December 1992

The Effects of Retention in Elementary School on Subsequent Academic Performance and Instructional Practices

Janie H. Snyder
East Tennessee State University

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The effects of retention in elementary school on subsequent academic performance and instructional practices

Snyder, Janie Harrison, Ed.D.
East Tennessee State University, 1992
THE EFFECTS OF RETENTION IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL
ON SUBSEQUENT ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE
AND INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES

A Dissertation
Presented to
the Faculty of the Department of Educational Leadership and
Policy Analysis
East Tennessee State University

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

by
Janie Harrison Snyder
December 1992
APPROVAL

This is to certify that the Graduate Committee of

Janie Harrison Snyder

met on the

6th day of November, 1992.

The committee read and examined her dissertation, supervised her defense of it in an oral examination, and decided to recommend that her study be submitted to the Graduate Council and the Associate Vice-President for Research and Dean, School of the Graduate Studies, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education in Administration.

[Signatures]

Chair, Advanced Graduate Committee

[Signature]

Signed on behalf of the Graduate Council

[Signature]

Associate Vice-President for Research and Dean, School of Graduate Studies
ABSTRACT

THE EFFECTS OF RETENTION IN ELEMENTARY SCHOOL ON SUBSEQUENT ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE AND INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES

by

Janie Harrison Snyder

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of retention on the academic performance of students retained in the third and fifth grade during the 1985-86 school year. A follow up study was used to analyze changes in academic test results. Another purpose was to interview teachers who had retained students and teachers who had taught the children the next school year to determine what changes occurred in instructional practices.

Forty retained students of Northeast Tennessee were matched according to sex and similar scaled scores on the Stanford Achievement Test. Scores were compared by grade and by year from 1986 through 1989. An interview guide was used to collect responses from teachers. Answers were categorized according to physical, social, academic, behavioral, emotional, programmatic and, instructional factors that were common to retained students.

Findings indicated there were no statistically significant differences in test scores for students who had been retained, verses students who had been promoted two years after the retention occurred. Findings also indicated minimal programmatic interventions were conducted for students during the second year in the same grade. The primary factors teachers listed for causing students to be retained were lack of academic performance in the regular classroom and lack of listening and attention skills. Most teachers relied upon physical, social, and behavioral maturity to aid students in their academic success, rather than different instructional interventions.
EAST TENNESSEE STATE UNIVERSITY
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

PROJECT TITLE: A Study to Determine Effects of Retention In Elementary School on Subsequent School Experience

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Janie H. Snyder

The Institutional Review Board has reviewed the above-titled project on July 8, 1992 with respect to the rights and safety of human subjects, including matters of informed consent and protection of subject confidentiality, and finds the project acceptable to the Board.

Anthony J. DeLucia
Chairman, IRB
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This study was completed through the assistance, understanding, and cooperation of many individuals.

Sincere appreciation and gratitude is extended to the members of my doctoral committee, Dr. Russell F. West, Dr. Cecil N. Blankenship, and Dr. Donn W. Gresso, for their time, expertise, and support throughout the duration of this study. Appreciation is also extended to Dr. J. Howard Bowers and Dr. Ernest Bentley who worked with me earlier on this project.

Deep gratitude is extended to the superintendents of the Bristol City, Johnson City, Carter County, and Unicoi County school systems for allowing me to review records and interview teachers. Special thanks to Penny White from Carter County, Rick McInturff from Bristol, Robbie Anderson and Dave Chupa from Johnson City, and Brenda Hensley and Anderson Pate from Unicoi County for their assistance in locating test scores, and identifying teachers to be interviewed. Special thanks is also extended to the teachers who allowed me to meet and discuss with them their thoughts and concerns regarding retention.

Of major importance was the support and friendship shown to me by the people with whom I work at the Unicoi County Board of Education, especially to my secretary, Mrs. Elizabeth Padgett.
A special thanks is extended to my family, especially to my husband, Ronnie, for his support and my daughter, Sarah, for her presence has made everything in life worthwhile.
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Chapter I
Introduction

Much concern has been generated about the effects of retention on the future academic success of students in school. Retention refers to the practice of requiring a student who has been in a given grade level for a full year to repeat the same grade level the following year (Jackson, 1975). Palardy (1984) stated that decisions about whether to promote or to retain students have been based on the answer to one of three questions: "How are students achieving in comparison to the others in class?" "How are they achieving in relation to predetermined standards?" or "How are they achieving in terms of their own unique abilities?" (p. 403). These questions seem to revolve around the issue of norm-referenced test results, criterion-referenced test results and whether students seem to be performing up to their potential.

Retaining students in grade is often used as a means to raise educational standards. Many believe that repeating a grade is an effective remedy for students who have failed to master basic skills. Therefore, grade retention is relatively prevalent in this nation (CPRE Policy Briefs, 1990, p. 1).
There are professional differences of opinion regarding the effects of retention. According to Koons (1977), promoting students to the next grade when they lack prerequisite skills does not necessarily deny them opportunities to learn. Koons argued against the assumption that a skill not learned the first time in a particular grade will be learned by a repeat presentation the next year.

Holmes (1983) reported that after the first year retained students scored lower than their promoted counterparts in reading, language arts, and math. This finding pointed to an inability of the retained students to ever catch up with their peer groups.

Light (1986) reported the following six (6) arguments against grade retention:

1. If children are not promoted universally, the lower grades will "fill up" with slow learners.

2. Retention adds greatly to the taxpayer's already heavy burden because the cost the taxpayer of having a child repeat a grade is much greater than the gains the child may make.

3. Grade placement is best made according to chronological age, since children tend to
achieve better with their peers than with younger or older children.

4. Educational research indicates that children who have "failed" a grade would have learned more had they been promoted to the next grade level.

5. Retention does not reduce the range of academic achievement in any particular classroom, and in fact usually creates even greater differences among classmates.

6. If the teacher is using a program of individualized instruction, the student's actual achievement should make little or no difference (p. 30).

Light (1986) also reported seven statements in support of grade retention:

1. The retained child is removed from a situation in which he is continually embarrassed by his poor performance and is therefore more likely to feel better about himself and to experience success if he repeats a grade.

2. A slow learner who is socially promoted will hold back the rest of the class.

3. Students who are not able to meet the minimum grade level requirements should
not be placed in the next higher grade where they would confront an even more difficult academic program than the one they just failed.

4. Every pupil should be at grade level before being promoted, since a child's poor performance in the next grade will reflect on the teacher who promoted him.

5. Promoting a child ahead who has not earned this placement does not prepare him for the competitive, demanding world he will face as an adult.

6. The child who is immature will benefit from additional time in which to mature socially and intellectually.

7. Promoting children who have failed is unfair to students who have worked hard for their promotion (p. 32).

Jackson (1975) stated educators favor retention for two major reasons: "to remedy inadequate academic progress and to aid in the development of students who are judged to be emotionally immature" (p. 614).

Bossing (1980) stated the decision to promote or retain is influenced by many factors and that general education philosophies impact this procedure greatly. Philosophies are constantly changing, which adds additional conflict.
The "back to the basics movement" is the result of a change in educational philosophy. As the mastery of basics subjects is essential, it is felt by some educators that minimum standards of performance must be obtained in order to progress. Some students may need additional time to master the skills expected at a grade level and retaining him or her will provide the necessary time. Many feel that it is an admission of failure to pass students when they have not mastered the necessary skills. Retention is based on the philosophy that children learn at different rates, and are entitled to extended time when needed.

Jackson (cited in Chandler, 1984) looked at retention data and concluded "the research on retention was of such poor quality that no decisions should be based upon it" (p. 60). What the retention decision comes down to is having to base conclusions about the value of nonpromotion on personal opinion and philosophy, experience and research findings.

According to Smith and Shepard (1988), beliefs are necessary for the guidance of our actions and our practical decisions. "Beliefs may be reasonable or unreasonable, depending on what evidence is available to the person believing and the weight of the evidence for and against the propositions. Evidence can be of several kinds: direct experience, testimony and inference" (p. 309).

As a supervisor of special education, this writer has worked with numerous classroom teachers, principals and
special populations teachers over a period of 16 years. Assistance has been offered to help teachers make decisions about promoting or retaining students. In the majority of situations, retention has been implemented with much thought, weighing of positive and negative effects and the general belief that it will ultimately help the child be successful.

The number of retentions in Unicoi County, Tennessee during the 1990-91 school year were 36 of 2585 students or 1.4% of the total school population. The retentions occurred in grades kindergarten through sixth with the following frequency: seven kindergarten children or 3.8%, eight first graders or 3.7%, five second graders or 2.3%, four third graders or 2.1%, six fourth graders or 3.2%, two fifth graders or .95% and four sixth graders or 2% (End of The Year Attendance Report: Unicoi County School System, 1991).

Carter County, Tennessee reported 119 retentions for the 1990-91 school year. Of 5914 students this number represented 2.01% of the total school population. Retentions occurred in grades kindergarten through twelve with the following frequency: ten kindergarten children or 2.1%, 21 first graders or 4.1%, seven second graders or 1.6%, six third graders or 1.7%, two fourth graders or .41%, six fifth graders or 1.3%, 26 sixth graders or 5.4%, 14 seventh graders or 2.8%, seven eighth graders or 1.4%, one
ninth grader or .26%, three tenth graders or .73%, two
eleventh graders or .49 % and 14 twelfth graders or 4.1%
(End of The Year Attendance Report: Carter County School

For the 1990-91 school year Johnson City, Tennessee
reported 142 of 5409 students or 2.6% were retained. The
retentions occurred in grades kindergarten through twelve
with the following frequency: 20 kindergarten students or
4.3%, ten first graders or 2.1%, five second graders or
1.1%, six third graders or 1.3%, four fourth graders or
.96%, six fifth graders or 1.4%, one seventh grader or .23%,
10 eighth graders or 2.4%, 23 ninth graders or 5.0%, 18
tenth graders or 4.9%, 23 eleventh graders or 8.3% and 14
twelfth graders or 4.7% (End of the Year Attendance Report:

The Bristol, Tennessee School System revealed 174 of
3546 or 4.9% of students enrolled were retained. The
retentions occurred in grades kindergarten through three,
five and seven through twelve with the following frequency:
seven kindergarten students or 2.5%, 24 first graders or
8.9%, 4 second graders or 1.5%, one third grader or .35%,
one fifth grader or .37%, eight seventh graders or 2.6%, 14
eighth graders or 4.9%, 45 ninth graders or 16.3%, 36 tenth
graders or 14.1%, 30 eleventh graders or 11.4% and 4 twelfth
graders or 1.7% (End of The Year Attendance Report:
Since retention occurred in the school systems of Unicoi County, Carter County, Bristol and Johnson City, Tennessee, and because a follow-up study of the effects of retention on student success has never been conducted in this region of Northeast Tennessee, there was a need to look at the long term effects of retention on students. Specifically, there was a need to determine whether students who were retained in grades three and five during the 1984-85 school year made gains in their achievement. In order to determine the academic effectiveness it was decided to compare levels of achievement of this population to a matched group of students who were promoted. In addition, it was important to identify the reasons behind teachers' retention decisions and the changes that occurred in instructional practices of teachers who work with retained students.

Since the late 1970s and early 1980s many programs to help students with their area of disability have been developed, implemented and expanded. In addition, a population of students served in schools in the 1990s was not served prior to the passage of the Education for the Handicapped Act in 1975, currently known as the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 1990.

Educational reform and reconstruction of the 1990s was causing an emergence of a new era in public education. As preparation was being made for the 21st century, it was
important to examine what has occurred in Unicoi County, Carter County, Bristol and Johnson City, Tennessee in terms of retention and its relationship to performance on achievement tests and changes in instructional practices. Teachers and administrators would benefit from examining information on students who have been retained as opposed to those who have not. Such a study would allow these decision makers to compare actual attainment levels over time, in order to determine the true effects of retention on academic success and to identify the instructional consequences of retention in the school.

Statement of the Problem

It was unknown whether retention had helped Unicoi County, Carter County, Bristol, or Johnson City students become more successful academically after staying another year in the same grade. Many educators felt an extra year of instruction would help students acquire the necessary skills to continue their educational experience with academic success. Others felt the process was detrimental to student success in subsequent years. By conducting a follow-up study on a population of Unicoi County, Carter County, Bristol and Johnson City students and by interviewing teachers, it was felt some insight into this problem would be gained and conclusions derived.
Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the impact of retention on the subsequent academic performance of students retained in the third and in the fifth grades during the 1985-86 school year. A retrospective follow up study was used to scrutinize changes in academic test results after a retention had taken place. Another purpose was to interview teachers who had recently retained students and teachers who had taught the children the next school year to determine if programmatic or instructional changes have occurred for the retained students. This information will be used to help teachers in Northeast Tennessee and specifically Unicoi County, Carter County, Bristol, and Johnson City make appropriate placement decisions in the future.

Research Questions

The following research questions were posed in this study:

1. What are the demographic, social and academic characteristics of students who are retained?
2. Are there differences in the demographic, social and academic characteristics of those who are retained as compared to those who are not retained?
3. Are there changes in achievement test scores of retained students after retention as compared with their scores before retention?
4. Do children who are retained have test scores comparable to a matched group of students who are not retained, two years after the retention occurred?
5. Does retention seem to have the same effect in rural and city school systems?
6. What criteria do teachers consider when deciding whether to retain a student?
7. Do programmatic or instructional techniques change when a child is placed in the same grade for the second year?

**Significance of the Problem**

During a time when public education is being scrutinized and persecuted for not producing quality products, a closer look at the effects of retention seems warranted. Because retention adds to the number of personnel necessary to operate a school it can be costly to taxpayers. If the purpose of retention is enhance the education of those who are not promoted, then it is necessary to determine if that goal is being met.

Another area of significance is to actually determine if retention helped targeted students in Unicoi County, Carter County, Bristol, and Johnson City. Are there any factors that can be identified as guides to help teachers justify promotion or retention? The results of this investigation into the effects of retention on a sample of students from Northeast Tennessee will enable policy makers
to provide more adequate guidelines to teachers based on credible information derived from school systems within the region.

**Limitations of the Study**

One limitation of this follow-up study of Unicoi County, Carter County, Johnson City, and Bristol students was the lack of ability on the part of the researcher to trace students who transferred out of the school system. A lack of available data could be the contributing factor. The impact of this limitation could be a smaller sample from which to draw conclusions. This loss to follow up could be a problem if those who moved away were different than those who stayed. The results were only generalizable to those who remained in their school.

Only four of 14 Northeast Tennessee school systems were being used in this follow up study, yet Bristol, Johnson City, Carter County, and Unicoi County were felt to be representative of this region.

Another limitation of this project was the change on the part of the State Department of Education in testing procedures. Initially, students were tested at alternate grade levels using the Stanford Achievement Test (SAT) and the Tennessee Test of Basic Skills. Beginning in the Spring of 1990, Tennessee began testing all second through eighth grade students and 10th grade students with the Tennessee
Comprehensive Achievement Test (TCAP) which includes norm-referenced and criterion-referenced components. This study was limited to test scores on the Stanford Achievement Test to measure academic achievement. Comparison scores were in terms of scale scores and Normal Curve Equivalent (NCE) methods.

It was recognized that factors other than retention could play a part in academic success or failure. Examples that were not be considered in this project included parent involvement, transfer from one school to another one, illness, divorce of parents and death of a loved one. These factors were not be directly examined.

**Definition of Terms**

**Chapter 1**

Chapter 1 is a federally funded program that provides assistance "to meet the special educational needs of educationally deprived children in school attendance areas with high concentrations of children from low income families and of children in local institutions for neglected or delinquent children" (Federal Register, Part II, 34FR Part 75 et al., p. 21752).

**Criterion-Referenced Tests**

Criterion-referenced tests are an "interpretation of a person's performance by comparing it with some specified
behavioral domain or criterion of proficiency" (Mehrens, 1987, p. 15).

Early Intervention

"Early intervention means that supplementary instructional services are provided early in a students' schooling and that they are intensive enough to bring at-risk students quickly to a level at which they can profit from high quality classroom instruction" (Madden, N.A., 1991, p. 594).

Effect Size

"The difference between the mean of the retained group and the mean of the promoted group, divided by the standard deviation of the promoted group" (Holmes, 1983, p.3), is the effect size. This procedure results in a measure of the difference between two groups expressed in quantitative units which are additive across studies.

Meta-analysis

Meta-analysis is a recent and sophisticated method for integrating findings of multiple research projects. It is presented in a summarized and more comprehensible form. Quantification of effects is based on the difference between treated and control groups averaged across studies rather than tests of statistical significance. It also permits systematic examination of study attributes that could influence results (Holmes, 1989).
Norm-reference Tests

Interpretation by comparing individual scores with results of other individuals within a norm group is considered norm-reference testing (Mehrens, 1987).

Program

A program can be defined as a "set of procedures intended to be implemented as a total package and capable of being replicated by others" (Slavin, 1989, p. 24).

Promotion

The process of moving through grade levels sequentially year after year is considered promotion.

Promotional Gates

Promotional gates is a program whereby deficient students would be checked at the designated grade or gate, and not allowed to pass until they had acquired necessary skills (House, 1989).

Retention

Retention, which is also known as nonpromotion or flunking, is the repetition for one year of a particular grade level in school (Rose, 1983). "Grade retention is the practice of requiring a student who has been in a given grade level for a full school year to remain at that level for a subsequent school year" (Jackson, 1975, p. 613).

Social Promotion

When a student is passed to the next grade, grouped according to ability and provided remedial help instead of
being retained it is considered social promotion (Rose, 1983).

Shepard and Smith (1989) define social promotion as "the practice of promoting students with their age-peers regardless of achievement" (p. 2).

Special Education

Special Education is the individually planned and systematically monitored arrangement of physical settings, special equipment and materials, teaching procedures and the other interventions designed to help exceptional children achieve the greatest possible personal self-sufficiency and academic success (Heward, 1984, p. 18).

Special Populations Teachers

Teachers of Chapter 1 eligible students and special education eligible students are called special populations teachers.

Standardized Tests

Standardized tests are commercially prepared by experts in measurement and subject matter which "provide methods for obtaining samples of behavior under uniform procedures" (Mehrens, 1987, p. 7).

Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP)

TCAP is a customized achievement test which provides both norm-referenced and criterion-referenced data for students in grades kindergarten - eight (8) and grade 10.
Criterion referenced items were developed by the State of Tennessee Testing and Evaluation Center. Normed referenced items were taken from the Comprehensive Tests of Basic Skills, Fourth Edition (CTBS/4). Testing of grades two (2) - eight (8) and 10 are mandated by Tennessee State Law.

Overview of the Study

This study was organized into five (5) chapters. In Chapter 1 was an introduction to the study of the academic success of students who had been retained in the Unicoi County School System, Carter County School System, Bristol City School System and Johnson City School System. Justification for researching the problem was also stated. The limitations of the study and relevant definitions were outlined.

Chapter 2 included a review of literature on the academic effects of retention or nonpromotion on students. Entries spanned previous research over a period of four (4) decades.

The methods and procedures to be used in completing this research project were be addressed in Chapter 3.

In Chapter 4 data findings were discussed and research questions will be answered.

Chapter 5 provided a comprehensive summary where conclusions of the study were provided.
CHAPTER 2
Review of Related Literature

General Introduction

Moran (1988) stated "the decision to retain a student in grade has been called the most significant decision an administrator makes in the school life of an individual student" (p. 31).

This chapter is a survey of literature related to retention and its academic effects on students. The chapter is organized by historical perspectives, social and emotional consequences, academic outcomes including specific relationships to the scholastic areas of reading and math, decision-making regarding retention, and alternatives to retention.

Historical Perspectives

In order to better understand the concept of retention it was important to understand the ways in which promotion and retention have played a part in the educational history of the United States.

The earliest schools in the United States did not categorize students into grade levels. Students recited lessons individually, passed to harder material when ready and graduated after the teacher or special school examiner
gave a test that was usually oral and often individual. As free public education spread, high schools appeared in the late 1840s and the demand for better grouping of entering students arose. This was based on the industrial model where division of labor was seen as more efficient. Grade levels replaced the traditional grouping system. Each grade came to have its own teacher and its own room (Chandler, 1984).

By 1846 administrators in Quincy, Massachusetts calculated the number of years students attended school, then designated them as first, second, and third grades. These categories referred to years of attendance, not to academic levels (Light, 1991). By the end of the Civil War, most urban communities had organized their students into grades with goals expressed for each level (Holmes, 1984).

Because of the German influence on American scholars studying in Europe, the concept of graded elementary schools was brought to the United States. By 1870, the implementation of this graded system included buildings, teachers, textbooks, and teachers (Balow, 1990).

Before the concept of grade levels, student progress was an individual matter where the last page completed was recorded at the end of the school year and used as a guide to begin instruction the following school year. Student texts began to be used to determine student status. Classrooms became organized according to academic levels.
"Some schools prohibited uneven advancement and did not permit a student to move ahead in one subject area until he had achieved the same level in all other subjects" (Light, 1991, p. 31).

"A premise of the graded school was that achievement would be enhanced if the curriculum were graded by year in school, if the teacher focused instruction on the curriculum of that grade, and if pupils worked to master that curriculum" (Balow, 1990, p. 2). With the introduction of gradedness, it became obvious that some students mastered the curriculum easily and others exhibited great difficulty with learning and failed to master some or all of the curriculum. The effectiveness of instruction was threatened if these students were promoted, therefore retention in grade was introduced as a solution to this problem (Balow, 1990).

By the 1900s all but the most rural schools were divided into grade levels, with students moving through the grades where definite standards determined who passed and who failed. At the beginning of this century up to 50% of the total enrollment in many districts had been retained at some time in their educational experience (Chandler, 1984).

By the 1930s educational investigators began surveying the problems of retention and began hinting at social promotion as a solution to the problem of retention. Some urban school districts were beginning to use social
promotion when World War II began and educational innovation slowed. After the war and with the beginning of the baby boom, retention lost favor and by the 1960s social promotion was a fact in many districts. This occurrence was defined by Rose as passing a student to the next grade, grouping according to ability and providing remedial help instead of being retained (Chandler, 1984).

Bucko (1986) stated "as recently as the 1950s, it was not uncommon to find a student of age 14 in the fourth or fifth grade, depending on the number of times he or she was retained. Today, retention of a student in more than one grade level is rare" (p. 9).

According to Rose (1983), the national trend toward lower retention rates between 1950 through 1976 were in line with the social promotion philosophy. However, in the past 25 years, the merit of social promotion has been questioned. During the early 1960s educators noted a decline in student achievement on standardized tests. This decline in student achievement was attributed to relaxed academic and promotion standards and led to a call for the reinstatement of stricter promotion standards. An outgrowth of this movement was minimum competency testing and basic skills assessment programs at specific grade levels.

Shepard and Smith (1989) report there are no national data on the number of children retained in grade each year.
Retention rates are inferred from the proportion of students of a given age who are not in the appropriate grade.

Moran (1988) estimated that 20 to 25% of students have been retained at least one time. He used information provided by the Census Bureau to make this prediction. Rather than gathering retention rates, the Bureau estimated the percentage of students who were below the modal grade for their age. Looking at data for 13, 14, and 15 year-olds, clearly more males than females and more blacks than whites were retained in a grade. Retention rates rose between 1978 and 1983 for this age group.

Shepard and Smith (1989) regarded *A Nation At Risk* as the most visible of the reform reports. It described "the loss of United States pre-eminence in commerce, industry, science, and technological innovation as a consequence of inattention to the purposes of schooling" (p. 2). The National Commission on Excellence in Education recommended placement, grouping, promotion policies, and graduation requirements guided by academic progress and instructional needs, rather than adherence to age.

Smith (1988) suggested the educational reforms of the 1980s advocated promotion from grade to grade according to the students' mastery of grade-level curriculum or suggested that children should be protected from a curriculum that is too advanced for their individual levels of readiness. Although these two areas of emphasis have different
philosophical bases, they are alike in varying from the traditional kindergarten through 12th grade progressions on an age-related basis. "Such diversions take the form of retention in grade (until the pupil attains mastery of grade level curriculum or, alternatively, grade-appropriate readiness), transition classes between kindergarten and grade 1, or placement of 5-year-olds into developmental kindergartens" (p. 308). Both ideas challenge social promotion.

Retention of first graders is more common than retention in any other grade. This suggests that "school systems may be attempting to prevent future school failure by retaining large numbers of first graders who are deficient in basic skills" (Rose, 1983, p. 204).

According to Slavin (1989), "research findings notwithstanding, schools continue to retain students as a remediation strategy, especially at the early grades" (p. 109).

Natale (1991) indicated there was a growing viewpoint that student retention was more harmful than helpful. She contended there was significant evidence to suggest that students who were retained were more likely to drop out of school than similar students who were not retained. Since data indicated that students do not learn at the same rate, she suggested that schools should be structured in such a way for students to progress at their own rate and be given
the kind of individualized instruction that would support their academic development.

