

READING ACHIEVEMENT AND SELF-CONCEPT  
OF PROMOTED AND RETAINED STUDENTS  
AT THE CONCLUSION OF SIX YEARS  
IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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## PREFACE

This study is concerned with the analysis of means on reading achievement and self-concept scores among retained and promoted students. The primary objective is to present the results of retention in grade among elementary students and allow the educator the opportunity to consider those results.

The author wishes to express her appreciation to her major adviser, Dr. Darrel D. Ray, for his guidance and assistance throughout this study. Appreciation is also expressed to the other committee members, Dr. Bernard Belden, Dr. Larry Perkins, and Dr. David Yellin for their time and assistance given to this research.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

The decision to promote or retain students has been a source of concern to educators for many years. Failure to meet grade level standards among a growing number of students has caused school systems across the nation to take a closer look at social promotion and consider guidelines for retention. School districts, such as the Greenville County, Virginia School System are requiring students to pass standardized tests before advancing to the next grade (Thompson, 1979). Ebel (1980) stated that competency testing implies that failures do occur, ought to be identified, and ought to be dealt with. He believed that retention in grade should be the result in some cases. Ames (1981, p. 36) shared this opinion when she said, "Retention in grade can be a step forward" for immature children.

Proponents of social promotion believe that retention in grade damages the self-concept and does not necessarily mean that greater achievement will result. Funk (1969, p. 38) said:

From the standpoint of mental health, pupil failure can be devastating. Research evidence has disclosed that retention has negative effects on the child's social acceptance, personality adjustment, and attitude toward his peers, teachers, and school in general. This is a heavy price to



pay for the opportunity to gain greater achievement which more often than not does not come about.

The responsibility of making the best decision for each student rests with the teacher. Knowing what research has to say on the subject of retention will help teachers in this decision. Two questions appear to be the most relevant. They are: Does research indicate that the student gains academically from retention commensurate with or above that of promotion? Does retention or promotion in grade affect the self-concept of the student?

#### Need for the Study

According to Jackson (1975) accumulated research evidence on promotion and retention is such that valid inferences cannot be drawn concerning the benefits of either. The three kinds of research conducted on the subject are: (1) comparing matched groups, (2) comparing individuals before and after retention, and (3) experimental research. Jackson's findings showed studies which compared retained students with promoted students as being more numerous. The next most common research was comparing outcomes of retained students before and after retention. The third type of research, experimental, randomly assigned students to repeat a grade or be promoted to the next one.

Jackson stated that the research being done in the area of comparing students who have been retained with those who have been promoted makes use of matched pairs. Students may

be matched using factors such as IQ range, age, scores on achievement tests, grade level, reading level, sex, race, and socio-economic scales.

Studies which compare students with themselves before and after retention are subject to criticism. There is no way to determine how the students would have responded to promotion rather than to retention.

Research of the experimental type was done over 40 years ago and was limited in nature. Present-day school standards make these studies obsolete. It is doubtful that many educators and parents would be willing to allow students to undergo such an experiment.

Various studies analyzed by Holmes and Matthews (1984) showed the number of studies done on retention and promotion peaked during the period 1965-1974 and has declined since that time. With evidence that retention is on the rise across the country (Thompson, 1979), the need for more research is warranted to determine the benefit or damage it has done on subject matter achievement and the self-concept of the student.

Reading in the lower grades has preeminence over other subjects and is often the basis for which the decision to promote or retain is made. With this in mind, this study has been designed so that insight on retention can be gained as it relates to reading achievement and self-concept among elementary school students.

### Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study was to examine and compare (1) total reading achievement scores and (2) self-concept scores between two groups of students at the conclusion of six years of school. The groups were students who started to school together in the first grade. One group consisted of students retained once in either first or second grades and the other group included those who were promoted.

### Hypotheses

The hypotheses to be tested are stated in the null form as:

1. There is no significant difference between the total reading scores on the achievement tests of the retained group as compared to the total reading scores on the achievement tests of the promoted group. (Tests for the various schools were: Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills, SRA Reading Assessment Survey, and Stanford Achievement Test.)
2. There is no significant difference between the total scores on the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale of the retained group as compared to the total scores on the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale of the promoted group.
3. There is no significant difference between the six scores on the subtests of the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale of the retained group as compared to the

scores on the subtests of the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale of the promoted group. (This hypothesis examines the following subtests: Behavior, Intellectual and School Status, Physical Appearance and Attributes, Anxiety, Popularity, and Happiness and Satisfaction.)

#### Definitions of Terms

Competency Based Education. This program requires students to pass tests in order to be promoted, evaluates objectives and teaching methods, and provides for re-teaching.

Competency Based Promotion. Promotion is based on mastery of tests for subjects taken in school.

Grade level. This is the level at which a child is placed. The student who is successfully performing those tasks which are designed for that grade is on grade level.

Meta-Analysis. Analysis is based on effect size which is calculated as the difference between the means of two groups and divided by the standard deviation of the first group. This is used when comparing several studies and their results.

Promotion. This procedure allows students to advance from one grade to the next.

Retention. This procedure does not allow students to advance to the next grade.

Self-concept. This is the self-perceived ability of a student. The self-concept deals with how a child feels

about himself/herself, how he/she perceives others to view him/her, and reveals capabilities which he/she believes he/she has in the realm of academic, as well as, behavioral areas.

Self-Concept Scale. The scores made by students in the six areas of self-concept using the tool designed for this study, Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale. The six areas of the scale are: Behavior, Intellectual and School Status, Physical Appearance and Attributes, Anxiety, Popularity, and Happiness and Satisfaction.

#### Limitations of the Study

This study is limited in the sense that:

1. Groups of students vary in interests and capabilities and cannot be totally compared with another group as far as motivation in achievement of reading and positive attitude is concerned.
2. Achievement tests which are the most reliable of measures available are known to be only moderately accurate indicators of actual classroom performance.
3. The study is limited to retained and matched students enrolled in the fifth and sixth grades in six centrally located Oklahoma towns.

#### Assumptions

This study is based on the assumptions that:

1. Maturation of children was matched within pairs of subjects.

2. Socio-economic scale was the same for all subjects.

3. Cultural and emotional stress was not present among subjects.

4. Teaching methods within each school were controlled within the study and did not relate directly to the results.

## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

#### Introduction

The studies on promotion and retention are controversial in nature. The subject, itself, is a highly emotional issue. Over the years, the voices of protestors to grade retention have been louder than those who favor it. They fail to see the benefits of retention academically, emotionally, socially, and economically.

The supporters of retention are concerned about the mental and social maturity of students and their readiness to accept the challenges of the next grade without stress and anxiety, and at the same time placing the primary responsibility of learning upon the learner. Hesitation of sending a student to the next grade when he/she has not mastered the grade level requirements of the grade completed is also a concern to the supporters of retention.

This review will include aspects of promotion and retention as they relate to reading achievement and self-concept of elementary school students in grades one through six. The first section of the review deals with the background practices in retention. The second section covers criteria designs for retention. The third section reviews

literature on reading achievement as related to promotion and retention. The last section reviews literature on the self-concept as related to promotion and retention.

#### Background Practices in Grade Retention

Competency-based promotion is increasing across the country as schools are requiring more performance from their student bodies. Jackson (1975, p. 613) said that 1,007,539 elementary and secondary school students were retained in the 1971-72 school year. Thompson (1979, p. 30) reported:

...in Fairfax County, Virginia, student retentions are up 142 percent since 1974 - up 22 percent in just one year - from 1977 to 1978. Retentions in Mobile, Ala., elementary schools increased from 1,500 in 1975 to 3,800 last year. Between 1977 and 1978, the number of high school seniors in Washington, D.C., who failed to graduate more than doubled. And last June, one-third of eighth-graders in the Richmond, Va., schools were held back; in previous years, the number of retentions averaged from 7 to 10 percent of the class.

