Psychosocial Fallout from Grade Retention: Implications for Educators
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Abstract

To identify potential counseling needs of grade-retained students, in-depth qualitative interviews with eight adolescent subjects focused on their (and a parent’s) psychosocial responses to being “left behind”. The participants universally reported highly negative developmental changes related to grade retention, including lower self-esteem, social isolation from peers, shame about being older than classmates, resentment toward school teachers and administrators, and diminished quality of life—powerful effects which increase the risk of dropping out. Because grade retention affects at least an estimated 10 percent of students in the United States annually (Holmes, 2006, Levin, 2012, & U.S. Department of Education, 2009), school counselors, teachers and administrators with accurately targeted interventions could make a significant difference in the lives of many underperforming students.

Keywords: grade-retention, adolescents, psychosocial effects, school counselors, educators
Psychosocial Fallout from Grade Retention: Implications for Educators

Grade retention is an educational practice that requires underperforming students to repeat the grade level they have just completed (Jimerson, 2001). In the present climate of accountability, many school systems have adopted the practice of grade retention, especially when students underperform on standardized tests (Tanner & Galis, 1997). In the United States, an estimated at least 10 percent of students are being retained annually (Holmes, 2006, Levin, 2012, & U.S. Department of Education, 2009). High stakes testing and compliance with the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB) have been driving forces behind the growing use of grade retention (Potter, 1996).

While grade retention seems to be growing in popularity as an academic intervention, it is not without its problems for schools in the longer term. One major result of grade retention has been reduced student numbers in school, a demographic fact well documented by researchers who have reported that grade-retained students have significantly higher suspension and dropout rates (Christle, Jovilet, & Michael, 2007; Janosz, LeBlanc, Boulerice, & Tremblay, 1997; Jimerson & Ferguson, 2007; Jimerson, Anderson, & Whipple, 2002, Suh & Suh, 2007).

We suspect these demographic effects from grade retention to be the tip of a psychosocial “iceberg” which poses special challenges for schools to provide grade-retained students with better support. To understand the effects of grade retention we adopted a conceptual framework based on Erickson’s (1968, 1980) psychosocial theory of development with a special focus on adolescence, Erickson’s fifth stage of development, which calls for the resolution of the crisis identity versus role confusion and typically occurs between the ages of 13 and 18.

According to Erikson (1968, 1980), one variable critical for identity development in adolescence is having a high level of self-esteem. Adolescents who feel good about themselves resolve the identity stage of development with a positive identity. Conversely, adolescents who do not feel good about themselves may struggle with their identity and ultimately form a negative identity along with maladaptive and dysfunctional behaviors that will not promote the resolution of crisis at future stages of development (Chandras, 1999). Erikson’s theory focuses on individuals’ psychological development, but it also encompasses the social aspect of adolescents’ lives. The social component of development includes the external relationships that adolescents have with family, school and peers. Therefore, when analyzing data for this study, a theoretical view including adolescent psychosocial development is imperative to completely understand the experience of retention.

Thus, the purpose of this exploratory study was to identify the most damaging psychosocial fallout in grade-retained students. Such knowledge would permit schools and school counselors to offer more effective preventive and remedial interventions.
Methodology

We chose a qualitative approach, which is especially suited for exploratory research relating to counseling issues (Banyard & Miller, 1998). A qualitative method of study promises deeper understanding of retention (Creswell, 2008) and yields in-depth data (Banyard & Miller, 1998). Open-ended interview techniques were used as recommended by Leech & Onwuegbuzie (2007) as well as a grounded theory design (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Participant selection

Selection of the research participants followed three criteria. The first was that students must have experienced being retained at least once. The second was that students be currently enrolled in school on a high school campus. The third was that students had a parent willing to be a participant in the study.

Data Collection

For this study, 45-minute, semi-structured interviews were conducted with the eight students selected to participate in the study. All of the student interviews took place in a private office located on a high school campus located in the southern United States. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the parents of the eight students. Each parent interview lasted approximately 30 minutes. Two of the parent interviews took place in at the high school. The other six parent interviews took place in each of the parent’s homes. To protect validity of the data collected, a second, follow-up interview was scheduled and conducted to serve as a member check for all research participants. Follow-up interviews lasted approximately 20 minutes and were also audio-recorded. Member checking is a process where researchers meet with interviewees to check out findings to ensure their accuracy (Creswell, 2008). Additional data was collected about the students and parents from a data collection sheet they were asked to complete. Prior to the process of data collection, the researcher completed a subjectivity portfolio to address any possible biases on the part of the researcher toward the research topic. Recognizing that subjectivity is always part of their research, qualitative researchers should work to monitor it, so the results will be more trustworthy (Glesne, 2006).