In summary, graded classes were an outgrowth of the widespread availability of public education. It became necessary to measure student achievement against standards in order to provide better groupings of students. Because some could not meet the requirements for being promoted to the next grade level many over age students were seen in various grades. Social promotion was encouraged to keep this from happening. As time progressed students seemed to be passed, no matter what their level of proficiency. Thus, a move toward increased accountability and higher academic standards ensued.

Social and Emotional Consequences

The effects of retention on a child's social and emotional well being could be greater than the effects on academic achievement and also the hardest to measure.

Dawson (1991) stated that retention advocates contend promoting students who are not ready can be damaging to the personal adjustment and self-concept of children. However, studies amassing the effects of retention on social adjustment and emotional adjustment and behavior revealed that retention produces generally negative effects. It was noted that students recognized retention as failure and felt ashamed.
Self-concept was primarily considered in terms of self-esteem. Lieberman (1980) defined this in terms of the "child's values and judgment of his own goodness, badness or worth" (p. 41). A major concern of retention was the effect of nonpromotion on the child's self-concept. "The concern is the possibility of detrimental impact when the child becomes convinced that he is looked upon as a failure" (p. 41).

According to Bossing (1980) many times the threat of retention was used as a motivating factor. Many felt that youngsters would quit working if they thought everyone was going to pass. In a study with second and fifth grade students, Otto and Melby (cited in Rose, 1983) found that children in the experimental groups when told they would be promoted regardless of their efforts made more progress on achievement tests than the control group who were told they would not be promoted unless they worked hard. "Proponents of social promotion contend that the threat or experience of failure is an ineffective motivator; pupils are motivated by success" (Rose, 1983, p. 207).

According to Madden (1991), "failing students begin to have poor motivation and poor self-expectations, which lead to continued poor achievement. They are caught in a downward spiral that ends in despair, delinquency and dropping out" (p. 594).
Norton (1983) reported retention leads to discipline problems, was a negative influence on the child's self-concept, and potentially fostered personal maladjustment. Retention has not increased socialization or readiness skills for most students. In actuality, most nonpromoted students have shown regression in their maturity levels. They also choose companions from grades higher than their own, therefore socialization nor group homogeneity is improved.

Smith and Shepard (1988) related the degree of conflict with parents over the decision and the extent of frustration, shame, and confusion kindergarten children felt upon being retained. Problems parents named with retention included:

- physical size in relation to their classmates,
- derogatory comments on the part of family and neighbors, missing agemates who had been promoted,
- feelings of failure in spite of the parents' presenting the retention in a positive light, teasing by peers,
- boredom at having to repeat the same material, and
- being overconfident and careless about repeated material (Smith and Shepard, 1988, p. 323).

Advantages included improved self-confidence, prevention of failure, and repeating material gave advantages over other students.
Holmes and Matthews (1984) have concluded that "the potential for negative effects consistently outweighs positive outcomes. . . . the burden of proof legitimately falls on proponents of retention plans to show there is compelling logic indicating success of their plans when so many other plans have failed" (p. 232).

According to Johnson (1991), failure is self-perpetuating. Students identified as failures actually live up to that destiny because of the way they view themselves.

"However you justify it, retention is failure. Failure causes wounds that allow self-esteem to ooze from the soul" (Norton, 1987, p. 327).

House (1989) looked at the ill effects of retention. He found the stigmatizing effects of the practice to be remarkable. In interviews by Byrnes (as cited in House, 1989) in a large city, it was found that 57% of the girls retained in primary grades refused to identify themselves as having been held back. Forty-eight percent said their parents were mad and 28% indicated their parents were sad. "Flunking evokes ridicule and punishment, shame and humiliation" (p. 207).

House (1989) discovered students were most likely to find out about their failure from their report card or their parents, not their teacher. Teachers avoided talking to the children about it. Many times students were left to come to
conclusions themselves, which meant they saw the inadequacy of their performance as compared to other children.

Of the 63 studies included in Holmes' meta-analysis, nine completed in the 1980s reported positive effects of retaining some children. House (1989) noted the positive studies had the following similarities: suburban settings, few if any black students included and retained students with average IQs who were reading and performing at or near the national norm. The retained students were placed into special classes with a low teacher/pupil ratio, provided extra help and were mainstreamed for a portion of the school day.

Bossing (1980) reported that retention was largely a discriminatory policy against the poor. He based this statement on study by Safer, Heaton and Allen using three economically different areas of a suburban county. They found the average frequency of nonpromotion in elementary schools of an affluent county runs three times greater in blue collar areas than in white collar areas. A second study cited by Bossing (1980) occurred in 1971 when Abidin, Golladay and Howerton reviewed the dynamics of retention decisions of 85 students who were retained in the first and second grade and 43 students who were promoted, but scored below the 25th percentile on the Metropolitan Readiness Test. Retention decisions could not be explained in terms of any differences in the abilities, conduct, or grades of
the students. Ultimately data suggested that sex, race, and socioeconomic status were crucial determinants of retention decisions.

In an informal study of 30 high school students who had failed courses, Glasser (1988) concluded there was a group who were not good enough to shine or bad enough to be picked up by special programs for those in serious trouble. The most notable finding was that students felt teachers and administrators did not care about them as people. Students indicated they would put forth more effort if others showed interest in them.

Byrnes (1989) concluded "retention is generally not an effective remedial strategy. Retained children perceive retention as a punishment and a stigma, not as a positive event designed to help them" (p. 130).

In summary, the effects of retention on self-esteem, motivation and how well students like themselves can be devastating. Although parents occasionally saw retention as giving a child self-confidence the second time material was presented, the opposite was generally true. Retention also seemed to influence the probability of discipline problems with students. The negative social and emotional effects of retention seemed to far outweigh the positive effects. Even though one cannot say that retention produces negative effects for all students, negative outcomes may be
particularly evident in the emotional and social development of students.

**Academic Outcomes**

The effects of retention on academic success has also been an area of much discussion. Authors of several studies cited outcomes of retained students who were matched with peers of similar IQ levels, mental ages, sex, educational background, and chronological age upon entrance to a particular grade. Even though all areas of academic instruction are important, reading and math seemed to be the most crucial when judging academic success. Information in this section represented a review of the literature relative to reading and math scores of students who have been retained rather than promoted.

Jackson (1975) conducted a systematic review of the research literature on the effects of grade retention. He categorized his findings into three general types of analytical designs. Design Type I, the most common with 208 analyses, compared the outcomes of students promoted under normal policies with the outcomes of students retained under normal policies.

This comparison is biased toward indicating that grade promotion has more benefits than grade retention because it compares retained students who are having difficulties with promoted students
who usually are not having as severe difficulties, as evidenced by the fact that they have not been retained in grade (p. 619).

The second type of design included 114 analyses that compared the condition of retained students after promotion with their condition prior to promotion. It did not attempt to compare the effects of grade retention with promotion. Design Type II was biased towards indicating pupils benefitted from grade retention because of lack of control for improvements resulting from causes other than retention.

Design Type III as reported by Jackson (1975) was a comparison of pupils with difficulties who were experimentally assigned to promotion or grade retention. Only three studies representing 40 analyses were located. The dates of reports were 1929, 1936, and 1941. It was found that the group of promoted students showed greater academic progress than the retained group during the succeeding term. Though of superior design, the three studies were not representative enough of the nation's population to make broad generalizations about the effects of retention. The studies were too old to be compared to the circumstances in the public schools of the 1970s and the studies failed to investigate the long-term effects of grade retention.

Jackson (1975) concluded there was "no reliable body of evidence to indicate that grade retention is more beneficial
than grade promotion for students with serious academic or adjustment difficulties" (p. 627).

Norton (1987) described changes brought about by educational reform, the call for teacher accountability, the concerns for back to the basics and the setting of higher achievement standards as reasons in support of retention. Some asserted that retaining the pupil would provide additional time for personal adjustment and social development and would serve to place the child with those closer to his maturational level. Another perspective stated by supporters of retention was that it serves as a motivator for a student to do better. Many studies revealed a much different perspective of what was likely to happen if a student was retained.

Holmes (1989) conducted a meta-analysis of 63 studies on retention. He found largely negative effects for retention and concluded "retained children were worse off than their promoted counterparts on both personal adjustment and academic outcomes" (p. 27).

Using clinical interviews with kindergarten teachers, Smith (1989) studied beliefs of teachers about retention. The interview was designed on the principle that beliefs can be inferred from recounting experiences and using practical knowledge as background information. A series of indirect questions that would extract narrative stories were framed. As a control against invalid inferences, interview data was
triangulated with data from classroom observations and district documents on retention rates. It was found that several teachers believed retained students would "move from the bottom of his original class to the top of the class into which he has been retained" (p. 140). That thinking assumed there was a single academic continuum along which all students could be arranged and that the bottom was undesirable. It seemed forgotten that if one child was moved from the bottom another took his or her place. Teachers also believed that retention would prevent struggle, frustration, and general difficulty in school in subsequent grades. It was shown that teacher beliefs were constrained by the context of the school structure, the kinds of information available to them and the types of decisions they were allowed to make.

Teachers in the Smith and Shepard study (1988) endorsed retention for immature students, not those with low ability, low motivation nor handicaps. They felt benefits of an extra year in kindergarten provided students with time to mature, the opportunity to move from the bottom of age-appropriate class to the top of the class, to become a leader, and prevented a later, more painful retention. They also believed it prevented deviant behavior later in life.

Steinberg (1990) reported a study by Shepard and Smith that compared 40 children who spent an extra year after kindergarten with 40 control children. They were matched by
age, sex and readiness test scores. When both groups had
finished first grade researchers found the extra-year
children were only one month ahead on a standardized reading
test. "There were no differences between the two groups on
the math test or on teacher ratings of academic achievement,
maturity, self-concept or attention" (p. 8).

Bocks (1977) in his article Non-Promotion: "A Year to
Grow?" cited several studies on the effects of retention.
His findings included a seven year study done by Keys in
1911 where a school district of 5000 retained a large number
of students. Twenty percent did better, 39% showed no
change and 40% did worse. Buckingham concluded that only
one-third of several thousand children did better
academically after repeating a grade. McKinney (1928) found
that 35% of retained students did better work, 53% did not
improve and 12% declined.

Grace Arthur (1936) found that 60 first grade repeaters
did not learn more in two years than the average non-
repeater of the same achievement and mental age learned in
one year. Klene and Branson (1929) concluded that potential
repeaters profited more from promotion than repeaters from
non-promotion (Bocks, 1977).

Holmes (1983) in his article The Fourth R: Retention
cited studies by Coeffield in 1958, Dobbs and Neville in
1967, Mendenhall in 1933, Skelton in 1963 and Worth in 1959
that indicated non-promoted students scored lower on
achievement tests than their counterparts who were promoted. Coeffield matched 147 seventh graders who had been retained in the third, fourth, fifth, or sixth grade with pupils that had never been retained. Of the 128 analyses made using the Iowa Tests of Basic Skills, 43 favored the promoted pupils and three (3) favored the retained pupils. Koons matched at the end of the second grade a group of 142 pupils who had been retained for one year. The mean score of 129 pairs of students on the Metropolitan Achievement Tests indicated the regularly promoted students ranked markedly higher than retained students after the year of study. After one year there was only a small difference favoring the regularly promoted group. Using the Stanford Achievement test, Mendenhall concluded the promoted group of 53 pairs of students "registered greater gains than the retained group with the exception of language arts." Skelton followed 34 children who had repeated the second grade from 1957-61 and matched them with students of similar IQ, mental age and chronological age upon entrance in the second grade. The promoted children made greater growth in every area. Worth matched 66 students who had been retained in third grade with promoted low-achieving fourth graders. In comparing test results it was found that "significant t values were obtained on the reading vocabulary, total reading, and arithmetic fundamentals section of the California Achievement Test and the paragraph reading section of the
Gates Advanced Primary Reading Test in favor of the promoted group" (p. 2).

Holmes (1983), cited analyses of reading achievement from the data obtained from seven studies. The mean of effect size "showed that the retained pairs scored on the average .46 standard deviation units lower than the matched promoted pupils. After the first year of retention the nonpromoted pupils scored considerable lower than the promoted pupils even though the gap does not seem to narrow in the following years" (p. 3).

Forty effect sizes were obtained from six arithmetic studies by Holmes (1983). He found that several years after retention had occurred and after spending an additional year in school, the difference between promoted and nonpromoted groups narrow, however, the nonpromoted group continued to score lower.

Holmes and Matthews (1984) looked at 44 studies which consisted of 18 published studies, 14 dissertations, and 12 master's theses. A total of 11,132 pupils; 4,208 who had been retained and 6,924 who had been promoted, were included in the 44 investigations. Five-Hundred-Seventy-five individual effect sizes were calculated. The average was -.37. This value indicates that the groups of nonpromoted students scored .37 standard deviation units lower on outcome measures than did the promoted group. The 575 effect sizes were grouped into five major variables: (a)
academic achievement, (b) personal adjustment, (c) self-concept, (d) attitude toward school, and (e) attendance.

The effect of retention of academic achievement was measured in 31 of the 44 studies by Holmes and Matthews (1984). "A value of -.44 was obtained, indicating that the promoted group on the average achieved .44 standard deviation units higher than the retained group, \( t(366) = 12.57, p < .001 \)" (p. 231). Other subarea effect size values indicating that retention had a negative effect on student learning were language arts, -.40 with \( p < .001 \); reading -.48 with \( p < .001 \); mathematics, -.33 with \( p < .01 \); work study skills, -.41 with \( p < .001 \); social studies, -.35 with \( p < .10 \); and grade point average, -.58.

The areas of personal adjustment, self-concept, and attitude toward school also produced negative results. Social adjustment was -.27 with \( p < .001 \); emotional adjustment, -.37 with \( p < .10 \); behavior, -.31 with \( p < .05 \); self-concept 1.19, and attitudes toward school -.16 at \( p < .001 \) (Holmes & Matthews, 1984).

Rose (1983) reported a summary of results from 25 studies on the effects of retention on school achievement. "On the average, promoted pupils make gains of eight to 12 months in a year while retained pupils make gains of only about six months" (p. 206). Approximately 85% of promoted students as compared to 35% of nonpromoted children are found to be achieving at a normal rate. In examining the
progress of those repeating as compared to progress in the original grade, only about 20-35% of the retainees learn more material in their second year. As many as 40% actually learned less material. These figures were based on more than 6,000 cases.

Shepard and Smith (1987) studied the effects of kindergarten retention at the end of the first grade. Since repetition of kindergarten, transition rooms or prefirst grade provide an extra year between first grade and kindergarten in order to prevent failure when a kindergarten child is not developmentally ready for first grade, the results of retention after first grade cannot be generalized to this population.

As part of a study for a Colorado school district that had from 5% to 25% of its students spending two years before first grade, Smith and Shepard (1987) addressed the question of how children retained in kindergarten would have done in first grade if they had not been retained. They looked at academics and how well children felt about themselves.

Four schools with retention rates of 16% to 20% were matched on size, percent receiving reduced or free lunch, and mean scores on the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills, but with retention rates of 4% or less. Forty students who were retained prior to first grade were matched according to sex, birth date, SES factors and entry Santa Clara scores with students from the control schools. Birthdays were used
so the retained and control children were the same age when they entered kindergarten the first time. Of the 40 matches, 32 were considered good matches for age of school entrance. Effect sizes, defined by Glass, McGaw, & Smith (1981) as the "difference between the experimental and control group" (cited in Smith & Shepard, 1987, p. 351) was used to address the effects of initial matching on the stability and magnitude of effects. The following results were obtained:

On all but one outcome measure, there were no differences between the retained and the control group. Children who were completing three years of school were the same as their matched controls on CTBS math scores and on teacher ratings of reading, math, social maturity, learner self-concept, and attention.

The only difference between groups occurred on the CTBS reading test, where the children with an extra year were ahead of controls by five points. This gain of five points translated into a difference of seven percentile points in relation to national norms, or one month ahead of where they would have been without the two-year program. Although the retained children and their matched controls are below average in the school district (though not necessarily the very lowest children),
they were above average compared to national norms. In reading, the two groups were at the 63rd and 56th percentiles; and in math they were at the 78th and 81st percentiles, respectively. The pattern of no differences except for CTBS reading was reasonably stable across schools and in the subset of data for which the original matches had been identical.

In parent interviews of retained and nonretained matched samples, there was no benefit for retained children in academic progress or in relationships with peers. Parents of children who repeated kindergarten reported that their children had slightly poorer attitudes toward school than equivalent groups of at-risk children (Shepard & Smith, 1987, p.356).

Mantzicopoulos and Morrison (1992) employed a design that compared matched kindergarten students in two ways "(a) within the same year (or same-age group) and (b) within the same grade" (p. 184). They explored both academic and behavioral effects of kindergarten retention with a group of retained and promoted students through the end of second grade. Thirty-five children retained during 1985-86 and 18 children retained during 1986-87 were matched with 53 promoted peers. They were matched according to school, sex, age, at risk factors, reading achievement, and math
achievement. Socioeconomic status was also used for matching when data was available. A series of t-tests were conducted to ensure effective matching.

Retained and promoted students were the same age, but the promoted peers were one grade level ahead of the retained group. They took different levels of achievement tests and their performance was evaluated on different norm standards. For the same grade comparisons, retained and promoted students were in the same grade but the promoted students were one year older.

According to Mantzicopoulos and Morrison (1992) analysis for the same-age comparisons revealed the retained children scored almost a standard deviation above the mean during their second year in kindergarten. This advantage disappeared as soon as they entered first grade. First grade test scores were identical to those of the promoted group. The results were true for reading and math.

Mantzicopoulos and Morrison (1992) analyzed same-grade comparisons on both reading and math and found a pattern similar to that of same-age comparisons. Retained students scored significantly higher during their second year in the same grade "(F = 58.78 and F = 19.06, p < .0001 for reading and math respectively)" (p. 191). This advantage did not continue during first grade or second grade. "On both reading and math, their means were close to the national mean at the end of first and second grade" (p. 191). The
results of this study failed to support the argument of early retention being beneficial when it occurs before the child experiences failure in elementary school.

Sandoval and Fitzgerald (1985) noted two gaps in the current literature: "investigators have not asked children directly to evaluate their experience and have not evaluated retention over a long time period" (p. 164, 165). The grade in which students were retained was an example of a variable that had gone uncontrolled in many studies. Other uncontrolled variables include ability of the children, developmental level and curriculum received during the year of repetition.

Sandoval and Fitzgerald (1985) studied the complete high school population of students who had repeated at least one grade or had been in a junior first-grade program of a suburban-rural district in Northern California. Seventy-five control students were matched at random to students from those of the same sex taking the same English class.

T-tests of the means of a questionnaire revealed no significant group differences in opinion about whether interventions helped them academically, socially or emotionally. Information about academic performance of the program participants indicated junior first pupils were superior to the control group on three out of four in the indicators of academic progress, however the differences were not statistically significant. Children who had been
placed in the junior first program or retained early in elementary grades had better high school grades and made better academic progress than those retained later in their school experience (Sandoval & Fitzgerald, 1985).

Niklason (1984) reported a study performed in two large Utah school districts during the 1979-80 and 1980-81 school years. The districts were chosen because of their different philosophies concerning retention. One district had a restrictive policy while the other was proretention. In order to determine the effects of retention compared to promotion on academically similar-functioning children, it was necessary to compare the growth of retained children after a period of time with the growth of academically similar-functioning children who were not retained. Of the 144 children recommended for retention, 102 were available for follow-up testing. Of the 102 children recommended for retention in 1980, 62 had been promoted and only 40 retained. These students were initially compared using the 1980 test scores. The program used was a multiple analysis of variance (MANOVA). There was a significance found. In performance ability, in personal adjustment, and in social adjustment, the promoted students scored higher than retained students. Analysis of covariance was used to compare the growth from year 1 to year 2 academically and in adjustment factors of both groups. "In reading achievement, the promoted students showed significantly greater growth
the following year than did the retained, $F(1,99)=5.44, p < .05$ (p. 495). No statistically significant differences in growth were found between the promoted and retained children in arithmetic, personal adjustment and social adjustment.

Grisom and Shepard (1989) reviewed studies that examined the retention-dropout relationship. In a longitudinal study of dropouts in Dade County, Florida, the dropout rate was 55% for overage students and 27% for normal-age students. Readers were cautioned not to conclude retention in and of itself causes dropouts. It was felt the occurrence of low achievement causes both being retained and dropping out.

Balow (1990) reported a study in the Mesa, Arizona Public School that provides more positive evidence of the results of retention than previously documented. This study evaluated the effects of retention when programming requirements for retained students were implemented. Students being considered for retention were identified before the beginning of the second semester. Instructional goals were established for the remainder of the school year. If progress was not sufficient to warrant promotion, an educational plan for the next year was constructed. Retained students did not repeat the same experience the second year. The sample of students included 65 retained first graders matched with 63 students who were promoted, 26 retained second graders matched with 26 promoted students,
and 15 retained third grade students matched with 15 students who were promoted. Increased achievement gains for retained first and second grade pupils were maintained for two years. "By the third year following retention, however, the promoted pupils caught up with the retained pupils in achievement while remaining one year ahead of them" (Balow, p. 8, 1990).

Lieberman (1980) promoted a decision-making model of rational problem solving. The categories of for retention, against retention, undecided, and not applicable are possible. The factors are not weighted, rather individual students must give weight to the factors. Child factors to be considered include: physical disabilities, physical size, academic potential, psychosocial maturity, neurological maturity, self-concept, ability to function independently, grade placement, age, previous retentions, nature of the problem, sex, chronic absenteeism, basic skill competencies, peer pressure, and attitude toward retention. Family factors involve geographical moves, foreign languages emigrants, attitude toward retention, age of siblings and sibling pressure, and involvement of family physician. School factors considered are school system attitudes toward retention, principal attitudes, teacher attitudes, availability of special education services, availability of other program options, and availability of personnel.
Since retention was usually considered on the basis of a learning-related difficulty, Lieberman (1980) advocated a multidisciplinary team approach to determine deficit areas. "Any discussion of retention should always imply a need for services over and above and perhaps different from unmodified, regular classroom programming" (p. 44). He warned against retention being a substitute for special education services.

Johnson (1991), advocated grade placement decisions made on an individual basis by educators who are familiar with research, theory, practices and policies on retention. Because all children are different there will be a population who will benefit from repeating a grade. However, it should also be noted that just repeating the same material a second year will not bring desired results for most children who were not promoted.

Kiner and Vik (1989) reported findings of a study of 100 elementary school principals in South Dakota. Using an Elementary School Grade Retention Survey developed by the authors, data was analyzed using Statistical Programs for the Social Sciences (SPSS). It was found that 42% of the districts had no written policy relating to retention, 43% used Light's Retention Scale as a guideline while 42% used no formal tool and 72% gave parents veto rights regarding the decision to retain. When t-tests were used to compare principal practices with their perceptions of needed
practices, the following factors were considered significant: "sex of student; knowledge of English language; physical size; sibling one grade behind; cultural background; immature social behavior; and misbehavior" (p. 11).

Fifty-nine percent of principals responding indicated retention resulted in greater student academic success in over 80% of the cases, a conviction that is distinctly different from the literature. Analysis of the data by Kiner and Vik (1989) suggested that principals felt certain factors should be taken into consideration before making a decision. These influences include "parental support and approval, student acceptance of grade retention, academic achievement, previous retention, student motivation, child self-concept and current teacher recommendations" (p. 11-12). Factors with less weight included "immature social behavior, learning disability, attendance, cultural/language differences, low family income, recent trauma, current grade level, siblings one grade behind, IQ, classroom misbehavior and student transience" (Vik, 1989, p. 12).

Byrnes and Yamamoto (1986) conducted a survey of 2000 parents in four elementary schools, 200 teachers in seven elementary school and 45 principals or assistant principals in 30 elementary schools in a district of 26,000 children. Half of the sample was from upper-middle income schools with the remainder from low income schools. Usable responses
came from 1063 parents, 145 teachers and 35 principals. All three questionnaire versions shared questions regarding the respondent's opinion of retention, what he or she considered valid reasons for retention, and who should have the final say on whether a child is retained. Results were examined by chi-square analysis.

The groups were asked to check responses from the following reasons: chronic nonattendance, parent request, emotional immaturity, academic failure due to reasons other than lack of basic skills, and lack of basic skills the respondent felt were valid grounds for retention. According to Byrnes and Yamamoto (1989) "the views of parents, teachers and principals were significantly different on excessive absences (p < .0001), emotional maturity (p < .0001), academic failure due to reasons other than lack of basic skills (p < .0006), and lack of basic skills (p < .0001)" (p. 15). The lack of basic skills was supported by all groups. Parents in this survey were less supportive of the other reasons listed.

According to Balow (1990) arguments concerning retention and promotion usually ignore the fact that neither action results in dramatic increases in the achievement. "When low-achieving pupils are retained, they remain low achievers -- when promoted they continue to be low achievers. Neither retention nor promotion is beneficial to
the pupils or to the school, if not accompanied by effective programmatic interventions" (p. 11).