Bossing (1980, p. 3) stated, "Currently more than 30 states require school systems to test students before they graduate from high school, before they are promoted from one grade to another, or both." He commented that the Greensville County school system in Virginia attracted national attention when the school board became one of the first in the United States to abolish social promotion and require students to pass standardized tests before they could pass to the next grade.

Owens and Ranick (1977, p. 532) defined the philosophy of the Greensville County Schools as being based upon the belief that:



Children's grades should reflect solid achievement; promotions should be based on achievement, enabling students to handle more advanced work properly; and the diploma should represent achievement rather than attendance in school.

Watts (1981) who also endorsed competency based education differs from other proponents in his philosophy when he defined it to mean not only mastery tests, but to include a revision of objectives and teaching methods to help the students to master subject matter. His emphasis was upon reteaching so that the students need not be retained because of failures nor promoted without necessary skills.

The Gallup poll taken in 1978 indicated that 68 per cent of those questioned favored promotions from grade to grade only if children could pass an examination. By 1982, this opinion was shared by 75 per cent of the people surveyed (Gallup, 1978, 1983). The question dealing with what to do with those who fail repeatedly was not asked in the poll.

#### Criteria Designs for Grade Retention

In most schools the policy of retention has never been defined. The school districts have failed to establish guidelines or policy on the subject. In a survey, Miller, Frazier, and Richey (1980) reported that 81 per cent of the 150 elementary, secondary, and special education teachers enrolled in summer courses in a middle Tennessee University stated that their schools did not have a written policy on retention, while 75 per cent believed that a school should

have a written policy.

Bossing (1980) endorsed in-service programs which would acquaint teachers with the research on the topic of retention. He also recommended a written policy for teachers to follow to assist them in determining the promotion and retention of students. Although he did not include parents in the decision making process, he stated that support from the parents was needed so that the child would not believe he/she had failed.

McAfee (1981, p. 9) stated:

School officials are expected to know that retention is either effective or it is not. Given the lack of good data, one's position is partly determined by the most persuasive rhetoric that one hears. Schools must exhibit a degree of certainty in their decisions on student assignments. Parents, particularly, are not anxious to have their children as objects in a social experiment.

Brown (1981) outlined a schedule to be used for students who are being considered for retention in which action steps and suggested time action are intended as a guide for schools to follow. The Light's Retention Scale is a more elaborate model than Brown's. It was designed with 19 categories to aid teachers in their decisions to retain or not to retain students. Points from zero to five are assigned to each trait and totals are matched with a table to determine if the student should be retained. The lower the number, the more likely the child will be successful in grade retention (1977).

Johnson (1984, p. 67) said:

. . . promotion or retention must be part of a carefully considered state or local decision-making model. To make such decisions capriciously

or on just one achievement test is intolerable and ignores all that researchers have learned about the effects of errors in the measurement of human behavior.

### Reading as It is Related to Promotion and Retention

A study conducted by Dobbs and Neville (1967) used 30 pairs of first and second grade children matched according to race, sex, socio-economic level, type of classroom assignment, age, mental ability, and reading ability. Each pair contained a first grade student who had been retained once and a second grade student who had not been retained. The children were white, low socio-economic, slow learners from urban areas. The  $t$  test for matched pairs showed the reading achievement gain of the promoted group to be significantly greater than that of the nonpromoted group during the first year of the study ( $t=6.06$ ,  $df=29$ ,  $p<.01$ ). The second year 24 matched pairs remained in the study with the same conclusion that nonpromotion was not an aid to achievement. The analysis of variance using the reading achievement test scores (Metropolitan Achievement Test) of the 24 matched pairs over the two-year period from 1962 to 1963 ( $F=4.00$ ,  $df=2/46$ ,  $p<.025$ ) and from 1963 to 1964 ( $F=5.28$ ,  $df=2/46$ ,  $p<.01$ ) showed that reading achievement was significantly greater for the promoted group of students.

Abidin, Golladay, and Howerton (1971) used for their study 85 children retained in either first or second grade and 43 children who scored below the 25th percentile on the

Metropolitan Readiness Test, but who were never retained. Data was collected during the sixth grade year. In the first year, students were much alike, according to teacher ratings of academic promise, conduct grades, and subject matter grades. Although the retained students' subject matter grades dropped during the first year of retention, the two groups showed similar grades during their second and third grades. However, during their first six grades, the retained students' achievement and ability scores continued to drop. By the end of the six years, the retained group's mean on ability was 11.2 points below that of the promoted group (Retained:  $n=85$ ,  $x=86.6$ ; Promoted:  $n=43$ ,  $x=97.8$ , .001 level of significance, Lorge Thorndike). The retained group's mean on achievement was .8 points below that of the promoted group (Retained:  $n=85$ ,  $x=5.4$ ; Promoted:  $n=43$ ,  $x=6.2$ , .003 level of significance, SRA).

Godfrey (1975, p. 34) in critiquing the 1970 research project by the North Carolina Advancement Schools stated:

More than 1,200 students in grades six and seven from 14 representative schools were tested and the data analyzed to differentiate between repeaters and nonrepeaters. Results showed that those who had not been retained were reading at a 6.8 grade level; those who had repeated one grade scored at a 5.2 level, and those who had repeated two or more grades dropped to a 4.5 grade level.

Her conclusion was that retention, even though increased, did not produce improved academic achievement.

Owens and Ranick (1977) reported that the Greenville County school system increased the achievement test scores of their students over a period of four years as a result

of retention. At the close of the 1973-74 school year, it was announced that in the future no students would be promoted until they showed a mastery of skills for their grade based on the achievement tests taken for that year. SRA Achievement Test scores rose from the 20th to 30th percentile in the 1973-74 school year to 50th to 60th percentile in the 1975-76 school year. As a result of the policy, student retention dropped to 695 of which 268 repeated the full grade and the rest were partially promoted. This compared with 800 retentions the first year and 1,100 retentions the second year. In addition, achievement rose among the students. In reading, third grade scores had risen from 33rd percentile to 50th percentile and in the seventh grade from 26th percentile to 64th percentile. Koons (1977) believed that nonpromotion was not the answer to improving achievement scores for the low-achieving students. He criticized the Greensville County report by saying that there were four reasons for the improvement in achievement scores. The reasons he cited were: (1) the Hawthorne Effect, (2) the fear of being retained, (3) a motivation toward positive test-taking attitudes among the students, and (4) the conscious or unconscious motivation of teachers to teach to the tests.

Thompson (1980) stated that grade retention failed to produce greater achievement. She prefaced her analysis of literature on the subject of promotion and retention with, "When schools are in doubt, they should promote rather than retain" (p. 1).

An article presented by the Eric Clearinghouse on Educational Management Research, a service which reports the findings of significant empirical research studies, said that most studies report on groups of students rather than on individual student achievement. The most important concern is not which grade failing students are placed in, but whether their needs are met wherever they are placed (1981).