Data Analysis

Consistent with grounded theory design, analysis of data began as soon as the data collection process began. Transcribed interviews were coded, initially, using a line-by-line coding method. Codes were once again reviewed using a method of focused coding which is the comparison of initial codes of the interview to each other in an effort to identify categories. Because the purpose of the parent interviews was to corroborate and elaborate further about the students’ retention experiences, categories about students were identified from both the parent interviews and the student interviews. Memos were then written about each student utilizing the categories identified from student and parent interviews.

Categories were integrated by analyzing and comparing each category to the other categories until themes about the student emerged which captured the retention experience in
relation to the research questions posed. Emerging themes, supported by direct quotes from both members of each student/parent dyad, were identified. At times, discrepancies among themes by students and parents relating to the research questions were identified. In some student/parent dyads, themes emerged that were not equally supported by both student and parent interviews, but provided significant data that were essential to answering the research questions. By comparing the themes that emerged from each student/parent dyad to themes of the other student/parent dyads in the study, the following findings about the personal reactions and experiences of retained students were identified and reported.

Results

Eight student-parent pairs participated in the study. Five of the students, whose pseudonyms were Beth, Donovan, Jerrod, Lisa and Sam, were white, and three, whose pseudonyms were Donna, James and Jennifer, were black. The students were evenly divided by gender, with three males being white and one black and two females being white and two black. All but one student-parent pair described its family as middle-income, with the remaining pair labeling its family as lower income. The students’ mean age of 17.5 reflected their impeded progress through school. The mean grade level of the participants at the time of this study was 10.6. However, the mean grade level in which they had been retained was 5.6. Only one student had been retained as recently as the previous grade. Two of the participants had been retention-free for seven and eight years respectively. Repeat grade-retentions were common, and had happened to half of the participants: two of the eight students had been held back twice, and two had been held back three times.

The parent participants were demographically diverse, being equally divided in race, and included seven women and one man. One of the parent participants was a maternal grandmother. The mean age of the parents was 46.8 with a range of 35 to 57. As a whole the parents were low in their own educational attainment with three school dropouts; two who had achieved GED’s; three who graduated high school, and one who had a college degree.

Reasons for Retention

Students and parents cited environmental stressors, apathy toward school, not being prepared for the next grade’s work level, and poor behavior patterns that did not promote academic success as being the reasons for retention. Examples of environmental stressors reported by participants are Donna’s illness during her fourth grade year, the illness of Beth’s mother during her seventh grade year and the chaotic, violent and drug-infested neighborhood where Jennifer lived her seventh grade year. While these stressors were not the sole reasons these adolescent students had to repeat a grade in school, they were obstacles to these three adolescent students’ academic success and are prime examples of barriers that can contribute to poor performance in school and eventual retention.

Acting apathetic toward school was a maladaptive behavior developed when Donovan repeated the third grade; Sam repeated the first grade; and Lisa repeated the seventh grade. Donovan, Lisa and Sam, along with Donovan’s and Sam’s parent, described how they developed poor attitudes toward school following their first retention and disengaged from the educational
The trio’s lack of academic success caused them to doubt their own ability to properly complete schoolwork successfully. As a result, this ultimately led these three students to be retained in eighth grade. On the other hand, Beth’s apathy developed as a maladaptive behavior to cope with her watching her mother’s health deteriorate to the point where she was unable to manage her personal life. For relief from her pain about her mother’s illness, Beth became apathetic about all aspects of her life including her schoolwork.

A significant portion of our interviewees had been swept up in the national tidal wave of new accountability measures associated with legislation designed to reform education (NCLB, 2001). Half of the adolescent students in this study were retained because they failed a standardized test referred to as the Louisiana Educational Assessment Program (LEAP) in either the fourth or eighth grades, a result which was interpreted by school officials as an indication of their lack of preparedness to pass to the next grade level. This finding is similar to research conducted by Jimerson and Ferguson (2007) which revealed that when achievement is not met on standardized tests, such as the LEAP, many school systems have, during the previous decade, increased the practice of retention in an attempt to demonstrate compliance with NCLB (2001). Consistent with Potter’s (1996) description of high stakes testing policies, the LEAP test proved to be a high stakes test for Donna, Donovan, Lisa and Sam, as they were not allowed to proceed to the next grade because of their failure to achieve the established minimum standards.

