University of North Dakota
UND Scholarly Commons

Theses and Dissertations

Theses, Dissertations, and Senior Projects

January 2014

Grade Level Retention: A Comparative Study Of Beliefs And Practices In North Dakota And Surrey

Kim Englund

Follow this and additional works at: https://commons.und.edu/theses

Recommended Citation
Englund, Kim, "Grade Level Retention: A Comparative Study Of Beliefs And Practices In North Dakota And Surrey" (2014). *Theses and Dissertations*. 1645.
https://commons.und.edu/theses/1645

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by the Theses, Dissertations, and Senior Projects at UND Scholarly Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of UND Scholarly Commons. For more information, please contact zeineb.yousif@library.und.edu.

المنارة للاستشارات

www.manaraa.com

GRADE LEVEL RETENTION: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF BELIEFS AND PRACTICES IN NORTH DAKOTA AND SURREY

by

Kim Englund
Bachelor of Science, Bemidji State University, 1996
Master of Science, St. Mary's University, 2001

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty

of the

University of North Dakota

In partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Doctor of Education

Grand Forks, North Dakota
December
2014

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

This dissertation, submitted by Kim Englund in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Education from the University of North Dakota, has been read by the Faculty Advisory Committee under whom the work has been done and is hereby approved.

Dr. Pauline Stonehouse, Chair

Dr. Sherryl Houdek

Dr. Gary Schnellert

Dr. Lori Swinney

Dr. Marcus Weaver-Hightower

This dissertation is being submitted by the appointed advisory committee as having met all of the requirements of the School of Graduate Studies at the University of North Dakota and is hereby approved.

Wayne Swisher
Dean of the School of Graduate Studies

December 8, 2015
Date

Title	Grade Level Retention: A Comparative Study of Beliefs and Practices in North Dakota and Surrey
Department	Educational Leadership
Degree	Doctor of Education

In presenting this dissertation in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a graduate degree from the University North Dakota, I agree that the library of this University shall make it freely available for inspection. I further agree that permission for extensive copying for scholarly purposes may be granted by the professor who supervised my dissertation work or, in her absence, by the Chairperson of the department or the dean of the Graduate School. It is understood that any copying or publication or other use of this dissertation or part thereof for financial gain shall not be allowed without my written permission. It is also understood that due recognition shall be given to me and to the University of North Dakota in any scholarly use which may be made of any material in my dissertation.

Kim Englund
December 2, 2014

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES vii

LIST OF TABLES viii

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ix

ABSTRACT xi

CHAPTER

I. INTRODUCTION 1

Statement of the Problem 2

Purpose of the Study 5

Importance of the Study 6

Research Questions 6

Initial Study 6

International Study 8

Scope of Study 8

Definition of Terms 9

Delimitations 10

II. LITERATURE REVIEW 12

Introduction 12

Historical Overview of Retention 13

المنارة للاستشارات

www.manaraa.com

The United States' Cultural Beliefs Regarding Retention 20

Retention Policies in the United States 23

Demographic Norms of Retained Students 25

Effects of Retention 27

Alternatives to Retention 30

Summary 32

III. RESEARCH METHODS 33

Initial Study 34

Researcher Background and Subjectivity 35

Research Questions 37

Qualitative Methods 38

Data Collection 39

Selection 40

Interviews 42

Data Analysis 46

Validity 48

Ethical Considerations 49

Summary 51

IV. FINDINGS 53

Purpose of Study 53

North Dakota Results 54

Surrey, England Results 75

Summary 101

المنارة للاستشارات

www.manaraa.com

V. THEORETICAL ANALYSIS 102

Theoretical Analysis 103

Summary 122

VI. CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS..... 124

Introduction 124

Overview of this Study 124

Emerging Theory: How Schools Decide to Retain a Student... 134

Limitations of the Study 136

Recommendations to Encourage Social Promotion in North Dakota 137

Final Thoughts 141

APPENDICES 143

REFERENCES 159

المنارة للاستشارات

www.manaraa.com

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure Page

1. North Dakota Code Map for Data Analysis..... 56

2. Surrey, England Code Map for Data Analysis..... 77

3. North Dakota Grounded Theory Diagram 104

4. Surrey Grounded Theory Diagram 116

5. The Balance of Power Regarding the Decision to Retain or Socially Promote a Student. 136

المنارة للاستشارات

www.manaraa.com

LIST OF TABLES

Table Page

1. North Dakota Participants 50

2. Surrey School Participants 51

3. North Dakota Participants 54

4. Surrey, England Participants 75

5. Recommendations to Encourage Social Promotion 137

المنارة للاستشارات

www.manaraa.com

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Pursuing my doctoral degree has been a journey that has changed my life forever. There are many individuals I wish to thank who contributed to and supported this amazing journey. First, to my advisor, Dr. Pauline Stonehouse, I express my sincere appreciation for your support, guidance, advice, and dedication to my study. You never gave up on me even when I wanted to. A special thanks to my committee Dr. Marcus Weaver-Hightower, Dr. Sherryl Houdek, Dr. Gary Schnellert, and Dr. Lori Swinney for taking the time to read my work and provide important feedback. To Dr. Sherry Houdek, I appreciate the never-ending support and guidance that you gave me from day one until the end and to Dr. Marcus Weaver-Hightower, a special thank you for all his extra time, expertise, and advice.

Next, to my friend Tina Christensen, a very special thank you for not only editing and providing excellent feedback, but most importantly all your encouragement and support throughout this journey. A very special thanks to the Fargo III cohort for your guidance, support, and words of encouragement. Each one of you has given me the courage, support, strength, and skills to see me through to the end.

Lastly and most importantly, I thank my family. To my children, Cody, Ty, and Kylie, I thank you all for your patience, encouragement, love, and support. I am most grateful to my husband, Jamie, whose encouragement and positive attitude gave me the motivation to pursue and accomplish my doctorate degree. Jamie continued to encourage

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

me to keep going no matter how stressful things became and helped me to believe that I could accomplish anything. This is for you, Jamison . . . I love you.

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

ABSTRACT

Many regions of the United States retain students who are not performing at grade level, yet a large body of research shows the ineffectiveness of having students repeat an academic year. The United Kingdom practices social promotion rather than retention. This comparative study sought to better understand the practices in these two countries and the research surrounding retention. First, it compared the interventions before and alternatives to retention used by both a North Dakota school district in the United States and two schools in Surrey, England. Second, it outlined a plan for teachers, parents, school administrators, and school policy makers to make better-informed decisions about whether or not to retain students in primary grades. The study responded to the question: Why do educators in the United States continue to retain students when research has shown it is not beneficial to students? This was done through research collected from the following questions:

1. Why do educators continue to retain students when research demonstrates it has a negative effect?
2. What steps are taken before retention is considered?
3. What does retention look like in the schools?
4. What educational best practice interventions are implemented before retention is considered?

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

I conducted interviews with and observations of teachers and administrators of varying years of professional experiences from a Midwestern suburban school district in the United States and from two schools in England. Interviews for the study focused on participants' beliefs about the practice of retention, alternatives to retention, and their district's policy regarding retention. The interviews and observations were transcribed verbatim and coded for central concepts through a two-cycle process. I also analyzed the retention policies of a variety of schools in the United States and—when available—in England.

Emerging theory from this research concluded that the balance of power and cultural beliefs in the two contrasting educational communities determined whether or not retention was considered as an option for struggling students. The implications of my findings suggest three specific recommendations for North Dakota schools to increase the more effective practice of social promotion: (a) implement best practice interventions; (b) improve teacher accountability; and (c) provide clear, concise information to all of the stakeholders.

Keywords: retention, teachers' beliefs, principals' beliefs, policies, grounded theory

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Retention, also known as "holding back," "repeating a grade," or "flunking" has been and continues to be a contentious issue in education. Grade retention is the practice of having a student who has been in a grade level for a full school year remain at that same grade level the next year with the hope that the student will make academic gains (Hattie, 2009). Despite research showing that retention has negative, long-term effects on students, it continues to be a strategy used by educators to address academic failure (Cannon & Lipscomb, 2011). Although grade retention has been researched and scrutinized for over a century, it continues to be significant topic of concern, as studies have shown that retention rates have steadily increased over the last 25 years (Rafoth & Knickebein, 2008). Since the implementation of *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB), school districts are being held to higher standards at the state and federal levels. When students do not meet these higher educational standards, school districts are penalized (NCLB Act, 2001); therefore, they use retention as an intervention for students performing below grade level (Bowman, 2005). Meanwhile, the English school system rarely if ever uses retention; instead, they practice other interventions for students who are underperforming.

Educators in the United States often choose to retain students who are struggling, believing that this will give the student an extra year to catch up academically and/or to mature socially. However, what educators believe contradicts the research on grade

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

retention. This raises several questions: Why do educators and policy makers against what research says about best practice? What can the United States learn from England's belief and policy that all students should be promoted to the next grade? Ultimately, what can schools in the United States do to make certain that every child experiences academic success rather than failure?

Statement of the Problem

As early as 1975, researchers stressed the importance of teacher beliefs and the role that those beliefs play concerning students at risk of retention (Cardigan, Entwisle, Alexander, & Pallas, 1988). Since then, research has shown that teachers, especially primary-grade teachers, believe that retention is an effective choice for students who are struggling (Gillborn & Youdell, 2000; Jimerson, Woehr, & Kaufman, 2007). Teachers' views regarding the effectiveness of grade retention are usually based on short-term outcomes, and they often have limited knowledge of the long-term student losses after retention. In the first significant review of grade retention, Jackson (1975) found that educators were retaining students without evidence that retention gave them any benefits over promotion to the next grade. In 2005, Xia and Glennie stated that primary teachers "have limited knowledge of the long-term student trajectories after retention" (p. 3); yet, researchers from the United States have shown that teachers at every grade level see retention as a positive option that motivates students to feel successful (Jimerson et al., 2007). Many children who are retained do make some progress during their second year, which reinforces the belief that retention is an effective way to help students be more academically successful (Jimerson et al., 2007). These superficial gains mask a greater problem: Not only has research has shown that retention is ineffective, but it has also

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

shown that students who are retained will likely fall further behind their peers over time (Bowman, 2005). Jimerson and Renshaw (2012) identified negative consequences for students who repeat an academic year. One of those consequences is that any temporary gains experienced during the repeated year, perform poorly on assessments than those with similar abilities and are 5 to 10 times more likely to drop out of school as well as they are more likely to be unemployed, live on public assistance, and/or be imprisoned in adulthood than students who are socially promoted (Jimerson, 2001; Jimerson & Ferguson, 2007; Jimerson, Anderson, & Whipple, 2002).

Schools that choose to retain students who are not meeting tougher academic standards should have a clearly defined retention policy in place. However, after analyzing 17 school districts' retention policies in an initial study, I found very few districts had clear and concise policies or procedures regarding retention. In several of those districts, such policies were not based on research, but rather each individual school worked on a case-by-case basis, often only using academic data or the personal beliefs of the teacher. As research has clearly indicated that retention is not a solution for students who are not making adequate progress, districts need policies and practices that address the actual barriers to learning for all students. However, there is wide-ranging disagreement over how to deal with the problem of insufficient mastery of grade level requirements (Poland, 2009; Silberglitt, Appleton, Burns, & Jimerson, 2006). A few states—Florida, New York, and Illinois—have required school districts to retain students who do not pass the third grade state tests. As of March 2012, Oklahoma adopted a similar policy to address students who were not making academic growth. These

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

policies, as laid out by each state, are based solely on state-mandated tests (Robelen, 2012).

In light of such varied policies, it is necessary to examine what is happening before students fail state-mandated tests, or who otherwise demonstrate a lack of mastery of grade-level skills and knowledge. Powell (2010) noted that when educators retain students, they are not considering other factors such as the student's development level; cognitive, affective, physical, and social skills; or language development skills. According to Anderson and Pavan (1993), "No two students arrive at school with identical dispositions to learn. They will differ in physical development and in life experiences both as to content and as to level of their success in negotiating their environment" (p. 33). Furthermore, Jimerson (2001) reflected Jackson's thoughts when he stated that "Simply having a student repeat a grade is unlikely to address the multiple factors influencing the student's poor achievement or needed adjustments that resulted in the decision to retain the student" (p. 432). Powell also noted that a student's development is actually measured in months, not years, as the school promotes students. While she is aware for the need of accountability, she stated that "There is no question that interventions are needed to help all children succeed . . . we need fresh alternatives and new ways of thinking" (p. 92).

Once the factors leading to retention are clear, one can draw conclusions and parallelisms between teachers in the United States, where retention is practiced, and teachers in England, where it is not. By looking to a successful school model where students are socially promoted instead of retained, administrators and teachers might become aware of other practices that offer students a variety of tested ideas that can build

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

academic success in school, and they can investigate a variety of methods, such as tutoring, remediation, mentoring, small group work, after school programs, Saturday school, and summer school to prevent failure before students are considered for retention.

As long as teachers and administrators believe that retention is an appropriate school practice, retention will continue to be used as an intervention strategy (Goos, Van Damme, Onghena, & Petry, 2011). The combination of educators' personal experience, which may not be evidence based, and of state- and/or district-level policies requiring retention for students not passing mandated assessments, makes it clear that retention will remain a significant problem for schools in the United States despite what research has shown.

Purpose of the Study

Historically many regions of the United States have allowed teachers, administrators, and parents to retain students based on personal beliefs and on school and/or state retention policies, while the United Kingdom has socially promoted most students: Retention is not considered as an option in most schools of the United Kingdom. This comparative study had a two-fold purpose as it examined how two regions of these countries, North Dakota of the United States and Surrey of the United Kingdom, support students who are under-achieving as measured by standardized tests. First, by comparing the practices in both countries, this study aimed to answer the question: Why do educators in the United States continue to retain students when research has shown it is not beneficial to students? Second, it sought information to help teachers, parents, school administrators, and school policy makers as they make decisions about whether or not to retain students.

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

Importance of the Study

In the early primary years, grade retention has been shown to correlate with dropout rates in high school (Jimerson, 2001). However, in the United States, grade retention remains an accepted educational practice. If research shows that grade retention has a negative effect on a child, why is it still practiced today? This study will be important to educators who have struggled with the question of whether or not to retain a student for two reasons. First, this study will help educators understand the beliefs that drive the continued use of retention. Second, this study will offer specific alternatives to retention that are being used successfully in England.

Research Questions

By comparing the practices of the United States and England in regards to students who are struggling academically, this study addressed the use of retention in the United States in primary grades. The following questions guided the study:

1. Why do participating educators in North Dakota, United States continue to retain students when research shows it has negative effects on students?
2. Why do educators in Surrey, England avoid retention?
3. How do school systems in North Dakota and Surrey meet the needs of students who are not performing at grade level?
4. What alternatives are being used in North Dakota using before retention is considered?

Initial Study

I conducted a pilot study in one suburban elementary school in North Dakota during the winter of 2012. The purpose of this study was to offer a theory about the role

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

played by teachers' and administrators' beliefs and by schools policies when student retention is under consideration. In order to understand why teachers retained students, I collected and analyzed data in the form of qualitative interviews with three elementary school teachers of various years and grade level experiences, and with two principals of various years of experiences. These interviews used the following questions to focus on principals' and teachers' beliefs about the practice of retention, alternatives to retention, and their district's policy about retention:

1. Why do educators continue to retain students when research shows it has negative effects?
2. What steps are taken before retention is considered?
3. What does retention look like in the schools?
4. What alternatives are implemented before retention is considered?

The five interviews were transcribed verbatim and coded for central concepts through a two-cycle process. A grounded theory approach was used, and important literature reinforced the study as well as 17 different school districts' retention policies were also analyzed.

The results of the initial study lead me to conclude that teachers have historically based their decision to promote or retain a student on the student's current academic achievement and the belief that retention is the best solution for students who are struggling academically or socially and emotionally. Principals neither agreed with nor ruled out the practice of retention, especially in the primary grades. Using the initial study findings, it was evident that future research needed to be conducted, as it provided me with more questions:

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

1. How are teachers held accountable for student growth?
2. What are some alternatives that could be used instead of retention?
3. What can be done to inform educators, administrators, parents, and politicians about the implications of retention?

International Study

My doctoral cohort was presented with the opportunity to conduct research in Surrey, England. I recognized this to be an excellent chance to conduct comparative research regarding the retention practices, beliefs, and policies of the English school system. I conducted research for five days, during which time I interviewed three head teachers, a school psychologist, a home-school worker, a special education director, and a parent who wanted to retain their child in one of the infant schools where I was conducting most of my research. I also had the opportunity to observe classroom teachers; to participate in their planning, preparation, and assessment time; and to informally interview eight teachers. The teachers provided me with their email addresses, so I was able to follow up with further questions as I continued with my research. They also provided me with documents concerning how they assess and document student growth, which interventions they used, and how they communicate with each student's next teacher.

Scope of Study

This comparative, qualitative study examined why educators in the United States continue to retain students when research shows it has negative effects. It determined the steps that educators take before retention is considered; it examined what retention looks like in schools; and it ascertained the alternatives that are implemented before retention is

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

considered. This study compared the interventions and alternatives used in the United States to those exercised in England when dealing with students who are not meeting grade-level expectations so that teachers, parents, school administrators, and school policy makers in the United States can make more informed decisions about whether or not to retain a student in primary grades.

Definition of Terms

The following are key definitions used in this qualitative research study:

Beliefs: Ideas individuals assume to be true based on experiences and knowledge.

