



Health Impact Assessment of Grade Retention



Cincinnati Health Department
Health Impact Assessment
Committee
Final Draft: 3/7/2013

Dear Reader

The Cincinnati Health Department (CHD) Health Impact Assessment (HIA) Committee is submitting the attached document for your consideration titled: HIA of Grade Retention: A Case Study in Cincinnati Public Schools.

HIAs are used to review pending policies, plans, and projects and to develop voluntary recommendations to reduce or ameliorate identified adverse health effects. These recommendations are shared with policy/decision makers. All of the recommendations are voluntary.

Grade retention is the practice used by many schools, public and private, where an underachieving student is not allowed to advance to the next grade level and instead is made to repeat the grade just completed. The attached document is a HIA of the pending grade retention policy for the Cincinnati Public School (CPS) District.

From our assessment we found the following:

- Retained students experience the following health impacts: emotional distress, increased aggression during adolescence, worse emotional health, and higher likelihood of cigarette use, alcohol drug abuse, driving while drinking, early onset of sexual activity, suicidal intentions, and violent behaviors.
- A grade retention policy has no bearing on the success of a school district as measured by State School District Report Cards. Two school districts, with retention policies, can be graded “Excellent with Distinction,” while the second district earns “Academic Watch”.
- Grade retention is the greatest predictor of a student dropping out of school.
- Parent and student involvement in the decision to retain a student is lacking in 5 of the 6 grade retention policies that were reviewed by our Committee.

Although this report was initiated to assess a pending policy of CPS, we feel that this report is especially timely now that the State of Ohio has enacted a state-wide policy known as “The Third Grade Reading Guarantee.” This law mandates that students, who score below the cutoff in reading, will receive intensive reading intervention from a highly credentialed teacher. Also, the law involves teachers and parents working together to develop a reading intervention plan. Under the terms of the law all 3rd graders who score below a cutoff level on reading diagnostic assessments, with a few exceptions, will be retained in 3rd grade. This law may have the dual effect of improving the retained student’s reading and increasing the likelihood that the same student will drop out all at the same time.

You will read in our report that academic intervention is a recommendation while grade retention is discouraged. The likelihood of success in graduating high school is increased for students who are promoted while receiving extra help in the areas where they struggle to keep up.

We thank you for reviewing this document. If you have any questions or concerns please contact LiAnne Howard on line 513-357-7472 or email LiAnne.Howard@Cincinnati-OH.gov , or contact Dr. Camille Jones, Assistant Health Commissioner, on line 513-347-7271 or by email Camille.Jones@Cincinnati-OH.gov.

Sincerely,
CHD HIA Committee

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Abstract

This health impact assessment (HIA) will study a pending policy of the Cincinnati Public Schools (CPS) on grade retention. Grade retention is the practice used by many schools, public and private, where an underachieving student is not allowed to advance to the next grade level and instead is made to repeat the grade just completed. From the assessment it was learned that retained students experience the following health impacts: emotional distress, increased aggression during adolescence, worse emotional health, and higher likelihood of cigarette use, alcohol drug abuse, driving while drinking, early onset of sexual activity, suicidal intentions, and violent behaviors. Retained students are 2-11 times more likely to drop out of school. The long range adverse health impacts related to dropping out of school include reduced access to better paying jobs, healthier housing, healthier food and medical care. Self reported overall health of Ohio residents increases as the school grade level completed increases.

Parent and student involvement in the decision to retain a student is lacking in 5 of the 6 grade retention policies that were reviewed.

As a result, a grade retention prevention process is recommended that includes parent education on the adverse health impacts of grade retention and parent involvement in the grade retention prevention process. The prevention process recommends early identification of struggling students, formation of an intervention team to identify services to assist the student to perform to his/her full potential, and the development of an Individual Education Plan (IEP). Parent and student (if the student has the ability to comprehend the process) involvement is recommended at each phase of the process. It is recommended that parent and student (if the student has the ability to comprehend the process) must receive a full explanation of the adverse health impacts of grade retention and certify by signing that they understand the health impacts of grade retention.

Introduction

This health impact assessment (HIA) will study a pending policy of the Cincinnati Public Schools (CPS) on grade retention. Grade retention is the practice used by many schools, public and private, where an underachieving student is not allowed to advance to the next grade level and instead is made to repeat the grade just completed. This practice is also known as “sticking,” “flunking,” and “held back.”

