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; Ndaruhurst et al., 2008).

### Myth vs. Reality

<table>
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<th>Myth</th>
<th>Reality</th>
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| ✗ Low-achieving students will “catch up.” | ✓ 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) |
| ✗ The student will become motivated to do well and start to take school more seriously. | ✓ 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) |
| ✗ Peers will be accepting and the student will adjust to being in a younger age group. | ✓ 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) |
| ✗ Repeating a grade will not have an emotional impact. | ✓ 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) |
| ✗ Holding back a student will not influence his/her behaviour. | ✓ Problematic Behaviours. Retained students display more aggression during adolescence relative to low-achieving, promoted students (Jimerson & Ferguson, 2007). |
| ✗ The student will have a better chance of graduation. | ✓ 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). |
| ✗ Grade retention is applied equally | ✓ Students who are at highest risk of retention (NASP, 2003):  
- 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


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