Head teacher: The educator who has executive authority for an English school. This position is equivalent to a principal in the United States.

Infant school: A school in the United Kingdom for children between the ages of 4 and 7. This is the equivalent of Pre-Kindergarten to Grade 2 in the United States.

Intervention: Research-based strategies that are used within the classroom to help improve instruction for students, especially for students who are performing poorly.

Key stage: The term used by the school system in the United Kingdom to refer to the set of skills and knowledge that a student is to develop at a certain stage in their education.

Multi-age: An English school in which students of different ages and abilities are placed in the same classroom to help each child develop as a learner.

Primary elementary: Kindergarten through Grade 2 in the United States (ages 4 to 9).

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

Reception: The term used in the United Kingdom for a child's age before August 1.

Retention: Keeping a student in the same grade level for an additional year.

Social promotion: Allowing a student to pass on to the next grade level even though they have failed to meet academic and/or social/emotional performance standards.

State Standards*:* Achievement standards implemented by individual states in accordance with *No Child Left Behind*. They establish the knowledge, concepts, and skills that students should acquire at each grade level.

Delimitations

Delimitations recognized for the qualitative research study:

1. The study was conducted at the elementary/infant level.
2. The study was conducted in an elementary school in North Dakota, United States and in two infant schools in Surrey, England.
3. The study was conducted on the educators' beliefs or perceptions about retention and social promotion in North Dakota, United States and in two infant schools in Surrey, England.

Chapter I provided an overview of the background and the problem surrounding the controversial and continual retention of elementary students in the United States. It also defined terms related to retention and social promotion in the schools in the United States and in England outlined the importance of the study, and discussed limitations and assumptions.

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

Chapter II examines the six areas of literature related to retention in the primary elementary schools: (a) the history of retention in the United States and the United Kingdom; (b) United States cultural beliefs regarding retention, (c) retention policies in the United States, (d) demographic norms of retained students, (e) the effects of retention, and (f) alternatives to retention.

Chapter III discusses the research methods and procedures, the researcher's role, data collection, data analysis, validity, and ethical considerations.

Chapter IV reports the themes and categories that emerged from the interviews and observations and from the review of retention policies.

Chapter V examines the similarities and differences between the themes and categories by explaining in greater detail the connections between my theoretical matrixes and conceptual framework.

Chapter VI provides a discussion of the findings summarized according to the research questions of the study. This is followed by the researcher's conclusions and the limitations of the study. The chapter ends with recommendations for further research.

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

Researchers have studied retention in both the United States and in England for more than a century. The body of literature concerning this research offers an expansive picture of the practice in each country. Xia and Glennie (2005) claimed that there is a gap between such research and how educators, policy makers, and the public view retention. The National Association of School Psychologists (2003) clearly stated that retention is not effective for students, yet many educators and policy makers continue to support it (Range, Yonke, & Young, 2011). Even though the research on retention is alarming, it does not "provide a clear view of the policy's effectiveness, particularly for early grades" (Cannon & Lipscomb, 2011, p. 3). However, retention continues to be used in the United States, showing that some educators and parents feel that it is a viable option for some students (Cannon & Lipscomb, 2011). According to Jimerson and Renshaw (2012), "grade retention has been viewed as a logical, fairly straightforward strategy for students who are achieving below their grade level or experiencing chronic behavior problems" (p. 12) and has increasingly been viewed as a "preferable alternative to social promotion" (p. 12). Some educators and administrators believe that retention gives struggling students another year to mature academically, behaviorally, or socially, while other school leaders "believe that grade retention is necessary to meet their

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

schools' annual yearly progress (AYP) and other performance mandates" (p. 12). Jimerson and Renshaw claimed that a few students may benefit from grade retention; however, there is no way of "predicting who will and who will not" (p. 13). They went on to note that students could benefit from retention if they were lacking in opportunities rather than ability. This disconnect between research and beliefs is at the heart of my own research question and makes it clear that retention will remain a hot topic. Prior to looking at my research process and the resulting data, I will review the relevant literature, which I divided into six categories: (a) the history of retention in the United States and the United Kingdom; (b) the United States' cultural beliefs regarding retention, (c) the various retention policies in the United States, (d) the demographic norms of retained students, (e) the effects of retention, and (f) the alternatives to retention.

Historical Overview of Retention

United States

Grade retention became an issue in public education in 1860, when the school system started organizing students into grade levels and began promoting them to the next grade level based on their mastery of academic skills. Grade-level grouping allowed teachers to create more uniform groupings of students to whom instruction could be addressed more effectively (Owings & Magliaro, 1998). As a result, students who failed to make adequate progress in their academic achievement were often held back or retained (Owings & Magliaro, 1998). In her article "Repeating Views on Grade Retention," Powell (2010) reviewed historical studies relevant to retention and social promotion. First, Powell (2010) reviewed Keyes's 1911 study that compared students who had been either promoted or retained during a seven-year period; it "suggested that

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

21% of the repeaters did better after repeating the grade and 39% did worse" (p. 91). Keyes's (1911) research also claimed that almost 25% of students had been retained at some time between first and ninth grade and that there was a "high percentage of students who dropped out of school after the 8th grade, rather than risk repeating a grade" (p. 91). Powell (2010) also reviewed Klene and Branson's 1929 study, in which they examined "students who would possibly be retained and concluded that promoted students benefited more than those who were retained" (p. 91). Caswell's 1933 study, called *Non-Promotion in Elementary School*, examined contemporary research on retention and found that retention sent a message of failure to a student**.** Powell's (2010) review also looked at Arthur's 1936 study of the achievement of 60 first graders who were retained as measured by a pre- and posttest process. Similar to Klene and Branson's (1929) results seven years earlier, Arthur found that on average students who were retained did not learn any more in two years than did their socially promoted peers. Powell concluded with a review of Goodlad's 1954 comparative study on the effects of retention and social promotion, which found that students who were retained did not succeed as well as the students who were promoted.

In 1983, the National Commission on Excellence in Education published *A Nation at Risk*, which revealed the decline in student achievement scores; lenient policies like social promotion were believed to have caused a decline in the quality of American education (Roderick, 1995). There was little confidence in public education so many school systems introduced stricter promotion and retention policies (Roderick, 1995). These were often tied to student performance on standardized tests, and they resulted in an increase number of children being retained (Owings & Magliaro, 1998). The No Child

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

Left Behind Act (NCLB) of 2001, recommended that grade retention be used as an intervention for students performing below grade-level expectations, which resulted in an increase in the number of students who were retained following the implementation of NCLB (Lazarus & Ortega, 2007; Picklo & Christenson, 2005;\). NCLB required that schools be held accountable for student success and for closing achievement gaps (Silberglitt et al., 2006).

In a landmark study, Jackson (1975) found that "there is 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). However, retention continued to be used for students who struggled to meet grade-level expectations academically, socially, or emotionally. Nine years later, Holmes and Matthews (1984) followed up Jackson's study; after studying the effects of retention on elementary and junior high school students' achievement and on socio-emotional outcomes, they also found that socially "promoted students were better off than their retained counterparts" (Powell, 2010, p. 92), stating that "those who continue to retain pupils do so despite cumulative research evidence showing that the potential for negative effects consistently outweighs positive outcomes" (Holmes & Matthews, 1984, p. 232). In 2009, Allen, Chen, Willson, and Hughes conducted a fourth meta-analysis of grade retention; they concluded that promoted students benefited more than retained students.

Even though the use of grade retention as an educational intervention for low-achieving students has varied over the last 40 years, it has continued to be a common educational practice. The continued poor achievement of students, particularly inner-city, minority youth, has driven several states to pass laws forbidding social promotion

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

and requiring schools to retain students. Although the empirical evidence on grade retention in the United States varies greatly, the literature shows that the results of retention are generally negative. After almost a century of research, it is clear that retention does not benefit students. Yet, schools continue to debate the question: Do we promote students regardless of their academic ability, or do we retain them?

United Kingdom

In the United Kingdom school systems, grade retention is either not allowed, or it is not implemented where it is allowed (Goos et al., 2013). As a result, children are normally expected to progress through school within their own year group. According to the 2009 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) survey, less than 3% of students in the United Kingdom had been retained in either primary or lower secondary education, while retention rates were higher than 30% in other countries, including Belgium, Spain, France, Luxembourg, and Portugal (Goos et al., 2013). The United Kingdom's Key Stage model is very unique: there are neither specific requirements that children should progress to a new age-related group each year nor legal requirements about how schools should be organized. However, there is a fundamental principle, protected in legislation, that education should be suitable for a child's age, ability, and aptitude. Therefore, the structure of the curriculum is designed to accommodate differences in a student's ability and academic performance, and schools organize their teaching groups based on their particular student body. Children with different levels of performance are normally taught with their own year-group, and they are placed 'out of year-group' only in certain circumstances (Goos et al., 2013).

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

In United Kingdom around 1824, David Stow became the first scholar to address how to organize children above the age of six in elementary schools (Gillard, 2011). He also considered a graded system of elementary education for children between ages two or three and six, as well as juvenile children between the ages of six and 14. For the first half of the 19th century, few established schools used his grading system due to criticism of his system due to its cost, the fact that school hours for students were short, and a lack of teachers (Gillard, 2011). Unlike the United States, which by the 1830s had established a public school system based on a common education for all children, England had allowed a divided school system to develop in line with its class structure.

In 1903, the Board of Education adopted a new policy for the training of teachers that required teachers to be more dedicated to the instruction of children under the age of 11 (Gillard, 2011). The works of Dewey, Montessori, and Edmond Holmes lead to a growing interest in both the intellectual and social development of students and to a consideration of how retention would fit into how students received efficient elementary instruction in reading, writing, and mathematics (Gillard, 2011). In 1931 and 1933, the United Kingdom offered a specific style of education that "despite good efforts to be developmentally appropriate, . . . resembled all the features of the elementary system in terms of curriculum, cost, economy, large classes, outdated, and inadequate buildings" (Galton, Simon, & Croll, 1980, p. 33 as cited in Gillard, 2011). Also during this time, the principles of child development were beginning to influence the education being offered to younger children due to the growth of developmental psychology and the writings of Dewey (Gillard, 2011).

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

Teachers in the 1960s, especially those in primary schools, experimented with progressive styles of teaching, including child-centered learning, open plan schools, discovery methods, creativity, and spontaneity (Gillard, 2011). In 1961, Williams summarized the philosophy of the era:

> Differences in learning ability obviously exist, but there is great danger in making these into separate and absolute categories. It is right that a child should be taught in a way appropriate to his learning ability, but because this itself depends on his whole development, including not only questions of personal character growth but also questions of his real social environment and the stimulation received from it, too early a division into intellectual grades in part creates the situation which it is offering to meet. (p. 146 as cited in Gillard, 2011)

By 1967, education in the United Kingdom was defined by a child-centered approach; Plowden pointed out that "at the heart of the educational process lies the child" (p. 7 as cited in Gillard, 2011). Plowden's report went on to say that "individual differences between children of the same age are so great that any class, however homogeneous it seems, must always be treated as a body of children needing individual and different attention" (p. 25 as cited in Gillard, 2011). The report also noted that one of the main educational responsibilities of the "primary school is to build on and strengthen children's intrinsic interest in learning and lead them to learn for themselves rather than from fear of disapproval or desire for praise" (Plowden, 1967, p. 196 as cited in Gillard, 2011).

The 1988 Education Reform Act stipulated that all maintained schools teach a basic curriculum and implement attainment targets that consisted of knowledge, skills, and understanding. Children were expected to meet these targets by the end of each key stage. The new National Curriculum established mathematics, English, and science as

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

the three core subjects; it also set up six foundation subjects: history, geography, technology, music, art, and physical education (Gillard, 2011).

Patten's 1992 white paper, *Choice and Diversity: A New Framework for Schools*, presented the concepts that children have different needs and that education should be geared toward local circumstances and individual needs. This white paper greatly influenced the 1993 Education Act (Gillard, 2011). Similarly, the 2009 white paper *Your Child, Your Schools, Our Future* gave schools the freedom to create high standards. The paper also addressed several topics related to promoting student progress: a student's learning should be personalized to meet their individual academic, health, and well-being needs; schools need to have partnerships with other schools in order to offer a wider range of services and to share teaching specialists; schools should be encouraged to be flexible and innovative; and teachers and support staff should be offered advanced professional training (Gillard, 2011).

As in the United States, education in the United Kingdom has under gone many changes. Whereas retention has been a significant part of the system in the United States over the years, the United Kingdom's educational reforms have focused on smaller class sizes, better development practices, teaching to each child, providing teacher education, meeting each child's needs as an individual, and addressing the needs of the families. Considering the similarities between the two systems, why has retention remained an option for low-performing, under-achieving students in one country, but not the other?

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

The United States' Cultural Beliefs Regarding Retention

The practice of retaining students in the United States is "overwhelmingly accepted" by teachers, parents, and the general public regardless of grade level (Tomchin & Impara, 1992, p. 202). Shepard and Smith (1989) noted that "beliefs held by individuals are related to beliefs held by others in the same environment; beliefs appear to be interwoven within school structure and social climate" (p. 330). Witmer, Hoffman, and Nottis (2004) claimed that the decisions that people make are based on their beliefs.

McCollum, Cortez, Maroney, Oanh, and Montes (1999) pointed out that teachers spent up to seven hours a day with students and that they believed that their opinions on students' academic skills have a major impact on whether to retain or to socially promote a student. Tanner and Galis (1997) noted that "the teacher is the single most important person in the conclusion to retain" (p. 108). Despite the fact that research has indicated that retention is not an generally effective practice for students who are not meeting grade level expectations (Jimerson, 2001), teachers who believe retention is beneficial will often retain those students (Bonvin, 2003). Xia and Glennie (2005) stated that teachers are "often unaware of the research of retention" (p. 4). Even when teachers were presented with the research about retention, they were not offered alternatives; furthermore, "they lack time, resources, and administrative support to identify and implement other effective intervention strategies" (p. 4). Retention was easy to implement because it often appeared to have immediate gains, and it did not require the creation or additional funding (Xia & Glennie, 2005).

Tomchin and Impara's 1992 study focused on the beliefs of teachers regarding retention and why teachers retained students in Grades K-7. The results from this

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

landmark study indicated that all teachers of Grades K-7 believed that retention was an acceptable practice that could prevent students from failing and that could motivate students to work harder. The study also found that teachers believed that retention was not harmful prior to fourth grade and that teachers were less likely to retain students after fourth grade because they believed that retention would have a negative impact on a student's self-esteem. Tomchin and Impara (1992) also identified the factors that influenced a teacher's decision to retain or socially promote a student: academic performance, maturity, ability, gender, and age.

Okpala (2007) conducted a study of 37 kindergarten teachers to better understand their beliefs about retention. The study revealed that kindergarten teachers believed that retention was a necessary intervention to increase accountability and educational reform. The study participants believed that academic ability, attendance, social maturity, emotional maturity, and physical maturity should be the major reasons for kindergarten retention.

Witmer et al. (2004) also studied teachers' beliefs regarding retention, including what teachers considered when making decisions about retention. Seventy-seven percent of the teachers believed that retention was an effective practice that would help keep the students from failing the next school year. Third and fourth grade teachers agreed that retention was an effective practice; however, these teachers were not aware of the actual effects of retention on students. The majority of teachers stated that their personal experiences with retention impacted their knowledge and beliefs about retention. Witmer et al. concluded that the first step in changing the practice of retention, which has been

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

proven to be ineffective, was to effectively instruct educators about the current research regarding it.

Despite the limited research conducted regarding principals' beliefs on retention, it is essential to try to understand their beliefs. As the instructional leaders of schools, they help shape teachers' beliefs about child development, and they should inform their educators about the consequences of retention, including specific interventions. Based on interviews with principal from the Los Angeles Unified School District, Cannon and Lipscomb (2011) discovered that many principals perceived some benefit to retention, while other principals believed that it was ineffective and that it could have negative long-term effects on students. Those who were proponents of retention also believed that it was not a better option than socially promoting a student who would struggle the following year. As with the teachers, the principals interviewed felt that retention should only be implemented during the earlier elementary school years, such as kindergarten and first grade. The majority of the principals in the study agreed with the idea that "academic performance is the main indicator of the need for retention" (p. 15) and that decision makers often lacked knowledge of the student's "maturity and social skills … when making retention recommendations" (p. 15).

Xia and Glennie (2005) reviewed a series of studies regarding the public's beliefs about retention. They found that the general public perceived retention as a logical choice, because it appeared to help students to grow academically, improve their social skills, and become better motivated to work harder; the public also believed that it would increase educational accountability. According to the *31st Annual Phi Delta Kappa/Gallup Poll of the Public's Attitudes toward the Public Schools* (Lowell & Gallup,

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

1999), “72% of the respondents favor stricter standards for promotion even if it means that significantly more students would be held back” (as cited in Xia & Glennie, 2005, p. 2). Other studies revealed that the public viewed social promotion as “detrimental” to low-achieving students, because they feared that such students might fall further behind their peers. Xia and Glennie concluded that the general public, who do not work in academics, lack the knowledge and understanding of the potential long-term effects of retention.

