Elementary Retention: Elementary Educators' Perception and Experience
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Introduction

Over the last century and a half, grade retention, a controversial intervention, has been used as a strategy to improve academic achievement with at-risk students (Beebe-Frankenberger, Bocian, MacMillan, & Gresham, 2004). Previous research has shown more drawbacks than benefits for those students that have been retained, especially when considering the long-term effects (Jimerson & Kaufman, 2003). Retained students are affected in a multitude of ways throughout their educational career, both socially and academically (Stearns, Moller, Blau, & Potuchnick, 2007). This study sought to learn about educators’ perceptions of grade retention and how different variables affect faculty members' decisions in the retention process. In addition, it sought to find interventions used with at-risk students throughout the academic process. This research addressed these questions: What are the risk factors and procedures of retaining a student in Northern Indiana public school districts according to school faculty members and are they consistent? What are the school faculty members’ perceptions of retention on students academically and socially within Northern Indiana public school districts? Are there interventions used in Northern Indiana public schools that faculty members choose prior to retaining students?

Methods

The design used for this research was non-experimental using both quantitative and qualitative data analysis. The data collection instrument was an on-line survey created by the research team using SurveyMonkey. The Convenience sampling was used with this qualitative data analysis. The data collection instrument was an online survey created by the research team as well as the parents. Ultimately, it is the parents' decision, including the Stat team as well as the parents. Ultimately, it is the parents' decision.” - Mr. C

Results

Educators’ Perceptions: Advantages of Retention
- Extra year academically: 22.9%
- Extra year socially: 11.4%
- Students confident among less experienced peers: 51.4%
- Early interventions identified for at-risk students: 51.4%
- No advantage: 11.4%

“Very few students are retained each year thanks to the impressive interventions we have beginning right away every year.” - Ms. B

Educators’ Perceptions: Disadvantages of Retention
- Academic gains short-term: 11.4%
- More behavior problems than peers: 11.4%
- Negative socio-economic impact: 19.2%
- More likely to drop out of school: 5.9%
- Suffer economic immobility: 29.7%
- Promoted low self-esteem: 50%
- Participants skipped question: 2.7%

Discussion

The quantitative and qualitative analysis revealed that elementary educators employed in Northern Indiana public schools supported the use of student grade retention. The findings were in disagreement with results of previous studies. This investigation found:
- A majority of educators believed retention did not affect retained students socially or increase behavior problems.
- A majority of educators believed retention had permanent long term gains.
- This study revealed participants had not stayed current with retention research.

Limitations:
- This study was conducted with only two small Northern Indiana school corporations, thus limiting the number of participants who self-reported the data and cannot be generalized to other school districts. Researchers were unable to email potential participants directly due to district policies.