"To retain or not to retain should not be the issue. The issue we should be addressing is how to improve the academic skills of numerous children and ultimately prevent failure" (Byrnes & Yamamoto, 1989, p. 19).

A review of the literature indicated no lasting benefit on the academic performance of students who had been retained. For those who did reap some benefit the first year, by the third year after retention it was not possible to distinguish those who had been retained and those who were promoted, yet could have been retained. A closer look at retention and the academic areas of reading and math revealed lower scores for students who had been retained than those who had been promoted. It was also advised that intervention rather than retention occur when a child is deficient in math and reading. Should retention occur, additional remediation or intervention is a warranted.

**Teachers' and Parents' Decision-making Regarding Retention**

Retention was an educational perspective used by many teachers because of their belief that it helps students be successful. Since it seems unlikely that retention will be abolished, the following section was devoted to intelligent use of the practice.
According to Dawson (1991) many factors were considered by parents, teachers and administrators when a retention decision was being proposed at the kindergarten or first grade level. Considered were visual-motor skills, physical size, and scores on standardized or informal tests. Research findings signified that these characteristics were not good indicators of positive outcomes. Basing a decision on standardized achievement tests at the kindergarten or first grade level was not an appropriate use of the tests as they are designed to be screening instruments. In addition, such testing practices disproportionately and adversely affected minority and low-income children.

Bucko (1986) reported a principal's perspective of indicators for the best candidates for retention. He referenced Medway's analysis as the best candidates being "primary students, chronologically young, not opposed to being retained and with parents who accepted the decision and worked with the child at home" (p. 10).

Tomchin and Impara (1992) used quantitative and qualitative methods to gain a better understanding of teachers' beliefs about retention in grades K-7. Participants were drawn from 96 regular classroom teachers, 8 teachers of the learning disabled and 31 specialty teachers, including reading, band, music, art, and physical education. Thirteen common beliefs about retention were identified. Teachers overwhelmingly accepted retention as a
school practice. Eighty-two percent indicated retention can be positive because it prevents daily failure in the next higher grade. Approximately 70% saw retention as a factor to motivate students to work harder. This number also felt that having a learning disability should not exempt a student from retention. It was not felt that retention permanently labeled children. It was concluded that retention is necessary to maintain grade level standards. Teachers did accept that retention in grades 4-7 produces more negative effects than in grades K-3.

According to Tomchin & Impara (1992), the average number of students retained by teachers of grades K-3 was not significantly different from the number of retained by teachers of grades 4-7, but the variances were significantly different. It was suggested that fewer upper level teachers retain children, but those who did, retained more students than the average primary grade teachers.

Tomchin and Impara (1992) also used a simulation exercise where teachers were asked to decide whether to retain or promote hypothetical students based on written vignette descriptions.

Regression equations for each teacher confirmed the stated importance of academic performance, ability, and maturity for most teachers as well as the relative unimportance of gender in retention decisions across grade levels. There was no systematic variation in the
importance of these factors in retention decisions by teachers of different grade levels (Tomchin & Impara, 1992, p. 206).

The expectation of maturity was important for upper level teachers as well as primary grade teachers. Physical size, when viewed with other factors, was significant for almost 25% of those responding. Student ability was significant for one-third of the respondents. The higher the grade level, the more likely teachers were to promote students. Teachers in grades K-3 made the same recommendation for 37 of 40 vignettes, teachers of grades 4-7 made the same recommendation in only 19 of 40 vignettes. "This pattern reflects disagreement among teachers about the appropriateness of retention for grades 4-7 students in general . . . and teachers' lack of consensus regarding the specific factors warranting retention" (Tomchin & Impara, 1992, p. 207).

Teachers of kindergarten through third grade felt retentions were necessary for future school success, retention was mandated by the curriculum and retention reflects adherence to standards. Teachers of grades four through seven were classified into one of four categories. Antiretentionists were opposed to all retentions in upper grades. Only two teachers fell into this category. Remediationists, where the majority of teachers were classified, hypothesized "that retention should be avoided
unless the teacher 'knew that the child could not succeed in the next grade and [the teacher] had something to offer that child that would help that child mature and develop'" (Tomchin & Impara, 1992, p. 214). Standard-bearers felt students should be retained when prescribed standards were not met. Work-ethic moralists attributed problems to home factors and personal characteristics such as being lazy, unmotivated or disorganized. These teachers "admitted that retention might not help the student, but they believed they were upholding a school principle that one must work to be promoted; students who did not put forth effort must be retained" (Tomchin & Impara, 1992, p. 214).

Sandoval and Hughes (1981) analyzed variables to predict successful retention in the first grade. As reported by Bucko (1986), the study looked at 146 students who were candidates for retention. Students were evaluated with test batteries, parent interviews, teacher interviews and questionnaires. Of the 146 students 78 were retained, 61 promoted and 4 dropped from the study. Primary findings of the study indicated that successful retainees have the following characteristics: an I.Q. of 84 and above, some academic achievement during the first year, sound emotional judgment with age appropriate social skills, parents who accept retention and work with the school,
a teacher with confidence in the retention decision (Bucko, 1986, p. 11).

Light (1980) proposed a decision-making model that looks at the four categories of consideration for retention, against retention, undecided and not applicable for several factors. The factors were not weighted because the circumstances of the individual student must provide the weight. Factors discussed included physical disabilities, physical size, academic potential, psychosocial maturity, neurological maturity, self-concept, independent functioning, grade placement, age, previous retention, nature of the problem, sex, absenteeism, basic competencies, peer pressure, child's attitude toward retention, family factors, school attitude toward retention, availability of special education, and other programmatic options.

In terms of grade placement Lieberman (1980) stated a reasonable rule of thumb was "retention presents a valuable programmatic option for kindergarten through second grade" (p. 41). Retention in fourth grade and beyond was usually unaccepted, and third grade was regarded as pivotal. "Students retained beyond fourth grade are usually the victims of inappropriate disciplinary action or lack of special education services or both. Also, self concept issues seem to take on much greater importance beyond third grade" (p. 41).
Johnson (1991) outlined seven recommendations for the use of retention. His direction, based on an understanding of the teaching-learning process, included the following guides: (1) Except in extreme cases students should not be held more than one year behind age appropriate peers. (2) Transition classes resulting in the nonpromotion of students to age appropriate grades should be considered a retention. (3) If retention occurs, it should do so at the earliest possible grade. (4) A plan for remediation should be developed for any child who is retained. (5) "Alternative strategies such as year-round grouping adjustments, probationary promotion, partial promotion, or mastery learning in an ungraded primary setting should be developed and their use encouraged" (p. 9). (6) Reasons for retention should be written and subject to review. (7) "Any decision concerning retention should include many factors such as school attendance, intelligence, academic achievement, physical size, age, siblings, history of learning disability, previous retention, student's motivation to learn, and parents' involvement in the school process" (p. 9).

By using a data management system to maintain records on students before and after considering them for retention, an estimate of the chances that retention would benefit a particular student could be computed. According to Moran (1988), if the chances of retention being effective were 50-
the student should be promoted. As the chances of the retention helping increase, the stronger the argument for retention. Professional judgement would play a very important part in this endeavor. Educators must choose the exact information needed to make the promotion or retention determination and each decision must be made on an individual basis. "With a data management system, a school district can learn when and how often its retention decisions were helpful or harmful to its students" (p. 36). Variables to be recorded for each child referred for retention could include date of birth, race, sex, school IQ, handicapping condition, primary language, physical size, child's attitude toward retention, parents' attitude toward retention, teacher's attitude toward retention, siblings' ages, attendance, grade point average, achievement test scores, disciplinary actions, and retention decision. It would also be advantageous to collect data for the year following retention. Examples would include grade point average, achievement test scores, disciplinary actions, and promotion/retention decision. Policies and procedures could be adjusted to meet the needs of its students.

In summary, guidelines for deciding retention or promotion were provided. It was suggested that decisions be made by a team and that factors such as social maturity, emotional development, family acceptance as well as academic considerations be explored. For all students considered for
retention, additional educational interventions should be explored.

Alternatives to Retention

If retention of students was not an appropriate action for students who did not perform well in school, what other alternatives were available? This segment of Chapter 2 will present a discussion of acceptable alternatives to retention which are currently found in the literature. The exchange will begin with reasons minimum competency standards should not be the only factor used when deciding to promote or retain a student and will move toward currently acceptable alternatives and program costs.

O'Neal (1984) indicated by setting performance standards for promotion or graduation, a board demonstrated to its share-holders that students are performing at a particular level of attainment. Commitment is shown to these standards by tying failure to meet them to grade retention or some other sanction such as attendance at a summer school. She further stated that districts that establish standards should provide alternatives for students who do not meet the criteria established. Being given additional instruction in order to increase performance was seen as one way of providing opportunities.

According to Palardy (1984), an educational system designed to honor individual differences has no justification for considering students ineligible for
promotion on the basis of criterion-referenced or norm-referenced test standards. Since there will always be a number of students unable to meet any identified standard, are minimum standards a "necessary condition of quality education?" (p. 403). Palardy says not. "A quality education consists of challenging all youngsters appropriately, not of asking some of them to accomplish impossible tasks regardless of whether these are viewed by others a minimal or maximal" (p. 403-404).

In a system of public education where attendance is required, excellence is achieved only when standards are adjusted to meet individual differences. Where education is not compulsory, such as medical school, different conditions apply (Palardy, 1984).

Slavin (1989) indicated students were retained for remediation purposes because schools cannot discover other alternatives. Because teachers may view the practice as effective, retention still occurs.

It does not appear possible to equally prepare all children for a given grade. One way of dealing with the problems created by this fact is to have each teacher prepare for the children who will be in the class. Research on non-promotion suggests that they can grow even better in classes with their own age-mates (Bocks, 1977, p. 383).
Rose (1983) stated, "it would be illogical to recycle a student using instructional methods which were inappropriate the first time. The teacher must provide a special program if the student is expected to succeed" (p. 209).

It is suggested by Madden (1991) that services for at-risk children need to emphasize prevention and early intervention rather than just remediation. This means providing developmentally appropriate kindergarten programs so that students will begin first grade ready to learn. It also means furnishing teachers with effective instructional programs, curricula and staff development to enable students to succeed the first time they are taught.

Cryan (1985) listed several alternatives to retention. Included were transitional classrooms which combine kindergarten and first grade experiences, continuous progress, or ungraded classes that allow children to acquire skills according to his own pace, intensive remedial instruction where teaching is based on specific learner characteristics, individual tutoring programs on a year-round basis, and home assistance that offers help to parents in learning to build positive environments and foster improved self-images in children.

Shepard (1989) reported three alternatives to school failure. One was to keep a child in kindergarten an extra year to help him or her prepare for first grade. A popular way to do this is the second alternative, transition
classes. In this setting students are provided an intermediate step between kindergarten and first grade. A third form of retention is developmental kindergarten, or pre-kindergarten followed by kindergarten. All of these two year programs provide a more appropriate curriculum for children judged to be unready for learning demands of the first grade. A study by Gredler in 1984 concluded that "transition room children either do not perform as well or at most are equal in achievement levels to transition room-eligible children placed in regular classrooms" (p.66). Jones in 1985 also found the same thing to be true. By third grade student gains of transition students could not be distinguished from third graders who had not been placed in transition programs.


Planned programming which allows each pupil to gain personal satisfaction in learning is of paramount importance. Thus, the determination of the pupil's success level and the provision of increasingly more complex experiences which can be performed successfully serve to build personal confidence toward achievement in learning. Continuation of failure, whether in the same grade as the previous year or in a more advanced grade level, will not obviate ineffective performance (p.25).
This necessitated innovative instructional approaches individualized for student need, setting more realistic expectations for the learner and improving individualized instruction. The role of the teacher was critical to the process.

Holloman (1990) reported "developmentally appropriate programs produce excellent long-term results for children, allowing them to reach their full potential while preserving their self-esteem" (p. 15). Looking at children over a period of several years rather than by school year shows that early readers are not necessarily the top readers when they reach middle school. If encouraged to move upward in developmentally appropriate reading groups as students gain in maturity, by third grade more proficient readers will be produced than if a graded situation is maintained. Developmental programs need to be instituted in grades k - 3. Teachers of these grade levels must maintain a level of communication in order to define age appropriate and developmentally appropriate curriculum.

Hamilton (1991) reported grade advancement for students who have been retained at an earlier grade can be successful if teachers, support personnel, parents, and the student understand and are involved in developing the plan to be used. He recounted an experience of a child who spent one semester in second grade, one semester in third grade and a year in fourth grade. At the end of his experience, the
student's work production had increased significantly and he had become a positive leader in his group.

Hargis (1991) suggested cooperative learning where students work together to help each other do as well as each individual can as being particularly beneficial to lower achieving students. Teachers should view each classroom as if it were a multigraded rural class. He stated most students do poorly because they are out of synchronization with the lock-step. They eventually become curriculum causalities in our current graded structure which makes failure possible. "It shifts the blame from the system to the students. It makes it all right to give students work at which they cannot possibly succeed. It requires failing grades" (p. 6). Cooperative systems that require all students to work successfully and to help each other work successfully are alternatives to graded systems where retention is encouraged.

Success for All was an early intervention program piloted with disadvantaged, low-achieving schools. It used a combination of approaches including individual reading tutors, reading level groups according to achievement rather than placement for students in grades one (1) through three (3), parent education, teacher training and utilization of advisory committees. Of seven schools using this model, "students in the Success for All program are far outperforming matched control students on individually
administered tests of reading. The overall effect sizes of +.55 in first grade, +.54 in second grade, and +.46 in third grade are all substantial" (Madden, 1991, p. 597). This research contrasts a Tennessee study that found the effects of reducing class size from 25 to 15 for four years (grades k-3) to average approximately +.25. Early intervention can significantly increase reading performance, reduce retention and lessen the number of special education placements necessary for disadvantaged students.

Peterson (1989) indicated providing Cognitively Guided Instruction (CGI) strategies to teachers of kindergarten and first grade students has proven useful in increasing math levels by associating math with story or word problems. It is a chance for students to build on the learning they already possess rather than completing only math fact activities.

Hamilton (1991) suggests a support strategy for the student being moved ahead and for the teacher receiving the student. A student support plan should call for specific commitments from persons to whom the student can turn for help. "Support for the teacher may come in the form of consultants to help with brainstorming and problem-solving, resource teachers to assist with specific areas of instruction, and/or other specialists for particular intervention strategies" (p. 6).
"Reducing retention and special education referrals and placements creates major savings in the long run" (Madden, 1991, p. 598) indicating the high-resource approach or utilization of education may be cost-effective.

Stopping the practice of retention requires publicity, education, and legal action according to House (1989). A second aid would be pre-service and in-service training for teachers on the disadvantages of retention as a theme. However, the most effective remedy in the long run would be for teachers to actively follow up on their own students who have been retained and examine the consequences.

Every school has a right to decide what is appropriate for the education of its children. "If the school does not fail, neither will the child" (Holloman, 1990, p. 15). Human variation is such that we are always faced with groups of unstandardizable children. Their welfare requires that teachers be sensitive to individual differences in learning capacity and to the previous experiences that these children bring to school. It also requires that teachers, as professional practitioners, find ways to adjust educational experiences to accommodate these differences (Doyle, 1989, p. 220).

The literature on alternatives to retention suggested several findings. Included were success strategies, developmental programs, remedial programs and tutoring. The
key thread woven throughout the readings was attention to individual learning styles and differences. Teachers need to be aware of and proficient in delivering a variety of techniques to meet the needs of her or his student population.

**Summary of Relevant Findings**

Since the 1900s the retention rate as defined by overage children in a particular grade level has been great, decreased in the 1950s, and increased in the 1980s. The 1900s saw an adoption of the industrial model in educational organization and structure of graded schools. With this plan students were measured against criteria to determine achievement levels. As one in two students were being retained, it was decided to promote students based on age appropriateness. This action was called social promotion. By the late 1960s or early 1970s social promotion was no longer considered the correct action. Students were placed in advanced grade levels, yet had very limited skills. The late 1970s and 1980s brought a cry for accountability by the American public. Proficiency and competency based testing became prevalent. This led to an increased rate of retention. As the effects of retention have been assessed, more negative than positive consequences have been documented. As a result, alternatives to retention have been sought.
As documented in this chapter, the emotional effects of retention can have devastating consequences. Students can feel a sense of failure that leads them to further failure. Actual academic proficiency is increased less by retention than if a student is promoted with his or her peers. Even if a child is provided transition classes between kindergarten and first grade, the positive effects cannot be distinguished by the time the student reaches third grade.

Alternatives to nonpromotion include assessing individual student needs, providing individualized instruction, providing remediation while being promoted to the next grade and allowing the student to encounter successful experiences.

Null Hypotheses

The review of literature has shown the effects of retention on students. Since no study of this type has been conducted in Northeast Tennessee, the following null hypotheses were tested in this study.

H₁: There are no differences between retained and promoted third grade students in the NCE scores on the Stanford Achievement Test.

H₂: There are no differences between retained and promoted fifth grade students NCE scores on the Stanford Achievement Test.
H3: There are no statistically significant differences in the 1986 pre-retention scores and 1987 post-retention scores of students retained in third grade.

H4: There are no statistically significant differences in the 1986 pre-retention scores and 1988 post-retention scores of students retained in third grade.

H5: There are no statistically significant differences in the 1986 pre-retention scores and 1989 post-retention scores of students retained in third grade.

H6: There are no statistically significant differences in the 1986 pre-retention scores and 1987 post-retention scores of students retained in fifth grade.

H7: There are no statistically significant differences in the 1986 pre-retention scores and 1988 post-retention scores of students retained in fifth grade.

H8: There are no statistically significant differences in the 1986 pre-retention scores and 1989 post-retention scores of students retained in fifth grade.

H9: There are no statistically significant differences in the 1987 NCE scores of retained and promoted third grade students after controlling for their 1986 NCE scores.

H10: There are no statistically significant differences in the 1988 NCE scores of retained and promoted third grade students after controlling for their 1986 NCE scores.

H11: There are no statistically significant differences in third grade NCE scores (second administration) of retained
students and the third grade scores of promoted students, in the areas of reading comprehension, spelling, and total math over four administrations of the SAT.

H₁₂: There are no statistically significant differences in fifth grade NCE scores (second administration) of retained students and the fifth grade scores of promoted students, in the areas of reading comprehension, spelling, and total math over four administrations of the SAT.

H₁₃: There are no statistically significant differences in the same age analysis by NCE mean of third graders in rural and city systems in the areas of reading comprehension, spelling, and total math on the SAT given in 1987, while controlling for 1986 scores.

H₁₄: There are no statistically significant differences in the 1988 NCE scores of retained and promoted third grade students in city systems and rural systems after controlling for their 1986 NCE scores.

H₁₅: There are no statistically significant differences in same-grade NCE scores of third graders in the areas of reading comprehension, spelling, and total math over four administrations of the SAT, within rural and city school system.

H₁₆: There are no statistically significant differences in the same grade comparison by rural and city systems of NCE mean scores of fifth graders in the areas of reading comprehension, spelling, and total math over four
administrations of the SAT for city students and three administrations of the SAT for rural students.
Chapter 3
Methods And Procedures

Introduction

This study was conducted in two distinct phases. Phase one was a retrospective follow-up study of students who were retained in grades three and five during the 1985-86 school year. Phase two involved interviews of teachers who retained students during the 1990-91 school year and teachers who taught the retained pupils during the 1991-92 school year.

Phase I: Retrospective Follow-up of Students Retained in Grades Three And Five During the 1984-85 School Year

Population

Phase one focused on the effects of retention on the academic success of students in grades three and five in two rural school districts and two city school systems in Northeast Tennessee and whether programmatic changes occurred for students who had been retained in these systems. The target population included students and teachers in districts with similar income levels, geographic conditions, ethnic backgrounds, and levels of education in Northeast Tennessee.


**Sampling Method**

The method of selecting a sample from the population was accomplished by targeting two rural counties and two city school systems in Northeast Tennessee with similar characteristics. These characteristics included size of population, per capita income, percentage of students on free and reduced lunch, geographic conditions, ethnic backgrounds, and levels of education.

The rural systems targeted were the Unicoi County Schools and the Carter County Schools. The city systems included the Johnson City Schools and Bristol City Schools. Data were collected on students who were retained in grade three and grade five during the 1985-86 school year. These students were labeled "retained students" for the purpose of this study. Data were also collected on a matched group of students in those grade levels who were not retained. These control groups were labeled "promoted students." One group of third grade students was matched according to the subtest scores of reading comprehension on the Stanford Achievement test and on gender. A second group of third graders was matched based on scores on the total math portion of the Stanford Achievement Test and on gender. Data were collected on a third group matched in the areas of spelling and gender. Scaled scores were used for the matching. The matched scores ranged within six points of the scaled score.
of the retained student. The same strategy was used to match fifth grade students.

The four school systems were geographically close. Unicoi County is a rural Northeast Tennessee county bordered by the counties of Mitchell, Marshall and Yancy in North Carolina and the counties of Carter, Washington and Greene in Tennessee. The population of Unicoi County was 16,900, with a school population of approximately 2,680 students. There were four elementary, one middle and one secondary school in Unicoi County (Directory of Public School, 1990-91). The per capita income of 1987 was $10,307.

Approximately 50% of Unicoi County land was owned by the federal government and was national forest land. This means the majority of county land was nontaxable. Thus, property taxes needed to support local education efforts were high, $4.40 per $100 value (Tennessee Community Data: Erwin, Tennessee, 1991).

Carter County is a rural Northeast Tennessee county bordered by the counties of Mitchell, Avery and Watauga in North Carolina and the counties of Washington, Unicoi, Sullivan, and Johnson in Tennessee. The population of Carter County was 51,505, with a school population of 6,005. There were four high schools, two middle schools and ten elementary schools (Directory of Public Schools, 1990-91). The 1986 per capita income was $7,321. The property tax
Located in Washington County, Johnson City, Tennessee had a projected 1990 population of 50,300. There were eight elementary schools, one middle school and one city secondary school which together served 6,265 students (Directory of Public Schools, 1990-91). The per capita income of 1988 was $13,732. The tax rate was $2.94 per $100 value (Tennessee Community Data: Johnson City, Tennessee, 1991).

Situated in Sullivan County, Tennessee, Bristol is a sister city to Bristol, Virginia. It has a population of 23,800 and served 3,485 students in its school system. Bristol had six elementary schools, one junior high school and one secondary school (Directory of Public Schools, 1990-91). The per capita income was $14,303. The tax rate for Bristol City, Tennessee was $3.16 per $100 value. (Tennessee Community Data: Bristol, Tennessee, 1991).

Sample

The size of the sample for each set of third and fifth grade students retained in 1985-86 depended on the number of students in the four systems who were retained. It was projected that each total grade level group to be studied would contain 30 students. An equal number of matched students per grade and per matched subtest scores were also selected. Students were matched according to achievement
scores and gender. A representative from each school system in the study was contacted for names of retained third and fifth grade students during the 1985-86 school year. Stanford Achievement Test summary score records for all third and fifth grade students were reviewed. A list of students with similar scaled scores to those who were retained were compiled. From that list, matches according to gender were made.

The third grade cohort consisted of 24 students who were retained and 70 students whose scores were matched to those who were retained. Seven students were retained in Unicoi County. Their scores were matched with 20 students from that county in the areas of reading comprehension, spelling, and total math. Eleven students were retained in Carter County. Their scores were matched with 32 students in Carter County. Johnson City had six students who were retained in third grade. Their scores were matched with 18 students from that system.

The fifth grade cohort consisted of 16 students who were retained and 46 students whose scores were matched in the areas of reading comprehension, spelling, and total math. Four students who were retained were from the city of Bristol. Their scores were matched with scores of 11 students from Bristol who had similar test results. Seven students were retained in Johnson City. Their scores were matched with scores of 21 students from that system. Unicoi
County had four students who were retained. Their scores were matched with scores of 12 students from that county. One student from Carter County was analyzed with the retained group. Her scores were matched to results of two students from the Carter County School System.

**Measurement of Variables**

Because the state of Tennessee's testing program during the 1985-86 school year was the Stanford Achievement Test (SAT), this information was used to compare levels of achievement of students. Scaled Scores, percentiles and normal curve equivalent (NCE) data were collected on subtests of reading comprehension, total math, and spelling. Scaled scores were converted to percentiles and then to NCE scores.

Raw scores on the Stanford can be converted to scaled scores, percentiles ranks, grade equivalents, stanines, and normal curve equivalents. "Scaled scores are useful for measuring growth from one year to the next, since these scores lie on a continuous scale that spans the various graded levels for each subtest" (Mitchell, 1985, p. 1451).