Retention Policies in the United States

Two significant reform efforts created pressure on educators about student accountability: the National Commission on Excellence in Education’s 1983 report *A Nation at Risk: The Imperative for Educational Reform* and the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. Despite the wide ranges in academic and social/emotional abilities within individual classrooms, policy makers continued to expect the achievement gap to narrow (Martin, 2010). As a result, some states (Florida and Texas) and some school districts (New York and Chicago) adopted strict promotion policies that resulted in retention for under-achieving students (Burkam, LoGerfo, Ready, & Lee, 2007). Hong and Raudenbush (2005) informed policy makers and educational practitioners that the data from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study-Kindergarten cohort provided little evidence to support either a policy that encouraged retention or one that banned it. However, the cohort data did reveal that kindergarten retention left most students even further behind and hindered their cognitive development during the repeated school year, while the at-risk students who were promoted appeared to have a better chance of academic success.

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

The America Federation of Teachers (AFT) conducted a study in 1997 of retention policies across the country, which found that 78 of the 85 largest school districts had policies regarding social promotion and retention (Bowman, 2005). However, there was a very little in common between the policies regarding "standards for promotion, who makes the decision to retain or promote, educational alternatives for students who are failing, and how districts go about making their retention rates public information" (p. 43). Most importantly, the AFT study noted that the lack of a clearly defined academic standard lead to a significant number of districts who lacked adequate retention policies (Bowman, 2005).

In 2005, Zinth updated the Education Commission of the States' overview of student promotion/retention policies. His brief indicated that states took a variety of approaches when determining grade promotion or retention. For example, many states had multiple policies throughout the state; 18 states had policies that specified an assessment be used in determining student eligibility for promotion or retention; three states specified that districts use locally determined tests; and two specified the use of a combination of state and local assessments. In Minnesota there are policies that "authorize—but do not require—districts to use state assessments to determine student eligibility for promotion or retention" (p. 1). On the other hand North Dakota as a state has no policy.

According to Bowman (2005), it is essential that schools critically examine both their retention policies and how they respond to the demands of national standards when making decisions about whether to retain or promote a student. The decision to retain a student should be made on an individual basis and only after other options have been

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

considered. She suggested that "districts should develop clear policies regarding retention and promotion. Such policies will help teachers make sound recommendations and decisions around this issue" (p. 45).

Demographic Norms of Retained Students

Nationally, no statistics are kept on grade level retention; however, according Jimerson, Woehr, Kaufman, and Anderson (2004), it was "estimated that at least 2 million students are held back each year, and 30–50% of students are retained at least once before ninth grade" (s3-61). Warren and Saliba (2012) claimed that, "in 2008-2009, about 447,000 public school students [were] retained. About 3 in 10 retained students—roughly 130,000—repeated the first grade" (p. 325). Importantly, they noted that they "make no claims about whether these numbers are higher or lower than they *ought* to be, but we would note that 447,000 is many students in just 1 year" (p. 325).

Beebe-Frankeberger, Bocian, MacMillian, and Gresham (2004) conducted a study in which they identified common demographic issues regarding students who were retained. First, they found that such students closely resembled their counterparts with special needs. Second, their results showed reliable differences between students who were promoted and all students who experienced academic difficulties, regardless of interventions. Finally, Beebe-Frankeberger et al. noted that students who were retained were twice as likely to be absent from school, had attended more than one elementary school prior to retention, and were more than likely from a low-income family.

Wilson and Hughes (2009) examined three factors—child, classroom, and family—to determine which variable(s) contributed to whether or not a school chose to retain a child. Their results showed that variables such as academic skill, age, and a

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

disadvantaged economic status were all significantly related to retention, while gender was not a variable. They noted that students who had been retained displayed low ego resilience and were more hyperactive. The student's family/home environment was also an important variable that determined whether or not a child was retained; this variable encompassed parent communication, a parent's positive perceptions regarding school, and parents' aspirations for their child's educational achievement.

After analyzing 91 studies about retention, Xia and Kirby (2009) concluded that "retained students are more likely to be male, minority, younger than their peers, of low socioeconomic status, and living in poor households and single parent families" (p. x). The National Association of School Psychologists (2003) and Jimerson et al. (2004) also found that males were at the highest risk of grade-level retention, especially those who were African American and/or Hispanic, had a late birthday in relation to the school year, were developmentally delayed, had attention problems, lived in poverty, came from a single-parent household, had parents with low educational attainment, or had changed schools frequently. The National Research Council (1999) and Hauser (1999) noted that "15 percent of pupils are retained between ages 6 to 8 and ages 15 to 17" and that "retention rates are much higher for boys and members of minority groups than for girls or the White majority" (as cited in Hauser, Pager, & Simmons, 2000, p. 1).

Griffith, Lloyd, Lane, and Tankersley (2010) analyzed the data from NCES (2006) and found the following norms:

> Recent national data show that more African Americans than Caucasians (16% and 8%, respectively), more boys than girls (13% and 6%, respectively), and more students from households in the lowest quartile than the middle two quartiles or top quartile on SES (16.9%, 10.6%, and 3.9%, respectively) have been retained. (p. 52)

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

Research completed by Barnett, Clarizio, and Payette (1996) and by McLeskey and Grizzle (1992) revealed that the "majority of students with specific learning disabilities are retained at least once prior to the time when they are determined to be eligible for special education" (as cited in Griffith et al., 2010, p. 52). Griffith et al. (2010) noted that there were several possible reasons why a student might have been retained: "low academic achievement, deficient social–emotional skills, low parental involvement, lack of prerequisite skills for the higher grade level, and political motivations" (p. 52-53). Lastly, Wu, West, and Hughes (2010) found that the student's physical size was a factor when teachers considered retention.

Effects of Retention

For the last several decades, researchers have analyzed studies to evaluate the effects of retention on student achievement (Holmes, 1989; Jimerson, 2001). In fact, research suggests that retention can cause students to fall further behind their peers and can have negative consequences, including lower academic achievement, poor self-esteem, a higher likelihood of drop out, negative long-term, and educational costs (Jimerson & Renshaw, 2012; Jimerson, Pletcher, & Kerr 2005). Despite this research-based information, retention continues to be the option for students who fail to reach academic expectations (Schwerdt & West, 2013).

In the RAND study, Xia and Kirby (2009) noted that "children in early grades such as kindergarten or 1st grade are often retained on the grounds of behavioral problems stemming from socio-emotional immaturity" and that an additional year of school was considered "a gift of time" to allow young students to reach the maturity level required for academic success (p. 12). However, in a review of 16 studies, Shepard and

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

Smith (1989) found that an extra year of kindergarten resulted in non-academic student achievement. Not all of the negative consequences of grade retention were apparent immediately (Bowman, 2005).

Temporary Gains

Jimerson et al. (2005) observed that even though a student who had repeated a year might show some academic improvements within the first few years, numerous studies showed that those achievement gains would decline in later years. Eventually, the students who were retained would "level" off or perform worse than the students who were socially promoted. As a researcher, I must ask myself, how can educators, policy makers, and other researchers make these findings as it is hard to have a controlled group? Also, Jimerson (2001) claimed that students who were retained would not catch up to their peers unless they had specific, targeted interventions.

Negative Academic and Social Impacts

Jimerson et al. (2005) noted that for "most students, grade retention had a negative effect on all areas of academic achievement and social and emotional adjustment" (p. 11). Of the areas affected, a student's reading skills were the most negatively impacted. "Sixth graders found retention as of one of the most stressful life events, similar to the loss of a parent and going blind" (p. 11).

Retention and Dropout

Research has shown that students who were retained were not only more likely to drop out of school than their socially promoted peers, but that retention was one the most powerful predictors of a student dropping out of school (Jimerson et al., 2002).

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

Negative Long-Term Effects

Jimerson et al. (2005) found no evidence to support the belief that retention had any positive long-term effects on a student's academic or personal achievements. In fact, adolescences who had experienced retention were more likely to experience a variety of long term challenges: aggression, low self-esteem and self-concept, poor relationships, and compromising behaviors, including emotional distress, smoking, alcohol and/or drug abuse, sexual activity, suicidal intentions, and violent behaviors (Jimerson et al., 2002). Furthermore, students who had been retained were less likely to receive a diploma by age 20 or to enroll in post-secondary education than their socially promoted peers; they were more likely to be unemployed and to live on public assistance; and there was a stronger correlation between adults who had been retained being in prison than adults who had been socially promoted (Jimerson & Ferguson, 2007; Joyce, Darlington, & Murray, 1983). Although studies have continued to show that retention appears to negatively impact the future of retained students, can one definitively state that it is actually due to retention alone? It is also difficult to establish a causative relationship between retention and the various negative outcomes. Therefore, is it just retention or a combination of factors?

In their 2010 report, Wu et al. presented the results of a four-year longitudinal study that examined the impacts of first grade retention on external and internal student behaviors. Ultimately, the study "concluded that while retention might have bestowed social advantages in the short-term, it had detrimental effects on social acceptance in the long term" (p. 149). Considering the detrimental effects of retaining students, why is it still a relatively common practice in the United States?

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

Alternatives to Retention

The first step in preventing student failure and retention is for schools to better identify students who struggle with learning, as it is "imperative that educators at the school level pay attention to the individual needs of the low-performing students likely to be retained" (Smink, 2001, p. 6). Researchers Smink (2001) and Jimerson et al. (2004) made it clear that additional time, extra help, and an individualized approach were important design elements in the development of prevention and intervention programs.

As a guide for developing more successful programs, Smink (2001) suggested that schools working to reducing retention should identify student problems as early in the school year as possible and intervene as soon as problems are identified. In addition, he noted that there should be continuous monitoring of a student's progress to ensure that the extra help and time is positively affecting the student's learning.

Jimerson et al. (2005) stated that "there is clearly no single silver bullet intervention that will effectively address the specific needs of all low-achieving students" (p. 13). However, they also pointed out that no matter what alternatives or interventions are implemented, it is imperative that they are evidence-based in order to assist with the academic and socioeconomic development of low-achieving students. Jimerson and Renshaw (2012) observed that the most "effective alternatives to retention and social promotion focus on prevention, early intervention, and intensive targeted interventions" (p. 14). Jimerson and Renshaw (2012) identified two models—Response to Intervention, or RTI, and Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, or PBIS—that had been successfully implemented in schools to help problem solve on an individual basis, as well as to monitor the interventions that had been implemented. They also observed that "no

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

single intervention will address the diverse needs of all students; instead, schools should use a comprehensive approach involving multiple interventions" (p. 16).

Algozzine, Ysseldyke, and Elliott (2002) suggested there were alternatives to retention when students did not meet predetermined academic standards. Researchers Jimerson et al. (2005), Protheroe (2007), and Jimerson and Renshaw (2012) suggest the following evidence-based alternatives to retention (a) aligning instruction with standards; (b) using systematic assessments to identify student needs; (c) implementing changes to grouping practices, such as switching to a multiage classroom model; (d) selecting interventions that accelerate learning and/or that extended learning time; (e) establishing quality pre-kindergarten programs;(f) training and hiring qualified teachers, and encouraging them to adopt a variety of teaching strategies; and (g) implementing comprehensive, school-wide programs that promote the psychosocial and academic skills of all students.

Phillips (2005) added the following strategies to the list of best-practice interventions for schools (a) support the successful practices that are already being used by highly effective teachers and assign those teachers to work with the struggling students; (b) utilize small intervention classes; (c) provide intensive, continuous professional development to help teachers who are working with struggling students; and (d) use formative assessment data to guide every aspect of the intervention.

It is essential that schools have an explicit, school-wide intervention plan that uses both data to identify barriers to achievement and research-based interventions to close the achievement gap for those students who are struggling to meet grade-level expectations.

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

Summary

This chapter presented a literature review of six key areas related to retention: (a) the history of retention in the United States and the United Kingdom; (b) the United States' cultural beliefs regarding retention, (c) the retention policies in the United States, (d) the demographic norms of retained students, (e) the effects of retention, and (f) the alternatives to retention.

I will describe the methods that I used in my comparative research study in Chapter III, and I will report the themes and categories that emerged from my study in Chapter IV. In Chapter V, I will discuss the similarities and differences between the United States and England by explaining the connections between my theoretical matrixes and conceptual frameworks. Finally, I will summarize and discuss my findings and the implications of my international comparative study in Chapter VI.

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODS

Historically speaking, many regions of the United States have allowed teachers, administrators, and parents to retain students based on personal beliefs and on school and/or state retention policies, while the United Kingdom has socially promoted most students: Retention is not considered as an option in most schools of the United Kingdom. This comparative study had a two-fold purpose as it examined how two regions of these countries, North Dakota of the United States and Surrey of the United Kingdom, support students who are under-achieving as measured by standardized tests who otherwise might be retained. First, by comparing the practices in both countries, this study aimed to answer the question: Why do educators in the United States continue to retain students when research has shown it is not beneficial to students? Second, it sought information to help teachers, parents, school administrators, and school policy makers as they make decisions about whether or not to retain students.

This chapter provides an overview of my research process. First, it covers my initial study, my background and subjectivity as the researcher, and my research questions and methods. Then, it discusses the forms of data that I collected, and my data selection process. Next, it presents how I prepared for and conducted interviews, how I analyzed the data, and which validation strategies I used. Finally, the chapter explores possible ethical issues.

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

Initial Study

In preparation for this study, I conducted a small pilot study in a rural North Dakota school district. In order to understand why teachers retain students, I collected and analyzed interview data from three elementary school teachers and two principals in the district in North Dakota to better understand their beliefs about grade retention. My purpose was to find a theory about the role of teachers' and administrators' beliefs as well as the school's policy in student retention. The interviewees answered four questions:

1. Why do educators continue to retain students when research shows retention has negative effects on students?
2. What steps are taken before retention is considered?
3. What does retention look like in the schools?
4. What alternatives are implemented before retention is considered?

My analysis of the initial data suggested that parent requests, student performance, social/emotional/behavioral skills, and state standards were the key dynamics that influenced the phenomenon of retention. This phenomenon supports researchers Xia and Glennie's (2005) statement that the public (parents) and educators believe that one more year at the same grade level will help the student "catch-up" with their peers.

The initial study only began to address teacher and administrator beliefs and policies on retention. In it, the location was focused, the number of participants was small, and there was insufficient time to conduct classroom observations to verify teacher accounts. Therefore, I expanded my study to add participants in Surrey, England. I then

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

used qualitative methods to compare the results of the initial study with those of other school districts in North Dakota, United States and Surrey, England. The results showed which interventions were used and which alternatives were implemented prior to retaining a student, as well as some best practices for classroom instruction, and what retention looked like in the classroom when it did occur.

Researcher Background and Subjectivity

Qualitative researchers must know and understand how beliefs influence the development of data. Glesne (2011) and Roulston (2010) stressed that a researcher must be careful about bringing pre-existing opinions into the observations and interviews, because they could cloud the findings. As a parent and a primary teacher, I came into this study with some pre-existing thoughts and opinions about retention due to my personal experiences. However, I was also open-minded about current research and interested in finding out how the data and literature supported and/or contradicted each other regarding the retention of students in the United States. As a primary (K-2) elementary school teacher of 17 years who has retained students, it was necessary for me to acknowledge my experiences with retention (Creswell, 2007). I have been in favor of retention as a means of intervention to improve academic achievement when students are not ready to be promoted to the next grade. During this study, I strove to put aside my beliefs which were based on my beliefs regarding the effects of retention

Since researcher bias may compromise validity in any qualitative study (Glense, 2011), I made an effort to remain objective and to conduct my research with a clear, objective lens. In the best interest of being trustworthy and reliable, I tried to set aside my preconceived notions and my personal experiences regarding retention. This allowed me

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

to participate in each interview with fresh eyes, to respond to participants' answers with probing questions based on their experiences and perceptions, and to ensure integrity of my emerging theories.

In my years of teaching, I have first-hand knowledge of retention and both the positive and negatives impact it has on students. Despite knowing that literature and research do not favor retention, I felt that deciding a child's future based on statistics was not in their best interest. Having a first-grade boy retained in my classroom and seeing him being "teased" by other classmates for being older displayed the negative effects of retention. However, I have also had students in my classroom who was socially promoted and who struggled with academics and with being socially immature. Even though I knew that retention should be considered as a last resort, I also believed that there were times when retention would be appropriate for some children. Since I had success with the retention of a kindergarten student 10 years ago, I found myself believing that the research was wrong and that what I was doing was in the best interest of the students. Since then, I have retained three more students. In the past I believed that giving a student one more year in the same grade would help them catch up socially, academically, and/or emotionally, and would help them become more confident in and less frustrated with their learning.

Now that I have dug deeper into the research, I have a different view of retention—I better understand the long-term effects that retention has on a child. After reading the results of Jimerson (2001), I know that the four students mentioned above were likely successful for one year, but that their achievement probably leveled off in subsequent years. Jimerson also stated longer-term implications, like high school

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

dropout rate, behavior issues, and low-paying jobs. After reading Jimerson's (2001) conclusions, I re-examined my own beliefs about retention. In light of my personal experiences, my knowledge of current research, and my beliefs on retention and social promotion, I have further explored the educational value of retention practices. The question remains: What do we do with students who are not making adequate progress according to state standards in the United States? When retention becomes the answer and we know the negative implications of retention, then the most important question is: Why do educators in the United States continue to retain students when research has shown it is does not benefit students?

Research Questions

My research study used grounded theory to provide an in-depth look at retention policies and practices by using a variety of data collection methods—interviews, observations, and analysis of school district retention policies—to seek answers to the following research questions:

1. Why do participating educators in North Dakota, United States continue to retain students when research shows it has negative effects on students?
2. Why do educators in Surrey, England avoid retention?
3. How do school systems in North Dakota and Surrey meet the needs of students who are not performing at grade level?
4. What alternatives are being used in North Dakota before retention is considered?