In 2008, the CPS Board of Education (CPS Board) charged the Superintendent to develop administrative guidelines for promotion, placement, and retention of students. This HIA will research the health impacts of retention only. The following is the CPS Board charge to the Superintendent (Cincinnati City School District, Bylaws and Policies, 2008, para. 25):

- A. “Require the recommendation of the relevant staff members for promotion, placement, or retention
- B. Require that parents are informed in advance of the possibility of retention of a student at a grade level
- C. Assure that efforts will be made to remediate the student’s difficulties before s/he is retained
- D. Provide parents the opportunity to request the promotion, placement, or retention for their child
- E. Provide parents the opportunity to appeal the decision about their child’s promotion, placement, or retention.”

In 2011, the CPS Public Affairs and Superintendent’s offices were unable to provide a final grade retention guideline to forward to the HIA Committee and this, in turn, has created an opportunity to complete an assessment of the health impacts of grade retention and to inform the CPS Board and Superintendent of our findings.

Purpose of a Health Impact Assessment (HIA) and the HIA Process

A Health Impact Assessment (HIA) is a process that helps evaluate the potential health effects of a plan, project or policy before it is built or implemented. An HIA can provide recommendations to increase positive health outcomes and minimize adverse health outcomes. HIA brings potential public health impacts and considerations to the decision-making process for plans, projects, and policies that fall outside the traditional public health arenas, such as transportation and land use.

The HIA has a focus on health outcomes such as obesity, physical inactivity, injuries, mental health and social equity. The HIA follows six steps: (1) screening - identify projects or policies for which an HIA would be useful, (2) scoping - identify which health effects to consider, (3) assessing risks and benefits, (4) developing recommendations, (5) reporting - presenting the results to decision-makers, and (6) evaluating to determine the effect of the HIA on the decision. Implementations of HIA recommendations are voluntary.

Scope of the Assessment

The scope of this study is the Cincinnati Public Schools (CPS) jurisdiction. The Board of Education is the governing body for CPS and is made up of 7 members elected at large. The district has 33,748 students, 5,000 employees, and 57 school buildings making it the third largest school district in Ohio. The 2011-2012 academic year budget is \$458 Million.

Research studies show that the practice of grade retention is ineffective in improving student achievement. More important, according to the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP), in its position statement on student grade retention and social promotion, there are risk factors that increase with grade retention such as: 1) a high correlation with dropping out, 2) emotional distress, 3) cigarette use, 4) alcohol drug abuse, 5) driving while drinking, 6) early onset of sexual activity, 7) suicidal intentions, and 8) violent behaviors. Adverse outcomes of grade retention follow students into adulthood where students who were retained are also more likely to be unemployed, living on public assistance, or incarcerated. In addition, matched comparison studies of retained vs. promoted students found that retained students experienced a negative impact on all areas of achievement (reading, math and language) and socio-emotional aspects (peer relationships, self esteem, and problem behaviors) (NASP, 2003).

The discovery process used in this assessment includes the review of literature evaluation of CPS school retentions by year, comparison of CPS with other large Ohio school districts in terms of student enrollment, race, sex, socioeconomics, graduation rates and school district report cards, and a comparison of large Ohio school district retention policies.

Discussion of Health Impacts

Relationship of Grade Retention, Dropout Rates and Health Impacts

The grade retention/dropping out/ and health impact connection is central to this HIA. The long term health impacts of not graduating are well known. In an article titled *Reframing School Dropout as a Public Health Issue*, (Freudenberg & Ruglis, 2007) urge public health professionals to become more involved in the dropout issue and to join with educators to improve school completion rates. In the article, they refer to education as the “elixir” of health and life expectancy. The “elixir” of school graduation can “reduce the burden of illness; delay the consequences of aging, decrease risky health behavior, and shrink disparities in health” (Freudenberg& Ruglis, 2007, p. 1).