In the third grade, teachers of Donovan and Jerrod determined that their maturity and ability levels were not equivalent to their peers, which also indicated a lack of preparedness for the next grade level. Although they both passed their subjects and could have gone onto fourth grade, the teachers in charge of Donovan and Jerrod determined that they were not on level with their peers. In an effort to better prepare them for the fourth grade LEAP test, both students’ parents agreed to retain them in the third grade. While the findings do not conclusively state why, Jerrod supported his parents’ decision to repeat the third grade, however, Donovan did not. The teachers of both Donovan and Jerrod recommended their third grade retention as they believed the boys failed to meet the basic grade level requirements to move on to the next grade.

James’ disruptive behavior caused his retentions in the sixth and seventh grades. Both he and his mother spoke of peer pressure influencing James’ behavior and its negative impact on his academic performance. During James’ interview, he stated that he deliberately engaged in behavior that was disruptive because he felt pressure from his peers to do so.

Strong Reactions to the News of Retention

When informed about their retention in school, seven of the eight adolescent students in the study reported that they reacted negatively. These negative reactions are described as being upset, becoming withdrawn, crying and being angry. Donna’s reaction described how many of them felt when she reported “I cried and cried and cried”. Only James and his parent reported that his reaction was minimal. The reported reactions of the adolescent students in the study speak to how seriously being retained affected them.
Universality of Negative Impacts on Lives

Major differences to students’ lives following retention were reported by 10 of the 16 research participants and proved to be two of the more dominate themes of the study. When Beth was asked how her life was different following her retention, she stated that it changed her entire life. This negative life change expressed by Beth was probably related to her perception of retention as being a stressful event in her life. In a study by Anderson, Jimerson, and Whipple (2005), adolescents were asked to identify the top seven most stressful experiences to them and rank them in order from the most stressful to the least stressful. Their results showed grade retention was rated as the most stressful event in life, more so than losing a parent or going blind.

Donovan was the only student in our study who reported that his life was improved following retention because he was diagnosed with Attention Deficit Disorder. Donovan’s teacher’s determination that he was not on level with his peers prompted his parent to have him evaluated by a physician who made the diagnosis. Awareness of the disorder was followed with accommodations in the classroom for Donovan and a change to his classroom environment. Beebe-Frankenberger, Bocain, MacMillan, and Greham (2004) found similar results in their study of grade retention and concluded that many schools use retention as an intervention strategy prior to identifying that students have a learning disability.

Students Feel Left Behind by Friends

For Lisa, it seemed like all of her friends went onto the next school and the next grade level while she had to stay behind and repeat her grade level with younger classmates. This truly magnified her feelings of being left behind. Beth was moved to tears as she spoke of the loss of her best friend when she went ahead to the eighth grade while Beth was left behind in the seventh. This finding in the case of Beth was probably not an intended consequence of the No-Child-Left-Behind legislation but it is evidence that students (and parents) feel “Left-Behind” when they are forced to repeat a grade.

Absence of Effects on Families

Most students reported that retention had no effect on their families. Of the six students who reported no effect, four of them stated the lack of impact on the family stemmed from their parents not being involved in their education. Indeed, Beth, Jennifer and Lisa’s parents all admitted to being uninvolved in their child’s education. The experiences of Beth, Jennifer, Lisa and Sam support the finding of Levy’s (2001) study which showed that parents who allow too much freedom produce students who have behavior problems or who are not successful in school. All four of these students reported parenting that was either lax or uninvolved, giving them the freedom to engage or not engage in educational pursuits. Unfortunately, all four of these students chose not to engage in schoolwork when allowed the freedom to do so.

Jennifer’s experience with her uninvolved parents supports a study conducted by Somers Owens and Piliawsky (2008), which found that parents with low socioeconomic status are less likely to become involved in the education of their adolescent children because they do not identify with the educational process. Parents themselves may feel inadequate because they lack
the academic skills to assist their adolescent children with school work. Additionally, some
schools do not welcome parental involvement and therefore are perceived as not inviting to
parents who might otherwise consider being more involved in their adolescent child’s school.
Despite the fact that Jennifer’s parent reported being aware of Jennifer’s lack of academic
success in school, she felt inadequate addressing Jennifer’s educational issues with the school.
Because she had dropped out in the ninth grade herself, Jennifer’s parent felt excluded rather
than welcomed by the educational institution and by its processes.