McAfee (1981, p. 14) defined retention to be beneficial to the student if at the end of the year of retention the student showed an achievement gain relative to the group of students of which he previously was a member. If the student maintained the same or less relative standing, then the retention is defined to be detrimental. He collected data over a two year period (1977-78 and 1978-79 school years). During the first year of his study, the district had implemented a pupil promotion policy in grades one through nine with 26 per cent of the students retained. A pre and post test of the SRA Assessment Survey was used to determine the effect retention had on achievement. Analysis of the data revealed that retention appeared to have a beneficial effect in the elementary grades, but no significant effect in the middle-secondary grades. A compensatory education group which was made up of students who were promoted after the first year, showed as large as, or larger gains than did the other groups of retained or promoted students. The mean normal curve equivalent (NCE) gains from 524 first and second grade students were:

Retained group, +3 (n=115); Compensatory Education group, +6 (n=66); Promoted group, +4 (n=343). Students in the fourth and fifth grades showed NCE gains as follows: Retained group, +5 (n=84); Compensatory Education group, +5 (n=99); Promoted group, 0 (n=287). NCE gains for sixth and seventh grade students were: Retained group, 0 (n=61); Compensatory Education group, +5 (n=119); Promoted group, -2 (n=322). Eighth and ninth grade students showed NCE gains as follows: Retained group, -1 (n=107); Compensatory Education group, +3 (n=79); Promoted group, +1 (n=378).

Of 146 students used in Sandoval's and Hughes' study (1981), 84 had been retained. Both groups of retained and promoted students were below average in word recognition and reading comprehension. They divided their study into four groups: Academic Success But Still Problems, Successful, Failure, and Promoted. The first three groups had been retained. In comparing the groups retained with the Promoted students, the Successful group compared favorably in the areas of comprehension and word recognition even though the retained group had remained in the first grade. Three a-priori contrasts were performed with the overall F test (Promoted group:  $x=73.8$ ,  $SD=23.7$ ; Nonpromoted Failure:  $x=48.8$ ,  $SD=31.4$ ; Nonpromoted Academic Success But Still Problems:  $x=61.6$ ,  $SD=25.3$ ; Nonpromoted Successful:  $x=69.6$ ,  $SD=23.1$ ) with the results of significance in favor of the Nonpromoted Successful group in the area of reading ( $F=6.2$ ,  $P<.01$ ). The Successful group

represented 38 per cent of the retained group. They emerged to the top third academically of their repeated first grade class.

Holmes and Matthews (1984) collected data to determine the effects of retention on elementary and junior high school pupils and used meta-analysis to compute their findings. They calculated 575 individual effect sizes from the 44 studies used in their analysis. The total mean effect size was  $-.37$ , indicating that the groups of retained students scored  $.37$  standard deviations lower than did the promoted groups. Out of 24 studies they calculated on reading achievement, 75 effect sizes were obtained with the total result of  $-.48$ . This indicated that retention had a negative effect on the students in these studies. These studies had been conducted throughout the United States except in the Rocky Mountain States. The studies analyzed by Holmes and Matthews extended from 1929 through 1981, with most studies conducted between 1960 and 1975. In their conclusions, they said:

Those who continue to retain pupils at grade level do so despite cumulative research evidence showing that the potential for negative effects consistently outweighs positive outcomes. Because this cumulative research evidence consistently points to negative effects of nonpromotion, the burden of proof legitimately falls on proponents of retention plans to show there is compelling logic indicating success of their plans when so many other plans have failed (p. 232).



Self-concept as It is Related to  
Promotion and Retention

One of the major concerns to educators who must deal with the decision to retain students is the effect it has on the self-concept. According to Glasser (1969, p. 113), "Once the child receives the failure label and sees himself as a failure, he will rarely succeed in school." School failure, according to Glasser is closely related to failure to read. He recommended that students be passed from year to year in the first six grades and placed in heterogeneous classrooms with homogeneous reading classes in order to remove the stigma that any child might feel who is reading books beneath his age level.

White and Howard (1973) researched the relationship of failure to be promoted in elementary school and the self-concept of the student. The data used was part of a larger study conducted by the North Carolina Advancement School, a research school funded by the state for studying under-achievement. The measure of self-concept was the Tennessee Self-Concept Scale, a test which consisted of 100 self-descriptive statements to which the subject responded according to his/her agreement or disagreement. Subscales of the test were Total Positive, Identity, Self-Satisfaction, Behavior, Physical Self, Moral-Ethical Self, Personal Self, Family Self, and Social Self. The 292 boys and 332 girls were in the sixth grade and were classified at the time of measurement according to the number of times they had

failed a school grade. Of the 624 subjects, 519 had never failed a school grade (237 boys and 282 girls), 73 had failed once (43 boys and 30 girls), and 22 had failed to be promoted two or more times (12 boys and 10 girls). The results of the study showed that the highest mean score which indicated a higher positive self-concept was obtained by those students who had experienced no grade promotion failures ( $\bar{x}=44$ ). When one grade promotion failure had been experienced, the mean score was lower than the promoted group ( $\bar{x}=41$ ). The mean score for the group with two or more promotion failures was even lower ( $\bar{x}=34$ ). The results indicate that failure to be promoted is related to the self-concept of elementary students. A Scheffe' Post Hoc analysis was used to make this conclusion ( $F=10.60, P<.01$ ).

Some educators believe that the self-concept of students who have been retained need not be damaged if care is taken in the process of retention. Bossing (1980, p. 17) stated:

In most cases, a child's emotional reaction to being retained depends largely on the way in which the parents break the news to the child. The situation must be handled positively. He should be assured that he has not failed.

Ames (1981) associated with the Gesell Institute of Human Development in New Haven, Connecticut shared the same opinion. She stated that she had worked with thousands of successfully retained children. By this she meant that the children were content with the retention. She believed that many children were not mature enough to be successful

in a certain grade. Like Bossing, she believed that parents who accept and support the idea of retention and convince their child calmly that it is best to be retained should find no emotional damage done to the child.

Sandoval and Hughes (1981) shared the same opinion, as well. They used an interview with parents and teachers finding the differences between the successful nonpromoted children and the promoted children in their study were particularly noteworthy in the emotional self-concept domain. However, two other groups which they named Failure and Academic Success But Still Problems represented 62 per cent of the nonpromoted children and means for these two groups were below that of the others (F ratio was not significant for the three nonpromoted groups when compared to the promoted group ( $F=2.6$ ). Results on the McDaniel-Piers Children's Self-concept Scale favored the Nonpromoted Successful group ( $F=6.0$ ,  $P<.01$ ). Their remarks were addressed in behalf of this latter group when they stated, "Perhaps the blow of repeating the first grade was not as great to self-concept and emotional development as the fact of going on to the second grade and remaining at the bottom of the class (p.150).

Johnson (1981) found evidence to link school failure with lower self-concepts, however. In her doctoral dissertation, she monitored personality and behavioral consequences of learned helplessness in children who had experienced extensive failure in school. The 60 boys

ranging in age from 9 to 12 were divided into three groups (average, failing, remedial). The subjects performed an experimental task which consisted of tracing two mazes (dependent variables of time and skill in performing task). Half of the subjects were chosen randomly and given academic incentive and expectancy instructions. The other half were also given academic incentive and expectancy instructions, as well as, a monetary reward condition. Failing children were significantly more persistent in the monetary reward condition than in the prediction of academic success condition [ $F(1,36)=6.77, P<.05$ ]. Using the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale and the Intellectual Achievement Responsibility Questionnaire, she determined that, like the learned helplessness theory, low self-concept was predicted independently and significantly by school failure, internal attributions for failure, and external attributions for success ( $R^2=.48$ ).

In the meta-analysis study by Holmes and Matthews (1984), retained students' effect size was below that of the promoted students on self-concept [ $-.19, t(33)=2.29, P<.05$ ]. In the area of behavior, [ $-.31, t(12)=3.01, P<.05$ ] and in the area of emotional adjustment, [ $-.37, t(18)=1.55, P<.10$ ] were calculated. Holmes and Matthews had drawn these conclusions from meta-analysis from 44 studies involving a total of 11,132 pupils (4,208 were nonpromoted and 6,924 were promoted). The studies involved as few as 30 subjects to as many as 929 in individual studies.