Students who complete high school enjoy better health. Graduation impacts health and well being in a number of ways: 1. More schooling opens opportunities for better paying jobs, access to healthier housing, and healthier food, and better medical care, 2. Education offers more opportunities for health education so that people make better choices, 3. Education helps people widen social networks, gain social skills and mitigate social stressors, and 4. Education helps people develop more control over their lives (Freudenberg& Ruglis, 2007, p. 2). The list of student health conditions that increase risk of dropping out include: psychological, emotional and behavioral problems, physical and learning disabilities, pregnancy, chronic diseases such as asthma and diabetes, dental and vision problems and health problems of family members

(Freudenberg& Ruglis, 2007, p. 2). They suggest that public health professionals are well suited, along with educators, to intervene to improve school achievement. One of the roles of the public health professional is to advocate for evidence-based interventions that improve health and reduce dropout rates (Freudenberg& Ruglis, 2007, p. 4).

Grade retention is considered to be the number one predictor of a student dropping out. In the study titled *Grade Retention: Achievement and Mental Health Outcomes* found that retained students are 2 to 11 times more likely to drop out of high school than promoted students (Anderson et al, 2002).

Self reported general health status is recognized as an important measure of community health. The 2005 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) survey of Ohio resident's general health status was cross tabulated with education levels. The table below shows that as the level of education increases the percentage of residents reporting very good to excellent health also increases.

Education Level	Excellent	Very good	Good	Fair	Poor
Grades 1-8	12.1%	15.7%	29.7	25.9%	16.6%
Grades 9-11	13%	20%	31.4%	25.9%	9.7%
Grade 12/GED	14.5%	30.5%	37.4%	12.9%	4.7%
College 1-3 yrs.	18.8%	40.5%	27.4%	10.3%	3%
College 4 yrs. +	31.3%	41.6%	20.6%	5.5%	1.0%

Source: 2005 BRFSS

Literature Review

Ferguson and Jimerson reported the results of a longitudinal study examining the socio-emotional and academic achievement outcomes associated with early grade retention through age 16 years. When compared to a group of unretained children who displayed similar levels of early achievement and had comparable scores on two measures the retained student demonstrated early gains. However, analysis controlling for achievement and emotional adjustment through elementary school and into high school shows that the retained students demonstrated significantly worse emotional health and did not show sustained academic achievement. The study concluded that elementary grade retention is an ineffective intervention for both achievement and adjustment (Ferguson & Jimerson, 2007).

Recommendations for alternatives to grade retention at multiple levels, include: a) advocating for policy changes that emphasize early prevention and intervention to address the needs of students with achievement or behavior problems; b) scholarship that evaluates alternative interventions rather than grade retention; c) developing academic intervention plans for those students experiencing achievement or behavioral problems; and d) for those students who have already been retained and are currently enrolled, target interventions to facilitate school engagement and school success (Ferguson & Jimerson, 2007). The National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) 2003 Position Statement finds that grade retention is not an "effective remedy" for students who are struggling academically. Instead the NASP recommends "promotion plus" where students are promoted and the individual student is

provided with “specific evidence based interventions designed to address the factors that place students at risk for school failure” (NASP, 2003, p. 3).

The No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001 was adopted by the US Congress to support standards based education reform. The act called for all state run public schools to administer annual state wide standardized testing. The objective of the testing was to increase accountability of teachers, schools, and school districts. However, the policy is also linked to a rise in the practice of grade retention where more children have been retained since NCLB was passed (Jimerson, et al, 2006, p. 86). Pamela Powell discusses the connection between NCLB and grade retention in her article titled “A Perilous Policy Path: Grade Retention in the Age of NCLB” (Powell, 2010). Students who do not do well in testing and in class performance are in danger of being retained. Standardized testing does not fit with child development, “we need to remember that children do not develop neatly across domains. If the typical child retained is young for grade and small for age, he may not be at the same developmental level of his peers. At all grade levels, in fact, children are at different places. This is the nature of child development” (Powell, 2010, p. 2). A powerful model of education and a counter to grade retention would recognize:

- “All children develop as individuals.
- Children are always “ready to learn,” they are always learning.
- Instead of comparing children with one another, compare the child with themselves.
- Switch schooling to a model that would assist children in developing talents and use these talents to increase development in other areas.
- All children have assets.
- Competition is not the best way to improve schools or educate children.
- Schools should be designed in order to support student success.
- Education is a right.
- Children should not be excluded through subtle forms of discrimination such as grade retention, because they are perceived to lack the necessary skills for them to succeed in school. They should be welcomed to learn, not kept out or held in place because they do not have the same knowledge as peers who may have had more educational experiences and opportunities” (Powell, 2010, p. 3).

