

Grade retention is an ineffective means of academic remediation and can be harmful to student well-being. It also has origins in colonial education practices (Dupraz, 2019; White & Peters, 2009; Ndaruhutse et al., 2008).

Myth	Reality
✗ <i>Low-achieving students will “catch up.”</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Temporary Academic Gains. Some retained students may show short-term gains in reading and math; however, improvement tends to decline within 2-3 years of retention (Moser, West, & Hughes, 2012). ✓ Worse Academic Performance. Most retained students do no better the second time, and many actually do worse (IDRA, 2018)
✗ <i>The student will become motivated to do well and start to take school more seriously.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Increased School Absences. Retained students display lower school attendance rates relative to low-achieving peers that were promoted to the next grade (Jimerson, 2001). ✓ School Disengagement. Students that repeated Grade 6 demonstrated a decrease in learning motivation, academic interests and belief in their academic abilities in the following years (Kretschmann et al., 2019).
✗ <i>Peers will be accepting and the student will adjust to being in a younger age group.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Low Peer Acceptance. After the repeated year, peer rating of retained students’ likeability decreases rapidly (Wu, West, & Hughes, 2010). ✓ Temporary Sense of Belonging. Retention may temporarily have a positive effect on students’ sense of school belonging; however, their sense of belonging tends to decrease within 2-4 years (Wu et al., 2010).
✗ <i>Repeating a grade will not have an emotional impact.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ High Stress. Students rated grade retention as the most stressful life event, more than the loss of a parent (Anderson, Jimerson, & Whipple, 2002). ✓ Low Self-Esteem. Students held back in elementary reported much lower self-esteem in middle school than non-retained peers (Jimerson, 2001).
✗ <i>Holding back a student will not influence his/her behaviour.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Problematic Behaviours. Retained students display more aggression during adolescence relative to low-achieving, promoted students (Jimerson & Ferguson, 2007).
✗ <i>The student will have a better chance of graduation.</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Powerful Predictor of Drop-Out. Students who repeated between Kindergarten and Grade 5 are 60% less likely to graduate than those with similar backgrounds who were struggling but still promoted (Andrew, 2014).
✗ <i>Grade retention is applied equally</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Students who are at highest risk of retention (NASP, 2003): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Male Minority groups Attention or behaviour problems High poverty or single-parent homes Low parental educational achievement English language learners

Instead of grade retention, promote students and support them with differentiated instruction, adaptations, and strategies known to be effective within an inclusive education model.



References

- Anderson, G. E., Jimerson, S. R., & Whipple, A.D. (2002). Children's ratings of stressful experiences at home and school: Loss of a parent and grade retention as superlative stressors.
- Andrew, M. (2014, December). The scarring effects of primary-grade retention? A study of cumulative advantage in the educational career. *Social Forces*, 93(2), 653–685. <https://doi.org/10.1093/sf/sou074>
- Dupraz, Y. (2019). “French and British Colonial Legacies in Education: Evidence from the Partition of Cameroon”. African Economic History Network. <https://www.aehnetwork.org/blog/french-and-british-colonial-legacies-in-education-evidence-from-the-partition-of-cameroon/>
- Intercultural Development Research Association (2018). Failing In-Grade Retention How an ineffective practice with lasting consequences, high price tags and civil rights implications can be wiped out by schools doing what schools do best: Teaching today's children. <http://www.idra.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/eBook-Failing-In-Grade-Retention-IDRA-2018.pdf>
- Jimerson, S. R. (2001). Meta-analysis of grade retention research: Implications for practice in the 21st century. *School Psychology Review*, 30, 313-330.
- Jimerson, S. R., Anderson, G. E., & Whipple, A. D. (2002). Winning the battle and losing the war: Examining the relation between grade retention and dropping out of high school. *Psychology in the Schools*, 39, 441-457.
- Jimerson, S. R., & Ferguson, P. (2007). A longitudinal study of grade retention: Academic and behavioural outcomes of retained students through adolescence.
- Kretschmann, V. (2019). Effects of Grade Retention on Students' Motivation: A Longitudinal Study Over 3 Years of Secondary School. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 111(8), 1432–1446. <https://doi.org/10.1037/edu0000353>
- Moser, S. E., West, S. G., & Hughes, J. N. (2012). Trajectories of Math and Reading Achievement in Low Achieving Children in Elementary School: Effects of Early and Later Retention in Grade. *Journal of educational psychology*, 104(3), 603–621. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0027571>
- Ndaruhutse, Susy, Laura Branelly, Michael Latham, and Jonathan Penson (2008). Grade repetition in primary schools in Sub-Saharan Africa: an evidence base for change. United Kingdom: CfBT Education Trust Reading.
- White, P., & Peters, J. (2009). “A Short History of Aboriginal Education in Canada.” Aboriginal Policy Research Consortium International (APRCi). 23. <https://ir.lib.uwo.ca/aprci/23>
- Wu, W., West, S. G., & Hughes, J. N. (2010). Effect of Grade Retention in First Grade on Psychosocial Outcomes. *Journal of educational psychology*, 102(1), 135–152. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0016664>