### Summary

The views on promotion and retention vary among educators. There are those who favor promotion regardless of achievement results, those who favor retention for students with the use of competency testing, and those who fall somewhere in between the two extremes. The literature cited has shown the concern educators have for the well-being of the retained student in the areas of reading achievement and self-concept.

## CHAPTER III

### DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

#### Introduction

Included in this chapter are a description of the population of the study, the testing instruments, the testing procedure, and research design on the treatment of the data.

#### Description of the Population

The population for this study consisted of students in the fifth and sixth grades of six centrally located towns in Oklahoma. Selected schools were randomly chosen from those having a cross section of the population of the student bodies by race and on the basis of having no written policy on promotion and retention. Students in the study had attended the same school from first through sixth grades. They were identified as developmental readers having had no severe emotional problems or learning disabilities. Two groups made up the study. The experimental group consisted of students in the fifth grade who had been retained once in either first or second grades. The control group was made up of sixth grade students who had never been retained. Subjects were matched by sex, race, IQ, and total

reading scores from the first grade tests. Tables I through IV list students by schools, sex, race, IQ range, and total reading scores.

TABLE I  
NUMBER OF SUBJECTS BY SCHOOLS AND SEX

School	Male	Female	Totals
1	12	6	18
2	4	2	6
3	8	4	12
4	2	2	4
5	6	2	8
6	6	4	10
Totals	38	20	58

The schools which the students attended had no written policy on retention. The philosophies of these schools were based on meeting the needs of the child and upon what the teacher believed was beneficial to him/her in relationship to the total educational program of the child. If a teacher decided to retain a student, and if the principal also believed that this was best for the child, they worked together in consulting with the parents and student

toward that end. In some cases, if the parent objected to retention, the superintendent and/or school board were consulted, in which case they either supported or did not support the decision of the teacher. It would be a rare situation where the teacher's decision to retain was not upheld by the administration and school board. The criteria for retention which the teacher used came from achievement test scores, teacher-made tests, teacher observation of work habits and skills, ability tests, and size and maturity of the child. Parents were kept informed of the student's progress during the regularly and specially called conferences throughout the year and were an intergral part in the decision to retain when possible.

TABLE II  
NUMBER OF SUBJECTS BY SCHOOLS AND RACE

School	Caucasian	Black	Native-American	Total
1	14	2	2	18
2	6	0	0	6
3	4	6	2	12
4	4	0	0	4
5	8	0	0	8
6	8	0	2	10
Totals	44	8	6	58



TABLE III  
IQ RANGE AND TOTAL READING SCORES OF RETAINED GROUP

Student	IQ Range*	First Grade Reading Raw Score
1	L Av	72
2	Av	74
3	Av	71
4	Av	43
5	Av	55
6	L Av	50
7	Av	84
8	Av	73
9	L Av	43
10	Av	48
11	Av	57
12	L Av	32
13	L Av	38
14	Av	65
15	Av	35
16	Av	49
17	Av	33
18	Av	35
19	H Av	77
20	Av	58
21	L Av	38
22	Av	64
23	Av	64

TABLE III (Continued)

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Student	IQ Range	First Grade Reading Raw Score
24	Av	84
25	Av	54
26	Av	73
27	Av	78
28	Av	52
29	Av	52

---

\*In some cases, IQ range was determined by school personnel.

TABLE IV  
IQ RANGE AND TOTAL READING SCORES OF PROMOTED GROUP

Student	IQ Range*	First Grade Reading Raw Score
1	L Av	78
2	Av	62
3	Av	64
4	Av	61
5	Av	66
6	L Av	50
7	Av	60
8	Av	64
9	L Av	63
10	Av	50
11	Av	40
12	L Av	41
13	L Av	39
14	Av	64
15	Av	34
16	Av	48
17	Av	32
18	Av	36
19	H Av	69
20	Av	52
21	L Av	40
22	Av	66

TABLE IV (Continued)

---

Student	IQ Range	First Grade Reading Raw Score
23	Av	61
24	Av	56
25	Av	54
26	Av	73
27	Av	80
28	Av	68
29	Av	73

---

\*In some cases, IQ range was determined by school personnel.

### Testing Procedure

Reading achievement scores were obtained from the 1984 spring achievement tests for this study. The investigator used the total raw scores for comparisons. The three tests used by the six schools were the Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills, SRA Assessment Survey, and the Stanford Achievement Test. Procedure in the administration of these tests was done by the individual school personnel.

The Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale was administered by the researcher to both groups of retained and promoted students. Rapport was established with the students at the beginning of the session and explanation of the purpose for the scale was given with discretion by saying that the examiner wanted to know how they felt about certain issues. It was pointed out that this was not a test, but a scale to help make this determination. No mention was made about promotion or retention in grade. Students were encouraged to be honest in their responses. To aid in allowing more freedom of expression, a numbering system was used instead of writing the names of students on the booklets. The examiner kept the group together at a similar pace and focused on the task by reading aloud each item. In some instances, explanations were necessary to define meanings of words or phrases. It was determined that lack of reading ability should not hinder the responses of items measuring self-concept.

## Testing Instruments

Instruments for testing achievement varied among the six schools. The Total Reading section raw scores used in this study were from the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills, SRA Assessment Survey, and the Stanford Achievement Test. For measuring self-concept, the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale was used for all students in the study.

Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills, Level 2, Form S. (1975)

This test had 15 subtests of which Vocabulary and Reading Comprehension were combined to make up the Total Reading section raw scores which were used for this study. The reported reliabilities for the reading subtests for Levels 1-4 ranged from .89 to .94. The reliabilities for the Total Reading section scores ranged from .94 to .97. The test materials represented reasonable tasks for basic skills achievement measures. (Buros, The Eighth Mental Measurement Yearbook. (1978)

SRA Assessment Survey, Multilevel, Form E. (1975)

The Multilevel edition included grades 4-5, 6-7, and 8-9 with 10 or 13 scores of which the Total Reading section raw scores from Vocabulary and Comprehension were used for this study. The K-R 20 estimates of reliability for individual tests ranged from the low .70's to the low .90's.

Correlations among the SRA scores averaged around .79. The item content appeared to be highly relevant to pupils and writing was clear and concise. (Buros, The Eighth Mental Measurement Yearbook. (1978)

Stanford Achievement Test, Intermediate 2 Level, Form A, (1973)

The Intermediate 2 battery included grades 5.5 to 6.9, and had 15 scores of which Reading Comprehension and Word Study Skills combined for the Total Reading section raw scores used in this study. The reported reliability coefficients ranged from the high .80's to mid 90's. The test was comprehensive across areas of instructional emphasis and over a wide range of grade levels. The Stanford is a norm-referenced test from which objectives-referenced interpretations can be made. The individual items test achievement of different specific objectives of learning in the content domain. (Buros, The Eighth Mental Measurement Yearbook. (1978)

Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale, Grades 3-12. (1984)

This self-concept scale consisted of 80 first-person declarative statements reflecting the concerns that children have about themselves. Slightly more than half of the items indicate a negative self-concept. The items are grouped into six categories: Behavior, Intellectual and

School Status, Physical Appearance and Attributes, Anxiety, Popularity, and Happiness and Satisfaction. Internal consistency was calculated on a normative sample of 297 sixth and tenth grade students using the KR-20 formula. The reliability estimates for the total score ranged from .88 to .93. The test-retest reliability coefficients ranged from .42 to .96. Validity was obtained from a number of empirical studies using item analysis, intercorrelations among the scales and items, and comparisons of the responses of various criterion groups (Piers-Harris, 1984).