The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) is a worldwide test administered in 65 member nations for 15-year-old school pupils' scholastic performance. In countries where more students repeat grades, overall national performance tends to be lower and social background has a stronger impact on learning outcomes. In addition, high rates of grade repetition can be costly because school systems must provide another year of education. In 2009, PISA ranked the United States, where the practice of grade retention is an acceptable intervention, 23rd in science, 17th in reading, and 32nd in math (PISA, 2011).

Relevant Data

CPS Grade Retention Data

According to the CPS Public Affairs Office, the district maintains a record of students who are promoted but does not keep data on students who are retained. The district provided a mathematical formula to use the promotion data to produce the retention data table you see below. Table 1 shows the total number of grade retentions has fallen from 2006 (2781, or 8.5%) to 2010 (2061, or 7%). The highest number of retentions occurred in the 2007-08 school year during which 2,847 students were retained or (8.8% of the student population). We note that the highest number of retained students occurs in the 9th grade, consistent across all academic years. In 2009-2010, it is a concern that grade retention continues to be implemented for 2000 students, particularly when one considers that the CPS reported a 97.9% attendance rate in 2009-10. This implies that students attended class on a regular basis, and in spite of good attendance were failing (7% in 2010) to meet academic standards. The retained students are in jeopardy of dropping out in future years and as a result are at risk to suffer a lifetime of poor health and well being.

Table 1: CPS Retention Rates

Grade	Tot. Pop	2006-07 Number Retained	%	Grade	Tot. Pop	2007-08 Number Retained	%
KG	2781	122	4.4	KG	2820	169	6
1	2641	82	3.1	1	2702	103	3.8
2	2586	52	2	2	2523	66	2.6
3	2515	48	1.9	3	2490	55	2.2
4	2377	43	1.8	4	2410	55	2.3
5	2409	29	1.2	5	2317	49	2.1
6	2434	32	1.3	6	2331	33	1.4
7	2520	63	2.5	7	2476	67	2.7
8	2582	57	2.2	8	2480	52	2.1
9	3641	1,333	36.6	9	3428	1,313	38.3
10	2336	378	16.2	10	2232	366	16.4
11	2086	288	13.8	11	2143	330	15.4
12	1977	255	12.9	12	1938	190	9.8
	32885	2781	8.5%		32290	2847	8.8%

Grade	Tot. Pop	2008-09 Number Retained	%	Grade	Tot. Pop	2009-10 Number Retained	%
KG	2640	169	6.4	KG	2722	191	7
1	2586	111	4.3	1	2603	94	4
2	2451	69	2.8	2	2483	94	4
3	2443	44	1.8	3	2376	62	3
4	2368	40	1.7	4	2395	38	2
5	2286	30	1.3	5	2287	32	1
6	2310	21	0.9	6	2236	29	1
7	2435	39	1.6	7	2391	38	2
8	2444	37	1.5	8	2383	36	2
9	2189	790	36.1	9	2177	801	37
10	1905	280	14.7	10	1859	271	15
11	1860	246	13.2	11	1795	215	12
12	1729	163	9.4	12	1655	159	10
	29646	2037	6.9%		29362	2061	7%

Source: Cincinnati Public Schools; Prepared by the Cincinnati Health Department 4/12/2011

Comparison of Large Ohio School Districts

Table 2 compares seven large public school districts in Ohio. All of the public school districts, with the exception of Cincinnati have written grade retention policies. Two districts, Lakota and Mason, are designated by the State of Ohio as “excellent with distinction.” “Excellent with distinction” indicates that a school district exceeded Ohio state standard levels in 26 indicators and it is the top designation. Lakota and Mason districts have a comparatively small percentage of students that are economically disadvantaged (14.6%, 6.4%) and disabled students (9.7%, 9.1%). CPS district is designated “effective” and has 69.7% economically disadvantaged students and 21% disabled students. Akron, Columbus and Toledo are all designated “continuous improvement.” These districts have a comparatively large percentage of economically disadvantaged (84.7%, 81.9%, 76.6%) and disabled students (18.8%, 17.1%, 15.8%). Cleveland Metropolitan School District is designated “academic watch.” Cleveland has a 100% economically disadvantaged school population and 22.9% of students have a disability.

