

# What Parents Need to Know about Retention

Retention of a student's grade placement is a very difficult decision for both parents and educators. When parents are first presented with this suggestion by the school, they may become very overwhelmed and confused. If parents are presented with this option, then great care should be taken in examining all the variables that will affect the outcome.

Present research seems somewhat divided about the use of such an educational alternative. Some studies have shown that the greatest success for such an action occurs prior to grade 1. The chances for success dramatically decrease as children become older. Other studies seem to indicate that if retention is exercised as an option in Kindergarten and first grade, boys seem to benefit most. This result seems to support the developmental pattern of a more advanced social and academic maturity in girls.

Since parents should be involved in the decision of retention, it is important that they become educated in this area. The following factors should be taken into consideration prior to the final action.

## 1-Present Grade Placement

As previously mentioned, the greatest chance for retention to work is in Kindergarten and first grade. By the time children are in fourth or fifth grade, the chances for success decrease dramatically.

## 2-Immature Behavior Patterns

The level of interpersonal relations exhibited by children is also a factor to consider. If they tend to play with children much younger than themselves, retention will have fewer consequences. However, if children choose peers that are equal or older in age, retention may have more negative results.

## 3-Age of the Child

Children who are younger than their classmates will experience fewer problems with retention. However, children who are one or two years above their classmates may have more serious adjustments to this action.

## 4-Brothers and Sisters

Children without siblings seem to make a better adjustment when repeating a grade. Others with brothers or sisters in the same grade or one year below find retention much more difficult. Children in this category find the experience ego deflating and feel a loss of familial status.

## 5-Attendance

The more time a child is out from school, the greater the reason for retention. Children who are ill and miss over 25 days of school are prime candidates. This is especially important in the early grades where the foundations of reading and basic skills are taught. Some children with excellent attendance are less suitable candidates.

## 6-Intellectual Ability

Children with average intelligence have the better chance of success with retention. However those with below average (lower 2-10 percent) or superior ability (upper 2-10 percent) tend to have more difficulty. Children who fall into these categories may be having difficulties in school for other reasons which would not be addressed by retention; i.e. emotional problems, & intellectual disability.

### **7-Physical Size**

Children who are smaller in stature make better candidates. Those who are physically larger than their present classmates will have more problems when retained.

### **8-Student's Gender**

As previously mentioned, boys in kindergarten and first grade make the best candidates. After fourth grade both boys and girls will have little chance of success when it comes to retention.

### **9-Present Classroom Performance**

Students who are performing one year behind in most academic subjects may find retention a help. Those who are more than two years behind may need an alternate type of program such as special education class or resource room. Children who are functioning on grade level or above should be reviewed carefully.

### **10-Present Emotional State**

Children who do not exhibit any signs of serious emotional difficulties, i.e. impulsivity, nervous habits, distractibility, unwillingness to reason, and tantrums, have a better chance when retained. Children who exhibit serious emotional concerns should not be considered for retention. However, other educational options should be explored.

### **11-Parent's Attitude about Retention**

This factor is crucial. Children will have the best chance of adjusting to retention when their parents see it as a positive step. Frustrated, angry and disappointed parents will negate any chance of success.

### **12-Number of Schools Attended**

Children who have attended several schools within their first two years of school will have less success with retention.

### **13-Student's Attitude**

Children who see retention as an opportunity to "catch up" will have a better chance of success. Children who become very upset, exhibit denial about poor performance or show indifference may have greater difficulty.

### **14-Evidence of Learning Disabilities**

Children with intact learning skills and processes have a greater chance for success when it comes to retention. Children who have been diagnosed as having learning disabilities should receive alternate educational support. In such cases, retention should not be considered as an option.

The above factors are offered as a general guide for parents to follow. There may be other factors that should be considered as well. Regardless, a parent input into this decision is crucial.