there needs to more studies involving academic data for students who have been retained. State and national governments recommend retention for students who are not performing at grade level, so more retention studies need to be conducted on the effectiveness of the practice of retention.

Most retention studies are dated, and there needs to be more current research studies since retention is now linked to assessment results. Is the practice of retaining students who do not pass state assessments helping to fill the gap in students who are retained?

There should be alternatives offered to teachers who may believe retention is the only possibility. Teachers need additional training on instructional practices that will help fill the academic gaps of the struggling students. Professional development can be beneficial to teachers who think retention is a successful practice. Teachers need to learn effective instructional strategies that will help students who are not meeting grade level standards.

Alternatives to Retention

If retention is not the answer, what do educators need to do when students are not successful? There are some alternatives to retention. Kinlaw (2005) included some ideas for reducing the possibility of retention. These ideas include social skills interventions, programs to reduce classroom behaviors, psychological evaluations and/or interventions, and special programs to address students' specific needs.

Lynch (2013) stated, "Alternatives to social promotion and retention that have been proposed include accountability, clear standards, early interventions, extended learning times, hiring competent teachers, learning resource programs, mentoring, multiage classrooms, multiple assessment measures, parental involvement, redesigned schools and year-round schools" (p. 292). One of the problems of implementing these strategies, according to Lynch (2013), are that these strategies are not comprehensive or thought out well.

Bowman (2005) believed there need to be additional funding for struggling students who may be at risk for retention. Interventions, summer school, and parental support are needed for students who have been retained. Bowman stated if a school spends $6000 each to retain 15 students, this $90,000 could have been spent on additional staff or interventions for those students.

Denton (2001) explained targeted interventions are essential to helping struggling students. The author suggested flexible scheduling can allow students to receive extra help on a particular or subject. Denton also explained afterschool programs, Saturday
school, and summer school programs can provide advantages to students who are struggling with the content and curriculum.

Bowman (2005) asked whether districts are willing to pay for professional development to help teachers become proactive rather than reactive. Bowman pointed out there is a need for increased professional development for teachers to help prevent retention for students and to give them increased instructional methods to meet the needs of all students. Bowman (2005) indicated that teachers need more opportunities to become familiar with research associated with school retentions and to network with each other to create proactive options for students. Further, preservice teacher programs need to educate future teachers on the research associated with grade-level retention (Bowman, 2005).

Intervention programs are an important way to help struggling students (Bowman, 2005). Progress monitoring students can help teachers understand student deficiencies. Progress monitoring programs are easy to administer, and they give teacher valuable student information about student progress.

Another idea to reduce retention rates involves redesigning the school structures. Traditional school designs of grouping students by age were adopted in the mid-19th century (Wells, 2016). Cross-grade groupings could be an alternative to retaining students (Lynch, 2013). This model would rate students by skills not ages. Multiage classrooms allow students to progress and learn at individual paces (Lynch, 2013).

Other alternatives to retention are providing support services for students as well as using classroom assessments to guide the instruction of the classroom (Wells, 2016). Instead of relying on one end-of-the-year assessment, teachers need to use classroom assessments throughout the year to guide instruction and help close achievement gaps for students (Lynch, 2013). Early interventions and extended learning time for students can help close achievement gaps early so that retentions are not necessary.

Darling-Hammond (1998) also outlined interventions to alleviate the need for retentions in schools. Darling-Hammond supported the use of skillful teaching, redesigned school, targeted services, and useful assessments to help improve instruction for students. Highly skilled teachers who have evidence-based instructional strategies can help students overcome educational deficits. Additionally, schools need to be redesigned so that teachers have students for longer periods of times by having longer class periods, teaching students more subjects, or teaching students for two or more years (Darling-Hammond, 1998). Darling-Hammond also suggested classrooms that are comprised of different ages and different grades can be more successful than traditional classrooms. Teachers need to know and recognize the individual needs of students to provide targeted services for effective instruction.

Finally, Darling-Hammond stated that ongoing, effective assessments need to guide teachers' instructional practices.

Jimerson et al. (2006) included a list of interventions which may deter retention. These interventions include pre-school programs, comprehensive school-wide programs, summer school and afterschool programs, looping and multiage classrooms, school-based mental health programs, parental involvement, early reading programs, effective instructional strategies and assessment practices, and behavior and cognitive behavior modification programs.

Summary

When students are involved in strong school programs, retention can and may be prevented (Jimerson et al., 2006). A preschool intervention program can promote academic success for at-risk students. School programs that enhance students' academic, social, and emotional learning can be effective to deter retention. Students who are not successful in the normal curriculum may benefit from summer school and after-school support. Looping and multi-age classrooms can allow teachers more flexibility to meet the needs of students, as well as more time to learn and understand about student's needs. Mental health issues can cause students to struggle academically, so schools that work to correct mental health concerns can help prevent retention as well. Strong parental involvement outreach programs and strong early reading intervention programs can be strong deters to early retention. Jimerson et al. (2006) noted strong teacher techniques and instructional practices are another key to helping to prevent retention. Finally, programs that help reduce negative behavior and increase positive classroom behaviors can help prevent grade level retention.

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