#### Statistical Techniques Used in the Treatment of the Data

The design utilized in this study was one of causal-comparative, or "Ex Post Facto" series and is used when data are collected after all the events of interest have occurred (Isaac and Michael, 1981). It was used to investigate possible cause-and-effect relationships between retention and promotion on reading achievement and self-concept where the independent variable was retention and the dependent variables were reading raw scores, total and subtest self-concept scores. The  $t$  test values were calculated using the following formula:

$$t = \frac{\bar{x}_1 - \bar{x}_2}{\sqrt{\left( \frac{(n-1) S_1^2 + (n-1) S_2^2}{n_1 + n_2 - 2} \right) \left( \frac{1}{n_1} + \frac{1}{n_2} \right)}}$$

where  $n$  = the number of subjects in a group



$\bar{x}_1$  = mean of the scores from the promoted group

$\bar{x}_2$  = mean of the scores from the retained group

$S_1^2$  = squared standard deviation of the promoted group

$S_2^2$  = squared standard deviation of the retained group. (Glass and Stanley, 1970)

Estimated critical  $t$  values used in determining significance are:

$$t_{56, .01} = 2.6$$

$$t_{56, .05} = 2.0$$

$$t_{56, .10} = 1.6$$

#### Summary

This chapter has described the population of the study. An explanation of the testing procedure and critiques of the instruments used were provided. Statistical techniques and formula used in the treatment of the data were also presented.

## CHAPTER IV

### TREATMENT OF DATA AND ANALYSIS OF RESULTS

#### Introduction

The purpose of this study was to examine the effect retention in grade had on reading achievement and self-concept. Comparisons of results were made using the total reading scores from achievement tests. Comparisons of results were also made using the total scores from the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale. Additional comparisons were made with the six cluster scores from the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale.

Reading achievement between the two groups at the beginning of the study will be discussed first. Next, the hypotheses of the study will be explained. The first is comparing reading achievement at the close of the study. The second hypothesis deals with self-concept of the groups. The hypotheses dealing with the six areas of self-concept will be further expounded in the last section.

#### Comparison of Beginning Reading Scores

A t test for significant means was calculated with first grade total reading scores. The comparison was made to insure that no significant difference existed between the

scores of the retained group as compared to the scores of the promoted group in order to match subjects (1979).

Table V lists the scores and means for both groups followed by the calculations of the t test.

TABLE V  
t TEST COMPARING 1979 READING RAW SCORES

Group	Promoted			Retained		
	X	$\bar{x}$	$\bar{x}^2$	X	$\bar{x}$	$\bar{x}^2$
	78	21.31	454.12	72	15.07	227.10
	62	5.31	28.20	74	17.07	291.38
	64	7.31	53.44	71	14.07	197.96
	61	4.31	18.58	43	-13.93	194.04
	66	9.31	86.68	55	-1.93	3.72
	50	-6.69	44.76	50	-6.93	48.02
	60	3.31	10.96	84	27.07	732.78
	64	7.31	53.44	73	16.07	258.24
	63	6.31	39.82	43	-13.93	194.04
	50	-6.69	44.76	48	-8.93	79.74
	40	-16.69	278.56	57	.07	.00
	41	-15.69	246.18	32	-24.93	621.50
	39	-17.69	312.94	38	-18.93	358.34
	64	7.31	53.44	65	8.07	65.12
	34	-22.69	514.84	35	-21.93	480.92
	48	-8.69	75.52	49	-7.93	62.88
	32	-24.69	610.00	33	-23.93	572.64
	36	-20.69	428.08	35	-21.93	480.92
	69	12.31	151.54	77	20.07	402.80
	52	-4.69	22.00	58	1.07	1.44
	40	-16.69	278.56	38	-18.93	358.34
	66	9.31	86.68	64	7.07	49.98

TABLE V (Continued)

Group	Promoted			Retained		
	X	$\bar{x}$	$\bar{x}^2$	X	$\bar{x}$	$\bar{x}^2$
	61	4.31	18.58	64	7.07	49.98
	56	-.69	.48	84	27.07	732.78
	54	-2.69	7.24	54	-2.93	8.58
	73	16.31	266.02	73	16.07	258.24
	80	23.31	543.36	78	21.07	443.94
	68	11.31	127.92	52	-4.93	24.30
	73	16.31	266.02	52	-4.93	24.30
Total	1644	0	5151.30	1651	0	5811.93
Mean		56.69			56.93	
Standard Deviation		13.56			14.41	

$t = .07$

The means of the promoted group and the retained group showed no significant difference so that the two groups were matched according to total reading raw scores from achievement tests in the first grade.

## Tests of the Hypotheses

Eight hypotheses will be discussed in terms of the statistical treatment of the data.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant difference between the total reading scores of the promoted group as compared to the total reading scores of the retained group. Table VI reports the results. Hypothesis 1 was not rejected based on the lack of evidence that the two groups were different ( $t = -.24$ ).

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference between the total scores on the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale of the promoted group as compared to the total scores of the retained group. Table VII reports the results. Hypothesis 2 was not rejected based on the lack of statistical evidence that the two groups were different.

Hypothesis 3: There is no significant difference between the scores on Behavior of the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale of the promoted group as compared to the scores of the retained group. Table VIII reports the results. Hypothesis 3 was rejected at the .10 level of confidence, but was not rejected at the .05 level of confidence.

Hypothesis 4: There is no significant difference between the scores of Intellectual and School Status on the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale of the promoted group as compared to the scores of the retained group. Table IX reports the results. Hypothesis 4 was accepted

TABLE VI  
COMPARISON OF 1984 TOTAL READING ACHIEVEMENT SCORES  
BETWEEN PROMOTED AND RETAINED GROUPS

Group	Promoted			Retained		
	X	$\bar{x}$	$\bar{x}^2$	X	$\bar{x}$	$\bar{x}^2$
	71	17.31	299.64	43	-11.93	142.32
	55	1.31	1.72	67	12.07	145.68
	36	-17.69	312.94	56	1.07	1.14
	67	13.31	177.16	25	-29.93	895.80
	66	12.31	151.54	40	-14.93	222.90
	40	-13.69	187.42	28	-26.93	725.22
	61	7.31	53.44	83	28.07	787.92
	78	24.31	590.98	69	14.07	197.96
	58	4.31	18.58	37	-17.93	321.48
	21	-32.69	1068.64	53	-1.93	3.72
	61	7.31	53.44	62	7.07	49.98
	41	-12.69	161.04	10	-44.93	2018.70
	25	-28.69	833.12	37	-17.93	321.48
	48	-5.69	32.38	47	-7.93	62.88
	35	-18.69	349.32	70	15.07	227.10
	33	-20.69	428.08	69	14.07	197.96
	40	-13.69	187.42	56	1.07	1.14
	36	-17.69	312.94	54	-.93	.86
	89	35.31	1246.80	97	42.07	1769.88
	82	28.31	801.46	37	-17.93	321.48
	31	-22.69	514.84	52	-2.93	8.58

TABLE VI (Continued)

Group	Promoted			Retained		
	X	$\bar{x}$	$\bar{x}^2$	X	$\bar{x}$	$\bar{x}^2$
	62	8.31	69.06	77	22.07	487.08
	53	-.69	.48	52	-2.93	8.58
	63	9.31	86.68	76	21.07	443.94
	32	-21.69	470.46	53	-1.93	3.72
	56	2.31	5.34	45	-9.93	98.60
	93	39.31	1545.28	97	42.07	1769.88
	60	6.31	39.82	43	-11.93	142.32
	64	10.31	106.30	58	3.07	9.42
Totals	1557	0	10096.32	1593	0	11387.72
Means		53.69			54.93	
Standard Deviations		18.99			20.16	