According to Mitchell (1985) the 1982 edition of the Stanford Achievement Test provides forms for Primary Level 1 for grades 1.5 - 2.9 that yields 13 scores in the areas of reading, word study skills, total mathematics, listening, spelling, and environment. Primary Level 2 is for grades
2.5 - 3.9 and yields 14 scores in the areas of reading, word study skills, total, mathematics, spelling, environment, and listening. Primary Level 3 for grades 3.5 - 4.9 yields 16 scores in the areas of reading, mathematics, language, listening, science, social science, and using information. Intermediate Level 1 is for grades 4.5 - 5.9 and lists 16 scores in the same areas that Primary Level 3 lists. Intermediate Level 2 is for grades 5.5 - 7.9 and also lists 16 scores in the areas provided in Primary 3 and Intermediate Level 1. The Advanced test for grades 7.0 - 9.9 provides 14 scores in the areas of reading comprehension, mathematics, language, listening, social science, science, and using information. Scaled scores lie on a continuous scale that ranges from Primary Level 1 through the Advanced Level for each subtest, thereby allowing the measurement of growth from level to level for each subtest. Conversion of scaled scores to NCEs allows for the measurement of growth across subtest areas and across test forms.

Of 280 Kuder-Richardson (KR) coefficients reported in the technical manual, 68% are above .90, and 97% are above .80. "Of the 89 alternate forms coefficients reported 16% are above .90, and 81% are above .80" (Mitchell, 1985, p.1451). The composite and subtest scores appear to be generally satisfactory in terms of reliability.
The KR 20 reliabilities for the subtests of Concept of Number, Mathematics Computation and Mathematics Applications range from .83 to .92 with a median of .90 for the national sample. The KR 20 reliabilities for Total Mathematics range from .92 to .97 with a median of .96 for the national sample. The alternate form reliabilities range from .77 to .90 with a median of .86 for Concept of Number, Mathematics Computation and Mathematics Application, and from .88 to .95 with a median of .93 for the Total Mathematics Test (Mitchell, 1985).

The within-grade correlations range from .66 to .83 with a median of .70 for Concept of Number, Mathematics Computation and Mathematics Applications for grades 2 through 9 for the concepts and computation paring. The range is .72 to .84 with a median of .81 for the Concepts and Application paring; and from .67 to .80 with a median of .70 for the Computation and Application paring. The median correlations increase with grade. In grades 2 through 4 the median is .70, .72 in grades 5 through 7 and .83 for grades 7 through 9 (Mitchell, 1985).

To summarize the reading subtests, it was noted by Mitchell (1985) that test makers were exhaustive in their efforts a careful standardization. "The reliability of the tests is very good" (p. 1456), and the procedures followed in item selection were appropriate.
Research Design

A quasi-experimental research design was used to describe this retrospective follow-up study of test scores of students who were retained as compared to scores of students who were not retained. Since students were not randomly selected to participate in this study, the nonequivalent control-group design was used. Borg (1989) represented this design by the following diagram:

\[ \cdots \ 0 \ X \ 0 \ \cdots \]

The experimental treatment was represented by X. Pretest or posttest measurement of the dependent variable was represented by 0, "and the broken line indicates that the experimental and control groups are not formed randomly" (Borg, 1989, p. 690). The nonequivalent control-group design was characterized by the administration of a pretest and posttest to both treatment groups, and nonrandom assignment of students to a group.

It is possible to have a nonequivalent control-group design with more than two groups. "The only essential features of this particular design, then, are nonrandom assignment of subjects to groups and administration of a pretest and posttest to all groups" (Borg, 1989, p. 690).

The design as diagramed is perhaps the most frequently used design in social science research. There were considerations for possible threats to the internal validity of this design as listed by Cook (1979). "One uncontrolled
threat is that of selection-maturation. This arises when the respondents in one group are growing more experienced, more tired, or more bored than the respondents in another group" (p. 104). A second threat was differential statistical regression. The deliberate selection of low scorers is a form of matching which can result in the control group mean regressing to its population baseline if the treatment group was not selected for its scores, but another variable. A third problem has to do with the interaction of selection and history or events other than treatment which affect the experimental group but not the control group, or vice versa.

The research design for this retrospective study can be represented by the following diagram:

Stanford Achievement Test Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group 1</th>
<th>3rd grade</th>
<th>retention</th>
<th>4th grade</th>
<th>5th grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group 2</th>
<th>3rd grade</th>
<th>retention</th>
<th>4th grade</th>
<th>5th grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>no retention</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>no retention</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>no retention</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group 3</th>
<th>5th grade</th>
<th>retention</th>
<th>6th grade</th>
<th>7th grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group 4</th>
<th>5th grade</th>
<th>retention</th>
<th>6th grade</th>
<th>7th grade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>no retention</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>no retention</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>no retention</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The treatment for group one and group three was considered to be retention in either the third or fifth grade. The pretest was the Stanford Achievement Test given in the spring of the retention year. Posttests were Stanford Achievement Tests given in the spring of the year students are enrolled in subsequent grade levels where the achievement test is administered. Subgroup one represented students who were matched for scaled scores on reading comprehension. Subgroup two represented matched students in the area of total math and subgroup three represented matched scores for spelling.

Another way to view the results of the study was to compare retained and promoted students in two ways using (a) same-age comparisons (see Figure 1) and (b) same-grade comparisons (see Figure 2). Same-age comparisons were made by comparing retained students with promoted students who were the same age, but took different forms of the Stanford Achievement Test.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Retained</td>
<td>3rd grade</td>
<td>3rd grade</td>
<td>4th grade</td>
<td>5th grade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoted</td>
<td>3rd grade</td>
<td>4th grade</td>
<td>5th grade</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retained</td>
<td>5th grade</td>
<td>5th grade</td>
<td>6th grade</td>
<td>7th grade</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoted</td>
<td>5th grade</td>
<td>6th grade</td>
<td>7th grade</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 1. Example of a same-age comparison of retained and promoted students.
Their performance was evaluated on different norm groups. For example, in the same-age comparison, the 1987 third grade scores of the retained group were compared to the 1987 fourth grade scores of the promoted controls.

Same-grade comparisons were made when both the retained and promoted groups were in grades three, four, and five for cohort one and grades five, six, and seven for cohort two, but the retained group was one year older.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Promoted 3rd grade</td>
<td>3rd 1986</td>
<td>4th 1987</td>
<td>5th 1988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Retained 5th grade</td>
<td>5th 1987</td>
<td>6th 1988</td>
<td>7th 1989</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Promoted 5th grade</td>
<td>5th 1986</td>
<td>6th 1987</td>
<td>7th 1988</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2. Example of a same-grade comparison of retained and promoted students.

For example, the 1987 third grade scores of retained groups were compared to the 1986 third grade scores of the promoted group.

**Data Analysis Procedures**

This section was organized according to research questions posed in Chapter 1. Descriptive statistics, also called summary statistics, were provided to address questions one and two concerning demographic, social, and academic characteristics of students who were retained. "Descriptive studies are primarily concerned with finding out 'what is'" (Borg, 1989, p. 331). Group means were used to indicate the average score on the different tests.
Individual NCE scores on the subtests of reading comprehension, total math, and spelling were used for determining academic standing. The t-test for independent groups was used to test for initial differences in the academic characteristics of retained and promoted students.

Research question number three concerned changes in achievement test scores of retained students after retention as compared with their scores prior to retention. A t-test for dependent groups was used to determine if significant differences occurred.

Research questions four and five concerned changes in the achievement test scores of retained students as compared to students with similar scores who were not retained. Same-age and same-grade comparisons were calculated through the use of analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) and analysis of variance (ANOVA).

According to Hinkle (1988), ANCOVA is used as a procedure for the statistical control of an extraneous variable.

ANCOVA, which combines regression analysis and analysis of variance (ANOVA), controls for the effects of this extraneous variable, called a covariate, by partitioning out the variation attributed to this additional variable. In this way, the researcher is better able to investigate
the effects of the primary independent variables (p. 492).

Analysis of variance (ANOVA) is a statistical procedure that is used when testing hypotheses where the $K$, the number of groups being compared, population means are equal and where $K$ is greater than or equal to 2. According to Hinkle (1988), in ANOVA there are independent and dependent variables. The independent variable is the variable that forms the groupings. The dependent variable is presumed to be the result of manipulation of the independent variable.

Scaled scores for the subtests of reading comprehension, total math and spelling were collected for all students retained in grades three and five and their matched counterparts. Scaled scores were converted to percentile scores, then to NCE scores so appropriate comparisons could be generated. Scaled scores were used because they had the advantage of representing approximately equal units on a continuous scale that makes it possible to compare scaled scores from form to form and level to level. Even though scaled scores are equivalent across forms and levels of the same subtest and domain total, they are not equivalent from one subject area to another (Gardner, 1983).

Once the scaled score was recorded it was converted to a percentile rank. Using a Standard Multilevel Norms booklet (Gardner, 1983), the percentiles were converted to
the normal curve equivalent (NCE) scores which allowed for data manipulation. NCE scores were used to run the statistical comparison of means.

Each group of third grade students had taken a Stanford Achievement Test three (3) times from 1986 through 1989. The groups of fifth grade students had completed the Stanford Achievement Test three (3) times during the duration of this study. Comparisons were made to determine whether the retained group or the promoted group made more NCE gains over a period of three and two test applications. In addition, the gains of city and rural students were compared to determine if any differences existed.

The .05 two tailed level of significance was used as the criterion for retaining or rejecting the null hypotheses for each statistical test. The SPSS/PC micro computer program was used to conduct the statistical analysis.

Phase II: Factors Influencing The Retention Decision And Instructional Changes

Population

Phase two focused on factors influencing the retention decision and whether or not programmatic or instructional changes occurred during the retention year for selected students who were retained during the 1990-91 school year. The two rural districts of Unicoi County and Carter County
and the city school systems of Johnson City and Bristol of Northeast Tennessee used in phase one were also be used in phase two.

**Sampling Method and Sample**

Qualitative methods focus indepth on small samples which are selected purposefully. "The logic of purposeful sampling lies in selecting information-rich cases for study in depth. Information-rich cases are those from which one can learn a great deal about issues of central importance to the purpose of the research" (Patton, 1990, p. 169). "Purposeful sampling is based on the assumption that one wants to discover, understand, gain insight; therefore one needs to select a sample form which one can learn the most" (Merriam, 1988, p. 48).

The strategy of criterion sampling was used in this study. The logic of criterion sampling is to study cases that meet some predetermined criterion of importance, for example grade retention. "The point of criterion sampling is to be sure to understand cases that are information-rich because they may reveal major system weaknesses that become targets of opportunity for program or system improvement" (Patton, 1990, p. 176, 177).

The Institutional Review Board of East Tennessee State University was asked to grant permission for conducting this study. Teachers to be interviewed were identified by a
representative from each school district in the study. All adult participants were asked to sign a consent form granting permission for the interview.

A representative from each system was contacted for names of one third grade and one fifth grade teacher who retained one or more students during the 1990-91 school year. These teachers were interviewed. Teachers who taught the same retained students during the 1991-92 school year were also interviewed. This purposeful sampling technique resulted in a total of 16 interviews for eight case studies. Case studies of one third grader and one fifth grader in Unicoi County, Carter County, and Johnson City, Tennessee were completed. Since neither a third nor fifth grade student in Bristol, Tennessee could be followed, two first graders were the subjects of case studies in that system.

Research Design

"A research design is similar to an architectural blueprint" (Merriam, 1988, p. 6). By assembling, organizing, and integrating data, it results in a specific end product. A case study is one research design that can be used to study an event in a systematic manner. A case study does not claim any certain method for data collection or data analysis. Methods from testing to interviewing can be used in a case study. However, by concentration on a single case, this approach aims to uncover the interaction
of significant factors characteristic of the event. "The
case study seeks holistic description and explanation"
(Merriam, 1988, p. 10). Becker as (cited in Merriam, 1988)
describes the purposes of a case study as twofold: "to
arrive at a comprehensive understanding of the groups under
study and to develop general theoretical statements about
regularities in social structure and process" (p. 11).

Four characteristics are essential in a qualitative
case study. They include particularistic, prescriptive,
heuristic, and inductive attributes. Particularistic
indicates that case studies focus of particular events.
Cases are important for what they reveal about programs and
for what the information may represent. Descriptive
characteristics mean the end product is "a rich, 'thick'
description of the phenomenon under study" (Merriam, 1988,
p. 11). Heuristic means that case studies bring about the
discovery of new meaning, extends the readers experience, or
confirms what the reader already knows. Inductive implies
that case studies rely on inductive reasoning.
"Generalizations, concepts, or hypotheses emerge from an
examination of data—data grounded in the context itself"
(Merriam, 1988, p. 13).

Several characteristics of qualitative research need
stressing, as they are prominent in case study research.
Researchers are concerned with the process, rather than
outcomes. They are more concerned with what people
experience and how they interpret these experiences than how they structure their social worlds. The researcher is instrumental in the areas of data collection and analysis and actual fieldwork is involved in the collection of data.

According to Yin (1984) five components of a research design are important. They include study questions, propositions, units of analysis, the logic linking the data to the propositions, and the criteria for interpreting the findings. Case study strategies are useful for acquiring "how" and "why" questions. Each proposition focuses attention on something that should be examined within the study. The unit of analysis may be a single case. "Information about each relevant individual would be collected, and several such individuals or 'cases' might be included in a multiple-case study" (p. 31). Linking the data to the propositions can be done in various ways, however no correct way has been established. One promising approach is that of pattern matching.

Reliability and Validity of the Case Studies

An interview guide was used to structure the collection of responses from teachers who have retained students and from teachers of the retained students during the retention year. Responses were reviewed and categorized into the areas of physical, social, academic, behavioral, emotional, programmatic, and instructional factors that were common to
retained students. The same categories were assessed for students the second year in the same grade.

According to Merriam (1988) validity, reliability, and ethics are major concerns in a qualitative case study. Since this type of research is based on different types of assumptions and a different view than traditional research, different criteria in assessing qualitative research is necessary. The extent to which findings are congruent with reality or the internal validity were addressed by checking interpretations with individuals interviewed, asking peers to comment on findings and involving participants in all phases of the research. The consistency of the study was established through the development of a detailed audit trail. This was performed by describing how the study was conducted and how the findings were derived.

**Interview Procedures**

According to Borg (1989) "the interview as a research method in survey research is unique in that it involves the collection of data through direct verbal interaction between individuals" (p. 446). Patton (1990) described an interview guide as a list of questions that will be explored during the course of the interview in order that the same information is obtained from all subjects.

An interview guide was developed to assist the researcher in structuring questions to be asked during the
teacher interviews. It also provided guidelines on what to say at the opening and closing of the interviews. Lists of acceptable probes were included in the guide. This interview guide is included as Appendix G.

Interview guide questions for teachers who had retained students were derived from the review of literature that addressed areas that were considered for retention. The areas of physical development, emotional, social, and academic progress were considered. Additional areas of inquiry for teachers of the retained students the second year were teaching strategies and programmatic changes as discussed in the section on using retention effectively. A panel consisting of seven educational experts in the fields of research, leadership, curriculum, and supervision assisted in the development of the interview guide by providing input relative to the types of questions that should be asked of the teachers. The experts read an outline of questions to be used as an interview guide. They made comments concerning questions as presented. They added additional questions and clarified ones already present.

Data Analysis Procedures

Data are nothing more than ordinary bits and pieces of information found in the environment. They can be concrete and measurable, as in class attendance, or invisible and difficult to measure,
as in feelings. Whether or not a bit of information becomes data in a research study depends solely on the interest and perspective of the investigator (Merriam, 1988, p. 67).

Interviews were tape recorded and transcribed by a professional typist. Patton (1990) stated "the analysis of case study evidence is one of the least developed and most difficult aspects of doing case studies" (p. 100). Much depends of the investigator's own style of thinking. Merriam (1988) defined data collection and analysis as a simultaneous activity in qualitative research. "Analysis begins with the first interview, the first observation, the first document read. Emerging insights, hunches, and tentative hypotheses direct the next phase of data collection, which in turn leads to refinement or reformulation of one's questions, and so on" (Merriam, 1988, p. 119).

Analysis of interview questions were categorized according to possible responses on specific questions. General groupings included responses to definite categories. Specific categories to be assessed were physical attributes of the retained verses the promoted children, social and maturity factors, academic performance, behavioral and discipline aspects, emotional indicators, and instructional or special program interventions.
In this situation, pieces of information from one case were related to information from another case. Criteria for interpreting findings were not based on statistical tests. Rather, the analysis was based on the development of common response patterns.
Chapter 4
RESULTS
Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to present the results of the study. The chapter is divided into two parts presented as a series of research questions. Part one incorporates statistical data regarding test scores. The second part includes qualitative data depicting teacher responses to questions concerning the retention of eight students. The analyses presented are in both narrative and tabular form, using the null format for testing hypotheses.

Part I: Retrospective Follow-up of Students Retained in Grades Three And Five During the 1985-86 School Year

Research Questions Number One and Two

Research questions one and two are answered together. Research question number one was stated as follows: What are the demographic, social and academic characteristics of students who are retained? Question number two was stated as follows: Are there differences in the demographic, social and academic characteristics of those who are retained as compared to those who are not retained?

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Third Grade Cohort

A total of 24 third graders from the Unicoi County School System, Carter County School System, and Johnson City School System were matched according to sex and scaled scores in reading comprehension, spelling, and total math. Because there were three areas for matching to occur, it was possible for the 24 students to be matched with 72 students of similar scores. Appendix A through C indicate the number of retained students by system and by grade, along with their matched controls.

Hypothesis number one, stated in the null, was associated with question number one. This hypothesis was stated as follows: $H_0$: There are no differences between retained and promoted third grade students in the NCE scores on the Stanford Achievement Test.

Table one shows a comparison of average NCE scores of retained and promoted students by subject area and gender during the year of the retention decision.
Table 1
Average NCE Scores of Retained and Promoted Third Grade Students By Subject Area And Gender for the 1985-86 School Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>n</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading comprehension:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retained</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>35.3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoted</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>35.0</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelling:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retained</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>33.9</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoted</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>34.8</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total math:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retained</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>39.9</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoted</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>40.2</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** p < .05

Eighteen third grade male students had an average reading comprehension average NCE of 35.3. Their matched cohort had a mean NCE of 35.0. Retained and matched female students averaged 36.1 NCE points for the retained group and 36.0 for the matched cohort. As an NCE score of 50 is the middle of average, students in this study had mean scores lower than average. Another way to look at the scores revealed the average scores were equivalent to a 2.7 grade level at the end of the third grade experience in the area of reading comprehension.
Third grade spelling scaled scores reflected an average of 33.9 NCEs for boys and 33.2 NCE points for girls who were retained. Their matched cohort groups scored 34.8 NCEs and 31.6 NCEs for boys and girls. It should be noted that an individually matched score for two boys could not be located within the six point bounds established for this study. The average NCE scores for the groups of retained and promoted were lower than average. A grade equivalent score in the area of spelling would be the same as a 2.8 for retained and 2.9 for grade level for promoted students at the end of third grade.

In the area of total math, boys who were retained averaged 39.9 NCEs, while their matched cohort averaged 40.2 NCE points. The mean score of the girls who were retained was 36.3 NCEs. Their matched peers averaged 38.6 NCEs. These scores indicated retained students scored as students who are in third grade first month would score, while promoted students who were matched scored as students who are in third grade second month usually score. Both groups scored at least six months behind what average students should score at the end of the school year. As shown in Table 7, there were no statistically significant differences between retained and promoted students on reading comprehension, spelling, and total math subtests.

The null hypothesis was retained in the areas of reading comprehension, spelling, and total math. The
matching procedure was successful in equating groups. Since students were matched based on gender, there were no differences between the retained and promoted students in terms of the number of boys and girls. Since it was not possible to obtain additional information about students from the schools, additional demographic, social, or academic comparisons could not be made.

**Fifth Grade Cohort**

Hypothesis number two, stated in the null form, was associated with research questions one and two. This hypothesis was stated as follows: \( H_0 \): There are no differences between retained and promoted fifth grade students on the NCE scores on the Stanford Achievement Test.

Fifth grade students retained during the 1985-86 school year were matched according to sex and similar scaled scores in reading comprehension, spelling, and total math. There were four students in Unicoi County, six in Carter County, seven in Johnson City, and four in Bristol making a total of 21 students. Of the six students recorded on the Carter County End of Year Attendance Report for 1986, only follow-up data for one student could be found. The test scores of only 16 students retained in the four systems studied in grade five were followed. The number of possible matches were 48 for the three academic areas analyzed. Appendix D, E, and F, show fifth grade students included in this study.
Table two shows a comparison of average NCE scores of retained and promoted students by subject area and by gender during the year of the retention decision.

Table 2
Average NCE Scores of Retained and Promoted Fifth Grade Students By Subject Area And Gender for the 1985-86 School Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>n M</td>
<td>n M</td>
<td>n M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reading comprehension:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retained</td>
<td>11 40.6</td>
<td>4 46.5</td>
<td>15 42.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoted</td>
<td>11 41.3</td>
<td>4 47.7</td>
<td>15 43.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelling:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retained</td>
<td>11 36.5</td>
<td>4 38.2</td>
<td>15 36.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoted</td>
<td>11 38.6</td>
<td>4 32.9</td>
<td>15 37.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total math:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retained</td>
<td>11 40.3</td>
<td>5 43.8</td>
<td>16 41.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoted</td>
<td>11 36.8</td>
<td>5 53.8</td>
<td>16 42.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** p < .05

Fifth grade boys who were retained scored 40.6 NCEs, while their matched cohort scored 41.3 NCEs. Retained girls scored 46.5 NCE points. The group with which they were matched scored 47.7 NCEs. These scores indicated that the fifth grade students identified for this study scored about one year behind grade placement level in reading comprehension. Grade level equivalents are 4.3 and 4.6 respectively for retained and promoted students. It should
be noted that a match within the six point bounds of this study could not be located for one student.

The mean in the area of spelling was 36.5 NCE points for boys who were retained and 38.2 NCEs for girls. The mean scores for the matched groups were 38.6 for boys and 32.9 NCEs for girls. Scores indicated that retained and promoted fifth graders identified for this study scored about the 4.1 grade level in the subject of spelling. The average level of students selected for this study was approximately one year and seven months behind what one would expect students to score.

Fifth grade boys who were retained averaged 40.3 NCE points on the total math section of the Stanford Achievement Test. The scores of their matched cohort averaged 36.8 NCEs. Girls who were retained in the fifth grade scored an average of 43.8 NCE points as opposed to 53.8 NCEs for the matched group. In the area of total math, the girls had higher scaled scores. Fifth grade students identified for this study scored a mean of 5.1 grade level on the total math portion of the SAT. This was approximately 7 months behind what average would be. As shown in Table 8, there were no statistically significant differences between retained and promoted students on the reading comprehension, spelling, and total math subtests.

The null hypothesis was retained in the areas of reading comprehension, spelling, and total math. The
matching procedure was successful in equating groups. Since students were matched based on gender, there were no differences between the retained and promoted students in terms of the number of boys and girls. Since it was not possible to obtain additional information about students from the schools, additional demographic, social, or academic comparisons could not be made.

Great care was taken to individually match scaled scores of retained students with students who were promoted. As reflected in Appendices A, B, C, D, E, and F, there was no more than a six point difference between the scores of retained and matched peers.

Although a hypothesis was not tested, an analysis was made to determine if there was any difference in the economic level of the communities, as measured by financial assistance through Chapter 1 funds, in this study.

Ninety-five percent of the students in the study attended schools served by Chapter 1. All students, retained and promoted, in Unicoi County and Carter County were enrolled in schools served by this program. Whether a school was identified as a Chapter 1 school denotes the economic level of the community. Students enrolled in Cherokee, Fairmont and Town Acres in Johnson City were not eligible for chapter services. Students enrolled in Haynesfield Elementary and Holston View Elementary in Bristol, Tennessee were not served by Chapter 1. School
eligibility for Chapter 1 services was determined by a
district-wide percentage. The total number of students in
the system was divided by the number receiving free lunch.
If a school average was equal to or lower than the system
average, the school qualified for services.

Five third grade students in the study from Johnson
City attended schools where Chapter 1 was not provided. All
five of these students had been promoted and matched with a
student who was retained. This means 19% of the third
graders were served in Non-Chapter schools. It also means
that 100% of the third grade students who were retained
lived in a community with an economic level sufficiently low
enough to receive federal assistance in reading and math.

Of the fifth graders in this study, one retained and
one matched student from Johnson City were not receiving
Chapter 1 services. One fifth grader who was retained in
Bristol City was not in a school that provided chapter
services. This means 13% of the retained students did not
live in an area that economically qualified for federal
assistance through Chapter 1. It also means 3% of students
who were promoted and matched to those who were retained in
fifth grade did not qualify for Chapter 1, based on
community income. In summary, students selected for this
study were well matched according to SAT test results in
reading comprehension, spelling, and total math, gender, and
economic levels of school communities.
Research Question Number Three

Research question number three was stated as follows: Are there changes in achievement test scores of retained students after retention as compared with their scores before retention? In order to answer this question, t-tests for dependent or paired groups were used to compare the 1986, 1987, 1988, and 1989 test results of third grade students who were retained. This analysis gives a pre-retention and post-retention comparison. The same type of comparison was used with fifth grade students who were retained.