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

Qualitative Methods

I used qualitative methods—specifically grounded theory methods—to develop a theory about the continued use of retention, as well as the use of alternatives to retention. Qualitative methods are the best choice for this comparative study for three reasons. First, qualitative methods allowed me to observe participants in their classrooms as well as their professional development. Second, the qualitative method is used when the research study addresses problems that are unknown and need further exploration, which retention versus social promotion clearly did. Third, qualitative research let me do fieldwork without being controlled by predetermined categories and allowed me to study the selected issue in depth and detail (Creswell, 2007; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

According to Glaser and Strauss (1967), grounded theory is used to "generate or discover a theory," making it an effective frame for this research study (Creswell, 2007, p. 63). In grounded theory, participants need to have experience with and/or knowledge of the research topic, which helps in the development of the theory and helps to frame further research. The participants in both the United States and England had experiences and personal thoughts regarding retention, allowing the research to develop and became grounded in the data collected along the way (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). I wrote memos for each interview and observation, and for every stage of policy analysis, while using other researchers such as Jimerson (2001) and Xia and Glennie's (2009) to strengthen the data; these memos were the "core stage" in the process of generating theory (Glaser, 1978). They were especially important in England, as my time was limited. At the end of every day, I would not only go over my data—memos, observation and interview notes—but I would also reflect on the day, which allowed me to make important, thoughtful

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

decisions for the next day. I needed to know if I had to clarify a comment, statement, etc. This allowed me to be clear about where I needed to go with my data collection.

Data Collection

I also used qualitative research methods to collect and analyze data in order to obtain answers to the research questions; this allowed me to "understand, promote change, and deconstruct the current understanding of topics" (Roulston, 2010, p. 76). I was able to use documents, interviews, and observations for data analysis in my research while maintaining consistency.

As my data collection in England was very limited by time constraints, I had to be very efficient: I carefully planned out each day of my one-week stay; I used all of my time wisely; and I took advantage of any down time such as lunch, recess, and breaks to converse with teachers. I analyzed the data after my return to the United States, and I used email for follow-up questions regarding clarification and for further probing. Due to location to my setting I was able to conduct observations and interviews over a two week time period.

Throughout my collection process, I used theoretical sampling—"sampling on the basis of emerging concepts" (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 73)—as this method allowed me to continually collect data and to generate a theory. Therefore, I collected, coded, and analyzed the data as I tried to understand why the United States uses retention for low-performing students. Theoretical sampling also allowed me to decide what data needed to be collected next and where to go in order to develop the theory as it emerged (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). I will provide greater detail later about how this study used observations,

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

semi-structured interviews, and reviews of school retention policies as data collection tools.

Selection

As my research study covered two very different geographic regions, I used two different selection tools. In North Dakota, I practiced purposeful sampling to choose participants who were familiar with the research problem and who could help develop my understanding of retention (Creswell, 2007). In Surrey, England, a gatekeeper selected participants by making formal contacts with local schools regarding the opportunity to conduct international research.

In the pilot study, I received permission from the Assistant Superintendent of a North Dakota school district to contact individuals with whom I was already acquainted (Appendix C). These individuals were diverse in their experiences with education, as well as with their perceptions of retention. I emailed the five interviewees and described the study in detail and agreed upon time and location.

In order to conduct my research in Surrey, England, my advisor, Dr. Pauline Stonehouse, acted as a gatekeeper—someone who can provide access to a site and assist researchers in locating participants (Glesne, 2011). She made the initial contact with a Head Teacher in Surrey and, after seeking written permission (Appendix D), the head teacher then set up interviews with, not only the teachers in her school, but also with other local individuals with vast educational experiences in administration and in other school settings such as a home-school worker and a special education teacher.

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

Site Selections

In the United States, I wanted to find a site in North Dakota that I would be able to drive to within a reasonable amount of time, that would have easy access for conducting observations, and whose participants would be willing to have follow-up interviews if need be. Ultimately, I found seven qualified professional participants who agreed to participate in this study without hesitation.

Dr. Stonehouse selected the site in the United Kingdom on my behalf; she chose schools in Surrey that were demographically similar to the North Dakota school, although one school differed in that it was set up as a multiage school.

Site Participants

In the initial study, the participants from the United States were certified teachers and licensed administrators at an elementary school (ages 5-11). In England, the participants were certified teachers, head teachers (the British equivalent of an administrator), a home-school educator, and a school psychologist at an infant school (ages 4-7). I also interviewed a parent whose child attended the infant school. Since this is a comparative study, and the British participants included professionals beyond the initial study's scope, I went back to the initial North Dakota school and interviewed a school psychologist and a special education teacher. The participants in both locations had experience at a variety of grade levels and had varying years of experience at their respective jobs.

In order to conduct research in North Dakota Public Schools, I requested and received consent from both the University of North Dakota Institutional Review Board (Appendix A) and the district's Assistant Superintendent. In order to do so in England, I

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

sought and was granted permission by the Head Teacher in Surrey. With regards to the participants, I provided each one with the Participant Consent Form (Appendix A). As I wanted their support in addition to their consent, I also shared my expectations of them as participants and informed them of the purpose of the study.

Interviews

In preparation for the interviews, I created interview protocols based on Patton's (2002) six types of questions: experience/behavior questions, opinion/value questions, feeling questions, knowledge questions, sensory questions, and background/demographic questions. I intentionally wrote open-ended interview questions, as they created space for follow-up questions (Creswell, 2007). Participants' beliefs and statements guided my question selections during the course of each interview. Below are a few questions from my interview protocol for the United States study:

1. What is your philosophy on retention?
2. Describe the key elements of your retention program.
3. Describe the key elements that inform your policies, practices and procedures in the area of retention.
4. What alternatives are there to retention?

Participants in England were asked questions of a similar nature that had been revised to reflect the fact that retention is not a common practice in their educational system. Their questions included:

1. What do you do when students do not meet the criteria for passing the grade/meeting the expected proficiency level for their grade?

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

2. What is the current educational position on retention and social promotion in your school?
3. What are your thoughts or concerns regarding grade retention?
4. What are suggested alternatives to retention?

After establishing my question set, I considered the interviews themselves. I chose to conduct semi-structured, individual interviews face-to-face with each participant, as this allowed for a guided conversation to take place. This interview format also helped me to build a rapport with the participants, to easily describe the research project, and to clarify any confusion that arose as we talked. According to Glesne (2011), the researcher is the primary instrument in qualitative research. To establish professional credibility, I provided a brief description of my background, including my 17 years as an elementary school teacher and my own interest in the topic of retention. All of these choices worked together to create a safe environment for both the participants and for me.

As I wanted to gain a new understanding of retention and its alternatives, I went into each interview with an open mind and an unbiased lens: I wanted the participants to share their perspectives on and experiences with retention. I consciously approached each interview with the same mannerisms so that the participant's position did not affect or intimidate me as I conducted the interview (Glesne, 2011). Additionally, I only deviated from my preset questions when I asked a follow-up question or when a probing question was needed for clarification (Glesne, 2011). Such probing for clarification and additional information also reinforced the validity of the study (Creswell, 2007; Glesne, 2011).

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

Prior to collecting data in the form of interviews, I provided each participant with an informed consent release and the time to read it and ask questions for clarification. After they signed the consent form, I assured them of their anonymity (see Ethical Considerations below) and confidentiality within the research process. To ensure confidentiality, I will keep all consent forms, interview documents, and other data in a locked file cabinet for seven years; no one other than myself will view it, and I will only do so for data analysis purposes.

The interviews were held at locations that were convenient for each participant. I requested and received permission from each participant to audio-recorded their interview; as we talked, I jotted down field notes to assist with accuracy during transcription (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw, 1995). This allowed me to obtain substantial information and to crosscheck that information for data reliability; the clear and concise questions outlined earlier further allowed me to collect reliable and trustworthy information. After each interview, I transcribed the audio-recordings verbatim for later use in the qualitative coding process (Saldaña, 2009).

Observations

In both the United States and the United Kingdom, I had the opportunity to conduct classroom observations of the teachers that I interviewed. During these observations, I gathered information on the interventions and/or classroom procedures—such as differentiating instruction and using small individualized group work—that the teachers were using for all of their students, not only those who were struggling academically. Each observation took approximately one hour; my primary goal was to gather information without participating (Patton, 2002). During the observations, I

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

collected data in the form of field notes. These notes provided additional support and added to the triangulation with the teacher interviews and district policies on student retention; they also added to the validity and consistency of the observations in both the United States and the United Kingdom.

Documentation: Retention Policy Analysis

To further understand retention, I went online to locate and review the school board policies regarding retention of 17 different school districts in North Dakota. I discovered that many small, rural school districts do not post their board policies online, so I contacted four such districts in North Dakota and asked for their retention policy. Only one of those schools responded: In a short email, they stated that the district does not have a policy and has not retained a single student in 17 years. The larger districts, including the school district in my study, posted a copy of their Retention/Social Promotion Policy online. I used the website https://www.gov.uk/governement to locate documents regarding retention policies in Surrey, England. As retention is rarely to never used in England, it was hard to find any kind of policy that addressed retention; I also searched for policies about social promotion, but those were also lacking. In an effort to determine if such policies existed, I ask each of the Surrey participants about their policies, and each confirmed the lack thereof.

My analysis of the most current retention policies from the United States and United Kingdom became the third piece of data triangulation. As I reviewed the retention policies, I took extensive notes, which I then coded for terms and procedures using the "generic" coding process (Saldaña, 2009). This allowed me to find patterns that either

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

confirmed or contradicted the information collected from other sources; such patterns generated new questions for further investigation (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Data Analysis

According to Creswell (2007), grounded theory uses "detailed procedures for analysis" (p. 160). Such procedures include three phases of coding: open, axial, and selective (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Before starting to analyze the data, I prepared and organized it. First, I transcribed the audio-recordings of the interviews, as stated earlier. Next, I submitted my transcriptions, field notes, and document review notes for peer reviewing and member checks in order to make sure the data was unbiased and accurate. Then, I started to analyze the data through the detailed coding process. All interviews, observations, and school districts' policies in this study were coded the same way using pens, pencils, and different colored markers. I chose not to use computer programs such as HyperRESEARCH, because I found it easier to spread out the documents and papers, and to rearrange them quickly as I coded them. Finally, the data was put into a table, which I examined closely in order to discover a theory on why retention is still used in the United States.

Open Coding

As Creswell (2007) pointed out, "the researcher examines the text" during the open coding process (p. 160). Therefore, I examined the data through a series of more and more detailed open coding steps. First, I read through all of the interviews and observations a couple of times. During the last of these early readings, I started to create tentative broad themes or codes of data by reading the texts line for line (Creswell, 2007). I coded common keywords and phrases from the interviews, observations, and documents

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

by assigning each its own highlighter color. Second, I used descriptive coding to develop categories with short titles, some which were a single word (Saldaña, 2009). I then labeled the data with the appropriate category. After completing this part of the coding process, I typed all of the codes and themes into a table in a Word document; this allowed me to easily group codes with similar meanings. From here, I further developed categories by returning to the descriptive coding process. Finally, I refined the categories until all data was "exhausted" and categories were "saturated" (Creswell, 2007, p. 160). In keeping with Strauss and Corbin (1998), I worked to create fairly abstract categories while maintaining very concrete ideas, as this would greatly help me generate a general theory.

Axial Coding

After completing the open coding process, I employed axial coding to compare the categories in order to start making "relational statements or a hypothesis" (Creswell, 2007, p. 160). The process of open coding helped to develop six broad themes from this study: (a) educators knowledge of and beliefs about retention, (b) the outcomes of retention, (c) interventions/strategies used for low-performing students, (d) how retention is determined, (e) the reasons for retention, and (f) the experiences of educators. Although these themes effectively summarized the data, I chose to further analyze the data through the process of axial coding. Using pattern codes, I identified themes based on the subcategories from the data, and I examined the relationships of these themes to form a theory (Creswell, 2007; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Through this process I was able to thoroughly analyze the data and to identify a central idea or phenomenon regarding why retention is a continually used in the United States.

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

Selective Coding

Finally, I integrated all of the categories, patterns, and themes into a theory through the process of selective coding, which Creswell (2007) described as "generating propositions or statements that interrelate the categories into a coding paradigm" (p. 161). I then completed a Grounded Theory Diagram, "The Paradigm," to illustrate the interrelationship of causal conditions—factors that influence the core phenomenon—and contextual and intervening conditions—specific and general factors that influence strategies—and to show the outcomes from using the strategies (Figures 3 and 4). These diagrams illustrate (Chapter V) the theory concerning why retention is still used in the United States (Saldaña, 2009; Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

Validity

I ensured the validity of the study by using member checks, by clarifying biases, and by seeking peer review (Creswell, 2007; Maxwell, 2005). First, I conducted member checks to minimize personal biases by sharing the data with the participants to confirm researcher interpretations (Patton, 2002). These ensured that the themes identified were demonstrated clearly by the actual data that emerged during the study, rather than my views as the researcher. I also used the observations as a form of checking to either confirm or disprove the interview data. For example, one participant said that they "teach" to each child based on that student's ability; this comment was affirmed when I observed that participant conducting reading groups: I heard and saw the teacher addressed the individual needs' of each learner. Being able to observe the participants solidified the data collected during participants' interviews.

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

The second way that I strengthened my interpretations was by conducting an audit trail in which a peer and an advisor assessed the competency of the study and the absence of bias on the part of the researcher. They affirmed that my efforts to maintain accuracy and to avoid being judgmental resulted in descriptive and diagnostic notes (Glesne, 2011). I explored emerging issues through peer debriefing in the form of both formal and informal discussions.

Third, I kept a detailed reflective journal to ensure validity. In this journal, I included the date, the time, and the location of each of each observation. Most importantly, I took thick, rich, detailed notes during the participant observations and interviews. In the margins of the journal, I would write little "AHHA" or "HMMMM" notes, which meant that I wonder what that was about; I also notated "yes" when something supported previous observations or interviews. These notes not only provided additional information when triangulating data, but they also allowed me to clarify notes with participants, thus avoiding misunderstandings (Creswell, 2007).

Finally, I further ensured validity by triangulating observations, interviews, and documents. I concentrated on gathering data from participants through interviews and observations, as well as document analysis. In early October 2013, I presented my experiences and the beginning stages of data gathered from England at UND. The Head Teacher that I worked closely with was present at my presentation and was able to verify the data: Her exact words were, "You got it, Kim!"

Ethical Considerations

As an elementary school teacher who has retained students, I was concerned that my knowledge and retention experiences would interfere with my ability to be unbiased

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

during the interviews and observations (Glesne, 2011). However, I was able to maintain objectivity, as well as listen reflectively to the participants during observations and interviews by being a non-participant during the observations and not adding my comments or views into the interviews. As discussed earlier, I was able to create a safe environment and to maintain a professional relationship by being nonjudgmental yet probing for clarification as needed.

Most importantly I wanted to ensure privacy for the participants. Glesne (2011) so therefore, I created pseudonyms (Tables 1 and 2). These pseudonyms were assigned to participants to "protect the rights of participants to privacy" (Glesne, 2011, p. 172). Participant pseudonyms will be important in Chapter IV and V.

Table 1. North Dakota Participants.

Pseudonym	Title	Years of Experience	Interview or Observation
Jamie	Principal	31	Interview
Cody	Principal	36 (Retired)	Interview
Grace	Teacher	7	Interview & Observation
Abbey	Teacher	4	Interview & Observation
Olivia	Teacher	18	Interview & Observation
Gayle	Special Education Teacher	15	Interview
Chelsea	School Psychologist	10	Interview

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

Table 2. Surrey School Participants.

Pseudonym	Title	Years of Experience	Interview or Observation
Karina	Head Teacher	20+	Interview
Esther	Head Teacher	30+	Interview
Margaret	Head Teacher	10	Interview
Susan	Teacher	5	Interview and Observation
Karen	Teacher	17	Interview and Observation
Lily	Teacher	15	Interview and Observation
James	Home-School Teacher	10	Interview
Christina	Special Education Teacher		Interview
Kyle and Jane	Parents		Interview

Summary

This chapter described the methods that I used in my comparative research study: the qualitative methods, my role as researcher, participant and location selection, data collection, data analysis, and how I addressed research validity and ethical considerations.

Chapter IV will report the themes and categories that emerged from the interviews, observations, and review of retention policies. In Chapter V, I will discuss the similarities and differences of retention practices in the North Dakota and Surrey by explaining the connections between my theoretical matrixes and conceptual framework in

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

greater detail. Chapter VI will include a summary and discussion of my findings and the implications of my international comparative study.

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

Chapter IV

FINDINGS

Purpose of Study

Historically, many regions of the United State have allowed teachers, administrators, and parents to retain students based on personal beliefs and on school and/or state retention policies, while the United Kingdom has socially promoted all students. Retention is not considered as an option in most schools of the United Kingdom. This comparative study had a two-fold purpose as it examined how two regions of these countries, North Dakota of the United States and Surrey of the United Kingdom, support students who are under-achieving as measured by standardized tests. First, by comparing the practices in both countries, this study aimed to answer the question: Why do educators in the United States continue to retain students when research has shown it is not beneficial to students? Second, it sought information from Surrey, England's beliefs and philosophy to help teachers, parents, school administrators, and school policy makers as they make decisions about whether or not to retain students.