$t = -.24$



TABLE VII  
 COMPARISON OF SELF-CONCEPT BETWEEN  
 PROMOTED AND RETAINED GROUPS

Group	Promoted			Retained		
	X	$\bar{x}$	$\bar{x}^2$	X	$\bar{x}$	$\bar{x}^2$
	73	14.10	198.81	43	-12.28	150.80
	61	2.10	4.41	71	15.72	247.12
	71	12.10	146.41	71	15.72	247.12
	31	-27.90	778.41	55	-.28	.08
	49	-9.90	98.01	63	7.72	59.60
	31	-27.90	778.41	55	-.28	.08
	67	8.10	65.61	54	-1.28	1.64
	55	-3.90	15.21	62	6.72	45.16
	65	6.10	37.21	50	-5.28	27.88
	65	6.10	37.21	46	-9.28	86.12
	68	9.10	82.81	55	-.28	.08
	66	7.10	50.41	60	4.72	22.28
	54	-4.90	24.01	51	-4.28	18.32
	64	5.10	26.01	39	-16.28	265.04
	56	-2.90	8.41	30	-25.28	639.08
	58	-.90	.81	65	9.72	94.48
	74	15.10	228.01	53	-2.28	5.20
	63	4.10	16.81	61	5.72	32.72
	64	5.10	26.01	69	13.72	188.24
	29	-29.90	894.01	55	.28	.08
	47	-11.90	141.61	56	-.72	.52
	76	17.10	292.41	68	12.72	161.80

TABLE VII (Continued)

Group	Promoted			Retained		
	X	$\bar{x}$	$\bar{x}^2$	X	$\bar{x}$	$\bar{x}^2$
	69	10.10	102.01	56	.72	.52
	63	4.10	16.81	63	7.72	59.60
	69	10.01	102.01	63	7.72	59.60
	44	-14.90	222.01	38	-17.28	298.60
	64	5.10	26.01	49	-6.28	39.44
	50	-8.90	79.21	60	4.72	22.28
	62	3.10	9.61	42	-13.28	176.36
Totals	1708	0	4508.69	1603	0	2949.84
Means		58.90			55.28	
Standard Deviations		12.69			10.26	

$t = 1.2$

TABLE VIII  
COMPARISON OF BEHAVIOR BETWEEN  
PROMOTED AND RETAINED GROUPS

Group	Promoted			Retained		
	X	$\bar{x}$	$\bar{x}^2$	X	$\bar{x}$	$\bar{x}^2$
	15	1.76	3.10	15	2.97	8.82
	15	1.76	3.10	12	-.03	.00
	16	2.76	7.62	16	3.97	15.76
	8	-5.24	27.46	10	-2.03	4.12
	15	1.76	3.10	8	-4.03	16.24
	11	-2.24	5.02	12	-.03	.00
	14	.76	.58	14	1.97	3.88
	14	.76	.58	10	-2.03	4.12
	14	.76	.58	15	2.97	8.82
	10	-3.24	10.50	6	-6.03	36.36
	15	1.76	3.10	9	-3.03	9.18
	15	1.76	3.10	12	-.03	.00
	10	-3.24	10.50	11	-1.03	1.06
	14	.76	.58	8	-4.03	16.24
	13	-.24	.06	4	-8.03	64.48
	13	-.24	.06	11	-1.03	1.06
	16	2.76	7.62	15	2.97	8.82
	14	.76	.58	13	.97	.94
	11	-2.24	5.02	15	2.97	8.82
	12	-1.24	1.54	13	.97	.94
	12	-1.24	1.54	14	1.97	3.88
	16	2.76	7.62	15	2.97	8.82

TABLE VIII (Continued)

Group	Promoted			Retained		
	X	$\bar{x}$	$\bar{x}^2$	X	$\bar{x}$	$\bar{x}^2$
	11	-2.24	5.02	15	2.97	8.82
	15	1.76	3.10	14	1.97	3.88
	14	.76	.58	16	3.97	15.76
	13	-.24	.06	11	-1.03	1.06
	14	.76	.58	15	2.97	8.82
	12	-1.24	1.54	11	-1.03	1.06
	12	-1.24	1.54	9	-3.03	9.18
Totals	384	0	115.38	349	0	270.94
Means		13.24			12.03	
Standard Deviations		2.03			3.11	

$t = 1.75$

TABLE IX  
 COMPARISON OF INTELLECTUAL AND SCHOOL STATUS  
 BETWEEN PROMOTED AND RETAINED GROUPS

Group	Promoted			Retained		
	X	$\bar{x}$	$\bar{x}^2$	X	$\bar{x}$	$\bar{x}^2$
	16	4.79	22.94	14	2.86	8.18
	14	2.79	7.78	17	5.86	34.34
	15	3.79	14.36	16	4.86	23.62
	5	-6.21	38.56	13	1.86	3.46
	8	-3.21	10.30	16	4.86	23.62
	8	-3.21	10.30	8	-3.14	9.86
	13	1.79	3.20	8	-3.14	9.86
	5	-6.21	38.56	13	1.86	3.46
	12	.79	.62	7	-4.14	17.14
	12	.79	.62	8	-3.14	9.86
	15	3.79	14.36	8	-3.14	9.86
	9	-2.21	4.88	15	3.86	14.90
	11	-.21	.04	6	-5.14	26.42
	15	3.79	14.36	3	-8.14	66.26
	11	-.21	.04	9	-2.14	4.58
	12	.79	.62	15	3.86	14.90
	15	3.79	14.36	12	.86	.74
	10	-1.21	1.46	12	.86	.74
	10	-1.21	1.46	14	2.86	8.18
	4	-7.21	51.98	14	2.86	8.18
	8	-3.21	10.30	12	.86	.74
	17	5.79	33.52	16	4.86	23.62

TABLE IX (Continued)

Group	Promoted			Retained		
	X	$\bar{x}$	$\bar{x}^2$	X	$\bar{x}$	$\bar{x}^2$
	15	3.79	14.36	9	-2.14	4.58
	11	.21	.04	15	3.86	14.90
	10	-1.21	1.46	11	-.14	.02
	10	-1.21	1.46	2	-9.14	83.54
	15	3.79	14.36	13	1.86	3.46
	6	-5.21	27.14	12	.86	.74
	13	1.79	3.20	5	-6.14	37.70
Totals	325	0	356.64	323	0	467.46
Means		11.21			11.14	
Standard Deviations		3.57			4.09	

$t = .07$

on the basis that there was lack of evidence that the two groups were different. ( $t=.07$ )

Hypothesis 5: There is no significant difference between the scores of Physical Appearance and Attributes of the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale of the promoted group as compared to the scores of the retained group. Table X reports the results. Hypothesis 5 was not rejected based on the lack of evidence that the two groups were different. ( $t=.26$ )