Only Donna and Jerrod reported being supported by their families following their
retentions. Jerrod’s experience is reflected in the findings of Ochoa (2007) in that the open
communications patterns described by both Jerrod and his parent worked to promote Jerrod’s
performance in school. By talking about the retention in a positive way, Jerrod was able to
overcome the experience and work toward a more positive school experience. The findings of
Garg, Melanson and Levin (2007) are supported by Donna’s experience in that her parent’s high
expectations for her school achievement was a factor that caused Donna to improve her school
performance following retention. Donna and her parent both spoke of how education was
emphasized throughout Donna’s school years and that, despite being retained, she was expected
and encouraged to improve her school performance. The upshot of these findings on family
involvement with the retained student is that school officials and counselors who regard grade
retention as a drastic distress alarm should not assume that all students’ families get the wake-up
call.

Teasing from Peers

Five adolescent students in the study reported that their peers made fun of them because
they had to remain behind in their grade level, calling them names like “stupid” or “dumb”.
Only two of these five adolescent students’ parents stated they were aware that their children
were being teased. According to Erikson (1968, 1980) adolescence is a phase when self-
concepts and identities are being shaped, and the importance of peers increases significantly. In
an attempt to protect their sense of identity, the dominant group may rebuff adolescents who
stand out. The teasing experienced by the adolescent students in this study supports Erikson’s
theory because participant students who stood out from their peer group were ridiculed about the
circumstances that caused them to be in that situation. Additionally consistent with Erikson’s
(1968, 1980) postulates, Keltikangas-Jarvinen (2007) found that adolescents tended to act more
aggressively when they were rejected by their peer group. This finding is supported in the study
by both James and Sam who reported getting into fights with peers when they were teased about
being retained. The aggression reported by these two students was a reaction to being rejected
by their peers and being subjected to teasing about being retained.

Short-Term Effects of Retention on Academic Performance

Students agreed that their school performance improved after grade retention. All eight
adolescent students and their parents interviewed reported improved school performance as a
positive result of being retained. When all eight students attempted grade level material for the
second time, they were either more familiar with the material or approached the material with a
different attitude and therefore experienced more success. This led to the perception that their
school performance had improved. This finding supports a conclusion by Jimerson et al. (2006) following a meta-analysis of 64 studies that suggested some students who were retained in school demonstrated short-term achievement gains following their retention. Retained adolescent students in nine of the 63 studies examined demonstrated increased academic achievement the year after they were retained, however, these gains later proved to be short-lived.

**Long-Term Effects on Academic Performance**

Despite student perceptions of improved academic performance after retention, two of the eight adolescent students were retained a second time, and two were retained three times. This finding agrees with studies conducted by Jimerson et al. (2006) and Walters and Borgers (1995) who found that retention appeared to benefit students the year after they were retained, but later results showed these benefits declined and disappeared in subsequent years, resulting in a second retention at times. Accordingly, while Lisa, James, Donovan and Sam reported their school performance improved following their retentions, they all experienced a subsequent retention and for James and Sam, a third.

**Importance of Mentoring following Retention**

Two participants achieved positive results from mentoring by school personnel. Jennifer was mentored by her teacher and James was mentored by the principal of his school. Karcher (2005) conducted a study of the effectiveness of developmental mentoring where adolescents were paired with older students in structured activities over a two year period. While the adolescent students in this study were mentored by older adults (unlike the adolescent students who were mentored by older students in Karcher’s study), the results were the same. Jennifer and James reported becoming more engaged in school and, subsequently, improving their academic performance. They stated that they felt more attached to the educational process and felt more inclined to exhibit the effort needed for them to be more successful in school.