Third Grade Comparisons

Hypothesis number three, stated in the null form, was associated with research question three. This hypothesis was stated as follows: $H_0$: There are no statistically significant differences in the 1986 pre-retention scores and 1987 post-retention scores of students retained in third grade.

Table three shows the pre-retention and post-retention results of third grade students retained in 1986.
Table 3
Comparison of 1986 Pre-Retention and 1987 Post-Retention Scores, by Subject of Third Grade Students Who Were Retained During the 1985-1986 School Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>1986 NCE</th>
<th>1987 NCE</th>
<th>Difference</th>
<th>t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading comprehension</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>36.98</td>
<td>47.13</td>
<td>+10.15</td>
<td>3.38**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelling</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>35.11</td>
<td>48.68</td>
<td>+13.57</td>
<td>5.14**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total math</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>41.36</td>
<td>60.33</td>
<td>+18.97</td>
<td>8.74**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** p < .05

In the area of reading comprehension, the NCE mean difference of 10.15 was statistically significant (t = 3.38, p = < .05). The mean difference of 13.58 in NCE scores in spelling was statistically significant (t = 5.14, p < .05). For the 19 students on which the t-test was run in the area of total math, the mean NCE difference of 18.97 points was statistically significant (t = 8.74, p < .05). NCE increases were found in all subjects when students were tested on the third grade test a second time. The null hypotheses of no difference in the 1986 pre-retention scores and 1987 post-retention scores of third graders was rejected.

Null hypothesis four was also associated with research question three. This hypothesis was stated as follows: H₀: There are no statistically significant differences in the 1986 pre-retention scores and 1988 post-retention scores of students retained in third grade.
Table four compares the 1988 Stanford Achievement Test scores of retained students with the 1986 SAT scores of the same retained students to determine change in subtest areas over a two year period.

### Table 4

**Comparison of 1986 Pre-Retention and 1988 Post-Retention Scores, by Subject, of Third Grade Students Who Were Retained During the 1985-86 School Year**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>1986 NCE</th>
<th>1988 NCE</th>
<th>Difference</th>
<th>t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading comprehension</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>35.97</td>
<td>41.88</td>
<td>+5.92</td>
<td>2.88**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelling</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>38.03</td>
<td>40.29</td>
<td>+2.26</td>
<td>.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total math</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>42.64</td>
<td>52.09</td>
<td>+9.45</td>
<td>2.83**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**p < .05**

For 12 pairs of scores compared in the area of reading comprehension, an NCE mean difference of 5.92 points was statistically significant ($t = 2.88, p < .05$). In the area of Spelling a comparison of 13 pairs yielded an NCE mean difference which was not statistically significant. This indicated little change over a two year period. The NCE mean difference in the area of total math was statistically significant ($t = 2.83, p < .05$). Null hypothesis two was rejected in the subject areas of reading comprehension and total math. It was, however, retained in the spelling subject area. Two years after being retained, NCE scores in the areas of reading comprehension and total math had improved.
Null hypothesis number five was also associated with research question three. This hypothesis is stated as follows: $H_0$: There are no statistically significant differences in the 1986 pre-retention scores and 1989 post-retention scores of students retained in third grade.

Table five compares the 1986 Stanford Achievement Test scores of retained students with the 1989 SAT scores of the same students to determine growth in subject areas over a three year period.

Table 5
Comparison of 1986 Pre-Retention and 1989 Post-Retention Scores, by Subject, of Third Grade Students Who Were Retained During the 1985-86 School Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>1986 NCE</th>
<th>1989 NCE</th>
<th>Difference</th>
<th>t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>comprehension</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>36.57</td>
<td>43.98</td>
<td>+ 7.41</td>
<td>2.80**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelling</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>36.08</td>
<td>33.55</td>
<td>- 2.53</td>
<td>.97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total math</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>41.47</td>
<td>43.86</td>
<td>+ 2.39</td>
<td>.77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** $p < .05$

For 16 pairs of scores compared in the area of reading comprehension the mean NCE difference of 7.41 was statistically significant. In the area of spelling retained students scored an average score lower in 1989 than in 1986, the year they were retained. The difference was not statistically significant. For the 16 pairs of scores compared in the area of total math, the mean difference of
.77 of a point was not statistically significant. Null hypothesis three was retained in the subject areas of spelling, and total math. Null hypothesis three was rejected in the subject area of reading comprehension. This means there was a significant change in the reading comprehension scores of students who were retained.

The answer to research question number three for third graders is there are changes in test scores of retained students in three major subject areas the first year after retention and changes in test scores of retained students in reading comprehension and math two years after retention. Greater score increases were noted the first year after retention than the second year. Little difference was noted in test scores of retained third graders three years after a retention was used as the treatment for academic lags.

**Fifth Grade Comparisons**

Null hypothesis number six was also associated with research question three. This hypothesis is stated as follows: H₀: There are no statistically significant differences in the 1986 pre-retention scores and 1987 post-retention scores of students retained in the fifth grade.

Fifth grade students who took the fifth grade Stanford Achievement Test a second time in 1987 had increases in their test results in the areas of reading comprehension, spelling, and total math. A t-test for dependent groups was conducted. Table six shows the results of the analyses.
Of 13 pairs compared in the area of reading comprehension, the mean difference of 6.52 was statistically significant ($t = 2.47$, $p < .05$). For the 14 pairs tested in the area of spelling, the mean NCE difference of 9.87 points was statistically significant ($t = 3.47$, $p < .05$). In the area of total math a t-test was conducted on 14 pairs, yielding a mean NCE difference of 11.21 points which was statistically significant ($t = 4.89$, $p < .05$).

Table 6
Comparison of 1986 Pre-Retention and 1987 Post-Retention Test Scores, by Subject, of Fifth Grade Students Who Were Retained During the 1985-86 School Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>1986 NCE</th>
<th>1987 NCE</th>
<th>Difference</th>
<th>t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading comprehension</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>44.14</td>
<td>50.65</td>
<td>+6.52</td>
<td>2.47**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelling</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>37.78</td>
<td>47.65</td>
<td>+9.87</td>
<td>3.47**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total math</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>42.24</td>
<td>53.45</td>
<td>+11.21</td>
<td>4.89**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** $p < .05$

There was change in all subject areas for fifth graders the first year after retention. The increases were found to be statistically significant in the three subject areas of reading comprehension, spelling, and total math. Null hypothesis four was rejected for all three subject areas. This indicated there were changes in scores for the students who were retained.
Null hypothesis seven was stated as follows: \( H_0: \) There are no statistically significant differences in the 1986 pre-retention scores and 1988 post-retention scores of students retained in fifth grade.

Table seven shows a comparison of 1986 Stanford Achievement Test scores with SAT results in 1988 of the fifth grade students who were retained at the end of the 1985-86 school year. The 1988 results were taken at the conclusion of the 6th grade experience. Results in all subject areas indicated positive growth from 1986 through 1988.

Table 7

Comparison of 1986 Pre-Retention and 1988 Post-Retention Scores by Subject, of Fifth Grade Students Who Were Retained At the End of the 1985-86 School Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>1986 NCE</th>
<th>1988 NCE</th>
<th>Difference</th>
<th>t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading comprehension</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>41.83</td>
<td>51.36</td>
<td>+ 9.52</td>
<td>2.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelling</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>39.07</td>
<td>48.35</td>
<td>+ 9.28</td>
<td>2.88**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total math</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>38.46</td>
<td>62.82</td>
<td>+24.37</td>
<td>5.82**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** p < .05

Of nine pairs compared in the area of reading comprehension, the mean NCE difference of 9.52 points was not statistically significant. The mean NCE difference of 9.28 points for spelling of the 11 pairs compared was statistically significant \( (t = 2.88, p < .05) \). Scores in
the area of total math were found to be statistically significant \((t = 5.82, p < .05)\). The mean NCE difference was 24.37. The null hypothesis of no difference was rejected for the spelling and total math subject areas. It was retained for reading comprehension. Fifth grade students who were retained showed positive growth in all subject areas. However, reading comprehension scores did not change significantly.

Null hypothesis number eight is stated as follows: \(H_0:\) There are no statistically significant differences in the 1986 pre-retention scores and 1989 post-retention scores of students retained in the fifth grade.

Table eight compares the 1986 Stanford Achievement Test scores of retained fifth grade students with the 1989 SAT scores of the same students to determine growth in reading comprehension, spelling and total math over a three year period.

Table 8  
Comparison of 1986 Pre-Retention and 1989 Post-Retention Scores, by Subject, of Fifth Grade Students Who Were Retained At the End of the 1985-86 School Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subject</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>1986 NCE</th>
<th>1989 NCE</th>
<th>Difference</th>
<th>t</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading comprehension</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>42.53</td>
<td>43.56</td>
<td>+1.03</td>
<td>.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelling</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>37.78</td>
<td>44.10</td>
<td>+6.32</td>
<td>1.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total math</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>41.07</td>
<td>46.87</td>
<td>+5.80</td>
<td>1.55</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[** p < .05\]
Although the 12 and 13 pairs of retained fifth graders achieved higher NCE means on the subtests of reading comprehension, spelling and total math in 1989 as opposed to scores in 1986, no difference was statistically significant. Students in 1989 scored at approximately the same NCE level as they scored in 1986. The null hypothesis of no difference was retained for the reading comprehension, spelling, and total math subject areas.

The answer to research question number three for students who were retained in grades three and five during the 1985-86 school year is yes, positive change in test scores did occur initially, however, by 1989 there were no significant differences in scores. Consistent to both groups, the scores changed significantly in the areas of reading comprehension, spelling, and total math the first year after retention. The second year after retention students in both grades exhibited significant increases in total math scores. Spelling scores had increased significantly for third graders while reading comprehension scores increased among fifth graders. Although positive, the other two comparisons did not reach statistical significance. By 1989, there were no significant differences found in scores of third or fifth grade students who were retained in 1986.
Research Question Number Four

Research question four was stated as follows: Do children who are retained have test scores comparable to a matched group of students who are not retained, two years after the retention occurred? This question was answered in two ways. A same-age comparison of test results and a same-grade comparison of results were made for students retained in grade three. A same-grade comparison was made for students who were retained in grade five during the 1985-86 school year.

A Same-Age Comparison of Test Results: 1987 and 1988

Third Grade Cohort

Same-age comparisons were made by comparing retained students with promoted students who were the same age, but took different forms of the Stanford Achievement Test. The statistical procedure of analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) was used to compare 1987 reading comprehension, spelling and total math scores of students who were retained with those who were promoted, while controlling for reading comprehension, spelling, and total math scores from 1986. In this same-age comparison, retained students repeated the third grade test while promoted students took the fourth grade test for the first time. Therefore, repeat third grade NCE scores were compared to first-time fourth grade NCE scores. The results indicated a same-age comparison
since the retained students of 1987 were in the third grade and their matched cohorts were in the fourth grade, but all were taking the test at the same age.

Null hypothesis nine is associated with research question four and involves the same-age comparison. It is stated as follows: \( H_0: \) There are no statistically significant differences in the 1987 NCE scores of retained and promoted third grade students after controlling for their 1986 NCE scores.

Table nine shows the number of retained students and their matched cohorts for each subtest of the Stanford Achievement Test in this study. Reading comprehension scores for 1987 of the retained and matched groups were compared with reading comprehension scores of the retained and matched groups in 1986 serving as a covariate. The mean NCE of the retained group was 46.39 while the NCE mean for the matched cohort was 39.15. The \( F \) value in the area of reading comprehension was 3.08, which was not statistically significant. Retained students scored higher than promoted students, but not at a significant level (\( p > .05 \)).
Table 9
Analysis of Covariance Showing Same-Age Comparison of Third Grade 1987 NCE Scores, While Controlling for 1986 Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variation Source</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>ms</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading comprehension:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retained</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>46.39</td>
<td>14.24</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>383.93</td>
<td>3.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoted</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>39.15</td>
<td>10.30</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelling:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retained</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>51.65</td>
<td>13.22</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1656.18</td>
<td>10.43**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoted</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>35.58</td>
<td>17.58</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total math:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retained</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>61.31</td>
<td>11.48</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1096.69</td>
<td>20.21**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoted</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>48.97</td>
<td>9.54</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** p < .05

The NCE mean in the area of spelling for the third grade group that was retained was 51.65. The third grade group that was promoted scored 35.58. This indicated the retained group scored higher on the spelling portion than the matched cohort. The $F$ value of 10.43 was statistically significant ($p < .05$).

In 1987, one year after retention, the retained group scored an average of 61.31 NCE points in total math while the matched cohort who was promoted averaged 48.97. The $F$ score obtained was 20.21, which was statistically significant ($p < .05$). The retained group scored higher
after one year in the same grade than the promoted group scored without the treatment of retention.

The null hypothesis of no difference was rejected in the areas of spelling and total math. While differences occurred in the expected direction, the reading comprehension comparison was not statistically significant.

Overall, 1987 scores indicated retained students scored significantly higher than the matched group in spelling and total math on the Stanford Achievement Test the first year after retention.

Null hypothesis ten is associated with research question four and involves the same-age comparison. It is stated as follows: $H_0$: There are no statistically significant differences in the 1988 NCE scores of retained and promoted third grade students after controlling for their 1986 NCE scores.

Table ten illustrates the results of Stanford Achievement Tests given in the spring of 1988. Outcomes were controlled by 1986 scores on the SAT, yielding a comparison of the retained and promoted group from the year when students had similar scores.
Table 10
Analysis of Covariance Showing Same-age Comparison Of Third Grade 1988 NCE Scores, While Controlling for 1986 Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variation</th>
<th>Source</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>ms</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reading</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>comprehension:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retained</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>41.84</td>
<td>14.94</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>44.18</td>
<td>.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoted</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>43.31</td>
<td>10.88</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelling:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retained</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>41.33</td>
<td>16.52</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>72.72</td>
<td>.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoted</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>38.02</td>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total math:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retained</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>52.09</td>
<td>15.50</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>843.48</td>
<td>6.90 **</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Promoted</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>41.25</td>
<td>8.19</td>
<td>1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** p < .05

On the subtest of reading comprehension the mean NCE of the retained group was 41.84. The promoted group scored an average NCE of 43.31. This yielded an F value of .56 which did not indicate a significant difference in the scores of the two groups (p > .05). The retained group scored an average of 41.33 on the spelling subtest, while the matched group scored 38.02. An obtained F value of .45 did not indicate a significant difference in the scores of the two groups (p > .05).

In the area of total math students who had been retained in 1986 had a mean NCE score of 52.09. Their
promoted peers who had similar scores in 1986, scored an average NCE of 41.25. Results indicated students who had been retained scored significantly higher on this subtest ($p < .05$).

Two years after retention, the third grade cohort scored significantly higher than their promoted peers in the area of total math on the Stanford Achievement Test. Even though scores of retained students were higher in the areas of spelling and reading comprehension, the increases were not significant.

The null hypothesis of no difference was rejected in the area of total math. While differences occurred in the expected direction, the reading comprehension and spelling comparisons were not statistically significant.

**Fifth Grade Cohort**

It was not appropriate to compare students who had been retained and matched in the fifth grade during the 1985-86 school year on a same-age comparison basis. Only city school systems gave students the Stanford Achievement Test in the 6th grade. If a same-age comparison had been analyzed, only city students would have been used in parts of the analysis and accurate results would not have been obtained. Since the sample size was so small, the results would have been masked.
A Same-Grade Comparison of Test Results

Scores of students who had been retained in third and fifth grades in 1986 in Unicoi County, Carter County, Johnson City, and Bristol Tennessee were compared using the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) procedure. This type of statistic gave a same-grade comparison. Mean NCE scores were computed for each group based on grade level. The comparisons measured mean scores as compared to the national NCE norm. Each group was compared to the national norm for the particular grade being analyzed. Results are reported in Tables 11 and 12.

Third Grade Cohort

Hypothesis number 11, stated in the null form, was associated with research question number four. This hypothesis was stated as follows: H₀: There are no statistically significant differences in third grade NCE scores (second administration) of retained students and the third grade scores of promoted students, in the areas of reading comprehension, spelling, and total math over four administrations of the SAT.

The NCE mean for third grade students during the retention year of 1986 was 36.13 for retained and 36.00 for matched students in the area of reading comprehension. Spelling NCE means for that year were 33.78 for the retained population and 34.11 for matched peers. Retained students scored 39.09 on total math, while their matched cohort
scored 39.82. As noted, all NCE scores for third grade students in this study who were tested in 1986 were similar.

The second level of analysis compared the scores of third graders who took the third grade test again in 1987 with those who had been promoted and had the third grade test in 1986 only. Reading comprehension NCE means were 46.05 for the retained population repeating the test and 35.62 for the control group. The increase in scores of retained students was statistically significant (p = .01). The spelling NCE mean reflected 49.01 NCE points for retained students and 35.87 NCEs for the matched peers. The retained group had statistically significant (p < .05) higher scores at the end of their second year in third grade. Retained students who took the third grade test a second time scored an average NCE of 59.68 on the total math subtest as compared with 40.68 for those who had been promoted. The score for the retained students was statistically significant (p < .01). Students who were retained consistently scored higher on third grade subtests after a second year in the same grade.
Table 11
Same-Grade Analysis by NCE Mean of Third Graders in the Areas of Reading Comprehension, Spelling and Total Math Over Four Administrations of the SAT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>n 3rd86</th>
<th>n 3rd87</th>
<th>n 4th</th>
<th>n 5th</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reading comprehension:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retained mean</td>
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<td>21</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matched mean</td>
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<td>21</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td>7.36**</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td>.09</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Spelling:**                |         |         |       |       |
| Retained mean  | 21      | 19      | 18    | 18    |
| Matched mean   | 21      | 19      | 18    | 18    |
| F              | .01     | 10.27** | .74   | .04   |

| **Total math:**               |         |         |       |       |
| Retained mean  | 23      | 21      | 17    | 20    |
| Matched mean   | 23      | 21      | 17    | 20    |
| F              | .05     | 26.22** | .41   | .004  |

** p < .05

A third comparison was made between scores of the retained group on the fourth grade SAT with the matched cohort on the same test. Results showed retained students scored an average of 45.39 NCEs on the reading comprehension portion and matched peers scored an average of 40.35 NCEs.
Spelling results indicated retained students scored an NCE average of 40.11 points, while their matched peers scored a mean of 35.28 NCEs. Retained students scored an average of 50.51 NCEs on the total math subtest, while promoted peers' mean NCE score was 47.54 points. The difference in fourth grade scores were not statistically significant in any of the three areas tested.

The last level of comparison was made on fifth grade scores of the students who had been retained in third grade during 1986 with fifth grade scores of students who had been matched and promoted during 1986. The NCE mean for retained students in the area of reading comprehension was 42.74, while their matched peers scored an NCE mean of 43.96 points. In the area of spelling the retained group scored an average of 34.10 NCEs and their matched cohort scored an NCE mean of 34.97. On the subtest of total math the retained group scored a mean NCE of 42.06, while the promoted peers scored a mean NCE of 42.28 points. None of the fifth grade scores were statistically significant in terms of the retained or promoted peers scoring higher.

Through conducting a same-grade analysis of test scores in the area of reading comprehension, spelling and math, it was found the treatment of retention did not have a significant effect on achievement test scores two years after the retention occurred. The null hypothesis of no difference in NCE scores in the areas of reading
comprehension, spelling, and total math for the third grade cohort over four administrations of the SAT was retained.

Fifth Grade Cohort

Hypothesis number 12, stated in the null form, was associated with research question number four. This hypothesis was stated as follows: $H_0$: There are no statistically significant differences in fifth grade NCE scores (second administration) of retained students and the fifth grade scores of promoted students, in the areas of reading comprehension, spelling, and total math over four administrations of the SAT.

Table 12 shows a same-grade analysis of fifth graders by number of pairs and mean NCE points in the areas of reading comprehension, spelling, and total math from the 5th grade in 1986 through the seventh grade administration of the Stanford Achievement Test. As only city school systems administered the SAT to 6th graders, the scores for that grade level represent fewer students.

Fifth graders who were retained in 1986 scored an NCE mean of 42.16 on the reading comprehension subtest. Their promoted peers scored a mean NCE of 42.99 points. The retained group scored an average of 36.95 NCE points in spelling, while their matched group scored an average of 37.11. Mean NCE points in the area of total math for the retained group were 41.42 for the retained group and 42.14 for the matched students. Since the students were matched
according to scores, there were no statistical difference in how retained and promoted students scored during the spring of 1986.

Table 12
Same-Grade Analysis of Fifth Graders by NCE in the Areas of Reading Comprehension, Spelling and Total Math Over Three Administrations for Rural Systems and Four Administrations for City Systems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>n 5th86</th>
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<tr>
<td>Reading comprehension:</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retained mean</td>
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<td>42.16</td>
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<td>50.65</td>
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<td>Matched mean</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>42.99</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>.05</td>
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<td>3.94</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spelling:</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retained mean</td>
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<td>36.95</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>47.65</td>
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<tr>
<td>Matched mean</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>37.11</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>38.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>.002</td>
<td>4.39**</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total math:</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retained mean</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>41.42</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>52.75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matched mean</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>42.14</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>42.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>6.26**</td>
<td>.26</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** F < .05

NCE scores of 5th graders who took the SAT after a year in the same grade were matched to the previous 5th grade scores of their promoted peers. In the area of reading
comprehension, the mean NCE of the retained students was 50.65, while the average NCE of the matched group was 45.09. Retained students scored an NCE average of 47.65 the second year in 5th grade, as compared to an average NCE score of 38.04 for the promoted group. Scores of the retained students were statistically significantly higher in the area of spelling the second year in fifth grade (p < .05). Total math scores were recorded as an average NCE of 52.75 for the retained group and 42.19 for the matched peers.

Same-grade analyses of sixth grade scores could only be calculated for students who were enrolled in city systems. Nine pairs of scores were compared in the area of reading comprehension. The mean NCE score for the retained group was 51.36 and the mean score for the matched group was 46.68. Of the 11 pairs of scores in the area of spelling, the retained students scored an average of 48.35 NCE points, while their matched peers scored 46.43. In the area of total math the 10 city students scored statistically significantly higher than the matched group. The retained students scored a mean NCE of 61.65 points and the promoted group scored an average of 38.49 (p < .05).

Seventh grade comparisons were conducted with pairs from both rural and city school systems. Retained students scored an average NCE of 43.56 points while their promoted peers scored an average of 33.46 points in the area of reading comprehension. In the area of spelling, retained
students scored an average of 44.10, while the mean of their promoted peers was 41.52. Retained students scored a mean NCE of 46.35 in the area of total math. Promoted students scored a mean NCE of 44.03 points in that subject.

There were only two subject areas where retained students scored significantly higher than their matched promoted peers. One was in spelling, the second year in fifth grade. The second area was in total math during the sixth grade. The sixth grade scores only included students enrolled in a city system. By seventh grade, students who had been retained in the fifth grade had similar scores as those who had been promoted during the 1985-86 school year.

The null hypothesis of no difference in NCE scores in the areas of reading comprehension, spelling, and total math for the fifth grade cohort over three administrations for rural students and four administrations of the SAT for city students was retained. However, it should be noted that students who were retained in the fifth grade did seem to stay ahead of their promoted peers, the difference was not statistically significant.

Research Question Number Five

Research question five was stated as follows: Does retention seem to have the same effect in rural and city school systems?
A Same-Age Comparison of SAT Scores in Rural and City School Systems

Same-age comparisons by rural and city systems were made by comparing retained students with promoted students who were the same age, but took different forms of the SAT. The statistical procedure of ANCOVA was used to compare the 1987 results in reading comprehension, spelling and total math with scores in the same areas in 1986.

Third Grade Cohort

Hypothesis number 13, stated in the null form, was associated with research question number five. This hypothesis was stated as follows: $H_0$: There are no statistically significant differences in the same-age analysis by NCE mean of third graders in rural and city systems in the areas of reading comprehension, spelling, and total math on the SAT given in 1987, while controlling for 1986 scores. A same-age and same-grade comparison will be used to answer this question.