Since 6 out of the 7 districts have grade retention policies and the State of Ohio designates the districts from “excellent with distinction” all the way to “academic watch,” this suggests that a grade retention policy has little to do with the success of the district. CPS does not have a grade retention policy however, from the discussion above, it is clear that grade retention is practiced by the district. From the Table 2 we see there is no clear correlation between a district’s success and having a grade retention policy.

Table 2: Ohio School District Comparison
2009-2010

District Name	Designation	Indicators Met Out of 26	Graduation Rate	Attendance Rate	Avg. Daily Enrollment	% Black	% Economic disadvantage	% Students with Disabilities	Retention Policy	% Retained
Lakota	Excellent w/Distinction	26	95.2	98.7	18426	10	14.6	9.7%	Yes	
Mason	Excellent w/Distinction	26	98.4	97	10503	3.5	6.4	9.1%	Yes	0.36%
Cincinnati	Effective	10	81.9	95.8	32009	66.9	69.7	21.0%	Pending	7%(09-10)
Akron	Continuous Improvement	5	76.4	94	22603	47.2	84.7	18.8%	Yes	
Columbus	Continuous Improvement	5	77.6	94.5	49616	58.9	81.9	17.1%	Yes	
Toledo	Continuous Improvement	5	80.5	94.7	22277	44.6	76.6	15.8%	Yes	
Cleveland	Academic Watch	1	62.8	92.2	43202	68.2	100	22.9%	Yes	

Source: Ohio Department of Education

Prepared by the Cincinnati Health Department October, 2011

Comparison of Large Ohio School District Dropout Rates

In Ohio, the dropout rate is calculated as the number of students entering the 9th grade who graduate in 4 years. Table 3 shows that Cleveland, Toledo, and Cincinnati school districts have the highest dropout rates (37.58%, 27.4% and 22.27%). Research shows that retention has a significant influence on a student’s decision to drop. Ferguson and Jimerson (2007) found that, “Of the 17 studies including grade retention, each found

grade retention to be associated with subsequent dropout. Several of these studies include analyses controlling for many variables commonly associated with dropping out (e.g., adjustment, socioeconomic status, achievement, gender, parental level of education, and parental involvement)” (Ferguson and Jimerson, 2007, p. 331).

Table 3: Large Ohio School District Dropout Comparison (2008-09)

District	County	District Type	Typical Students Enrollment	SWD Enrollment	1 - Graduation Rate			2 - Dropout Rate		
					08-09	Target	Met?	08-09	Target	Met?
Cincinnati City	Hamilton	Public District	25,764	6,761	77.73%	87.50%	Not Met	22.27%	12.40%	Not Met
Cleveland Municipal City	Cuyahoga	Public District	36,272	10,425	62.42%	87.50%	Not Met	37.58%	12.40%	Not Met
Columbus City	Franklin	Public District	42,810	8,542	81.10%	87.50%	Not Met	18.90%	12.40%	Not Met
Akron City	Summit	Public District	18,987	4,408	80.75%	87.50%	Not Met	19.25%	12.40%	Not Met
Toledo City	Lucas	Public District	20,360	4,835	72.60%	87.50%	Not Met	27.40%	12.40%	Not Met
Mason City	Warren	Public District	9,434	969	98.63%	87.50%	Met	1.37%	12.40%	Met
Lakota Local	Butler	Public District	15,796	1,637	89.77%	87.50%	Met	10.23%	12.40%	Met

SWD = Student With Disability
Source: Ohio Department of Education

Comparison of Large Ohio School District Retention Policies

Table 4 is a summary of all of the large district retention policies. All 6 policies contain Ohio Revised Code (ORC) language pertaining to truancy: “Any student who is truant more than 10% of the required attendance days of the current school year and has failed 2 or more of the required classes in the current grade will be retained, unless principal and teachers of failed classes deems fit for promotion.”

Only one policy mentions parent involvement in the decision to retain. The Lakota district policy mentions involving parents in the grade retention decision for grades K-8th. None of the policies mentions student involvement in the retention decision.

All of the policies have an “escape clause.” By an “escape clause” we mean that with the approval of the principal and reading teacher or the failing teacher, the student can progress to the next grade.