My goal for this study was to understand educators' beliefs about grade retention, and why it remains an accepted practice in education in the United States. If research continues to show that grade retention has negative effects on a child, why is it still practiced today in the United States? This study will be important to educators who have struggled with the question of whether or not to retain a student for two reasons. One reason is that this study will help to establish why teachers continue to use retention as an educational option for low-performing

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

student when a substantial amount of research has shown it to be potentially damaging to their educational development. The second reason is that this study will offer effective alternatives that are being used in England.

North Dakota Results

For this small study, I observed and interviewed three teachers, two administrators, a special education teacher, and a school psychologist who all held positions within the same school district in North Dakota in the spring of 2012 and the winter of 2013.

Table 3. North Dakota Participants.

Pseudonym	Title	Years of Experience	Interview or Observation
Jamie	Principal	31	Interview
Cody	Principal	36 (Retired)	Interview
Grace	Teacher	7	Interview and Observation
Abbey	Teacher	4	Interview and Observation
Olivia	Teacher	18	Interview and Observation
Gayle	Special Education Teacher	15	Interview
Chelsea	School Psychologist	10	Interview

Moving from Codes to Themes

To gain an overall sense of my coded data, I read through my transcripts several times to explore the connections between codes and to reflect on the greater meaning of each participant's observations and interview responses and of my review of policies (Creswell, 2011). As I worked, I began to notice similarities and differences in codes among my North Dakota participants. Through further analysis, I began to notice commonalities among the codes. For example, the codes Research Knowledge and Grade Level Expectations both illuminated the

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

impact of an educator's role in student retention. I used these commonalities to establish categories (see Figure 1). After color-coding and combining my codes into categories and analyzing parallels and contrasts among participants, five themes emerged: (a) beliefs and research knowledge impact why educators use retention, (b) outcomes of retention, (c) three main factors inform retention decisions, (d) educators implement interventions prior to retention, and (e) multiple challenges surround retention**.**

Based on data obtained through interviews, observations, and policy review, these themes suggested the assertion that retention is determined to be an option by educators and parents when a student is not at grade level-academically, socially, and/or emotionally. Based on beliefs, research, and interventions, educators used data to determine that retention is a viable option despite the outcomes indicated by research.

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

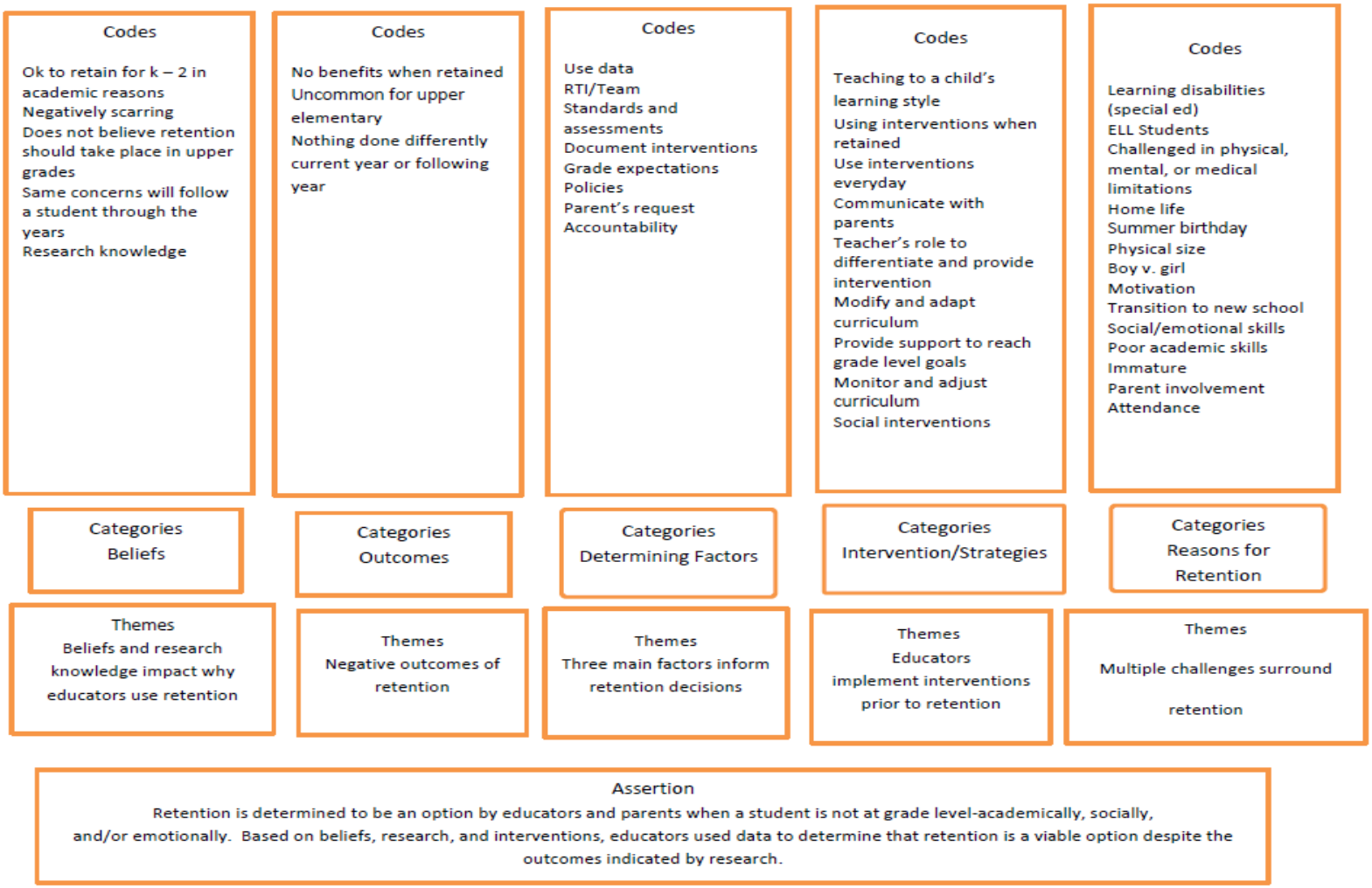

Figure 1. North Dakota Code Map for Data Analysis

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

Theme 1: Beliefs and Research Knowledge Impact Why Educators Use Retention

The participants' views regarding retention varied greatly, as did their knowledge of the relevant research. The teachers had little or no research knowledge to inform their beliefs, and there was a strong belief that retention only be used as last resort; the administrators strongly believed that retention should not be used unless a parent requested it. The two administrators, the school psychologist, and the special education teacher were aware of the research about retention, while the three teachers were not aware of what current research says about the implications of retaining a student. Educators appeared to ignore research and to retain students based on their personal beliefs as teachers. In each of the teachers' interviews, I never heard "research says . . ." Instead, I heard "I believe . . ." or "I think . . ."

Abbey had "heard" that students in third grade above should not be retained, but she had not read anything specifically. Still using the word "believe," she focused on the notion that she never thought of retention as a solution when discussing students who were struggling either behaviorally or academically with her colleagues. She believed that the reason that she did not retain students was because it was uncommon to retain upper elementary school students. She continued to note that students in kindergarten or in first or second grade would have to have "severe limitations to their learning and to show drastic academic concerns" before being considered for retention.

On the other hand, Grace and Olivia believed that it was acceptable to retain a child in prior to third grade, especially in kindergarten. They both noted that retention should be avoided if a child's concerns were solely academic, and if the student was showing some gains, even if they are minimal; in such cases, effective teaching and planning needed to take place, not

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

retention. They believed that the student needed to have adequate and effective modifications, accommodations, and support during the following year.

Gayle, the special education teacher, noted in a highly generalized statement, "Retention may be beneficial if numerous factors can come together." I asked her to further explain what she meant by "numerous factors." Her follow-up responses were still vague, and they focused on the word "believe" rather than on what she "knows" to be true based on research.

The two administrators, Jamie and Cody, both noted that their beliefs were well known throughout their school and that it was understood that any retention outside of a parent's request needed to have sufficient documentation to support it. Cody clarified his position by saying that the only time he would retain a student would be when the parents wanted it, but he would strongly discourage requests from his staff by providing his professional expertise on the negative effects of retention.

All three teachers, who each had experience at a variety of grade levels, believed that academic performance played a role when considering whether or not to retain a student. Abbey, who was currently teaching fourth grade, believed that retaining a child in the upper grades might not be the best practice. However, when she had a student who was not making academic gains as a fourth grader, and who was the lowest achieving student in all of her math and reading groups, she considered retention. Not only was this student not making adequate academic progress compared to her peers, but she also had no drive or will to apply to her schoolwork. Olivia, who was teaching second grade at the time, believed that if a student was very young for their class, then retention might allow them time to develop some maturity to handle school better. She also believed that retention should only happen in kindergarten. All of the participants shared that they felt that retention would be a positive decision if everyone—parents,

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

teachers, and administrators—supported the decision and worked together as a team to support the needs of the student during the following year.

Participants stated that teachers lacked the time, resources, and support to implement interventions. The three teachers did not ignore the research; rather they had no knowledge of the current research regarding research. When I asked if they would continue to retain students if they knew that it was not in the best interest of the student, two of the three said, "yes." They felt that at times there were not any other options. On the other hand, the administrators knew what the research said about retention; they both stated that they would let a teacher retain a child if the individual case met their own personal criteria, such as the student missing a lot of school, being immature, and having transitioned poorly from another school, or if the parents were on board with the decision. Therefore, the administrators were ignoring research and instead basing their decisions about retention on their own personal beliefs.

Cody was a Title I coordinator before he became an administrator. When he held that position at another school, he had a number of meetings with that building's research dropout coordinator. As a result, he was very aware of research that correlated retention and student dropout rates. Cody told me that he did not want to encourage retention knowing the outcomes down the road, so he presented the research to his current staff during their staff meetings, and he was clear that they had to make a good case for retaining a student. He also informed his staff about how the school district would be impacted by retention. However, he noted that the teachers continued to discuss retaining students.

Jamie also shared current retention research with his staff. He felt that his staff reflected on the research and that they were more careful when making the decision about retention after he had presented the research on the connection between retention and dropout rates. However,

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

he noted that it was “hard for the primary grade teachers to make a connection to what happens when the kids move up in the grades, perhaps 10 years down the road.” Although he was proactive by sharing research and his staff agreed retention was a last resort, Jamie’s school continued to retain students. I observed three retention meetings that included the administrator, special education teacher, current teacher, next grade level teacher, and counselor; in all three, all of the committee members supported retention of the respective students. Little to none of their conversation was centered on research or best practices, and little evidence of completed interventions was provided.

Theme 2: The Outcomes of Retention

The study data suggested that participants perceived that there were no educational benefits to student retention, that retention was uncommon for upper elementary students, and that nothing was done differently for students. None of the participants noted a time when retention was positive or had turned out in the child’s favor. Instead, comments included “we found that a lot of the behaviors didn't change,” and “the same issues followed him the second year,” and “academics kind of stayed the same but even plateaued a little bit.” Gayle noted a personal story with retention that deeply reinforced these concerns:

> Personally, I have an older brother who is 50 years old. My parents followed the recommendation of his first grade teacher, and he was retained in first grade due to academic and social immaturity issues. My brother struggled through his entire school career. He didn't like school. Just recently at age 50, he told my dad how angry he was that my parents retained him. He stated it was hard to deal with “feeling dumb” and having neighborhood friends say unkind things to him. He said he struggled every school year until he graduated with not being in the class of his same age peers . . . In a perfect world . . . I believe children should stay with their same age peers and receive instruction— and additional academic interventions—at their academic level.

The three teachers spoke extensively about instances in their teaching careers when they had a retained student in their class. Abbey found that one such student’s academics were still

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

below grade-level expectations, they still lacked social skills, and they acted young and "immature." She also stated, "You would have never known this child should be in fifth grade." Grace and Olivia also recalled that when students repeating a year with them still struggled with behaviors, social skills, and academics. Olivia was very direct with her comment: "I found it didn't make much difference for that student as the years went on. He continued to have difficulties in school." She as reluctant to retain students, but she required that there be a clear, concise plan in place when a child was retained, otherwise retention would be counterproductive.

While Olivia only considered retention as a last resort, Grace shared that there was no change in the student's education when they repeated a grade with her:

> I don't do anything differently. We don't have any extra support. I can use my para and individualize the curriculum, but other than that I do nothing. They just do the normal curriculum and they get pulled for interventions such as literature group or Reading Recovery.

Abbey shared a specific story about one of her students. The fourth grader was struggling academically, socially, and emotionally. Through an innocent conversation with this student's first grade teacher, Abbey discovered that the student had been repeated first grade. Three years later, this student still did not meet grade-level expectations. The first grade teacher told Abbey, "Well I can see that holding her back did not do any good." Abbey mentioned that the student's developmental immaturity was the primary reason that she was retained; Abbey noted that the student was still quite immature—she used baby talk in Abbey's fourth grade classroom—and she was academically behind her peers. Both her math and reading scores were significantly below grade level. What concerned Abbey most was that this student should have been in fifth grade. This experience made Abbey acknowledge that retention is not the best option, because after looking through her academic records, nothing had been done differently

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

for this student in the school years following her retention. Abbey also pointed out that even the student's home life had a huge impact on her educational experience, which is something that we as educators cannot change.

Olivia noted that she understood why some students were retained when their learning was challenged by medical, physical, or mental restrictions. She had known some students who automatically repeated kindergarten due to limitations in their learning; the teachers believed that these students unfortunately would not be able to perform at grade level with their peers. The teachers and/or parents believed that these students would benefit from more quality time in the school system and that the additional year would provide them with more life and social skills to better themselves in the future. However, Olivia did not see these benefits. She had previously had two students who were retained; neither student experienced positive results. She observed that retention resulted in "stigma from peers, lowered self-esteem in academics and in relationships with teachers and peers." Olivia believed that retention scars a student emotionally and that it is the teacher's job to coach and teach students by setting high expectations and by correctly aligning modifications and accommodations to the needs of their students.

Theme 3: Three Main Factors Inform Retention Decisions

It became apparent during data collection that policies, parent requests, and student data were the driving forces behind the decisions surrounding student retention. In the beginning stages of collecting data, I wanted to know how school districts acknowledged retention and social promotion. I compared school districts across North Dakota and Minnesota by looking at schools of similar size, location, and demographics.

The most significant commonality between the smaller districts (fewer than 10,000 students) in both North Dakota and Minnesota was lack of posted policies. In fact, I contacted a

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

few of the districts personally, and they noted that they did not retain students. One administrator told me that not once in 35 years had he had a teacher bring up the idea to him. The larger school districts (10,000 or more students) in both states had policies posted on their district websites. I looked at five school district policies in North Dakota, and each district's policy had the same language for purpose, policy, and the definition of retention. Only a few of the districts had updated their policies within the last couple of years, while many others were outdated.

Of the 17 districts in North Dakota and Minnesota that I analyzed, only three of them had what I would call an "outstanding policy." All three had a clear, concise policy with timelines, specific procedures, and criteria for retention. Someone from outside of one of these districts could easy follow their policy and know that they did not retention lightly. Each of the policies was written specifically for the individual district; they were not cookie-cutter policies.

The North Dakota school district where I conducted this study also posted their retention policy on their website. The 2003 policy states:

> Placement, promotion, retention, and acceleration shall be made in the best interests of the student after a careful evaluation of all the factors relating to the advantages and disadvantages of alternatives. Every effort shall be made to identify special needs and talents of children early in their school careers so appropriate placements can be made. Final decisions on placement, promotion, retention, and acceleration shall be made by the principal after consultation with teachers, parents, and other resource persons. The preference of the parents shall be honored to the greatest extent possible.

It is important to note that on one hand, all five of the participants in my study said they followed the school district's policy when considering retention, but on the other hand they all also said that "As a district there was never any written policy." Instead, they believed that retention policies were more building specific and that retention was determined on a case-by-case basis. Grace and Olivia noted that they had a Response to Intervention policy; when they had a child

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

that they were concerned about, they brought the situation to a team and then tried different interventions while monitoring the student's progress. This process was "loosely" done, and there were no specific guidelines or procedures. Abbey also noted that she was not aware of her school's policies or procedures for retention. However, her philosophy was that all students could and would learn if provided with appropriate and reachable expectations and support. She personally felt that retention was "looked at too quickly." All participants felt the need for a clear, concise policy, and they looked to other districts for examples. However, other than the three districts discussed earlier, many of the districts that I analyzed had vague retention policies.

In five of the seven interviews, the most common reason for retention a request from the parents. In her interview, Grace commented on this many times. In the past two years, she had two parents request retention. When talking about her experience with retention during the previous school year, she stated, "Parents really wanted him to be retained. I didn't think it would have mattered. I think he would have done fine going on and not being retained." During the current school year, she had already had parents who wanted their child retained. Grace was hoping that the team process would give her a chance to educate the parents that it would be in their child's best interest to move to the next grade. Ultimately, however, the parents make the final decision, despite an educator's professional opinion. In another interview, a principal reinforced the influence of the parents by sharing his experience from the previous year's kindergarten class:

> I had a couple of kindergarten retentions that were requested by parents because they knew that their child(ren) would be retained from the very beginning. They knew when they enrolled them that they were young, and yet the plan was to have them go through kindergarten twice.

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

Not all of the interviewees necessarily believed that retention was the best solution for students who were not meeting grade-level expectations, but they all had and would retain students at the parents' request, because ultimately the parents make the final decision. When referring to trying to educate parents about the consequences of retention, Cody noted that "getting parents on board is sometimes hard and sometimes it is impossible." The message I received throughout the study was that the educators retained students per parent's request, but that they strongly discouraged it.