Table 13 shows the number and scores of retained and matched students by rural and city system in the areas of reading comprehension, spelling, and total math for the 1986-87 school year. Scores during the 1985-86 school year were used as the covariate or as a control to measure change.
Table 13
Analysis of Covariance Showing Same-Age Comparison of Third Grade 1987 Scores of Rural Versus City Systems, While Controlling for 1986 Scores

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Variation Source</th>
<th>n</th>
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<td>12.84</td>
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<td>298.88</td>
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<td>37.04</td>
<td>8.14</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City retained</td>
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<td>51.25</td>
<td>18.44</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>89.46</td>
<td>.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City promoted</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>44.43</td>
<td>14.44</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Spelling:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural retained</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>54.28</td>
<td>13.31</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1423.97</td>
<td>7.76**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural promoted</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>36.93</td>
<td>20.02</td>
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<tr>
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<td>31.10</td>
<td>3.46</td>
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<td><strong>Total math:</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural retained</td>
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<td>60.80</td>
<td>11.77</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>679.15</td>
<td>10.47**</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rural promoted</td>
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<td>50.11</td>
<td>9.78</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City retained</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>63.17</td>
<td>12.52</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>481.79</td>
<td>50.18**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City promoted</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>44.80</td>
<td>8.91</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** p < .05

In this comparison, retained students repeated the third grade test while promoted students took the fourth grade test. The mean NCE of the retained group of rural students in reading comprehension was 44.45, while the mean
NCE of the city students was 51.25. The mean NCE of matched students in reading comprehension was 37.04 for rural students and 44.43 for city students. These scores indicated that city students scored higher than rural students and that retained students scored higher after a second year in the third grade than their matched cohorts who were promoted. The difference in the scores of the retained and promoted groups was not statistically significant.

The score of rural retained students was higher than the score of rural promoted students. The rural students had a mean NCE average of 54.28 in the area of spelling and their promoted peers had a mean NCE of 36.93 points. This difference was statistically significant ($p < .05$).

Students who were retained in city school systems scored an average of 42.90 NCEs in the area of spelling, while their promoted peers scored an average of 31.10 NCE points. This difference, however, was not statistically significant.

The average total math score for retained rural students was 60.8 and 50.11 NCEs for their promoted peers. City students who were retained in the third grade scored an average of 63.17 NCEs one year after retention as compared to 44.80 NCEs by their matched cohort. Total math scores of retained students in the city and rural systems were statistically higher than the scores of their promoted peers ($p < .05$).
The results of the same-age comparison by type of system and the results of the same-age comparison of all third grade students in this study were the same in the area of total math. Retained students scored higher than their promoted peers one year after the retention occurred (p < .05). In the area of spelling, city students who were retained in third grade did not statistically outscore their matched cohort one year after the retention, while rural students who were retained did. However, there was an 11 point difference in spelling that did not show up as statistically significant. Since there were only three pairs in the group of students in city systems, the power of the test was low. The difference in city schools is consistent with rural schools.

The second year after retention occurred scores were analyzed to see if NCE gains were continuing to be greater for retained students. Using ANCOVA, 1988 scores were compared for retained students and matched students by type of school system, while controlling for 1986 scores. Table 16 lists results by number of students, mean NCE, standard deviation, degrees of freedom, means of squares, and the F score.

Reading comprehension NCE average results were 36.92 for rural students who were retained and 54.15 for city students who were retained. These scores were compared to 42.93 for city students and 44.28 for rural students who
were matched and promoted during the 1985-86 school year. Results indicated that rural students who were promoted scored significantly (p < .05) higher than students who had been retained two years previously. Results also indicated that students in city systems who had been retained scored higher than those who had been promoted. However, the results of the city students were not statistically significant. Students from both types of systems who were promoted had similar NCE points two years after the study began.

The null of there being no differences in scores for city or rural students on the SAT in 1987 in the area of reading comprehension was retained, as was the null of there being no difference in scores of city students in the area of spelling. However, the null was rejected in the areas of spelling for rural students and total math for rural and city students.

Hypothesis number 14, stated in the null form, was associated with research question five. This hypothesis was stated as follows: H₀: There are no statistically significant differences in the 1988 NCE scores of retained and promoted third grade students in city systems and rural systems after controlling for their 1986 NCE scores.
Table 14  
**Analysis of Covariance Showing Same-Age Comparison By Rural And City School Systems of Third Grade 1988 SAT Scores, While Controlling for 1986 (Covariate) Scores**

<table>
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<th>Variation Source</th>
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<th>SD</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>ms</th>
<th>F</th>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural retained</td>
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<td>36.92</td>
<td>10.33</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>317.09</td>
<td>7.76**</td>
</tr>
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<td>Rural promoted</td>
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<td>42.93</td>
<td>12.42</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>City retained</td>
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<td>19.09</td>
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<td>189.18</td>
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<td><strong>Spelling:</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural retained</td>
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<td>15.71</td>
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<td>36.33</td>
<td>15.29</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Total math:</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural retained</td>
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<td>51.20</td>
<td>12.96</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>551.52</td>
<td>4.71**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural promoted</td>
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<td>41.35</td>
<td>8.52</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>55.33</td>
<td>26.49</td>
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<td>1.74</td>
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<td>City promoted</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>40.87</td>
<td>8.50</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**p < .05**

Rural students who were retained scored an average of 41.45 NCE points while rural students who were promoted in 1986 scored 38.70 in the area of spelling. City students who were retained scored an average of 41.03 NCE points while their matched cohort scored an average of 36.33 NCE
points. These scores indicated that students who were retained scored higher in spelling for rural systems than those who had been promoted. However, the higher scores by retained students were not statistically significant in the area of spelling. This was because the small sample size masked group differences.

Total math NCE scores for rural students averaged 51.20 NCEs for retained and 41.35 NCE points for promoted students two years after the retention occurred. City students scored an average of 55.33 NCE points for retained students and 40.87 NCEs for matched students. These scores indicated that retained students scored higher than promoted students two years after the retention occurred. Rural differences were statistically significant. Since there was a 15 point difference in the mean NCE score of in favor of retained students, it was felt these scores were significant, but the size of the sample masked the group differences.

The null hypothesis was retained for third grade students in city systems in the subject areas of reading comprehension, spelling, and total math. However, the mean NCE scores of the retained students were from 10 to 15 points higher for retained students than their matched cohort in the areas of reading comprehension and total math. Since the sample size was small, it was determined that a significant difference was shown for the city students in reading comprehension and total math. The null hypothesis
of there being no difference in 1988 scores for third grade students in rural systems was rejected in the areas of reading comprehension and total math. The null was retained for rural students in the area of spelling.

When comparing rural and city systems, significant differences in scores one year after retention in third grade were found in the area of spelling where retained rural students scored higher. In the area of total math all retained students scored higher than their promoted peers. When comparing rural and city systems, significant differences were found in the areas of reading where promoted rural students scored higher and in the area of total math where retained rural students scored higher.

Fifth Grade Cohort

Because students who were retained in fifth grade during 1986 and their matched cohort did not take a Stanford Achievement Test for four consecutive years it was not possible to complete the Same-Age Comparison. City Systems chose to give a 6th grade SAT, but rural systems did not administer the 6th grade version. Because of that decision, a same-age comparison of rural versus city results could not be obtained for those who had been retained in fifth grade in 1986.
A Same-Grade Comparison of SAT Scores in Rural and City School Systems

Scores of students retained in the third grade in 1986 and in fifth grade in 1986 in Unicoi County, Carter County, Johnson City and Bristol, Tennessee were compared using the statistical analysis procedure of ANOVA. A same-grade comparison was derived by type of system, rural and city. Mean NCE scores were computed for each group based on grade level. The comparisons measured mean scores with the national NCE norm for specific grade levels. Results are reported in tables 15 and 16.

Third Grade Cohort

Hypothesis number 15, stated in the null form, was associated with research question five. This hypothesis was stated as follows: $H_0$: There are statistically significant differences in same-grade NCE scores of third graders in the areas of reading comprehension, spelling, and total math over four administrations of the SAT, within rural and city school system.

The NCE means during the retention year showed that rural retained students scored a mean NCE of 35.89 in reading comprehension, while their promoted peers scored an average of 35.78 NCE points. Retained city students scored an average of 36.87 NCE points and their matched peers scored an average of 36.65 NCE points. In the area of spelling rural students scored an average of 32.94 NCE
points and their peers scored an average of 32.81 NCEs. City students who were retained scored an average of 36.46 NCEs, while the matched group scored an average of 38.28 points. In the area of total math, rural retained students scored 39.64 NCE points and their promoted peers scored an average of 40.38 NCEs. City students who were retained scored an average of 37.12 NCEs, while their peers scored an average of 37.78 NCE points.
Table 15
A Same-Grade Analysis by NCE Mean of Third Graders in the Areas of Reading Comprehension, Spelling and Total Math Over Four Administrations of The SAT, By Rural Systems and City Systems

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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<th>n 3rd87</th>
<th>n 4th</th>
<th>n 5th</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reading comprehension:</strong></td>
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<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural retained</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rural promoted</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>15</td>
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<td>F</td>
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<td>.36</td>
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<td>13</td>
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<td>10.30**</td>
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<tr>
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**p < .05

When the SAT was administered a second time to third grade students, results in the area of reading comprehension showed retained rural students scored an average of 46.75 NCE points which was statistically significant (p < .05)
while their promoted peers scored an average of 35.21 points. City retained students scored an average of 44.30 NCEs and their matched peers scored a mean 36.65 NCE points. Even though the analysis did not show the eight point difference of retained and promoted city scores as being significant, it was felt the small sample size masked the results.

Rural retained students scored an average of 51.05 NCE points ($p < .05$) in the area of spelling. This compared to a mean NCE of 34.11 points for rural promoted students. City students who were retained scored an average of 44.57 points, while their matched peers scored an average of 39.70 points. Results showed the increase for rural students who had been retained to be statistically significant. Even though the analysis did not show the 10 point difference for city students who were retained as being significant, it was felt the small sample size masked the results.

Rural retained students scored an average of 57.13 NCE points ($p < .05$) in the area of total math. Their cohort group scored an average of 42.46 points. City retained students scored an average of 66.05 NCE points ($p < .05$), while their matched peers scored a mean of 36.73 NCEs. Retained students from both rural and city systems scored statistically significantly higher than their promoted peers in the area of total math.
Fourth grade scores showed city students scoring higher on all three subtests, however, no statistical significance was found. Rural students who were retained scored an average of 43.06 in the area of reading comprehension, while their matched cohort scored an average of 40.05 NCEs. City students who were retained scored an average of 50.33 NCEs and their promoted peers scored an average of 50.17 points.

In the area of spelling, students retained in rural systems scored an average of 39.85 points and their peers scored an average of 33.50 NCEs. City retained students scored an average of 41.03 NCE points, while their peers scored an average of 41.53 NCE points.

Rural students who were retained scored an average of 49.47 NCE points in the area of total math, while their promoted peers scored a mean NCE of 48.13. Retained students in city systems scored an average of 55.33 NCE points and their peers scored an average of 44.80 NCEs.

Two years after the retention, fifth grade scores were not significantly different for retained or promoted peers in the city or rural systems. In the area of reading comprehension, rural students who were retained scored an average of 41.94 NCE points and their promoted peers scored an average of 44.81 points. City system retained students scored an average of 44.98 points, while their peers scored an average of 41.56 NCEs.
In the area of spelling, rural students who were retained scored an average of 32.28 NCE points and rural promoted students scored an average of 33.23 points. City students who were retained scored an average of 38.84 points, while their peers scored a mean of 39.48 NCEs.

Math results indicated rural retained students scored an average of 40.88 NCE points and rural promoted students scored an average of 42.85. City students scored an average of 45.60 NCEs, while their promoted peers scored a mean of 40.56 NCEs.

By the time students were in fifth grade scores of matched and retained students were comparable, with retained students enrolled in city schools scoring slightly ahead of their matched peers in math and reading and slightly ahead of rural students in all areas. The students in rural systems who were promoted rather than retained in third grade scored slightly higher than promoted students in city systems, except in the area of spelling. The null hypothesis of no difference in test scores for rural and city students after four administrations of the SAT was retained for the subject areas of reading comprehension, spelling, and total math.

**Fifth Grade Cohort**

Hypothesis number 16, stated in the null form, was associated with research question five. This hypothesis was stated as follows: $H_0$: There are no statistically
significant differences in the same-grade comparison by rural and city systems of NCE means scores of fifth graders in the areas of reading comprehension, spelling, and total math over four administrations of the SAT for city students and three administrations of the SAT for rural students.

Table 16 shows results of SAT scores over a period of three test administrations in the subtest of reading comprehension, spelling, and total math of students who were retained in grade five during 1986 as compared with students of similar test scores who were promoted during 1986. Sixth grade scores were omitted due to city systems being the only ones that administered that form of the SAT.

Fifth graders in rural systems who were retained in 1986 scored identically to the matched group from rural systems in the area of reading comprehension. Both groups scored an average NCE of 45.92 points. Retained students in the city system scored an average of 40.28 NCEs, while their promoted peers scored an average of 41.52 NCEs.
Table 16
A Same-Grade Analysis by NCE Mean of Fifth Graders in the Areas of Reading Comprehension, Spelling and Total Math Over Three Administrations of The SAT, By Rural Systems and City Systems

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** P < .05

In the area of spelling, retained students in the rural systems scored an average of 31.10 NCE points and their matched peers scored an average of 31.17 points. City system students who were retained scored an average of 39.07 points and their peers scored an average of 39.27 NCEs.
Rural students who were retained scored a mean NCE of 51.42 points and their promoted peers scored an average of 52.74 NCEs. Students who were retained in city systems scored an average of 36.87 points, while their peers scored an average of 37.32 NCEs.

When the fifth grade SAT was given the second time, rural students who were retained scored an average of 57.50 NCE points in the area of reading comprehension, while their promoted peers scored an average of 49.33 points. Even though the analysis did not show this difference to be statistically significant, it was felt the small sample size masked results. City system students who were retained scored an average of 47.61 points and their peers scored an average of 43.21 points.

In the area of spelling, rural students who were retained scored an average of 48.63 NCEs, while their promoted peers scored an average of 33.50 points. Again, analysis did not show this difference to be statistically significant, however, it was felt the small sample size masked results. City system students scored an average of 47.38 points for retained students and an average of 39.27 NCE points for the matched group. Retained students in both types of systems scored higher than promoted peers, however the difference was not statistically significant.

Total math scores were higher for rural students than for city students. Retained students from rural systems
scored an average of 60.95 NCE points and their matched group scored a mean of 55.60 NCE points. City students who were retained scored an average of 49.77 points while their matched peers scored an average of 37.32 NCEs. There were statistically significant differences in the scores of retained students and their promoted peer group of students in city systems.

By the seventh grade administration of the test, reading comprehension scores of the retained students in rural systems produced a mean of 49.43, while scores for the promoted peers averaged 33.90. City system scores reflected an average score of 41.60 NCE points for retained students and 33.31 points for their matched group.

Spelling scores were the lowest of the three areas tested. Students in rural systems who were retained scored an average of 30.30 NCE points and their matched peers scored an average of 37.90 NCEs. Students enrolled in city systems scored an average of 46.61 NCE points and their matched group scored a mean of 42.17 points.

In the area of total math retained students in rural systems scored a mean NCE of 51.73 points and their promoted peers scored an average of 57.90 NCEs. Students retained in city systems scored an average of 44.88 NCE points while their promoted peers scored an average of 40.25 NCEs.

Results of the seventh grade SAT indicated the retained group in rural systems scored higher than their matched
peers in the area of reading comprehension. Rural students who were retained scored higher than their promoted peers on all other subtests. Students who had been retained in the city systems scored higher than their matched peers on all subtests. This contrast, however, did not represent a statistically significant difference.

There was close comparability in the scores of matched and retained students in the area of spelling and total math. In spelling the range was 7.6 points for rural promoted students over retained students and 4.5 points for city retained students over city promoted students. In the area of total math rural promoted students scored 6.2 points higher than the retained group, while students retained in the city systems scored 4.6 ahead of their promoted peers. No statistical significance in the differences in scores of retained and promoted students were found. The null hypothesis of no difference in test scores for rural and city students after three and four administrations of the SAT was retained for the subject areas of reading comprehension, spelling, and total math.

Part II: Case Studies of Eight Students Who Were Retained in the 1990-91 School year and How Retention Effected Them During the 1991-92 School Year

One third and one fifth grader from Unicoi County, Carter County, and Johnson City were the subjects of a case
study. Because Bristol City retained no third or fifth grader during the 1990-91 school year, two first grade students were followed to answer research questions six and seven. For each third and fifth grade student, the teacher making the retention decision and the teacher who taught the student the next year were interviewed separately. For one first grader in Bristol, the same procedure was used. A second first grade case study was gathered by interviewing the student's first and second grade teachers in a group situation.

Case Number One: The First Year in Third Grade

The subject was a third grade boy, who attended Evans Elementary during the 1990-91 school year. Joe was one of two students retained in his class that year. His classroom teacher said his "lack of listening," the fact he "never completed a task," and "never focused on what he should be doing" contributed to the decision to retain him.

His teacher, Mrs. Doe, felt that he was immature socially; for example "he just didn't care" about playing with the other children. Another example of Joe's immaturity was evidenced by his bringing tiny toys to school and playing with them at his desk. He "just acted indifferent when something special" was being promoted. Physically, Joe was the same size as other students in his class, except that he was extremely thin. Mrs. Doe
questioned whether he was being fed well at home. Joe ate very well the two meals he got at school. He did come to school hungry and was often dirty.

When reviewing his school history, Mrs. Doe noticed Joe had changed schools on several occasions, including a move from another state to Tennessee. Upon contact with the parents a week and a half before school was out, there was a panic as to why he was going to be retained. Mrs. Doe explained the efforts she had made to get the parents to school for discussion. These efforts included notes home and telephone calls.

There seemed to be some traumatic life experiences that year. After the move back to Tennessee, the family was living with a relative in one room of a house for much of the year until they found their own housing. The father seemed to be away a lot during the school year. According to Mrs. Doe, there was inconsistent information provided by the mother throughout the year about their living situation.

Academically Joe seemed to have ability as "his grades did not qualify him for Chapter 1", nor did he attend a resource program. He did retain some information that was presented to him. According to Mrs. Doe, he was a "smart child, his sense of focus was just not present." He did not complete classroom assignments. His achievement test scores at the completion of the school year were below average. It was felt by his teacher, if a retention did not occur at
third grade, "it was going to catch up with him somewhere along the line. He was either going to end up going into some kind of program or have to be retained somewhere."

Case Number One: The Second Year In Third Grade

Evans Elementary became Unicoi County Middle School at the beginning of the 1991-92 school year, necessitating another move for this student. Joe became a third grader at Unicoi Elementary School. At the beginning of the school year his new teacher, Mrs. Buck, thought the decision to retain him "was going to be disastrous. He was bright, but not motivated at all." At the beginning of the year, "he spent his day leaned back in his chair, doing what he could to disrupt the class. He turned in nothing." For example, "You could not get him to complete the heading on his paper," Mrs. Buck stated. "It was just a constant battle trying to get him on task" which could only be accomplished for a short period of time. As time progressed, the disruptions ceased, but he still did not turn in work. Mrs. Buck said, "he could ace any test any time it was given." This type of behavior continued the first five of six week grading periods.

All of a sudden during the last six week grading period, Joe changed. He became interested in school, turned in his work and according to his teacher he became a "team player" with the other children. Until that time other students did not like him. Joe became very interested in
the science fair. In social studies, he began bringing to class things such as books that would go along with the theme they were discussing.

"He was real secretive about his home life, very guarded" and "would get very nervous" if questioned at all about anything to do at home, Mrs. Buck related. He seemed to get no support from home. An example was for the science fair, Joe needed a lemon for his experiment. According to Mrs. Buck, "he had done more than most of the other kids, but she wouldn't buy him a lemon," He drew pictures of what he was going to do if he had a lemon.

Instructionally, Joe did better when nontraditional approaches were used. His three third grade teachers who did team teaching, instituted "Flip Flop Friday," according to Mrs. Buck, which was "another concept that was different where we, on Friday just threw our regular schedule out. We combined all three classes and tried to make it sort of theme oriented." Students thought it was a play day. They did not seem to understand that many times they were working. They had music, art and guest readers on that day. If homework throughout the week had not been completed, Joe had to work instead of participate in the special Friday activities. "He hated this," according to Mrs. Buck. The student enjoyed art. When something a little different occurred, he responded positively. His achievement levels at the end of the year were all above average. The teacher
felt that retention helped because of his attitude change. She never felt academics were his problem, but his attitude, motivation, and behavior had effected his academics, causing the retention to occur. It was the first experience this teacher had where she felt "good about a child being retained."

Case Number Two: The First Year In Fifth Grade

The subject of this case study was a fifth grade girl enrolled at Love Chapel Elementary School in Unicoi County. She was the only student in her class retained during the 1990-91 school year. Her teacher, Mrs. Bass, was encouraged to retain her because of Jane's maturation process. She stated Jane "deserved a little more time to develop her skills." Physically she was small for her age. "On the playground she would go to the lower grade rather than stay with peers," Mrs. Bass said. She seemed to prefer the younger children. Emotionally Jane seemed immature as "she would pout over little things." She presented no discipline problems. Her attendance was good and she had never been retained previously.

Academically, Jane did not do well. While reviewing her records, Mrs. Bass found that she had not mastered fourth grade skills and had an average of F in all subject areas. Jane did not attend Chapter 1 classes, but was seen by the resource teacher for help in reading and language.
Her math skills were higher than her language arts skills. As her IQ was within the average range, a level that indicated learning could take place, Mrs. Bass was further encouraged to have her repeat the fifth grade.

Knowing the organizational skills required in sixth grade, the teacher said, "I didn't feel like she was at a developmental stage to succeed, and I felt like to place her in there would have caused her more problems even with her self-esteem". Mrs. Bass also said of the retention decision, "It was like a balance, and you had to weigh what was going to be the best."

The only traumatic experience Mrs. Bass could recall for Jane during the year was the birth of a sibling. As there was already a younger child in the family, it was unknown how much impact the birth of a third child had on the student.

Before finalizing her decision, Mrs. Bass talked to the student's former teachers, resource teacher, and mother. The parent seemed to trust the judgement of the teacher. The parent seemed actually glad Jane would remain at Love Chapel for one additional year so she could be available for her little brother who was in kindergarten.

Case Number Two: The Second Year In Fifth Grade

The second year in fifth grade Jane attended both resource and Chapter 1 classes. "She really enjoyed the special education," Mrs. Troutman said. There seemed to be
a carryover of what she did in the special classes and how well she did in the regular class. Her grades on her report card improved. On one occasion, she made all Bs and Cs. Academically, Jane did much better the second year in fifth grade than the previous year.

Instructional strategies used included working in small groups, with better students being paired with less able learners. Jane was also given much individual help. A student teacher was present the second semester. She and Jane developed a very good rapport.

When asked about any traumatic events in her life during the second year in fifth grade, Mrs. Troutman told of an autobiography written about the student where feelings of sadness were portrayed. According to Mrs. Troutman, Jane had written "that her mother didn't even want her from the time she found out she was pregnant." On another occasion, Jane made the highest grade in the class on a social studies test and was so proud of her grade. However, the teacher stated, "she said, 'Well, I'm not going to take it home cause Mom doesn't care.'"

Socially, Jane interacted well with all of the children in her class. Physically she was about the same size as others. She was always willing to cooperate and got along well with everyone. There were no behavior, nor discipline problems.
At the end of the school year achievement test results were average in most areas. Because Jane was given a chance to catch up academically and because she performed well in class and on achievement tests, her retention was considered successful by her teacher in fifth grade the second year.

Case Number Three: First Year in Third Grade

The subject of this case study was a third grade boy at King Springs Elementary during the 1990-91 school year. Jimmy's teacher, Mrs. Black, stated, "When he came to me he was only reading on a first grade level, and he had only completed the first grade readers... So we put him through the second grade readers all during the third grade." Because of his poor skills, Jimmy did not do well in English, science, and social studies.

Socially, behaviorally, and physically he was like other students in the third grade. Jimmy seemed to accept the retention decision easily and with no emotional outbursts. He had never been retained.

According to Mrs. Black, this student was the oldest of two siblings in a single parent family. He was left alone on many occasions to take care of his brother while his mother was on dates. The mother was known to have a chemical abuse problem.

While in third grade Jimmy was tested to determine if special education services were necessary. He did qualify
as a learning disabled student in reading and received help in a resource setting.

When deciding whether to retain him or not an M-Team was held to aid in the decision-making process. Because of Jimmy's reading skills it was determined he would need to repeat third grade. According to Mrs. Black, the student's mother attended the meetings concerning his progress, "but she wasn't helpful as far as helping him at home with his work." Mrs. Black stated if he had not been retained in her class, "I'm sure it would have been necessary because he was so far behind."

**Case Study Number Three: Second Year in Third Grade**

The second year in third grade the teacher, Mrs. White, stated "I had a lot of behavior problems with him at the beginning of the year. The academic work was pitiful. He did absolutely nothing."

One six weeks, around Christmas, a positive change in the Jimmy's behavior was noticed. Mrs. White said,"It got a lot better, and academic work picked up and this lasted for about six weeks after Christmas and then after that six weeks period 'boom' it went down again." She said, "He almost made honor roll. He just pushed and did such a good job, but then after that it was like, you know, and no matter how much you do, how much you praised . . . ."