Table 4: Large Ohio School District Retention Policy Summary

<u>Promotion and Retention Policy</u>	Promote to 4th grade if principal and reading teacher agree child is ready academically to move to 4th grade. If not ready child will be retained.	Students in 4th and 6th grades who fail to pass three or more of the five proficiency tests will be retained to their current grade.	No child will be retained more than twice in elementary school.	Any student who is truant more than 10% of the required attendance days of the current school year and has failed 2 or more of the required classes in the current grade will be retained, unless principal and teachers of failed classes deem fit for promotion.	Students will be assessed annually at the end of the first, second, and third grades for the purpose of identifying students who are reading below grade level. The district will provide intervention services, including intense summer remediation after third grade.	Any decision to retain a student shall be made with the parents or guardian. Parental approval of retention is required for students in grades kindergarten-8th grade.	A student may get retained for reasons of age, maturity level, achievement level or proficiency.	A student who fails 2 or more required curriculum subjects will be retained, unless the student is deemed academically prepared by the failing teacher and principal.	No student having a passing grade of "D" or above throughout the year is failed or retained.
Akron City Schools	✓			✓			✓	✓	✓
Cleveland Metropolitan		✓	✓	✓				✓	✓
Columbus City	✓	✓		✓	✓			✓	
Lakota Local School				✓		✓	✓	✓	
Mason City School	✓		✓	✓				✓	✓
Toledo Public Schools				✓			✓	✓	
Ohio Revised Code	✓			✓	✓				
Prepared by the Cincinnati Health Department, 11/3/2011									

Mitigation Recommendations

Retention Prevention Process

This HIA recommends no grade retention, unless it is required by law. This assessment recommends promotion with the services that a student needs to be successful rather than retaining a student. This is recommended because grade retention has proven to be ineffective in that retained students perform less successfully than similar students who are promoted and are 2 to 11 times more likely to drop out. Students who are retained more than once in their compulsory schooling rarely graduate from high school. In addition, grade retention is associated with adverse health behaviors that include: emotional distress, elevated aggression during adolescence, worse emotional health, cigarette use, alcohol drug abuse, driving while drinking, early onset of sexual activity, suicidal intentions, and violent behaviors. The potential long term impacts to health and well being due to the increased risk of dropping out of school includes reduced access to better paying jobs, healthier housing, healthier food and medical care.

Goal: The goal is to ensure that every student graduates from high school on time with sufficient skills and abilities to avoid the negative health impacts that are associated with not graduating from high school.

Notification: The school district should promptly notify the parent/guardian when a student is struggling in school in order to formulate a team of relevant staff, professionals and advocates to design an individualized student intervention plan to prevent the student from being retained.

Convene A Team: Identify a team of relevant staff, professionals and advocates, subject to the individual needs of each student, and agreed upon by the parent/guardian, principal and teacher as soon as there is the possibility of failure in order to design an individual intervention services plan for the student to prevent retention. Parent/guardian should sign off that they agree with the composition of the team and the intervention, or have the opportunity to appeal the composition to the school principal.

Create an Individual Education Plan (IEP): Create an IEP in conjunction with the parent/guardian, student (if the student has the ability to comprehend the process), and team members approved by the parent, principal, and teacher. Develop interim objectives for the student. It is the responsibility of the school district to provide resources for the child to meet the requirements of the IEP. Parent/guardian should be given a list of resources available through the school district to meet the student's needs.

Parent/Guardian Certifies That They Understand Health Impacts: At the time of notification, the parent/guardian should be given information regarding the health impacts of grade retention, and of dropping out. Document that the parent/guardian understands by having them sign a statement that they understand the health impacts.

Students who have a disability under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act should not be at higher risk of being retained.

Chronic Illness or Unmet Medical Needs: No student shall be retained for absence related to a chronic health condition and/or who is in need of vision, hearing corrective devices, interpretive services, and/or dental services.

Do Not Retain Without Parent Education and Consent: Documentary and anecdotal evidence should be provided to parent/guardian to address possible retention in a time frame that allows for the formation of an IEP and provision of services to avoid retention. The parent/guardian should be given information regarding the appeal process and the health impacts of grade retention documented with the parent/guardian's signature that they understand the health impacts.

Written Agreement: No student shall be retained in grade without the written agreement of the parent/guardian and student (if she has the ability to understand the long term health impacts) after the health impacts of grade retention have been provided in writing, with an explanation, and the parent/guardian assents in writing signature that they understand the health impacts.

Acknowledgements

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