**Low Self-esteem and Retention**

The signals for low self-esteem were quite clear in most of the student participants. Five of the eight students in the study and five of the eight parent’s comments mentioned low self-esteem. Beth’s father specifically stated that he felt that Beth had a low self-esteem. Jennifer’s parent conveyed in her interview that Jennifer “felt bad about herself”. Both Donovan and Sam’s parents described their children as giving up too easily and not believing in themselves. Lisa’s parent described how Lisa called herself “stupid”. Beth indicated that she did not set goals too high that she knew she could not achieve. Lisa revealed that she felt “stupid” and “dumb” because of her lack of success in school. Donna believed “she would never get it” when she kept experiencing failure on the LEAP test and reported how she felt she may never pass. Sam reported feeling angry because he felt victimized by his teachers when they forced him to repeat a grade and described how he wanted to drop out of school to escape the experience. Only Jerrod and James showed signs of positive self-concepts, describing themselves positively and feeling optimistic about their abilities, a description supported by their parents.
According to Erikson’s (1968) psychosocial theory of development, high self-esteem is important for adolescents to resolve the crisis of the identity versus role confusion stage of development. In keeping with Erikson’s theory, six students (Beth, Donna, Donovan, Jennifer, Lisa, Sam) in this study reported having a low level of self-esteem which could be described as having a poor identity development following the experience of being retained. Alternatively, only two students (James and Jerrod) could be described as having a positive identity development following the experience of being retained. Research conducted by Steinberg and Morris (2001) is supported by this finding which found that because academic ability is one of the many factors used by adolescents to evaluate themselves, self-esteem may be compromised during identity development if adolescents are not successful in school.

Retention and Dropping Out

Multiple retentions are major danger signals but for some students they do not necessarily lead to dropping out. Beth, Donna, Jennifer, Jerrod and their parent expressed they have never considered dropping out of school. It appears that despite experiencing retention at least once, these four students were still engaged in the educational process. Additionally, when Donna and Jerrod graduated from high school, they contradicted the finding of Jimerson and Ferguson (2007) who reported retention increases the chances that a student will later drop out of school. Both of these students proved resilient enough to avoid a drop-out future.

Donovan and Lisa (who were retained twice) and James and Sam (who were retained three times) all reported considering dropping out of school. The parents of these four students all stated that they were aware that their children seriously considered dropping out of school. These students expressed frustration about their continued retentions and their ability to continue in the educational process. This result bears out a study conducted by Jimerson et al. (2002), which determined that multiple retentions increased the likelihood of students dropping out of school by 90 percent. Sam dropped out of school because he was fed up with his lack of success. Similar experiences are repeatedly mentioned in the large body of research which links grade retention to students later dropping out of school (Christle et al., 2007; Janosz et al., 1997; Jimerson & Ferguson, 2007; et al., 2002; Suh & Suh, 2007; Suh, Suh, & Houston, 2007).

Blaming Retention on the School

Many participants in this study believed retention could have been avoided if the students had received more help from the school. Four students in the study (and their parents) believed that if they would have received more help from the school, they (possibly) could have avoided being retained. Two students theorized that, if they had received more help from their parents, they would have performed better in school and possibly avoided being retained. The perceptions of these students were that the school and their parents should have done a better job of identifying their needs so they would have been more successful. These students believed that their failing grades should have signaled to someone in the school or home that they needed help, and measures could have been taken to investigate the reason for these students’ lack of accomplishment. Because many of the students in the study lacked the skills to advocate for themselves, they were afraid to ask for the help they needed.
Discussion

Our exploratory study of the psychosocial effects of grade retention has many limitations which suggest caution when generalizing from our findings. Principal among these is its small regional sample. Our results must be used with care.

Recommendations for Educators

Our results are consistent with the vision of the developers of the American School Counseling Association (ASCA) model, which is to focus on the psychosocial aspect of student learning ASCA (2005). While its standards are designed for implementation by school counselors, education reform could be more effective if all educators included the psychosocial implications for students when considering academic policies and procedures. Therefore recommendations for educators include not only school counselors, but also teachers, administrators and parents as well.

Educators need to work collaboratively as a team of students, teachers, parents and administrators to help reduce barriers to academic success ASCA (2005). Knowledge of barriers to adolescent students’ achievement: like family stressors, apathy, academic deficits, disabilities, and poor behavior can support educators’ efforts to be more proactive in their attempts to prevent retention from occurring.

Educators can problem solve with parents to develop interventions to support adolescent students toward academic success that fit the school climate (ASCA). Specifically, school counselors can help adolescent students cope with their reactions to retention by providing guidance services both individually and in groups. Being retained identifies a student as having a need and concern that may be addressed by school personnel. Negative reactions to retention can be mitigated by meeting individually or in groups with adolescent students after they have been retained to assist them in processing the negative feelings they have and to reframe retention from a negative experience to one more positive (ASCA).

