

## **Retention and Special Education**

### **Some Things to Keep in Mind**

- Teams should follow district guidelines.
- The student's IEP team should meet, review assessments and data, and make a recommendation.
- Does retaining low-achieving students help? According to research, the answer is definitely NO.
- The basic idea is that retaining students will give them a second dose of the same material and the students will catch up. Retained children may appear to do better in the short term, but they are at much greater risk for future failure than their equally achieving, non-retained peer.
- According to IDEA we are required to provide SPED services for eligible students starting at birth and up to age 22. Retention takes away the SPED services at the end point. Keeping this in mind, IEP teams need to consider if this is in the best interest of the student. Having services at the end of a student's SPED eligibility is often key in providing a longer period of support to meet the student's transition needs.
- Children retained during elementary school are at an increased risk of dropping out of high school. Grade retention has been identified as the single most powerful predictor of dropping out.
- There are already supports and special services in place to address the SPED student's needs.
- Neither repeating a grade nor merely moving on to the next grade provides the necessary scaffolding to improve academic and social skills for student at-risk of failure. Instead, it is necessary to implement and examine remedial strategies that can facilitate success. This can be done by examining the IEP and discussing the following:
  - Accommodations in the classroom
  - Accommodations for testing
  - Instruction; does there need to be a significant change
  - How the IEP being implemented
  - Alternative interventions and instructional strategies

It is clear that raising expectations for students with disabilities can have positive results.

### **Alternatives to Retention**

NASP (National Association of School Psychologists) encourages education professional to consider a wide array of well-researched, effective and responsible strategies, a specifically recommends:

- Actively encouraging parents' involvement
- Adopting age-appropriate and culturally sensitive instructional strategies
- Establishing multi-age groupings in classrooms with teachers trained to work with mixed-age and ability populations
- Providing effective early reading programs

- Implementing effective school-based mental health programs
- Identifying specific learning or behavior problem, designing interventions to address those problems, and evaluating the efficacy of those interventions
- Providing appropriate special education services
- Implementing tutoring programs
- Establishing full-service schools to provide a community-based

#### References

- Jimmerson, S. (2001) Meta-Analysis of Grade Retention Research, *School Psychology Review*, Volume 30, No. 3
- Nagaota, J., Roderick, M. (2004) *Ending Social Promotion: The Effects of Retention*
- NASP, (2003) *NASP Position Statement on Grade Retention*