All seven participants believed that retention was being discussed less frequently because of the move toward differentiated instruction and the use of the problem solving process (Response to Intervention, or RTI). Teachers were continually collecting data—such as running records, daily observations, and assessments—about their students' performance. Next, the teacher presented their data to the RTI team, which consisted of a principal, school psychologist, special education teachers, classroom teachers, and school counselor. Then, the RTI team would suggest possible options for the students.

Olivia used the district's grading scale to determine retention. If a child had a lot of partially proficient or novice scores/grades on their report card, then she considered retention. She clarified by saying that the student had to have such scores in more than one academic area. A student in kindergarten or in first or second grade with severe limitations to their learning and who presented drastic academic concerns would also be considered for retention. Another teacher referred to Title I services that automatically came up as part of a retention referral; such services would then be discussed by a team including the teacher, the principal, and the school psychologist.

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

During my research, I had the opportunity to observe a student retention meeting. In this meeting, the regular education teacher presented her data on the student. Using a standard school district retention questionnaire form, the administrator asked the teacher clarifying questions such as: What are the strengths and needs of student? How is the student compared to his/her peers (academic and social/emotional)? What steps were taken to have the student be at grade level? After about an hour of hearing the teacher's data and responses, each committee member presented their response about whether the child should or should not be retained. The school counselor and psychologist noted that they believed that the student had needs that would not be met with another year in the same grade. They also said that they believed that this particular student needed to be with his peers and to continue with small group instruction and differentiation of academics with more support with social groups. Despite the in-depth conversations that had taken place during this meeting, the ultimate decision would be up to the parents. Within one week, the parents would meet with the principal and classroom teacher to discuss the findings of the retention meeting.

After the meeting the principal and I had a brief conversation. His last comment summed it up well. Cody said, "Hopefully, the three of us—parents, teacher, myself, and perhaps counselor—can come to a mutual agreement on what is best for the child." All of the educators interviewed expressed a similar idea at some point in their interview. "It is not an easy decision to make, do we retain or promote?" "It is a difficult decision to make, but we are doing what we think is best for this child at this time." But my questions remained: What is "best"? What does "best" mean?

In this study, only one interview eluded to more accountability and the stress it puts on teachers. Other teachers found that grade-level expectations are higher and they have to work

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

harder, but that they did not feel the pressure like their middle or high school peers. Cody believed that there had been an increase in teacher accountability at the elementary level. He felt that teachers were being held more accountable for the learning of their students, but they had not increased the number of retentions in his school district as a result.

Theme 4: Educators Implement Interventions Prior to Retention

Based on all seven interviews, it was evident that teachers were aware of the value of implementing researched-based interventions when students' academic and social/emotional needs necessitated it. From administrators to classroom teachers, they all believed that if there was a student struggling in their classroom/school, then as educators they should try to find interventions that would support that student's learning in the classroom, thus preventing retention. Abbey noted that she looked at her students' data first thing during each school year to prepare her to best reach each student. Regardless of their position regarding retention, the administrators, teachers, and school psychologist all agreed that they would modify or differentiate instruction and pull in different resources to best meet the student's needs, while always keeping high expectations for the student.

Abbey, Grace, and Olivia noted specific interventions they had either tried before retention became an option or that were implemented the year following retention. If the reason for retention was social or behavioral, then the students were placed in small social groups that met with the guidance counselors to work on social skills and that addressed or revisited specific behaviors. If the reasons were academic, then the students would be "reading and/or doing math in a small group."

Abbey talked freely about student currently repeating fourth grade in her classroom. Abbey had placed the student strategically in math and reading groups, not because the student

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

had been retained, but because Abbey used data to differentiate all of her students based on their individual needs. Abbey stated:

> The first thing I do every school year is look at data of my students to prepare myself and my teaching to best reach each student in my classroom and make sure I understand their learning strengths and needs. For my one student, I do bring in interventions that best meet her needs and monitor her progress from the beginning to the end of the school year. I use the same curriculum for every student in my classroom, fourth grade state standards. I then modify and pull in different resources that will best meet the student's needs, and most importantly I always keep high expectations for the students.

During my observation in Abbey's classroom, I observed how she conducted her classroom during math time. First, she taught a large-group math lesson using the school district's math curriculum that lasted for approximately 20 minutes. In her interview, Abbey had noted that after she had assessed her students on number concepts and number sense, she formed groups based on their needs regarding mathematical concepts such as structuring numbers, addition/subtraction, multiplication/division, place value, and numeral identification (forward and backward numeral identification). After the large-group lesson, the students quickly moved into their designated small groups. There were five groups of six students each. One group met with Abbey and worked on forward/backward number sequences in the range of 40 to 70; the rest of the groups met on their own: two groups worked on place value, one on structuring numbers to five, and the last group worked on structuring numbers to 20.

This observation confirmed Abbey's interview responses: She is very aware of the needs of ALL her students, and she differentiates math lessons accordingly. She believed it was each teacher's job to coach and teach students who were struggling while maintaining high expectations of the student. It was essential that her students had adequate and effective modifications, accommodations, and support in place.

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

I had a similar experience with Grace during my observation of her small group reading time. Like Abbey, Grace spoke about different interventions and groups that she used in her classroom and that were based on her reading assessments. Her lowest achieving student left the classroom to see a literacy teacher, while the rest of the students worked in groups based on comprehension, fluency, or vocabulary needs. During my observation, Grace worked with two of her reading groups for 20 minutes for each group. One group, consisting of five students, was what she called her "high" group. Group members, who were reading one grade level higher than their peers, focused on comprehension strategies. The other group, comprised of four students, focused on fluency; this group was just about at grade level.

While three of the group members silently reread their book-box books, she conducted the intervention—repeated reading—with the other student. About 30 minutes into the observation, the lowest performing group, who had been working outside of the room, came back and quickly sat down to read their books from the day before. Grace then briefly touched base with this group to do some letter/sound blending. Grace's observation confirmed what she said in her interview:

> I just believe that with the supports we have built into our buildings and the process of providing interventions that each student is on a continuum of development, and so teachers should differentiate their instruction.

Grace continued to state that teachers who were knowledgeable and came to their classroom with a variety of strategies would most likely help their students become successful learners. Abbey summed this up clearly: She "gears in on [her students'] learning styles, differentiates their learning, implements interventions for their individual needs, and clearly communicates with the parents."

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

When I asked all seven participants about what retention looked like, I received a few different responses. One administrator believed strongly, as he noted at two different times, that the retention team tried to determine what would be "different" during the repeated school year that could allow for the student to make enough gains to counteract the negative, long-term "social" consequences of retention. However, a teacher in this administrator's building stated, "This doesn't make sense. If the child couldn't do the curriculum the first time, will they really be able to be successful the second time around?"

Three of the seven participants claimed that there was not anything specific done differently with a student who had been retained. Jamie shared that while he understood there is a lack of research that supports retention, he also believed that some students could benefit from retention. He also stated that retention was a vital option used to address the academic needs of a student. However, the social/emotional needs were hard ones to reach. "I just don't think the ability to make up maturity is always there. You can make up academically but not maturity." Cody also mentioned that there just were not enough "alternative interventions for a retained student." Both administrators noted that they would never say no to a teacher who wanted to retain a student solely based on that student's social/emotional needs, because "no one knows better than the classroom teacher."

Finally, the number of interventions used to support a student in the classroom varied according to the services that were available in the school district and to what extent the teacher actually implemented them. Some schools had access to Title 1 funding activities for reading and math, Reading Recovery, social skills groups, and/or differentiated lessons. It was obvious that not all students had the opportunity to receive all of these services, as not every school in the district had access to all of these services. Gayle noted that no matter whether a child was

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

retained or socially promoted, the most important thing was to focus in on the student's learning styles, differentiate their instruction, and implement interventions for their specific needs, and most importantly to communicate with the parents.

Theme 5: Multiple Challenges Surround Retention

My analysis of the interview data led me to the conclusion that there are multiple challenges prior to and after retention; most of these challenges are beyond their control: parent involvement, academic and social/emotional skills, student motivation, demographics, English language skills, summer birthdays, gender, and physical size. Furthermore, the educator's role in the decision-making process is itself a challenge.

All seven participants noted that retention was one of the most difficult decisions to make as an educator. It was a decision that would have a direct impact on a student's life in both the short and the long term. No one actually knows the consequences of the decision. Cody, Jamie, and Chelsea noted that they sometimes felt like they were playing "god" with a student's life when deciding whether to retain or to socially promote a student. Chelsea made a comment that captured the sentiment of all of the participants:

> I believe teachers in general look at several factors when possibly recommending retention for a student: academic achievement, academic ability, attendance rate, child development (emotionally/physically), family situation / support.

As noted above, parents play a vital role in the decision to retain their student, but they also influence a student's performance at school in other ways. A parent's role can range from being actively involved in their child's education, to expressing their beliefs and knowledge about school, to being supportive or unsupportive of a school's decisions about their student. All seven participants noted that in one way or another, a parent's role in their child's education is either positive or negative. For example, the participants shared that many times, parents would

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

put their child in kindergarten knowing that the student would have to repeat the year. When I asked one principal to further explain this, he stated that both parents in the modern family now work and daycare is very expensive. "They want to save money and full-day kindergarten is cheaper than daycare." He did not blame parents for their decision. He stated that this past school year, he believed two students were retained for that particular reason. He also believed that because the parents were supportive and had what he called "strong" family values, these two students would be "ok," and retention would not have a negative impact on their educational experiences.

On the other hand, Chelsea confirmed the impact of a lack of parental involvement. Recently, a student had been retained because the team hoped that another year in kindergarten with better attendance and greater maturity would help him gain better academic skills before moving on to first grade. Even though his parents agreed to retention, his attendance continued to be a problem, and his parents did not encourage or support additional academic learning time, such as an after school program. Furthermore, they denied literacy interventions, as they did not want their child to be "different" than the other students. He still struggled, and in fact his behavior and attitude became an issue the following year. Chelsea noted that he grew into an "angry, unhappy" child. She now believes more than ever that "In a perfect world, I believe children should stay with their same age peers and receive instruction and additional academic interventions at their academic level."

A student's academic performance and maturity levels also influence their educational success. Students who were considered for retention showed a range of academic performance, from performing at grade level to not making adequate progress. They also ranged from immature to fairly mature for their age. My research data showed that these two factors were

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

sometimes mixed and matched—a student could be a high academic achiever, but be very immature, or a student might be a low academic achiever, but be very mature—which made retention a more difficult decision for some of the teachers who participated in this study. State and local assessments helped educators understand when a student was below grade-level expectations in one or more of the following areas: academics, social/emotional skills, and /or behavioral skills.

Olivia, a second-grade teacher, noted that she had never retained a student and believed that students who were struggling academically would be fine the next year with support. She believed that if teachers were truly differentiating for students in the classroom, then they could meet the needs of all the students. She also noted that if she had a student who was struggling in her classroom, then she would try to find the interventions that would support that student's learning. However, she would retain a student "if he/she were in kindergarten, and if the student happened to be younger (more immature) than most students." Abbey recalled one specific student whose kindergarten teacher wanted to retain the student due to underachievement in their academic progress. The student missed at least a third of his kindergarten year due to absences. He was an English language learner; two of his four older siblings had previously qualified for special education, while the two other siblings qualified for other Title I services. This student is now starting fourth grade and is still significantly below grade level in reading and math.

The study participants also pointed out the significant impact that age has on decisions about retention. Olivia believed that if a student was very young for their class, then retention might allow them to develop some maturity to handle school better. All three of the classroom teachers mentioned that they would only consider retaining a student if he/she were in

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

kindergarten and if the student happened to be younger than most students—if they had a birthday in the late spring or the summer—to allow for their maturity to develop. When I asked Grace for clarification, she stated:

> I guess I never really thought about retention and our policies in our district. Retention is not an easy decision, even when looking at my daughter. She has a summer birthday, and she took no interest in school. When she was in kindergarten, I would have kept her [in kindergarten] another year, from a parent's point of view. In kindergarten, it is easier to retain, but when they get to first grade it gets a little trickier. Third grade is the highest grade I would go to. Self-esteem is so important. I had a friend growing up who was retained in second grade because of her reading. It didn't bother her because of her personality. As they get older and in older grades like second or third grade, kids start to recognize that their peers are moving on. In North Dakota, we have so many neighborhood schools and close-knit schools, I think it would be harder as they go on, but whether I would say no, I don't know. I think it would be more about visiting with the kids and parents and getting both their views.

Cody, the administrator who was very knowledge of the retention research, noted, "There are some times when retention might be appropriate. For me, it has been along the lines of . . . are they ready for the [academic] things that they are being asked to do?" The school psychologist noted:

> I *may* support retention of a kindergartner / first grader if the teacher *and* parents believed strongly and could possibly demonstrate immaturity. For example, if the student just turned five years old during the summer, [if] the ability to focus, attend to task, or get to school regularly, would be improved by the child being a year older. The parents must also have a good understanding of how retention could impact their child socially / emotionally and have a thought out [a] plan of how they would address with their child to support him/her.

Conclusion

I found that all of the participants felt that they were doing what was in the student's best interest for individual success. While each of them stressed the importance of using retention as a last resort, I also found that they would retain students even knowing the negative factors of

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

retention, as well as having no control over the negative factors that impact a child and their education for the rest of their lives.

Surrey, England Results

For this comparative phase of the study, I observed and interviewed three teachers, three administrators, one special education teacher, one home-school worker, and the mother and father of twins in the Surrey, England school system in June 2012. Because I was unfamiliar with the school systems in a country of which I am not a native, I was challenged to comprehend very different educational policy and practices during my 10 days in England. I was fortunate to have been able to immerse myself in two school settings for a total of five school days: I was able to observe classrooms, attend data meetings, and to interact casually with the classroom teachers and other personnel to better understand the school's culture, climate, and policies.

Table 4. Surrey School Participants.

Pseudonym	Title	Years of Experience	Interview or Observation
Karina	Head Teacher	20+	Interview
Esther	Head Teacher	30+	Interview
Margaret	Head Teacher	10	Interview
Susan	Teacher	5	Interview and Observation
Karen	Teacher	17	Interview and Observation
Lily	Teacher	15	Interview and Observation
James	Home-School Teacher	10	Interview
Christina	Special Education Teacher	10	Interview
Kyle and Jane	Parents	NA	Interview

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

Moving from Codes to Themes

Similar to my analysis of data collected in North Dakota, I read through my transcripts from England several times to explore connections in codes, and I reflected on the broader meaning of each participant's observations and interviews (Creswell, 2011). I noted similarities and differences in codes among my Surrey participants by spreading out my work and grouping similarities into color-coded categories. When comparing the frequency of codes and subsequent categories and themes, I also compared the data generated through interviews and observations of each participant. Four themes emerged from my analysis: (a) all staff have a direct impact on students' learning, (b) assessments drive instructions and reveal areas of need, (c) multiple factors influence social promotion, and (d) instructional practices impact the learning of all students.

Based on data obtained through my interviews, observations, and policy review, these themes suggested the assertion that all staff have a direct impact on student learning through instructional practices, as well as through the assessments that drive instruction and reveal areas of need to provide interventions that prevent retention.