TABLE X

COMPARISON OF PHYSICAL APPEARANCE AND ATTRIBUTES  
BETWEEN PROMOTED AND RETAINED GROUPS

Group	Promoted			Retained		
	X	$\bar{x}$	$\bar{x}^2$	X	$\bar{x}$	$\bar{x}^2$
	11	2.66	7.08	2	-6.10	37.21
	6	-2.34	5.48	13	4.90	24.01
	11	2.66	7.08	8	-.10	.01
	4	-4.34	18.84	8	-.10	.01
	4	-4.34	18.84	13	4.90	24.01
	0	-8.34	69.56	8	-.10	.01
	9	.66	.44	7	-1.10	1.21
	5	-3.34	11.16	9	.90	.81
	11	2.66	7.08	4	-4.10	16.81
	11	2.66	7.08	13	4.90	24.01
	11	2.66	7.08	10	1.90	3.61
	13	4.66	21.72	10	1.90	3.61
	6	-2.34	5.48	10	1.90	3.61
	10	1.66	2.76	3	-5.10	26.01
	8	-.34	.12	5	-3.10	9.61
	9	.66	.44	11	2.90	8.41
	12	3.66	13.40	13	4.90	24.01
	13	4.66	21.72	11	2.90	8.41
	11	2.66	7.08	9	.90	.81
	1	-7.34	53.88	9	.90	.81
	3	-5.34	28.52	7	-1.10	1.21
	12	3.66	13.40	9	.90	.81

TABLE X (Continued)

Group	Promoted			Retained		
	X	$\bar{x}$	$\bar{x}^2$	X	$\bar{x}$	$\bar{x}^2$
	12	3.66	13.40	5	-3.10	9.61
	8	-.34	.12	9	.90	.81
	13	4.66	21.72	9	.90	.81
	4	-4.34	18.84	2	-6.10	37.21
	7	-1.34	1.80	5	-3.10	9.61
	8	-.34	.12	9	.90	.81
	9	.66	.44	4	-4.10	16.81
Totals	242	0	384.68	235	0	294.69
Means		8.34			8.10	
Standard Deviations		3.71			3.24	

$$t = .26$$

Hypothesis 6: There is no significant difference between the scores of Anxiety on the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale of the promoted group as compared to the scores of the retained group. Table XI reports the results. Hypothesis 6 was not rejected based on the lack of evidence that the two groups were different. (t=1.26)



TABLE XI  
COMPARISON OF ANXIETY BETWEEN  
PROMOTED AND RETAINED GROUPS

Group	Promoted			Retained		
	X	$\bar{x}$	$\bar{x}^2$	X	$\bar{x}$	$\bar{x}^2$
	12	1.69	2.86	3	-6.30	39.69
	12	1.69	2.86	14	4.70	22.09
	14	3.69	13.62	12	2.70	7.29
	5	-5.31	28.20	12	2.70	7.29
	10	-.31	.10	12	2.70	7.29
	5	-5.31	28.20	10	.70	.49
	13	2.69	7.24	13	3.70	13.69
	9	-1.31	1.72	13	3.70	13.69
	11	.69	.48	7	-2.30	5.29
	13	2.69	7.24	8	-1.30	1.69
	10	-.31	.10	10	.70	.49
	12	1.69	2.86	11	1.70	2.89
	12	1.69	2.86	7	-2.30	5.29
	8	-2.31	5.34	8	-1.30	1.69
	9	-1.31	1.72	4	-5.30	28.09
	8	-2.31	5.34	11	1.70	2.89
	12	1.69	2.86	5	-4.30	18.49
	11	.69	.48	9	-.30	.09
	13	2.69	7.24	12	2.70	7.29
	4	-6.31	39.82	6	-3.30	10.89
	10	-.31	.10	8	-1.30	1.69
	14	3.69	13.62	12	2.70	7.29

TABLE XI (Continued)

Group	Promoted			Retained		
	x	$\bar{x}$	$\bar{x}^2$	x	$\bar{x}$	$\bar{x}^2$
	14	3.69	13.62	9	-.30	.09
	10	-.31	.10	13	3.70	13.69
	12	1.69	2.86	6	-3.30	10.89
	3	-7.31	53.44	9	-.30	.09
	10	.31	.10	10	.70	.49
	10	.31	.10	11	1.70	2.89
	13	2.69	7.24	5	-4.30	18.49
Totals	299	0	252.32	270	0	252.21
Means		10.30			9.30	
Standard Deviations		3.00			3.00	
<hr/>						
t = 1.26						

Hypothesis 7: There is no significant difference between the scores of Popularity of the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale of the promoted group as compared to the scores of the retained group. Table XII reports the results. Hypothesis 7 was not rejected based on the lack of evidence that the two groups were different. (t=.99)

TABLE XII  
COMPARISON OF POPULARITY BETWEEN  
PROMOTED AND RETAINED GROUPS

Group	Promoted			Retained		
	x	$\bar{x}$	$\bar{x}^2$	x	$\bar{x}$	$\bar{x}^2$
	10	1.30	1.69	2	-6.00	3.60
	10	1.30	1.69	11	3.00	9.00
	10	1.30	1.69	12	4.00	16.00
	2	-6.76	45.70	9	1.00	1.00
	3	-5.76	33.18	11	3.00	9.00
	3	-5.76	33.18	10	2.00	4.00
	9	.24	.06	6	-2.00	4.00
	10	1.30	1.69	10	2.00	4.00
	11	2.24	5.02	7	-1.00	1.00
	9	.24	.06	10	2.00	4.00
	11	2.24	5.02	9	1.00	1.00
	10	1.30	1.69	8	0.00	0
	8	-.76	.58	8	0.00	0
	10	1.30	1.69	7	-1.00	1.00
	8	-.76	.58	2	-6.00	36.00
	11	2.24	5.02	9	1.00	1.00
	10	1.30	1.69	6	-2.00	4.00
	11	2.24	5.02	9	1.00	1.00
	11	2.24	5.02	9	1.00	1.00
	4	-4.76	22.66	9	1.00	1.00
	4	-4.76	22.66	10	2.00	4.00
	12	3.24	10.50	6	-2.00	4.00

TABLE XII (Continued)

Group	Promoted			Retained		
	X	$\bar{x}$	$\bar{x}^2$	X	$\bar{x}$	$\bar{x}^2$
	13	4.24	18.00	6	-2.00	4.00
	11	2.24	5.02	10	2.00	4.00
	12	3.24	10.50	10	2.00	4.00
	3	-5.76	33.18	8	0.00	0.00
	12	3.24	10.50	3	-5.00	25.00
	6	-2.76	7.62	9	1.00	1.00
	10	1.30	1.69	6	-2.00	4.00
Totals	254	0	292.60	232	0	184.00
Means		8.76			8.00	
Standard Deviations		3.23			2.57	
<hr/>						
t = .99						

Hypothesis 8: There is no significant difference between the scores of Happiness and Satisfaction on the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale of the promoted group as compared with the scores of the retained group. Table XIII reports the results. Hypothesis 8 was not rejected based on the lack of evidence that the two groups were different. (t=1.00)

TABLE XIII  
 COMPARISON OF HAPPINESS AND SATISFACTION BETWEEN  
 PROMOTED AND RETAINED GROUPS

Group	Promoted			Retained		
	X	$\bar{x}$	$\bar{x}^2$	X	$\bar{x}$	$\bar{x}^2$
	10	1.41	1.99	4	-4.03	16.24
	8	-.59	.35	10	1.97	3.88
	10	1.41	1.99	9	.97	.94
	7	-1.59	2.53	4	-4.03	16.24
	10	1.41	1.99	9	.97	.94
	1	-7.59	57.61	10	1.97	3.88
	10	1.41	1.99	8	-.03	0.00
	8	-.59	.35	9	.97	.94
	10	1.41	1.99	9	.97	.94
	10	1.41	1.99	7	-1.03	1.06
	8	-.59	.35	8	-.03	0.00
	8	-.59	.35	8	-.03	0.00
	8	-.59	.35	9	.97	.94
	8	-.59	.35	9	.97	.94
	8	-.59	.35	1	-7.03	49.42
	10	1.41	1.99	9	.97	.94
	10	1.41	1.99	10	1.97	3.88
	10	1.41	1.99	10	1.97	3.88
	10	1.41	1.99	10	1.97	3.88
	5	-3.59	12.89	8	-.03	0.00
	6	-2.59	6.71	7	-1.03	1.06
	10	1.41	1.99	10	1.97	3.88