According to Mrs. White, there were many problems at home. There was no father in the home. The mother went out
frequently at night according to the younger brother. At one point she was put in jail. It was during this period when Jimmy was with a grandmother that his grades and all aspects of his work began to improve.

Jimmy continued to receive help in a resource room in the areas of math and spelling. Cooperative learning was practiced in his classroom. Mrs. White found when she paired him with one student, rather than in a group of four, he did better. She said the little girl with whom he was paired, "kind of pushed him" to do better. Jimmy was also in a small group with a student teacher the second semester for social studies and science instruction. "He had a different resource teacher, and a different third grade teacher. . . .different school environment because he was at another school."Basically, his curriculum stayed the same.

Discipline problems revolved around disruptions to gain attention. The kind of discipline most effective for Jimmy was the removal of play time. However, that got to where it had no effect. According to the teacher, she talked to the mother on several occasions. The mother seemed real concerned and said she would help, but help never came.

It was felt by the third grade teacher the second year that retention for Jimmy was not beneficial. She stated that in talking with his previous teacher, "we couldn't see that he had done any different than what he had done with her. The grades were still poor." His discipline problems
seemed worse the second year. He became the class clown. According to Mrs. White, there were a couple of other children in the class that were not a good influence on him. He desperately needed attention, even if it were negative attention, he did not seem to mind.

Case Study Number Four:

The subject of this case study was a fifth grade girl at Annie Stratton Elementary School in Johnson City, Tennessee. The structure of the fifth grade was one of team teaching, so that the two teachers interviewed knew the student, Joy, the first and second years she was in fifth grade.

The home room teacher of the student during the year it was decided to retain her was interviewed first. Mrs. Green indicated the student had an average IQ with weaker achievement scores, but was not eligible for special education services or Chapter 1 pull out programming. According to Mrs. Green, "She had the potential just had lost some ground through family problems and so forth, . . . very immature. She was definitely a follower, and whoever wanted her to do something she would do it." The teacher said, "Generally she would have been a good fourth grade student the first year we had her in fifth grade."

Mrs. Green felt Joy was an ideal candidate for retention because she was the youngest of two children, she
was short, and she lacked basic academic knowledge such as multiplication tables, spelling, and word attack skills. Mrs. Green also felt the student was immature, meaning she was unable to "make changes, follow through with directions, get along with peers." The teacher stated, "If they go out on the playground and play with someone younger, you know, that's kind of a red flag." Joy also had a very late birthday. She was one of the youngest in her class.

Mrs. Green reported a traumatic life event during the first year in fifth grade was due to Joy's father being away from home participating in Desert Storm. The teacher also indicated prior to that there had been an unstable marriage with parental separation and reconciliation. There seemed to be many emotions the student was feeling.

During her first year in fifth grade Joy was "real cocky", according to Mrs. Green. Since she was such a follower, she began to associate with a group which was not good for her. This changed the second year. She became a leader, more responsible, and did better academically.

Both teachers felt an extra year in the fifth grade was extremely beneficial for the student. Basically all skills were repeated without modification for Joy. According to Mrs. Green, "she went back through the same program which I know they say is terrible, but that's what she needed. She needed basic type things." Her teacher the second year, Mrs. Gray, stated, "she was really just like a regular
little fifth grader. So she just fit real well into the program that we had planned for our other students."

The only apparent instructional difference was the more extensive use of cooperative learning techniques. Mrs. Green, for science and math the second year paired her students and said, "I had them facing each other so they could kind of talk back and forth." She related, "Basically, everything we did . . . they did in a cooperative group except final things, like a final chapter test or a quiz."

Mrs. Gray felt the biggest contributor to Joy's success had to do with attitude. The student's attitude the second year was so different from the beginning of school, like she came ready to learn. The parents had a good attitude. Mrs. Gray and Mrs. Green also had a positive attitude toward Joy and put her in a position to have many responsibilities. According to Mrs. Gray, "she knew the ropes in a lot of ways about a lot of things. It made her feel special." Mrs. Gray also stated, "We made certain at the beginning of the year that she was in the spotlight, that she was just one of our leaders. . ."

Case Study Number Five: Third Grade First Time

The subject of this study was a student at Happy Valley Elementary in Carter County during the 1990-91 school year. Justin moved into the school after the school year had
already begun. As a result, the teacher, Mrs. Street, did not recall whether he went to Chapter 1 for reading or not, although she stated, "He did have a definite reading problem." The first year in third grade "he was more or less a loner, than he was a team player." Justin was of average size and the only discipline or behavior problems present was the lack of completing homework and assignments.

In Carter County the retention decision starts with the thoughts of the teacher as to what would be best for the student. If there is another teacher involved with the student that person also expresses an opinion. Justin's third grade teacher said, "If you don't have the parents' backing in it, and if they don't feel like it's right for the child, you know, I don't know if I would do it."

As Justin had not been retained previously, did not know his multiplication tables and had a definite reading problem, Mrs. Street felt it in his best interest to repeat third grade.

**Case Number Five: Third Grade Second Year**

During his third grade experience the second time, Justin received Chapter 1 help in the area of reading. "As far as classroom performance he was like an average child. He didn't excel in anything," but did not present a terrible deficit according to his teacher, Mrs. Carr, the second year in third grade. At the beginning of the year, Justin tried to get by without doing his homework, but when
that lack of effort was not successful, he began to work very hard. Maturity-wise, Justin was ahead of his peers. Mrs. Carr stated that socially, "he always had somebody to play with; he was not a loner." Discipline or behavior problems were very limited and not of a significant nature.

During this Justin's second year in third grade, his curriculum was the same as the previous year. Teaching strategies for him included large group instruction and individual attention to any problem he had with the content being taught. Mrs. Carr stated "We do use the large group because we have so much material that we have to cover" She also added, "Then, if I see a child that's having problems then I'll pull them out or take them to the table or bring them to my desk and work with them individually." This approach was basically the same as he had received the previous year.

There were no known traumatic life events occurring during his second year in third grade. It was felt by Mrs. Carr that nothing bad was occurring at home. He talked positively about his home life, his family, and his dogs.

Mrs. Carr indicated his retention was beneficial. She said, "He just for some reason wasn't settled the year before, and somehow he got settled and like I say he didn't set the woods on fire, but he was a good average student." Mrs. Carr stated she saw two types of reactions by students who are retained, "Either they give up and don't work at
all, or they try harder and do well." This student fit the second category.

Case Study Number Six: Fifth Grade First Time

The subject of this case study was a fifth grade male student at Happy Valley Elementary during the 1990-91 and 1991-92 school years. Jacob was the only child in his class who was retained during 1990-91 and one of two children repeating the fifth grade during the 1991-92 school year.

According to the student's fifth grade teacher, Mrs. Parker, factors which encouraged her to retain Jacob were "mostly his academic performance wasn't up to where it should be, and I thought that he could do better if he had another year, also emotionally. His social skills were really, really bad. He had a lot of problems." It was felt he could do better in classes if he had another year to help him through the process. Jacob had problems getting along with others. He seemed very immature and was very small for his age. His attendance, however, was good.

There seemed to be many traumatic events effecting his school performance. The father who lived in another state, was remarried with male step children. Apparently he was paying a lot of attention to his new wife's children and not to his own. Jacob came to school on many occasions with this type of story. "I could just see by his facial expressions and the way he was acting that something had
happened the night before or that morning," said Mrs. Parker. This student was very fragile emotionally. He was very emotional all of the time. Mrs. Parker had to be very patient and understanding with him. Jacob began to fall further and further behind in his school work.

According to Mrs. Parker, Jacob also had a mild physical disability, scoliosis, which did not interfere with his school performance, but which was used as an excuse to get attention. Many times he would say, "somebody's pushed me," or his back hurt or another comment relating to his disability.

Mrs. Parker contacted the subject's parent well before the end of the school year to keep her informed of her son's situation. Because Jacob had a lot of problems before he enrolled at Happy Valley Elementary, Mrs. Parker gave him more leeway than many other students. The mother and the principal were in agreement with the decision to hold this student back for one year.

Case Number Six: Second Year in Fifth Grade

The second year in fifth grade Jacob received help in Chapter 1 for math. He also met occasionally with the elementary guidance counselor. There were no other out of the classroom interventions given.

According to the second year teacher, Jacob seemed like a different child. He tried real hard. He passed on his
own. He was not socially promoted at the end of fifth the second time he was in that grade.

The second teacher interviewed concerning Jacob described himself as a different kind of teacher. Mr. Van Dyke's approach was not as stiff as some others. He demanded respect, responsibility, and honesty. On tiny little things he was not as strict as some other persons. As Mr. Van Dyke used to be an entertainer, he used voices to do impressions. Mr. Van Dyke stated, "I use the Sesame Street form of education where if you can just keep moving every 30 seconds and change things . . . that might have contributed to the student's success the second year."

Jacob was the smallest boy in the class, but he still tried to be the bully. Physically, this was always a mistake for this student.

As far as discipline was concerned, Jacob had to have one paddling during the year. Sometimes he would get into trouble, but he generally acted within the normal standards of a child his age. He seemed to get over wanting to be the bad guy, since he could not be the best guy in class. Emotionally, many problems continued to exist, however, he was able to not let them interfere totally with his academic standing.

According to Mr. Van Dyke, retention seemed to help this student. Jacob was more emotionally and socially
mature the second year. The students he was with had a good influence on him. He did well academically.

Case Study Number Seven: First Year in First Grade

The subject of this study was a first grade girl who attended Anderson Elementary in Bristol, Tennessee. Factors that encouraged her teacher, Mrs. Violet, to retain her included a very poor attention span, "she could not attend to work," inability to comprehend and complete work tasks, immaturity, no response to instructional intervention techniques, and small physical size.

During the first six weeks of school, Mrs. Violet was on maternity leave. The family developed an attachment to the interim teacher, which made it difficult for the family to accept that Julie was not doing well after the regular teacher returned. Julie seemed to complete the readiness activities of the first six week period well. In a one-to-one situation, she also did well, but she did not respond well in the classroom setting. According to Mrs. Violet, the same behavior was exhibited in her Chapter 1 class.

After much convincing, the parents agreed to psychological testing for their daughter. No deficits or disabilities were found. According to Mrs. Violet, the father was then able to overcome his fear of something being terribly wrong with his child. This further encouraged the
teacher that a second year in first grade would be appropriate.

Julie was very sociable. She liked to talk, which sometimes developed into a discipline problem. Mrs. Violet labeled Julie's behavior as "immature." She supported this classification by describing her as unable to complete assigned tasks and not listening in a group situation.

There did not seem to be any traumatic events other than the family's attachment to the interim teacher and the father's fears that something was terribly wrong with his child. In conferences, Mrs. Violet observed "her mom was always positive and for anything you wanted to try, and he was always very negative and against anything, so they were always pitted against each other." The teacher felt the Julie knew that and knew which way to manipulate her parents to get her wishes.

Basically, Julie was a very sweet and loveable child who, according to Mrs. Violet, did not possess the skills necessary to be academically successful in second grade. She seemed to meet all established criteria as being a successful candidate for retention.

**Case Study Number Seven: Second Year in First Grade**

Julie was one of four repeaters in her class. She received no additional help from Chapter 1 and was not eligible for special education services. According to her teacher the second year in first grade, "she did an
outstanding job." She matured into a "vivacious, capable, young lady" who started bringing in all of her homework. She read beautifully and "her math was perfect." Her only problem was not always completing tasks as presented. By the end of the year that skill was where it should be.

"She was right at the top of her class" academically and seemed older than others in her class as far as maturity was concerned, Mrs. Rose indicated. Her only discipline was after talking too much in class.

Instructional techniques used by Mrs. Rose included large group, small group, and individual instruction. When a student was repeating a grade, Mrs. Rose tried to put Julie in a position of leadership and provide her with activities to build self-esteem. The teacher advised that the provision of variation in teaching strategies was important for her students, particularly those who had been retained.

Case Study Number Eight

Case study number eight was the only child in first grade retained at his elementary school in Bristol, Tennessee during the 1990-91 school year.

After the first semester, the teacher began to look at Jordan as a possible candidate for retention. She began having parent conferences with the mother to make her aware of her son's progress and involve her in the retention
decision. According to the teacher, Mrs. Ruby, the "mother always came to conferences."

Factors which influenced the teacher included poor eye-hand coordination and lack of sufficient progress in the reading series. Mrs. Ruby stated this student came from kindergarten without being able to "write one letter" on paper. His eye-hand coordination skills were very poor. Because Jordan came to first grade so far behind the other students the teacher had to give him "work on his ability level, totally different than the rest of the class, and he didn't get through Open Court at all." Open Court reading "is a whole group approach" to teaching reading, Mrs. Ruby. After the vocabulary and skills have been introduced, the teacher "tries to enrich or do remedial work." Jordan was not able to finish the reading series.

Jordan's mother agreed that another year in first grade was important for him. According to Mrs. Ruby, the mother helped him to realize that also. It was felt her involvement made the retention a positive move for the student. Mrs. Ruby felt the retention was very beneficial for this student.

During his second year in first grade Jordan was reluctant to perform. He was late with work. He needed instructions repeated on a more frequent basis than other children. He was very unsure of himself as he was always seeking teacher approval throughout the day. Mrs. Pearl
stated "once he had started on something he would invariably call back and say 'Now is this what I'm supposed to do?' and it was that kind of thing throughout the day."

This little boy did not present behavior nor discipline problems. However, in comparison with other children "he was so disorganized. He just couldn't get things done."

Socially, Jordan was accepted very well by his peers. He had a speech disability which made it difficult for him to communicate with other children, but it did not seem to affect the desire of children to play with him. Physically, Jordan was a lot taller and larger than the other children in his class.

Jordan seemed to have quite an unstable home life. His parents were divorced during his second year in first grade. The mother also remarried that same year. It seemed to be to someone that Jordan did not know very well. According to Mrs. Pearl, "It was almost a surprise to him when she got married. It was kind of difficult to relate, but I do feel like there were certain problems at the home that affected him."

His mother was able to attend one parent conference during the year. At other times when she was asked to come in there would be some problem that prohibited her attendance.

Instructional techniques used during this Jordan's second year in first grade included much repetition of the
material, games, flashcards, hands-on activities as well as the regular paper and pencil activities usually presented in a classroom. It was noted by the teacher, Mrs. Pearl, that he did better on hands-on and nontraditional activities, than with paper and pencil activities. Jordan's motor coordination was not very good which caused him not to do well on written work.

Jordan's second grade teacher was also interviewed. She saw in second grade many of the characteristics seen by Mrs. Pearl who had him the second year in first grade. She stated, "if he had not been retained in first grade, it would have been necessary to do it in second grade."

By the time Jordan was in second grade his teacher stated, "his self-esteem was built up and he was able to make some decent grades." It was still hard for him to initiate a task, but after he began, he worked very hard. His writing skills were still giving him trouble. Jordan was well liked by the other children and had a wonderful personality. Also by this grade, his mother never came to school to conferences or for any reason. It was felt by his second grade teacher that he would eventually be alright, he just needed to mature and progress at his own rate, a little later than most children his age.
Research Question Number Six

Question six was stated as follows: What criteria do teachers consider when deciding whether to retain a student? Results will be presented as a series of assertions that reflected as common themes reported in respondent interviews.

Assertion One:

The lack of reading skills and poor academic performance are the most significant factors teachers consider when making the student retention decision.

Seven of the eight students recorded were considered by their teachers as exhibiting poor academic performance in the classroom.

"As long as I sit one-to-one, she would do whatever you asked her to do, to a point, but after that she gave no response" reported Mrs. Violet.

Mrs. Black told of Jimmy entering her class "only reading on a first grade level. Mrs. Black said, "He had never even been through the second grade readers, so we put him through the second grade readers all during the third grade." She was concerned he "missed out on English, science and social studies, because his reading was poor."

Mrs. Bass indicated Jane was "not up to grade level." When reviewing her cumulative record she noticed the student "hadn't mastered 4th grade skills. She said, "No wonder she wasn't succeeding in fifth grade." Mrs. Bass had formerly
taught 6th grade and was aware of requirements at that level. She stated, "In the reading a lot of higher order thinking skills, higher cognitive levels of comprehension that I didn't feel like she (Jane) was at a developmental stage to succeed" influenced her retention decision.

Mrs Street, a third grade teacher stated, "Mostly his academic performance wasn't up to where it should be, and I thought that he could do better if he had another year." Justin had a "definite reading problem" and "didn't get through the reading series," she said.

**Assertion Two:**

The maturity level relative to academic and social competencies of student performance at all grade levels was a major consideration influencing the retention decision.

Mrs. Violet, a Bristol, Tennessee, teacher indicated Julie was "babified," and demanded "constant attention." "Poor attention span" was suggested as being a maturational problem by two teachers interviewed.

Mrs. Bass, a Unicoi County teacher related social immaturity of Jane as evidenced "on the playground she would go to the lower grade rather than stay with peers." Jane would "pout over little things," according to the teacher.

Mrs. Street, a third grade Carter County teacher also spoke of emotional and social maturity levels of Justin who needed to be retained, "He didn't get along well with other
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children." "I thought with another year would help him," she said.

Mrs. Doe, a third grade Unicoi County teacher said Joe "brought tiny toys to school," and played at his desk which was an immature behavior for his age. She also listed "lack of listening, lack of participation" and the fact "he never completed a task, never focused on what he should be doing" as major retention factors for Joe. A first grade student in Bristol, Tennessee was described by Mrs. Ruby as being "disorganized he just couldn't get things done." Jordan also had motor coordination problems which was thought to be a maturational lag.

Poor attention span, playing with younger students, bringing toys to school, not being able to complete assignments and poor motor coordination were all listed as characteristics of immaturity that inhibited learning.

**Assertion Three:**

Students who are not working up to their potential are stronger candidates for retention, than students who are just not able to perform.

Three teachers were concerned that their students were not working or performing up to their potential. "Test scores showed up nothing, no discrepancies at all," stated Mrs. Violet in Bristol, Tennessee.

Mrs. Bass, a fifth grade Unicoi County teacher said of Jane, "she deserved a little bit more time to develop her
skills." Jane "had the ability and a chance to really catch up with herself and mature a little bit before she was asked to do those higher, higher level skills."

Mrs. Street, a third grade Carter County teacher said, "the fact that he seemed to be able to learn, but he was having a lot of trouble," influenced her retention decision. She stated, "He was way below his grade level, but it seemed that he should be able to" do the work.

Assertion Four:

Homelife situations significantly impact whether a student is at risk for retention.

In the case of one first grade student, Mrs. Violet observed the parents "pitted against each other" in a conference. Rather than working together, one parent was positive, while the father was negative about all comments. Mrs. Violet said the "student played on this." In this situation, by the "end of the school year, he (the father) was fine with everything."

Mrs. Black, a third grade teacher said Jimmy was from a "one parent family, she didn't always get them to school on time." Mrs. Black also stated, "His mother had an alcohol and a drug problem." Through information provided by the student's brother, the student was "left alone a lot to take care of a younger sibling while she (mother) was out on dates or whatever," said the teacher. Of the mother attending parent conferences and M-Team meetings, Mrs. Black
said, "she attended it (conference), but she wasn't helpful as far as helping him at home with his work."

Mrs. Bass related the "birth of a sibling that year" to her student who was retained. Because Jane already had one younger sibling, the teacher did not know the extent of the influence of this event on her performance in class.

Mrs. Parker, a fifth grade teacher said Jacob had a "bad family situation." She said, "his mother came to school on a regular basis and talked about the problems he was having because his father was in California and had remarried, and that had upset him." There were step brothers to whom the father paid more attention than the child who was being retained. "What was happening at home was absolutely influencing everything I was doing at school," said Mrs. Parker. "He couldn't concentrate on what he was supposed to be doing; he was upset," she stated.

Mrs. Doe, another third grade teacher stated Joe had "a lot of problems in the family situation." They were "latchkey children and moved a lot," the teacher related. There was an "unstable home life." The father lived part of the year in another state. Before finding permanent housing in Tennessee, the four member family lived in one room of a relative's house.

Three of eight teachers who retained students recounted incidence where the home situations of their students were
an overwhelming influence on the productivity of the student in class.

Research Question Number Seven

The last research question was stated as follows: Do programmatic or instructional techniques change when a child is placed in the same grade for the second year? This question will be answered by providing assertions and stating reasons for them.

Assertion One:

Teachers provide the same instructional program the second year a child is in the same grade, with very few variations.

Quotes which provided the background for the assertion statement include, "we did pretty much the same thing cause we have all the same books," by Mrs. Carr, a Carter County teacher. She stated, "Lots of time we do use the large group because we have so much material that we have to cover, and then if I see a child that's having problems." Mrs. Carr added, "Then I'll pull out or take them to the table or bring them up to my desk and work with them indiividually."

Mrs. Troutman, a Unicoi County fifth grade teacher said, "Besides me teaching the whole, we broke into groups and I may put maybe a better student in with a few of the ones who were having trouble."
Two teachers interviewed, Mrs. Troutman and Mrs. Gray, had the opportunity to have student teachers during the second year a student was repeating a grade. Both teachers indicated students "responded well" to the extra attention derived from the situation.

One Johnson City teacher, Mrs. White, stated her student who had been retained was enrolled in a "regular self-contained classroom, and he went out for math and spelling in resource." In addition the teacher found that a cooperative learning technique, where students work together to solve answers to problems, in a group of two was beneficial for Jimmy.

Mrs. Rose, a Bristol, Tennessee, teacher stated, "I try to let them be my helpers and start out the year because they are usually going to be strong students at the beginning of the year anyway." She had Julie help the other students with routine matters.

Mrs. Gray, a Johnson City teacher stated "We do provide and supply an alternate program as needed." However, of Joy she said, "But this gal had lost so much ground she really gained nothing (the first year), it was almost square one for her." Therefore, Joy went back through the regular program again. The only modification seemed to be an increased use of cooperative learning techniques in all subject areas, which was used for all students in the classroom.
Assertion Two:

When variations in traditional instructional techniques occur, the retained students perform better and appear to be more motivated, than they were during the year it was decided a retention was necessary.

In the interview process teachers talked about the use of nontraditional instructional techniques and how students related to them. Mrs. Buck explained Flip-flop Friday "was another concept that was different where we on Friday just threw our regular schedule out. We combined all three third grade classes and tried to make it sort of theme oriented, and they thought it was a play day." "We had music instead of social studies and art and guest readers," she stated. The student who had been retained "hated it" if he had to miss activities on this day.

Another nontraditional approach was when three teachers rotated teaching social studies, science and spelling to all three 3rd grade classes in their school. If students didn't like one teacher he knew a change was coming. Mrs. Buck said she "taught social studies as units," rather than use her textbook, she "made up own units." Joe, who had been described a unmotivated, began to bring into class objects of interest relative to the lesson.

Mr. Van Dyke, a fifth grade teacher in Carter County stated, "I was an entertainer." This was prior to being a classroom teacher. He used his talents to "do
impressions." He stated he does all the things students like in relation to "the sesame street form of education" where he just kept instruction moving quickly and use different approaches. Mr. Van Dyke used storytelling to provide interest in the subject of history. He indicated this technique gave him "much popularity with students."

Mr. Van Dyke also indicated by being a positive person, he developed a strong relationship with his students. This was particularly true with Jacob.

A Bristol, Tennessee, teacher found when techniques other than paper and pencil activities were used, Jordan, who had been retained enjoyed class more and worked harder. Mrs. Pearl indicated, "Whenever we did hands-on activities and games, flashcards, board games where we were using our words on flashcards, he seemed to do better than with paper/pencil activities."

Students learn better in different ways and by using different approaches to instruction. Students who have been retained, many times, do not grasp the skills and concepts that are presented through large group instruction to the entire class. An individualized or small group approach may be necessary. The practice of the skill or concept which may ordinarily be reinforced through written activities for most students may need to be reinforced another way for those who have been retained.
Chapter 5
Summary, Findings, Conclusions, and Recommendations

The purpose of this chapter was to summarize the findings and present conclusions derived from the analysis of the data outlined in chapter four. Summary and conclusions were divided into two parts. In part one the results of test score analysis are summarized and conclusions are drawn. The second part summarizes recorded conclusions gleaned from the case studies of eight students who were retained in the 1990-91 school year.

Summary

Part I: Retrospective Follow-up of Students Retained in Grades Three and Five During the 1985-86 School Year

One part of this investigation was to determine whether retention helped Unicoi County, Carter County, Bristol, or Johnson City, Tennessee, students become more successful academically after staying another year in the same grade. The purpose was to examine the impact of retention on the subsequent academic performance of students retained in the third and in the fifth grades during the 1985-86 school year.
Scores from the Stanford Achievement Test (SAT) on the sample of third and fifth graders were followed over a period of two, three, or four test administrations from 1986 through 1989.