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

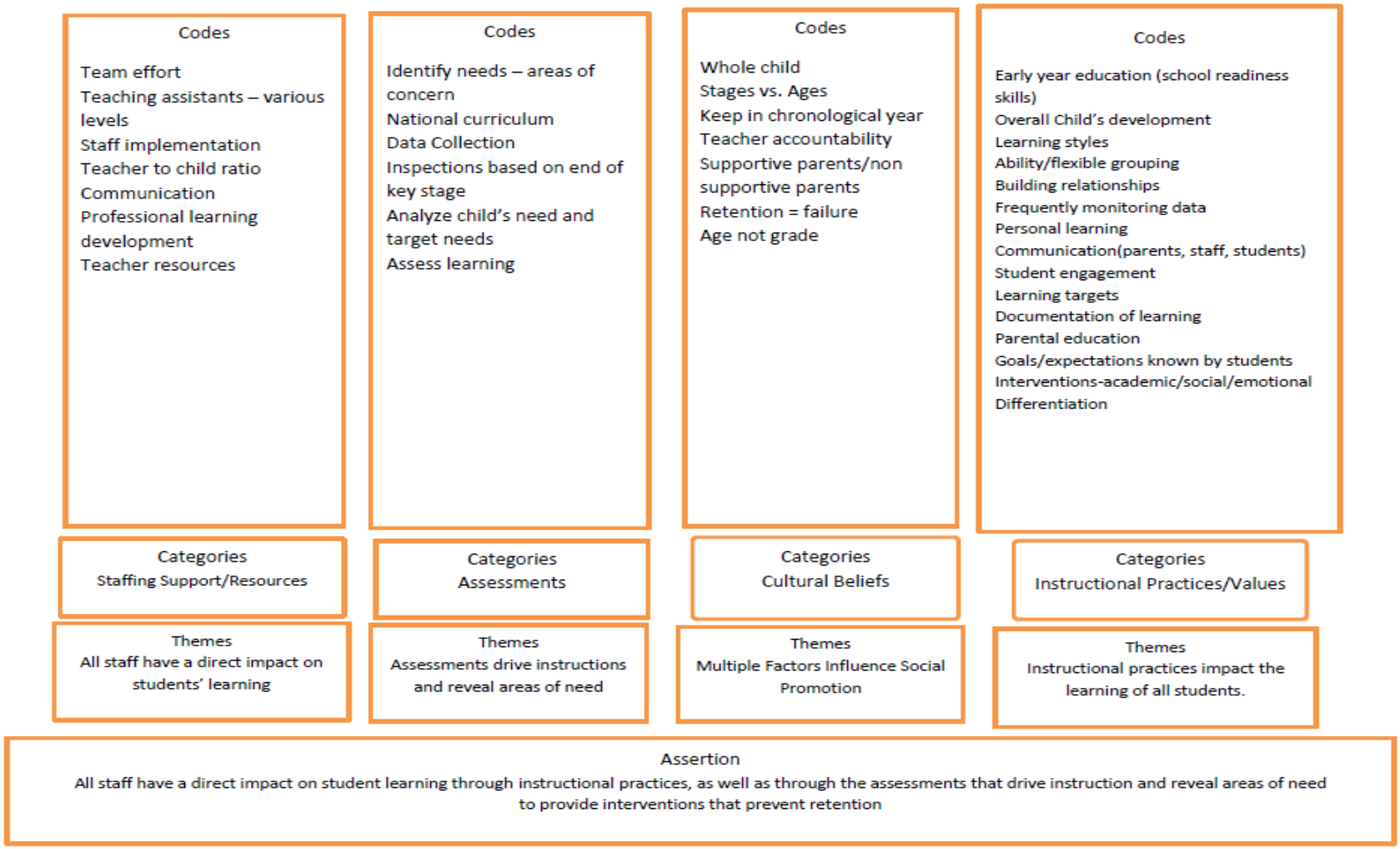

Figure 2. Surrey, England Code Map for Data Analysis

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

Theme 1: All Staff Have a Direct Impact on Students' Learning

My visits, interviews, teacher observations, and professional development planning sessions revealed that all of the staff—including teaching assistants—play a vital role in the success of students' learning. During my observations in both schools, I noticed that each classroom had several "extra" adults. For example, in one school, there were three adults for every 18 students. One of those adults was the classroom teacher, and the other two were teaching assistants, what the United States system would call paraprofessionals. During the interviews, I became aware of the roles of these teaching assistants and of their importance within the classroom. Christina, the special education director, noted that over the years, she had been able to establish "a very good team of teaching assistants." She continued:

> In England, we have different levels of teaching assistants. There is something called an HLTA, which is a higher-level teaching assistant, and then we have TAs, which are teaching assistants. My higher-level teaching assistants, I'm very fortunate to have. Two of them are actually qualified teachers, but chose not to teach. One of them actually teaches French throughout the school, but has done a lot of specialist training on children with language difficulties. The other one does an intervention which was created by an educational psychologist and is a very systematic, rigorous program that is used on a daily basis.

The three head teachers, Karina, Margaret, and Esther, all noted that their school system "heavily" involved their teaching assistants and provided them with a lot of training. Karina stated that what was most interesting was that her teaching assistants wanted to take on as much responsibility as the teachers, and they appreciated being members of the educational team. The three head teachers claimed that the teaching assistants not only had a positive, direct impact on student achievement, but that they also allowed students to have a better relationship with more adults. All three stressed that they were able to

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

use both teachers and teaching assistants throughout the day, week, and school year to facilitate or teach small student learning groups.

Karina noted that by using her general budget to employ full time teaching assistants, she was better able to support her students. She added that by having teaching assistants, “we’ve always got somebody there who can help either during a normal class lesson sitting on the side of that child, maybe doing some explaining or checking their understanding, or otherwise leading an intervention program.”

Esther mentioned that she had provided training for her teaching assistants, because they felt a little bit vulnerable because they were not teachers. She had some in-house training for them, led by teachers, and she brought in some people from the county to talk to TAs about how to record a student’s progress, what to look out for, and what questions to ask. Therefore, the assistants were well informed and kept informed. She believed that they valued their training, and most importantly that they felt valued because of the training.

Besides teaching assistants, Christina also discussed the important role of other professional educators in her school. Christina’s school received special funding that allowed her to employ a trained counselor who was able to work in the building one morning a week. Since this position was based on special funding, this counselor was only employed on a yearly contract. However, Christina noted that the counselor’s work was essential to the success of the students in the school. For example, I was able to watch through a classroom window as the counselor interacted with a particular student whose mother had just been diagnosed with cancer. This student had academic support in class as a result, but the extra emotional support through the counselor's work was an

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

important intervention as well. Christina reiterated that by intervening immediately and being proactive with this student, they were able to provide support for the whole child: emotionally, behaviorally, and academically.

Esther and Karina specifically discussed the value of having good staff that were "trained up" and that knew what each student needed in order to be successful. This key understanding of a child's needs allowed for the students to make good progress and to pass the key stage standardized tests and thus move successfully to the next key stage.

The level of communication among teachers and teaching assistants became apparent through the data collection process. All of the participants—teachers, head teachers, special education teacher, and counselor—spoke about the importance of communicating about a student's academic, social/emotional, and behavioral progress not only during the school year, but also from one year to another. Similar to North Dakota, Surrey schools had "report cards" or "progress reports" to note a student's grades. However, Karina noted that because of the small size of the schools in Surrey, the teachers had opportunities to meet on a weekly basis to plan for, assess, and discuss individual children. For example, the teachers discussed how the students were working in groups, their achievements and progress, and if they were ready for the "next group," or if they could work in a "higher group."

As I observed the five classrooms, I noted that teaching assistants and teachers communicated and interacted effectively with each other as well as with their students. It was clear which adult was the teacher, but I also noticed how the students worked with all of the adults in the classroom respectfully and successfully. Even though the teacher conducted the lessons, the teaching assistants worked in small groups, large groups, and

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

one-on-one with all students. I also noted that all staff moved freely about and appeared comfortable within the classroom. As an outsider looking in, I felt things moved smoothly and without "tension" in the room. Everyone appeared to know their roles and expectations, and the students worked respectfully with all adults in the classrooms. From my observations, it was also clear that all of the students were being "reached" in their personalized learning. During one 30-minute writing lesson, a teaching assistant and the teacher were able to reach all 18 students, while also taking anecdotal notes for "grades." Since all of the staff members knew their role and expectations, this record keeping ran smoothly, efficiently, and quickly. Clear communication between well-trained staff was vital to such classrooms success.

During a planning session, I had an opportunity to observe classroom teachers discussing their students. This planning session was towards the end of the school year, so it reinforced Karina's statement about sharing data: The teachers were sharing observations, progress reports, and anecdotal records from one key stage to the next. They discussed the strengths and needs of each student and created plans so that under-achieving students would start the next school year with interventions in place. The teachers discussed what interventions worked and what interventions needed to be tried again or abandoned for each child. Karina noted that this was feasible due to their small class sizes. When asked about students who were not making adequate progress, Esther noted:

> These children would either be given external support in or out of the class according to how far down the priority order they are, but then, as a school, we would also look to support these children who fall outside the norm. Now, which children we are talking about that is where the choice of the school comes into a play a little bit, and the results of the school, and we come back to employing

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

> extra support staff, whether it be a high-level teaching assistance, or special needs teachers, or just teaching assistants and support staff. Also, we discuss how it would be best to support this child—once week, for 10 minutes every day, just in class or other available options.

All three head teachers noted that they had conversations with staff about the students who were making good progress as well, and that some schools do that more and others do that less. Margaret specifically stated that "if any of our children drop by their points in any of their tests, the teacher needs to go and speak to the head teacher about it, and explain how they will address the scores." Similar to Margaret's school, all of the head teachers said that they had team meetings with staff, and that they met regularly with their leaders to talk about children who are making progress, be it good or poor progress.

The classroom teachers—Susan, Karen, and Lily—all stated numerous times during our interviews the importance of having quality teaching assistance, staff development for themselves as well as their assistants, and good communication between themselves and their assistants. They shared with me how each of them became an expert in a content area, and then provided staff development activities to the rest of the staff. During the after-school staff development, I had the opportunity to witness Susan providing new resources and information regarding the new science curriculum. This staff development ran smoothly as they made plans about how to implement the new science curriculum into their themes, as well as how they would educate their assistants. Because one staff member had become "an expert" in the content area, they all felt that they themselves became stronger without any one becoming overworked. I felt that this meeting was impressive, because they all appeared to be committed to the success of

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

their students and their school as a whole. Furthermore, I often heard the words "our" students and "our" school.

Theme 2: Assessments Drive Instructions and Reveal Areas of Need

Throughout the data collection process in the Surrey schools, it was evident that educators took many measures that addressed the students' needs before retention would be considered. They identified students' needs through data collection, used both initial and continued assessments, and analyzed the children's needs, all while focusing on the National Curriculum and keeping in mind the end of key stage inspections.

When I asked participants about retention, all of them noted that retention was not a common practice in their school system. Karina stated, "We don't operate our system like that. That wouldn't happen when you have children not making grade, because it does put pressure on the next year's teacher." She added that instead, they monitored class progress and year progress. For example, if the year three teachers had made a "pig's ear" of it—they had not done a good job at all—then that put extra pressure on the "authorities," who are equivalent to superintendents in the United States. Karina described her approach:

> Well, these children are falling off, what are you going to do about it? Do we need more professional development and training, or do I, as a head teacher, need to monitor the teachers a little more? What is it—what is this causing the problem? Or where are you being idle, in which case are you in the right place?

All of the teachers that I interviewed, and one of the head teachers—Margaret—had been a part of the education system in Surrey for approximately the last 10 years; they all believed that the educational standards were good, and that they continued to be good. They noted that at the moment they had the National Curriculum, which encompassed a

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

body of knowledge under several subject areas that the children needed to master by specific key stages. The curriculum was broken up into some key learning areas of knowledge and skills for instruction. The educators noted that there was a lot to help the students meet their appropriate academic levels.

Karen and Lily—veteran teachers with a minimum of 15 years in the Surrey education system—believed that the standards were "good" when they began teaching and that they had remained "good." However, they also noted that there was room for growth, and they had continued to try to make improvements, especially when dealing with children who were struggling. Lily noted that "while we still have a National Curriculum, it has been 'loosened' a little bit, but we generally follow it. [The students] have some flexibility in how they need to reach the standards for each key stage. There is a government that empowers us to what we're expected to cover and standards that are we expected to meet."

All participants noted that they had tried to implement a number of strategies. According to the teachers, they felt that as of "today" (June 2012) they had been unsuccessful, but that they had seen improvements. They were committed to continue to change and improve not only their instructional practices, but also their interventions, which they based on the initial and ongoing student assessments. Susan stated:

> I think the breadth of our curriculum and the quality of our curriculum is better since I've been here, and we have been able to add more "hands on learning," different learning styles, more memorable experiences, and then the spin off desire to get more engagement with the learning.

During my interview with Christina, the special education teacher, she pointed out that "if [a student were] slightly behind, then we'd look to close the gap, but the minimum we

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

would expect is not to fall behind. Once you fall below a certain level, that's when you get into special needs." She explained the system by walking me through her data collection forms:

> So for instance, green boxes here and the staff know well, because it is so nice and clear. These are expected levels for reading when they join year five. So these children are where they should be; these children are bright; these children (pointing to the yellow boxes) are slightly behind where they should be, and depending how low down here you go, this is no—it doesn't matter. (Pointing to the red boxes) Those two children I know for a fact would be on our special needs register, because they're too far behind for us to be comfortable with, and they're fairly tight, because money comes with this as well from the government, so there were fairly tight boundary zones you can't just go all your special needs. So these children would be either given external support in or out the class according to how far down the priority order they go, but then, as a school, we would also look to support these children who fall outside the average norm.

She continued to note that she did "temperature" checks throughout the year to check students' progress. These "checks" acted as an accountability step for the staff, and they confirmed that these students were being supported effectively and appropriately.

Christina shared how the system was changing, but how those changes had not affected how they did things:

> It is a rating traffic light system: red, yellow, and green. Red is bad, yellow is ok, and green is good. Because this is a visual system, you know how they are doing. The 'bright' ones are on the top; the less 'bright' are at the bottom. With the less 'bright' students, I make the teachers look at these students, because we know they didn't make great progress coming in, so, what are we going to do about that?

Part of her process was looking at patterns and comparing them with the "global scale" at the start of the year or at the end of the academic year in preparation for the start of the next year:

> For example, this year we have four progress reports in writing. We then look how we can score those children, because they are individuals who are going forward into year five, in which case we will be sending a few who have fallen

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

> behind for various reasons. We will need to investigate where they are and what their needs are as they move into the next academic year.

She also shared that another way that they supported individuals was by "tracking" them in reading, writing, and math. When Christina observed students in class, she specifically looked for a child's needs and successes. Every week, her teams reviewed plans as a group; one of the things they looked at was the child's growth and any areas that needed to change. She felt strongly that "What is important is that at the end of the day we say what progress, if any, has been made and if not what are we going to do about it?"

The three head teachers discussed the importance of having conversations with staff about the progress that the students were or were not making. They noted that while all schools were different, some schools conversed more about their students than others did; the common theme was having those important conversations rather than the frequency of them. The teachers used weekly assessments to monitor the students' on-going progress; if any of a student's score dropped on any of their tests, then the teacher would speak to the deputy about it. In the Surrey school system, teams met regularly to discuss the children who are making "good and poor progress." The head teachers regularly stressed how important it was to have good staff who are trained and knew what needed to be done.

During the time that I was in England, the teachers discussed and analyzed their annual assessment reports, which the government provided to them, and which broke down the data for all their students, including the children with special needs. The reports told them where they were, how they doing are compared with others; after discussing the data, the teachers were expected to explain what the report revealed. Esther and

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

Karina noted that they believed it to be really important for them to know and understand that all of their "inspections" were based on benchmarking drawn from the end-of-key-stage data. They clarified that it was more like a test score, but that they also had to find ways of showing the qualitative data and to explain what they were doing that could not be measured. Esther pointed out that their work was "holistic. It's not just about that long scoring endurance, it's about the whole development of the child."

I asked each of the seven participants about what they did when students did not meet the criteria for passing the grade or reach the expected proficiency level. All seven participants had very similar answers that were grounded in assessments and early interventions. Esther's response affirmed what the other participants said:

> When that happens, it's usually not a surprise, because I guess what you're suggesting is the grade is the sort of end-of-year test. It would not be a surprise to us, so we would have done things before that along the year because of the assessing them for their learning in a formative way as we go along.

She and Margaret both stressed the importance of monitoring interventions throughout the year and of taking action if they found that the interventions were not working. Then they would further assess individuals, despite the fact that basic assessments had already given them a baseline of "intelligence." This word bothered all seven participants, as they did not think that intelligence could actually be measured. Esther shared her thoughts by stating "it's a verbal recognition test, so that it's about their vocabulary, which isn't a good indicator of the ability to learn and do whatever is taught."

Karina's multiage school addressed the needs of "her children" as if they were in the pre-School Action level. She had her children assessed at least once every term, because the children were put into key stage one between their year one and year two

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

classes. She was able to use the teaching assistants and teachers such that there were four adults in the classroom; this allowed the instruction to support learning at four different levels. The children were then placed in the appropriate group for that child's level of phonological development rather than being group by age. The students were continuously assessed in order to know if a skill or concept needed to be either retaught or enhanced. They were placed into the appropriate group as supported by solid data. Karina also stated that the education of psychology section of the local authority helped provide the "next steps" when a child continued to struggle with achieving identified targets and developing specific skills; she described this process for me:

> Sometimes, what we will do is if you've got a group, say that are revisiting some learning, then they will write a "group IEP," just so that we are clear about what targets, endpoints you want the children to reach. A statement is much more detailed if it would still have targets in it. But they will be linked very—they will—targets in a statement will be more long-term, because it's reviewed annually with all the services involved. Although you know the school, you get midterms, so there might be medical interventions at that stage, if there were a statement there would be some educational psychological input, if it was a language need or whatever.

All participants, especially teachers, stressed the importance of the assessments conducted in the early years. These were extremely vital, as they allowed the teachers to identify children who might need extra support from a very early stage. As they go through the year, the established point system helped the educators identify children who needed some extra support.

The Surrey educators did not need to retain students due to their thorough process of identifying students' needs through data collection, using both initial and continued assessments, and analyzing the children's needs, while keeping in mind the end-of-key-

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

stage inspections by the National Curriculum. The participants appeared to be confident and comfortable in addressing the needs of their students.

Theme 3: Multiple Factors Influence Social Promotion

My data collection revealed multiple factors—including teacher accountability and valuing age groupings over grades—that influenced the Surrey education model of social promotion instead of retention. These factors stemmed from the whole-child centered educational model. The three head teachers spoke at length about teacher accountability and the measures that they took when teachers were not performing up to the expectations. They also noted that teachers were vital to the success of student achievement. For example, Esther discussed the levels that she used to measure professional performance; she had a folder of observations that documented her teachers' performance on two scales: one through four; and outstanding, good, satisfactory, inadequate, or unsatisfactory. She further explained her philosophy and practice:

> Everyone has a bad day at the office, but if we have a staff member who is developing a pattern, we put a program in place for her. We have someone to help cover work with every class to improve the quality of the teaching for the children. This has been successful in the past. The previous program was an intense six-week program, twice a week; and then I came back in at the end and said 'Well, where are we at?,' and 'Let's go look.'