TABLE XIII (Continued)

Group	Promoted			Retained		
	X	$\bar{x}$	$\bar{x}^2$	X	$\bar{x}$	$\bar{x}^2$
	10	1.41	1.99	8	-.03	0.00
	10	1.41	1.99	10	1.97	3.88
	9	.41	.17	9	.97	.94
	7	-1.59	2.53	7	-1.03	1.06
	9	.41	.17	4	-4.03	16.24
	9	.41	.17	10	1.97	3.88
	10	1.41	1.99	7	-1.03	1.06
Totals	249	0.00	113.09	233	0.00	140.94
Means		8.59			8.03	
Standard Deviations		2.01			2.24	
<hr/>						
t = 1.00						

### Summary

This chapter has presented the statistical results of the effects promotion and retention had on total reading scores, total self-concept scores, and the six cluster scores of the self-concept scale. The findings of the investigation showed no significant differences at the .05 level of significance on the eight t-tests using the means of the two groups. However, one of the cluster scores on

the self-concept scale, Behavior, was significant at .10 level in favor of the promoted group. Table XIV reports the summary of each t test.

TABLE XIV  
RESULTS OF  $t$  TESTS FOR TOTAL STUDY

Test	t-test	Significance*
1979 Total Reading Scores	t = .07	p < .01 = 2.6
1984 Total Reading Scores	t = -.24	p < .05 = 2.0
Total <u>Piers-Harris Child-</u> <u>ren's Self-Concept Scale</u>	t = 1.20	p < .10 = 1.6
Behavior	t = 1.75	*with 56 degrees of freedom
Intellectual and School Status	t = .07	
Physical Appearance and Attributes	t = .26	
Anxiety	t = 1.26	
Popularity	t = .99	
Happiness and Satisfaction	t = 1.00	



## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

#### General Summary of the Investigation

This study investigated the effects of promotion and retention on elementary students who attended all six years in the same school system. The six school systems used in this study did not have a written policy on retention. Decisions to promote or retain students were primarily made by teachers. This study yielded 29 pairs of students matched by IQ range, first grade total reading achievement scores, sex, and race, making a total of 58 subjects. They were identified as developmental readers without learning disabilities or severe emotional problems.

The effects of promotion and retention were investigated in the areas of reading achievement and self-concept. The latter was divided into six cluster scores: Behavior, Intellectual and School Status, Physical Appearance and Attributes, Anxiety, Popularity, and Happiness and Satisfaction. Students' responses to the items on the self-concept scale indicated the ways they perceived themselves in the six areas.

In the area of reading, this study established that retention in grade had not produce significantly higher

reading achievement scores than did promotion in grade. Total raw scores from selected students at the beginning of the study showed a slightly higher total in favor of the retained group (retained - 1651, promoted - 1644) but was not significant in the  $t$  test of significant means (+.07). At the conclusion of the study, the retained group also showed a higher achievement total (retained -1593, promoted - 1557), but was not significant (+.24). In order to determine that retention was beneficial to reading achievement, total reading scores should have yielded a  $t$  score of 2.0 at the .05 level of confidence, with 56 degrees of freedom. Although it can be argued that the retained students scored above that of the promoted group, it must be taken into consideration the fact that the retained group lost one year in their educational accomplishments and the difference between the two was not significant enough to justify retention. Despite what schools across the nation with competency-based promotion policies contend, there is no proof that retaining students results in significantly higher reading achievement scores according to this study. There is no way to determine what students would have scored in reading had they been promoted and compared with the same students.

In the area of self-concept, this study established that promotion in grade did not produce significantly higher scores in the area of self-concept than did retention. This area of the study indicated that the promoted group had a more positive self-concept in total scores than did the

retained group (promoted - 1708, retained - 1603), but the t test of significant means showed no significant difference between the two groups ( $t=+1.2$ ). In order to determine if the self-concept of the students was affected significantly due to retention, the self-concept scores between the promoted and retained students should have yielded a t score of 2.0 at the .05 level of confidence, with 56 degrees of freedom. The contention made by proponents of social promotion that retention lowers the self-concept of the student has not been substantiated by this study. Further testing as the students advance in grade may possibly yield more significant results.

The six cluster scores on the Piers-Harris Children's Self-Concept Scale produced higher scores in favor of the promoted group in all areas: Behavior, Intellectual and School Status, Physical Appearance and Attributes, Anxiety, Popularity, and Happiness and Satisfaction indicating that the promoted group had a more positive self-concept. However the t tests of significant means were not significant at the .05 level of confidence with 56 degrees of freedom (Behavior -  $t=1.20$ , Intellectual and School Status -  $t=.07$ , Physical Appearance and Attributes -  $t=.26$ , Anxiety -  $t=1.26$ , Popularity -  $t=.99$ , Happiness and Satisfaction -  $t=1.00$ ). In order to be significant at the .05 level of confidence, a t score of 2.0 with 56 degrees of freedom was necessary. The t test on Behavior was significant at the .10 level of significance ( $t=1.6$  indicated significance). The six traits

in the Piers-Harris Children's Self-concept Scale are based on how the students perceive themselves and not on how others perceive them, so that interpretation should not be made concerning character traits. However, an important element of learning to read effectively deals with the self-concept of the student and how he/she perceives himself/herself to be. Although this study did not prove that after six years of school, the self-concepts of the students who were retained was significantly lower than the promoted students, consideration for the individual in the decision to promote or retain is of utmost importance in the process of learning to read.

#### Conclusions

This study has established that retention in grade did not produce significantly higher reading achievement scores than did promotion in grade. Consideration should be given to the fact that the retained group lost one year toward graduation from school, and would have done as well as, if not better than the promoted group, had they been promoted. This study also showed that the self-concept of the students retained was not significantly below that of those who were promoted. Indications are that the students in the various schools have received help in the adjustment to retention.

Other aspects of retention such as early drop-out rate and discipline problems were not covered in this study and would further shed light on the decision to promote or

retain students. The possible future behavior of the student as a result of retention could significantly affect that student's ability to learn to read well.

Another consideration which is rarely thought about when considering retention is the amount of money it costs the taxpayer to educate the child for another year. The cost of educating one child for the 1984-85 school year in one of the schools in this study was \$2,160.00, based on average daily membership. In this study around 13 per cent of the student body was affected by retention. The cost for the extra year for the 29 retained students was \$62,640.00.

#### Implications

The developers and advocates of minimum competency testing before promotion in grade should think through all the aspects of retention. Questions which should be considered are:

1. What will be done with minority children who will never pass competency tests?
2. What will competency testing do emotionally and psychologically to the student who tries his/her best and still fails to pass?
3. Have considerations been made concerning teacher motivation toward teaching the tests?
4. How much money will it cost to administer the special tests for all the students in the state?

5. How much money will be spent in educating students who will be retained once, twice, or more times?
6. Will the results from competency tests create an increase for special classes?
7. Will the developmental first grades being initiated across the country as a result of this movement be able to show increased improvement in achievement scores?

Schools with established guidelines for promotion and retention based on competency testing should analyze the results to determine the significance of such a program. Schools without established guidelines on competency-based promotion need to consider all of the aspects discussed in this study.

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