Referrals to community-based mental health services may also be necessary for students who experience more severe reactions to being retained (Keys, Bemak, Carpenter, & King-Sears, 1998). Retention can cause changes in the lives of adolescents who may lack coping skills for recovering from this significant event in their lives. The development and implementation of a comprehensive guidance curriculum by the school counselor according to Standard two of the ASCA model (ASCA) could include programs that address the bullying and teasing of not only adolescent students who experience retention, but also all students that are different from their peers on all campuses. How students treat each other can be viewed as a school-wide issue needing to be addressed in order to promote a more positive school environment.

By incorporating into the guidance curriculum standards that address the acquisition of interpersonal skills, adolescent students can be better equipped to move into and out of friendships when situations, like retention, may cause friendships to shift. Because the importance of friendships is emphasized during adolescence, this is a key issue that should be addressed on school campuses. Additionally, educators can work as advocates for students who
must repeat a grade by making all school personnel aware of how students view the repetition of the same material year after year (ASCA).

According to Karcher (2005), mentoring is based on concepts of attachment theory and works to re-engage adolescent students who have detached or disengaged from the educational process. Considering the success of this type of intervention with two adolescent students in the study, school personnel consider incorporating strategies of mentoring on their campuses in order re-engage adolescent students who have become disconnected from school due to experiences like retention.

By working collaboratively as a team, educators can help identify students who are not performing at grade level (Wells, Miller, & Klanton, 1999). Wells et al. found that school counselors accurately identified those students on a school campus who were at-risk and could benefit from interventions. However, identification without an intervention plan would be of little use for these students. Accordingly, once the at-risk students are identified, interventions can be developed to improve academic skills in order to provide a positive academic experience similar to that experienced when adolescent students repeat a grade for the second time (Wells et al., 1999).

Self-efficacy theory relates to adolescents’ perceptions of their ability to accomplish tasks. The cognitive functioning of adolescents is affected by how they feel about themselves. Students who experience failure in school are more likely to have a negative self-efficacy (Bandura, 1993). Family systems theory considers adolescents within the context of their families and takes into account that adolescents are part of a system that can affect their self-efficacy and ultimate academic performance in school (Hall, 2003).

When counseling adolescent students individually for low self-esteem, school counselors can assist adolescents in increasing their self-efficacy by including the adolescents’ family as part of the therapeutic process. Despite the best of interventions designed by school counselors to increase the academic performance of adolescents, families who are not involved may fail to support programs initiated by the school to help their children. By including parents in strategies to increase adolescents’ self-efficacy, educators can help adolescents who have been retained or who are at risk of retention improve how they perform in school (Hall).

The counseling needs of adolescents who experience multiple retentions can be addressed by school counselors utilizing Standard three of the ASCA model (ASCA), which recommends collaboration of school counselors with parents and guardians to assist students in their plans for future education. Including parents in helping students plan for their future is pivotal as career goals that may aim higher than parents’ current occupations may not be supported without the assistance of school counselors (Hall, 2003). Because parents play a pivotal role in the psychosocial development of adolescents, devising strategies for parents that will involve them in their adolescent’s education could give an important boost to adolescent students looking forward to a brighter future (ASCA).

Awareness of how adolescents experience and react to retention is crucial to understanding retention’s potential adverse impact as an educational intervention. This study
illustrates how retention of adolescent students increases the likelihood that they will drop out. To address the drop-out issue, educators should collaborate routinely to devise and implement more productive plans for student achievement.

Community counselors work effectively with issues like depression, substance abuse, aggression, and hopelessness which, for many adolescents, may be exacerbated by being retained. Young adults who have not graduated from high school are more than likely to be the recipients of social services and public mental health services not only at the present time but also for years to come. Educators should work collaboratively with community based mental health agencies that provide services for adolescent students who have experienced retention (Lerner, 1998).

Conclusion

The use of grade retention in educational reform can produce complex problems. To be effective, solutions should include all stakeholders: students, parents, teachers, administrators and especially school counselors. As an academic intervention, grade retention is a double edged sword. It often does more psychosocial harm than it produces academic benefits. More research in the area of psychosocial fallout from grade retention is clearly needed.

References