**Findings**

**Research Questions**

Findings based on the data produced by matching student test scores in the spring of 1986 and performing the statistical procedures of t-tests for dependent groups, analysis of covariance (ANCOVA), and analysis of variance (ANVOA) yielded the following information. These findings were related to five research questions dealing with the effects of retention on academic outcomes.

**Research Questions 1 and 2.** What were the demographic, social and academic characteristics of students who were retained? Were there differences in the demographic, social and academic characteristics of those who were retained as compared to those who were not retained?

**Third and Fifth Grade Cohorts**

Since students selected for this study were matched according to test scores, gender, and by school system, no discrepancies were found in demographic and academic characteristics. Students who attended Cherokee, Fairmont or Town Acres in Johnson City, Tennessee or Haynesfield, or Holston View in Bristol, Tennessee attended schools that
were not served by Chapter 1. This denoted a higher economic level of the community, than other schools in those two systems or schools in Carter County or Unicoi County.

The discrepancy in socio-economic levels of students in this study was 19% of promoted third graders attended non-eligible Chapter 1 schools, while 100% of retained third graders lived in lower socio-economic communities. Thirteen percent of the retained fifth grade students did not live in an area that economically qualified for federal assistance through Chapter 1, while 3% of the fifth graders who were promoted and matched did not live in Chapter 1 eligible districts.

**Research Question 3.** Are there changes in achievement test scores of retained students after retention as compared with their scores before retention?

**Third Grade Cohort**

By using the statistical analysis of t-tests for dependent groups, SAT scores of students retained in third grade in 1986 were compared to results of their 1987, 1988, and 1989 test scores. Students who were retained scored statistically significantly higher in the area of reading comprehension, spelling, and total math the second year in third grade.

In 1988, test scores revealed students continued to score statistically significantly higher in reading
comprehension and total math than they did during the year they were retained. There was no significant difference in the spelling subtest, meaning there was not statistically significant change or growth in achievement in that area over a two year period.

Nineteen eighty-nine test scores uncovered no statistically significant differences in any subtest analyzed. Significant differences were not found in reading comprehension, spelling, nor total math. This indicated that third grade students who were retained scored no higher in 1989 than they scored in 1986. Results indicated the treatment of retention did not significantly impact academic scores on the Stanford Achievement Test two years after retention.

Fifth Grade Cohort

The SAT scores of students retained in fifth grade during the 1985-86 school year were also compared to scores on the SAT administered in the spring of 1987, 1988, and 1989. Retained fifth graders made significant gains in all subject areas assessed in this study after the 1987 administration of the fifth grade SAT. Students enrolled in city systems continued to score statistically significantly higher in spelling and total math on the 6th grade test given in 1988. However, by 1989, three years after the retention decision, students did not score statistically significantly different from the way they scored in 1986.
The treatment of retention did not significantly impact academic success of fifth grade students who were retained in 1986 in Carter County, Unicoi County, Johnson City, nor Bristol, Tennessee.

Research Question 4. Do children who are retained have test scores comparable to a matched group of students who were not retained, two years after the retention occurred?

Same-Age Comparison

Using a same-age comparison retained students were compared with promoted students who were the same age, but took different forms of the Stanford Achievement Test. Comparisons were made for 1987 and 1988 while controlling for test result in 1986, the retention year.

Third Grade Cohort

Third grade students who were retained in 1986 scored significantly higher in the areas of spelling and total math when they took the third grade test a second time as compared to their promoted peers who took the fourth grade SAT.

In 1988, scores revealed that students who had been retained in third grade scored statistically significantly higher in the area of total math than their promoted peers. The 1988 results compared the retained group in 4th grade and their promoted peers in fifth grade. Two years after a retention occurred, the retained third grade cohort scored
statistically significantly higher in one of three subtests analyzed.

**Fifth Grade Cohort**

Because only city systems administered the sixth grade version of the SAT, a same-age comparison of the fifth grade cohort was not appropriate.

**Same-Grade Comparison**

**Third Grade Cohort**

Using a same-grade comparison, students who were retained in third grade at the end of the 1985-86 school year scored significantly higher than their promoted peers the second time they took the third grade test. This was true in reading comprehension, spelling, and total math. Fourth grade scores of the retained cohort as compared to their promoted peers were higher in all three subtests, but only statistically significantly higher in the area of total math. Fifth grade comparisons of these two groups yielded no statistically significant differences in the scores. Students who were promoted rather than retained at the end of the 1985-86 school year scored higher in all three subtests analyzed, however the difference was not statistically different. Looking at student achievement in terms of same-grade comparisons for the third grade cohort, yielded no positive effects of retention on academic performance as measured by the Stanford Achievement Test.
Fifth Grade Cohort

Scores of the fifth grade cohort were also analyzed using a same-grade comparison. Findings indicated the fifth grade group that was retained scored significantly higher than their promoted peers in the area of spelling the second time they took the fifth grade version of the SAT. Sixth grade comparisons only included city school systems as rural systems chose not to administer the 6th grade version of the SAT. For the 6th grade scores analyzed, the retained group scored statistically significantly higher in the area of total math. The retained population had higher scores in reading comprehension, spelling, and total math after a second administration of the fifth grade test and on the sixth grade test. The scores were not statistically significant except in the area of spelling for the fifth grade results of retained students and in the area of total math for the 6th grade results of the retained group. By seventh grade, the retained group scored higher in all three subtests analyzed, yet there were no statistically significant difference in the scores of promoted peers verses the retained cohort. Findings indicated there were no statistically significant differences in scores of seventh graders who were retained in fifth grade in 1986 and the scores of their peers who had similar scores in fifth grade, but were promoted. Scores of both groups were below the 50th NCE level which is considered the middle of average.
Research Question 5. Does retention seem to have the same effect in rural and city school systems?

Same-Age Comparison

Third Grade Cohort

Using an analysis of covariance, a same-age comparison of third grade cohort scores in 1987 and 1988, while controlling for 1986 test scores was conducted for students in rural systems and students in city system. Findings indicated rural students of Unicoi County and Carter County who were retained had statistically significant higher scores in the second time in third grade as opposed to the fourth grade scores of their promoted peers. Retained students in Johnson City scored statistically significantly higher in total math the second year in third grade as opposed to the fourth grade students whose scores were matched the previous year.

In 1988 the retained group was in the fourth grade and their promoted peer group was in the fifth grade. Unicoi County and Carter County students who were retained scored significantly higher than their same age peers who were in the fifth grade in the areas of reading comprehension and total math.

Students enrolled in the Johnson City School System showed no significant difference in their same-age scores of retained students in the fourth grade students verses promoted peers who were in fifth grade. A reason for the
findings in Johnson City could have been the small number of students analyzed. There was a large difference in mean scores of retained students over their promoted peers, with retained students scoring higher. Since a small sample size was analyzed, results were masked. Bristol had no retained third grade cohort during the 1986 targeted year. Therefore, the city students involved only four students who were retained. The largest number of pairs analyzed in city systems were four.

**Same-Grade Comparison**

**Third Grade Cohort**

A same-grade comparison was conducted on rural and city system test scores for the third grade and fifth grade groups. Because the students who were retained were matched to a peer group that had similar test scores in 1986, but were promoted, third grade and fifth grade scores were similar for the first administration of the test. Findings for the third grade cohort revealed the retained students in Unicoi County and Carter County scored statistically significantly higher on all subtests the second time in third grade, than their promoted peers had originally scored. Students who were retained in Johnson City scored statistically significantly higher in the area of total math.

Fourth grade comparisons indicated retained students in rural and city systems scored higher on all subtest than
their promoted peers. However, there were no significant statistical differences found.

By fifth grade, promoted peers in rural systems scored higher than the retained group on all subtests analyzed. The promoted group in Johnson City scored higher than their retained peers. There were no statistically significant differences found in any of the scores. This finding indicated an extra year in third grade was not beneficial academically, for students in city or rural systems three years after the retention decision was made and implemented.

**Fifth Grade Cohort**

Same-grade comparisons of the fifth grade cohort revealed retained students in city and rural systems scored higher in reading comprehension, spelling, and total math the second year of the fifth grade administration of the SAT, as compared to the scores of their promoted peers the previous year. The differences for city students who were retained were statistically significant in the area of total math. There were large mean differences favoring scores of retained students in rural and city systems, however, due to the small sample size, scores were not statistically significant.

Seventh grade scores were compared for rural students and city students. Findings indicated students who were retained in Johnson City and Bristol scored higher on the reading comprehension, spelling, and total math sections of
the SAT than their promoted peers. However, scores were not statistically significantly higher for the nine pairs compared in reading comprehension and the 11 pairs compared in spelling and total math.

Students retained in Unicoi County and Carter County scored higher than their promoted peers on the subtest of reading comprehension only. The promoted peers scored higher in spelling and total math, by the seventh grade comparison. No statistically significant differences were found in the results of the scores. By seventh grade there were only three pairs of rural scores to compare in the areas of reading comprehension and total math and only two pairs in the area of spelling. Scores of rural students who were retained and rural students who were promoted exceeded an NCE of 50 which is considered average.

**Part II: Case Studies of Eight Students Who Were Retained in the 1990-91 School Year and How Retention Effected Them During the 1991-92 School Year**

**Summary**

Four teachers in each of the four school systems were interviewed. Two of the teachers per system had retained students. Each teacher was asked to focus on the history of one particular student. The other teachers had taught the students the second year in the same grade. For the counties of Unicoi and Carter, a third grade student and a
fifth grade student were used as the subject of the case studies. This was also true for the Johnson City School System. Since there were no third or fifth graders in Bristol, Tennessee who were retained during the 1990-91 school year, the history of two first graders were depicted. Interviews were conducted during July and August of 1992.

Findings

Findings of eight students who were retained in four school systems provided through the answers to research questions six and seven follow:

Research Question 6. What criteria do teachers consider when deciding whether to retain a student?

By interviewing eight classroom teachers who had retained a child in the 1990-91 school year it was determined if students were not achieving up to the performance level of classroom teacher expectations, they were at risk for retention. Factors included reading skills, completion of daily assignments, listening skills, and compliance to class and grade expectations. Even if a student had average or above academic achievement scores, but did not perform on a daily basis, the likelihood for retention prevailed. Teachers interviewed expresses a belief that an extra year in the same grade would enable students to increase their academic ability levels.
If students were perceived by their classroom teachers as being immature, the probability of retention was strengthened. Teachers interviewed listed the demand for constant attention, poor attention span, lack of listening skills, pouting, bringing toys to school, being disorganized, and gravitation toward younger children during play time as characteristics of immaturity. First grade, third grade, and fifth grade teachers interviewed expressed an expectation that another year in the same grade would allow students to improve their levels of maturity.

Students who were viewed by their teachers as not working up to their potential, yet having the ability to learn were stronger candidates for retention than those who were lacking in ability. If psychological or achievement test scores did not indicate a strong discrepancy in ability or potential to learn, or if the intelligence level was average and the achievement low, or if students did not score below the 50th percentile in reading or math, teachers justified their retention decision with the need for the child to spend another year in the same grade. One teacher said of her student, "She deserved a little bit more time to develop her skills." Another teacher said, "the fact that he seemed to be able to learn, but he was having a lot of trouble" influenced her decision to retain the student.

Home life situations impacted greatly whether students needed to be retained. Only one of eight teachers
interviewed said she would retain a student against a parent's wishes. The other seven indicated parental approval was necessary for a successful retention. In essence, teachers actively sought the approval and participation of parents in the retention decision.

Another finding of this study was home lives seemed to greatly influence factors in the class that made students successful. For example, if something had gone wrong at home, students seemed unable to attend to the business of the day.

Five of the eight teachers who retained students during the 1990-91 school year provided information concerning traumatic homelife events that seemed to effect student performance. One student lived in a single parent family where he was caretaker of a younger sibling while his mother participated in her social activities. One student lived in a single parent home and was concerned that the father was remarried, had a second family and lived in California. The fourth student was a member of a family that moved a great deal, seemed to be financially indigent and whose family had to live much of the year with a relative in one room of their house. The fifth student was also a member of a family who had moved a lot, thereby causing him to have to adjust often to new educational surroundings as well as physical home environments. It seemed that these five students came into the class with life problems that
inhibited their performance. Responses of teachers seemed to be that providing the students with an extra year in the same grade would be beneficial for the students in terms of academic performance and self-esteem.

In summary, findings of research question six suggested if students were perceived as being immature, not working up to their potential in classroom activities, exhibited academic deficits, especially in the area of reading, and had a homelife that was crisis oriented, their chances of being retained were great. It was also found that teachers did not make the retention decision lightly, and truly thought they were doing what was best for the children in terms of enhancing maturity, building self-esteem, and increasing academic performance.

**Research Question 7.** Do programmatic or instructional techniques change when a child is placed in the same grade for the second year?

Because Tennessee has a mandated state curriculum framework for each subject taught in grades kindergarten through eight and core high school subjects, the curriculum for students who were retained was the same both years the students were in the same grade. The same textbooks were used by the retaining teachers and the teachers who had the students the second year in the same grade. Each system used different publishers for reading and math. However,
since the students studied remained in the same school system the second year in the same grade, the same texts were used.

It was found that seven of the eight teachers who had students the second time in the same grade used the same type of instruction as the teacher the previous year. The only exception was the utilization of a "theme" approach by Mrs. Buck and her fellow teachers.

It was also found that teachers in one school system used cooperative learning to a greater extent the second year students were in the same grade than the first. However, since this held true for the two students followed in that system, since both students were at different elementary schools, and because the method was extensively used with all students in the classes, it was determined the use of this technique stemmed from an administrative decision to enhance instruction and encourage team working skills.

All teachers interviewed provided alternative materials and reteaching techniques for the students in their classes. These techniques seemed to be used more often for those who had been retained, than others in the classes.

Of the eight teachers who taught students the second year in the same grade, four emphasized providing ways for the students who were retained to be leaders in the class as being important. These teachers used the way they teamed
students in cooperative learning situations, mentoring to first year students, and class helper activities to help the students develop leadership skills.

Conclusions

The following conclusions were drawn based on this study.

1. Students who are retained have an increase in their achievement scores the second year they are in the same grade, however it diminishes the next year, and by the third year after the retention decision, there is virtually no difference in scores of students who were retained and those who were promoted.

2. The effects of retention appears to be similar in rural and city school systems.

3. Retention helps increase scores of students during one academic year, the second year in the same grade. This held true when scores of retained students were compared the year of retention and subsequent years. It also was true when same-grade and same-age comparisons were made. The results were consistent for rural and city students. In the long run, the increase of scores for one school year was not considered to be worth a year of a student's life when the positive effects did provide lasting benefits.

4. Academic achievement on standardized tests is not a major factor in a teacher's decision to retain a student.
5. Teachers in different schools had different approaches, but teachers in the same school used the same approaches to learning. Instructional techniques seemed to be a product of all the teachers in the school rather than the individual classroom teacher. This denotes either peer pressure at the teacher level for all to conform to the same teaching strategies, or administrative encouragement of particular strategies.

6. Students who were retained tend to be financially indigent, had challenging home lives, and had greater life worries than school performance. Teachers need to make a conscious effort to understand the circumstances of their students, to look at them as whole persons, and not to only evaluate their performance based on the product returned to the teacher to be graded.

7. While teachers are genuinely concerned about students, their primary focus is on how students are performing in their respective classes. How students would perform in classes the next year, and how they would perform on achievement test scores were also a consideration for retention. It seemed to be a great concern of teachers what the next grade teacher would think of them if a child with poor grades were promoted, rather than retained. The peer pressure of teachers seemed to emerge again. How students performed on state mandated achievement tests was the least of the three concerns. Many times the teachers did not
receive the results prior to the end of the school year and did not know how the students performed. With the new accountability standards for Tennessee schools, it is predicted that achievement test performance will become a significant factor encouraging retention, if not the year of poor performance, then at the next grade level.

8. Most teachers do not look at retention as failure, but as an opportunity for extra time for the students to catch up to their peer group. The teachers interviewed, in most situations, thought they were doing the children a favor by having them spend another year in the same grade. As teachers become more aware of statistical data concerning student achievement relative to retention, it is hoped that they can better evaluate the effects retention might have on their individual students.

9. A second year in the same grade is looked on by teachers as a one year reprieve from struggling to understand information and produce answers during homework sessions for the family and during school time for the student. To provide a one year reprieve and extend 13 years of formal education to 14 years does not seem appropriate in the overall scheme of education.

10. Teachers are so involved in the demands of the curriculum for which they are responsible, they are truly unaware of how their expectations mesh with the expectations
of all grade levels within the kindergarten through 12th grade system.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are suggested.

1. Based on the parameters of this study, it is recommended that retention of students in the same grade do not occur at the third grade level or higher.

2. Teachers need to be provided with a means for follow-up of students who have been retained and those who were considered for retention, yet were promoted. It is recommended that schools establish a management system for tracking the performance of students who have been retained and those at risk for retention.

3. It is recommended that an investigation into the retention practices of school systems be begun. Policies regarding retention decisions and management systems of student cumulative grade level information should be compiled. Implemented efforts by systems to help underachievers perform better in school should also be documented and disseminated.

4. Administrators, from the superintendent level down, need to provide teachers with staff development and necessary materials and supplies to implement instructional strategies to meet the needs of individual students and classes as a whole. School leaders should encourage
teachers to try different methods to meet the needs of students.

5. Education of teachers concerning the total curriculum needs to be provided. Everyone has a job to do and each job is important, yet it needs to be understood that the total curriculum provides for review of skills introduced the previous year, for reteaching to occur, for new skills to be introduced, and for expansion and acceleration to take place in each grade level. This is true for each subject area. With a better understanding of the total curriculum and how each grade level fits with another, teachers may not feel so overwhelmed by the demands of their particular areas.

6. It is recommended that teachers provide students with cooperative learning activities. Since many of the students who were retained exhibited poor social skills, ways to help them improve in this area include practice in working with other children.

7. It is recommended that teachers re-evaluate their definition of immature to reflect actual behavioral or developmental characteristics of students. Rather than providing retention as a means for helping a child to mature, the provisions of direct instruction to teach a skill, instructional strategies aimed at the appropriate developmental level, and behavioral management techniques should be devised.
8. It is recommended that teachers incorporate multi-level groupings of students within a first grade through third grade educational environment, thereby providing students with developmentally appropriate instruction without the use of same-grade retention.

9. It is recommended that teachers use as many concrete, hands-on experiences to teach a new skill. This is especially imperative for students who are at risk for retention.

10. It is recommended that a retrospective study of retained and randomly selected promoted students be conducted using Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP) scores as a basis for comparing the achievement levels of students. A comparison of test results of retained and randomly selected students is necessary to find how retained students achieve relative to a sample of the total population.

11. It is recommended that an ethnographic study be conducted by observing a selected number of classes for two consecutive years to determine if instructional approaches for retained students actually occur.
References


- research and policies on promotion (pp. 151-173).


Tennessee Community Data: Johnson City, Tennessee. (February, 1991). Nashville: Department of Economic and Community Development.


APPENDICES
Appendix A

Reading Comprehension Scaled Scores, NCE Scores, and Gender of Third Grade Students Who Were Retained and Promoted, By School System

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APPENDIX B
## Appendix B

### Spelling Scaled Scores, NCE Scores, and Gender of Third Grade Students Who Were Retained and Promoted in 1986, By School System

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APPENDIX C

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## Appendix C

### Total Math Scaled Scores, NCE Scores, and Gender of Third Grade Students Who Were Retained and Promoted in 1986, By School System

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<td>male</td>
<td>601</td>
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<td>606</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>48.9</td>
<td>589</td>
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APPENDIX D
### Appendix D

Reading Comprehension Scaled Scores, NCE Scores, and Gender of Fifth Graders Who Were Retained and Promoted During The 1985-1986 School Year

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>System</th>
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<th>NCE</th>
<th>Promoted</th>
<th>NCE</th>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td>679</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unicoi Co.</td>
<td>male</td>
<td>647</td>
<td>52.6</td>
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<td>50.5</td>
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<tr>
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<td>600</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carter Co.</td>
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<td>48.9</td>
<td>641</td>
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Appendix E

**Spelling Scaled Scores, NCE Scores, and Gender of Fifth Graders Who Were Retained During 1986, By System**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>System</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Retained</th>
<th>NCE</th>
<th>Promoted</th>
<th>NCE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
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<tr>
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</tr>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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</tr>
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<td>33.7</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Unicoi Co.</td>
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Appendix F

Total Math Scaled Scores, NCE Scores, and Gender of Fifth Graders Who Were Retained and Promoted During the 1985-1986 School Year, By System

<table>
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<tr>
<th>System</th>
<th>Sex</th>
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<th>NCE</th>
<th>Promoted</th>
<th>NCE</th>
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<tr>
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<td>642</td>
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<tr>
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<td>599</td>
<td>27.2</td>
<td>592</td>
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<tr>
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<td>29.1</td>
<td>597</td>
<td>28.2</td>
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<tr>
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<td>57.5</td>
<td>650</td>
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<tr>
<td>Unicoi Co.</td>
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<td>59.3</td>
<td>662</td>
<td>62.3</td>
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</table>
Appendix G

INTERVIEW GUIDE

FOR TEACHERS WHO RETAINED STUDENTS DURING 1990-91

1. What grade level did you teach during the 1990-91 school year?

2. How many students in your class were retained during the 1990-91 school year?

3. What were the factors that encouraged retention of the student?
   Physical
   Social
   Academic
   Behavior/Discipline
   Emotional
   School History (Attendance, Previous Retentions, etc.)

4. Was the student experiencing traumatic life experiences during the course of the year? Examples include divorce, death of a significant other, etc.

5. Did the student have a certified disability which made him eligible for special education services? If so, what type of intervention did he or she receive? How did he or she respond to this?

6. Did the student qualify for chapter services? If so, in what area(s) did he or she receive intervention? How did he or she respond to this?
7. Was the decision to retain based on a team decision? If so, who was involved in the process?

8. Looking back, do you feel the retention was beneficial for the student?
INTERVIEW GUIDE
RECEIVING TEACHERS OF RETAINED STUDENTS
1991-92

1. What grade level did you teach during the 1991-92 school year?
2. How many students in your classroom were repeating that grade?
3. Did they receive intervention from special education or chapter programs? How did they respond to this?
4. How was their classroom performance during the second year in the same grade?
5. Did the students seem to be on the same maturity level as others in their grade level?
6. How was their behavior during the year?
7. Was discipline a problem?
8. Were there any traumatic life experiences during the year that could have impacted their school experience?
9. Describe the curriculum, instructional techniques, etc. that were used with the retained students. How did they respond?
10. Do you feel an extra year in the same grade was beneficial?
Appendix H

Rt. 2 Box 824
Unicoi, Tennessee 37692
October 29, 1991

Dr. R. Mike Simmons
Johnson City School System
P.O. Box 1517
Johnson City, Tennessee 37605

Dear Dr. Simmons:

Please allow me to introduce myself. My name is Janie Snyder. I am Supervisor of Special Education for the Unicoi County School System, a position I have held for 14 years. As part of my professional growth and development I am perusing an Executive Doctorate in the area of administration at East Tennessee State University in the department of Educational Leadership and Policy Analysis.

My culminating project will be the production of a dissertation. I have chosen to study the effects of retention on the academic success of students. I would like to match second grade students who were retained with those who were not retained and follow their SAT scores throughout their school experience. To do this I will be looking at students who were in second grade in 1981. To study the effects on intermediate grade pupils, I will also be matching fifth grade students that same school year. The results of two years of TCAP data on first grade retentions will also be investigated. In order to provide significant conclusions I am proposing to study data from two rural and two city systems. I am asking your permission to use information from Johnson City in my study. Other systems in Northeast Tennessee from which data collection will be sought are Bristol City, Carter County and Unicoi County. The time frame for my dissertation is prospectus presentation in November, data collection in December and January and conclusions in February.

Thank you for considering my request. All specific information will be handled in a confidential manner. Only scale scores, nce scores, correlations and time regression tables will be published. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at (615) 743-9020.

Sincerely,

Janie H. Snyder
Supervisor of Special Education
Please Return In the self-addressed, stamped envelope.

___________ I agree for Janie Snyder to use data from the School System in her study.

___________ I do not agree for Janie Snyder to use data from the School system in her study.

___________ Date

___________ Signature
VITA

JANIE HARRISON SNYDER

Personal Data:  
Date of Birth: October 29, 1953  
Place of Birth: Unicoi County, Tennessee  
Marital Status: Married

Education:  
East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tennessee; special education, B.S., 1974.  
East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tennessee; special education, M.A., 1977.  
East Tennessee State University, Johnson City, Tennessee; educational administration, Ed.D., 1992.

Professional Experience:  
Special Education Teacher, Unicoi County High School; Erwin, Tennessee, 1974-1977.  

Professional Organizations:  
Member, Upper East Tennessee Supervisors' Study Council.  
Member, Tennessee Association for Adult and Continuing Education.

Awards and Honors:  
Graduated Cum Laude, East Tennessee State University, 1974.