Esther had recently had a "course" with another head, who had turned around a failing school; her colleague described the environment upon her arrival, "You know a lot of the teachers were—'Well I just turn up and it's fine,'" so she "shed" or dismissed those teachers, because she "demanded more . . .[from] our staff than that because we have an obligation to the children." Esther's end-of-year conversations with the governor reaffirmed her colleague's approach: They discussed staff who were falling below the

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

acceptable thresholds, and how they could deal with those teachers. Karina brought up the correlation between inadequate lessons and inadequate performance reviews: “Well, you're not doing fair by the children, and therefore we are going to put you into a capacities procedures.”

It became obvious to me that Surrey school leaders were not afraid to “let a staff member go” if needed, because teacher accountability was vital to the success of their schools. In fact, one teacher shared that she was aware of some staff that had been moved in order to “play to their strengths a little bit, and [they] negotiated where they would be moved to.” Lily shared:

> I know of a number of schools I worked in before, there was one good example of a nursery teacher who was not great, but she was good enough. She was taken out of class because she was far better working with small groups because maybe her management wasn’t good.

I asked all seven participants to tell me about their professional stance on retention and social promotion. I was surprised by their answers. All seven participants firmly believed that retention was not a common practice because of its negative consequences. Although it was not a common practice, three participants shared that they have had retained students previously. Even though they found the retention to be beneficial for those particular students, they would not recommend in the future.

These three teachers shared some of the negative consequences that they observed: it negatively impacted the student’s future funding; it placed a social stigma on the student; and it communicated failure to the student. According to James, the home-school counselor, retention created “headaches, particularly when it comes to exams, public examinations, because they're out of their phase for their exams.” He also noted

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

that his main concern that the student would feel different because they would be a year older than their peers. Karina spoke about funding:

> If a child was receiving additional funding on account of having special educational needs, that funding would stop when he/she reached 16. If that child happens to still have one year of school left when they reach 16, then that's kind of tough luck. So then I guess the default position is always try and keep them in the correct chronological year group unless there is something exceptional.

All of the participants shared the same belief that it was important to look at the child's needs and where they are; "you always want to look at the individual children." Lily and Karina felt that it was their priority to meet those needs through differentiation and to assess student learning along the way. They both commented that this made retention a non-issue, because they were reaching all students where they were as individuals.

Esther also stated that in her 30 plus years in the education field, she had not noticed retention as a common practice. She shared with me her thoughts on the practice in general:

> I don't think there's an option for that. But, and going back to what we believe, I will say we are about whole child aren't we? . . . Development is really important and so, I'm saying if you push them all or keep them back, you know [you] are forcefully affecting on their development . . . Personally, I don't think [retention is] a policy I could agree with because I think the dispositions behind the learning and self-esteem is just crucial from the very early stage all the way through. I also think the idea of retention, of saying 'Okay, you haven't made the grade, you've got to go back and do it again' is actually saying to that child 'You're a failure' in a very explicit way when the rest of the class moves on and it is just going to de-motivate them on the spot.

Karina stated that she believed in social promotion, but she then stated that in very rare circumstances, a child might be retained. She knew of one time when a child was retained by the maintained nursery school. She expressed her concerns about retention:

> The problem is that the way our system works, the children by the time they get to GCSE 15/16 [their graduate assessments], they cannot take their GCSE's after

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

> that age, and if they are not ready for it, at some point along the line they have got to move into the correct age group.

As Karina's concern highlights, the current British educational philosophy focuses on inclusion and on students progressing through the system within their age group. So, even when something traumatic has happened to a child prior to school, the educators work to help that student remain in their age group by providing appropriate support. If there was a child who had been through the pre-school- and kindergarten-equivalent years, but they were still performing at a level significantly below their peers, then the Surrey schools would consider whether the student had some level of innate learning difficulties; they would also consider the possible impacts of outside factors, such as a traumatic event in early infancy. Regardless, there would never be any question around that child being placed in a different year group. The assumption would be that they would continue with their year group, but that there would also be whole-child centered interventions to differentiate their curriculum and education. For example, Susan shared her experience working with a child in her classroom the previous year:

> There was this one child who I worked with last year who ended up spending time, almost respite time for him, in a reception class and he was in year one at the time. Because he'd missed out on an awful lot of their play, now he was able to be retained with his friendship group. [He] felt very much in place, because he was the size of a year one child . . . but he got access to just that free play that you [get] in the early years of kindergarten, which he really needed, but he got that maybe one hour a day or something, so that was perfect. So I figure [there are] ways in which you can almost re-create the good aspects of the year that you want to keep a child in, without having to literally keep the child in that year.

During my stay in Surrey, I had the opportunity to interview Kyle and Jane, the parents of twins in Esther's school, who felt that one of the twins was doing well academically, while the other twin struggled academically, socially, and emotionally.

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

When they asked Esther if they could let the twin who was struggling stay another year in year one, her answer was no. Even though the school has been "fantastically supportive," and even though Kyle and Jane were supportive of the decision and were willing to do whatever it took to support the school, as well as to be supportive of their student at home, they were still frustrated by the decision:

> I think the school 'delighted' our children here. Would I be happier having my child been held back a year, [so they] were near the top of their class? Ultimately, probably yes, because as they go through life, it's that final bit of paper they get when they are 16 that opens the door for what they do till they are 18 . . . In the next school, they are going to be put into sets or tiers, and if they are put in the bottom group, they will get the best teaching they can for that skill set. Well, that's when the groups do that, and it's always easy to go down, it's impossible to go up. So with preference I would rather they had–I would rather we would have had the option to discuss it instead of being told no, because according to Esther, retention was not even an option.

Kyle and Jane shared that even though they felt that their son was behind, the head teacher had told them, "[your child is] not that far behind and with some additional work, we can get them to where they need to be." The parents reflected on the situation a bit:

> You want the best for your child and you never know what's right. I think sometimes having that taken out of your hands may help, because instead of us maybe making the wrong decision that we thought was right at the time, we've had to make what the systems imposed upon us and the schools help greatly.

One participant's experience with retention reaffirmed the school's position. She had a student in class who was retained, and he became very difficult at the point of transfer from the infants to the junior stage because he was out of his year group. Hindsight lead her to this reflection:

> I would be very, very reluctant to agree to do that again. It was about 11 years ago, and I think the whole way of teaching and learning has evolved. I have been in the same school the same amount of time, but some views have remained crucial. However, you do learn as you go along, and I think we are much better at meeting the needs of children as individuals and differentiating for them.

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

When asked about parents being supportive of their choices to socially promote students who were not meeting expectations, all seven participants felt that yes, they were, and that they were fortunate to have active parents who wanted the best for their children. Lily stated that she had some "pushy" parents who, in her opinion, were "affluent" parents who push and push and push for their child when, actually, their student's needs were quite low. Then, Lily had parents who were somewhat involved, but who needed to be more so, for their children needed them the most. Balancing these varying levels of involvement was a struggle, but she believed that it was her obligation as an educator to educate and promote parents, as their support was vital to the success of all children in her class.

The other teachers agreed with Lily's comments about parental involvement; they regularly shared students' progress toward the learning targets with the parents, because parents were very interested in their children's education. The educators also stressed how their schools had an open-door policy, because they wanted the parents to feel comfortable discussing their concerns with them at any time. They also encouraged the parents to feel comfortable discussing good things, as well. Karen stated, "[This] is important for the parents to know, because we want to get them feeling positively about us and our school."

My research data suggests that retention was not considered as an option for children who were underachieving academically, socially, and/or emotionally. The participants believed that maintaining teacher accountability, keeping a child in their chronological year, and involving parents along the way, all children would be successful.

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

Theme 4: Instructional Practices Impact the Learning of All Students

While reflecting on the observations and interviews that I conducted in Surrey, it became apparent that the educational staff implemented specific instructional, including academic interventions, early years education, and personalized student learning. Teachers in Surrey also adapted materials to match each child's learning style in order to engage them more. They also felt that it was imperative that students and parents alike knew and understood the student's learning goals. By having these key elements in place, all students in the Surrey school system were able to become successful without retention.

I heard the word "intervention" several times during my observations and interviews. While some participants did not clearly name a particular intervention, they all discussed the common characteristics of many of the interventions, especially sharing ideas, activities, resources and materials across year groups. This collaboration allowed the staff to provide students access to multiple peer groupings. During my observations in each of the five classrooms, I noticed a lack of specific "programs" like those I am used to seeing in North Dakota—Reading Recovery, Math Recovery, Duet Reading, and Repeated Reading for fluency. However, what I did observe were small groups, flexible grouping, re-teaching of a skill or concept, and many quick check assessments. For example, Lily began her whole-group math lesson with an open-ended question about designing a garden. This led to a discussion that lasted for approximately 15 minutes. After that, the children broke into small groups with three additional adults who differentiated the lesson based on the children's needs. I observed this pattern of starting in large group and moving into small, skill-based groups continued throughout the day.

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

Since the school had a small population, the teachers were able to work very closely with their peers, and they knew each other very well. They also knew the children well, which allowed for good communication between teachers, teacher assistants, and students. When student assessments were completed, all children, regardless of their age, were put into literacy, numeracy and foundational skills groups according to their abilities. The teachers met on a weekly basis in order to plan for, assess, and discuss the various needs of their students. During these weekly meetings, they discussed many things: if the students had achieved their learning goals; how well the groups were working; if they need to adjust groups in some way or another; and whether specific groups were ready for the "more" or perhaps needed "less." They also discussed any children who were struggling or needed some extra support.

One intervention that the teachers described using at many different levels was the Signs and Letters Program. This program introduced phonological knowledge and "tricky words," or words that are not phonological code able. At least once a month, after the assessments were completed, students were placed into a key stage; as I was observing classes at an infant school, these key stages were between year one and year two classes. In the case of the Signs and Letters Program, students were put into groups that were appropriate for their level of development in phonological knowledge. Throughout the month, students were assessed frequently and regrouped accordingly. The teachers monitored listening and sound reproduction skills in addition to the ability of the student to memorize and to recognize phonological information. If a child did not make adequate progress in a specific amount of time, then the education of psychology section of the local authority developed programs to provide the student additional support.

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

All head teachers and classroom teachers discussed what they did when a student was not performing at age-appropriate levels. Lily shared that the solution might be as simple as revisiting some of the learning that was missed, the student could have more one-on-one support for the learning that they had missed. However, she also noted that if, after a period of time, the one-on-one support was not working, and she implemented what she called "quality-first teaching," which she described as when "you're actually differentiating right away, so that at that point the child would not be registered on the Special Education Needs Register."

Karen noted that her whole school used assessments to group students based on ability. These groups were flexible, and students could move back and forth freely based on their needs. However, if the teachers found that interventions were not working, then they would perhaps carry out some basic assessments to provide a data baseline or a starting point for further investigation, or for conversations with head teacher or fellow teachers within the school. Sam and Christina shared that many times they used specific tests to show a specific learning difficulty, like oral or visual memory difficulties. They wanted to "move into the next phase and say, 'Is there something specific here that we need to investigate further?' " Once they had moved to the next phase, they might confer with an outside agency, which might have even more specialized diagnostic tools and could give advice about setting up an individual education plan for the student in question.

Margaret shared a story about a boy who had missed a lot of nursery school. The teachers did not know if they should promote or retain him for another year of nursery school. Margaret and the other teachers believed that spending some extra time in the

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

"playful" environment might be beneficial to his overall development. Since retention is not a common practice in Surrey, Margaret and her teachers ultimately decided to re-create the reception year for him, which allowed him to be with his "proper year group." The child was able to stay with his peers, while receiving "extra" support for social skills and child development skills. Margaret felt that this option outweighed the benefits of repeating the reception year.

According to the head teachers, if a teacher were to say to them, "We want to retain a child, but we also understand that this is a practice we don't practice," then they as head teachers would suggest alternatives to the teacher. Margaret shared her thoughts:

> There would have been intervention strategies that would have been put in place to support them in a variety of ways. It might be that we add social/emotional development practices or inventions for the younger age. When we add that support, we would have to talk to the parents about it, but otherwise there would have been an intervention program.

Karina supported this idea: "We would suggest producing a substantially differentiated curriculum." She continued to describe individualized and personalized curricula designed to meet "[the student's] level and whatever their needs were and [that] would change according to the individual changes."

The data from my interviews and observations suggests that play and academics were considered equally important in the overall development of a child. Karen and Susan each shared that the emphasis was very much on play. Both teachers agreed that learning through play was very important to the development of the whole child. Karen stated that the "children learn through their own exploratory play, by themselves, without the adults in the classroom." Karen described the academics as "bits of phonics, bits of

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

early reading. Early number work is also done, but that is often done through play rather than sitting idly. There is no sitting down at desks and just learning stuff."

Communicating with parents was also seen as vital to the success of the student's learning. In the two schools that I visited, the staff noted ways that they promoted parent communication, such as by having a workshop. Workshops for parents began in a student's very early years, and their purpose was to help educate the parents about how they as parents "teach" and what they can do at home to aide in literacy and numeracy. Karina, Esther, Lily, Susan, and Karen shared that these workshops had good turnouts. The schools also used progress sharing as a communication tool. All of the participants noted that they gave parents an idea of their student's progress, beginning with how the student was settling into their school year. At the beginning of the year, this parent meeting was more about social development and about students' social and learning dispositions. The focus of the progress sharing shifted as the year continued; the parent information became more detailed in "terms of a focus on the literacy and numeracy development." The teachers shared with the parents "the long-term targets for their children." These targets were reviewed just prior to the spring term and were linked to the end of key stage one summative assessments. The student's progress toward the targets was shared with the parents, as was how the student compared to national norms at that point in the year, because the educators knew that the parents were very interested in their children's education. The teachers also shared all of this information so that new targets could be set for each student for the spring term.

As these data suggest, all of the participants believed that it was not just the children who needed to make an effort for success, but it was also the school's and the

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

parent's job to support them. Karina approached her students this way: "Okay, what are the difficulties? We must be looking at how we differentiate. How do we meet the needs of these children, and what needs to be in place for the children to be successful?"

The Surrey school system focused specifically on education in the reception years. It was not uncommon for child to be ready for school, but their listening skills interfered with their ability to learn. The participants indicated that they spent a lot of time working on listening skills, improving communication, and making friends. Lily stated that she believed that developing those behavioral skills was really important: "If they haven't got those skills, they are unlikely to succeed."

I had the opportunity to witness the students preparing for the new school year. Each teacher asked the children to come up with "themes or topics" for the next year's class; the students then spent approximately 15-20 minutes brainstorming ideas in groups of three or four. After the time was up, they shared their lists with the whole class and narrowed their ideas down to eight themes. I asked a teacher about this during one of our interviews. She shared that students had a say in what they were learning, which made them more apt to take ownership for their learning. They shared what they were interested in learning about, and the teachers then worked out the curriculum to include those ideas. The students did not just repeat what they had done before or have the same experiences, even when they might have the same topic from year to year. For example, during my visit, year one's theme was centered on the Olympics. As I observed during the week, I noticed that their writing topics focused on jousting; they also incorporated jousting in to math, spelling, literacy, and science. If that class chose the Olympics as a theme for the next year, there would be many ways for the teachers to refocus the

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

activities and lessons. The teacher shared with me how these lessons and activities fit into the National Curriculum, and I realized that they really did not use a "curriculum" like I am accustomed to in my professional teaching experience. They focused on learning targets and implemented the themes/topics the students come up with, which personalized the learning and improved student, staff, and school accountability.

Summary

In both North Dakota and in Surrey, the data suggested that assessments, interventions, progress monitoring, collaboration, and decision-making were key elements when addressing a student's needs when they were not performing at grade level. However, the North Dakota and Surrey school systems resulted in two different outcomes: retention and social promotion. In Chapter V, I will provide a detailed discussion of these similarities and differences by explaining the connections between my theoretical matrixes and conceptual frameworks. In Chapter VI, I will discuss my findings and the implications of my international comparative study; I will also provide several recommendations for schools in North Dakota who want to minimize their use of retention.

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

CHAPTER V

THEORETICAL ANALYSIS

By exploring and presenting educators' perceptions of retention in both North Dakota and Surrey, I hope to provide other educators with the means to more effectively address the needs of students who are not performing at grade level according to state standards and to better meet the needs of all learners in the educational process. Therefore, I closely examined the complex relationships in the data by completing a comprehensive theoretical analysis of my observations and interviews with educators and of district polices, especially as they were applied within the educational setting. This data analysis revealed the perceptions of a variety of educational professionals and suggested underlying perceptions about retention throughout the educational systems in the United States and in England.

Grounded Theory

In this chapter, I will present and explain in detail two theoretical matrices (Figures 3 and 4) that contain my findings on educators' perspectives regarding retention and that analyze the conditions of and influences on student retention. I developed two grounded theory frameworks in order to better understand my assertions and to best illustrate the interrelationship of causal conditions (factors that influence the core category), contextual and intervening conditions (specific and general factors that influence strategies), and outcomes from using the strategies. Creswell (2007) described

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

this process as a theory developed and articulated by the researcher toward the end of the study that "can assume several forms, such as a narrative statement, a visual picture, or a series of hypothesis or propositions" (p. 65). While the theoretical matrix for each location reveals different influences for each assertion, both North Dakota and Surrey reflected similar assertions. For increased validity in developing these assertions, I analyzed the emerging codes and themes by triangulating data not only among participants in each location, but also between them (Creswell, 2011). For further analysis of the data, I utilized a selective coding practice, which is the process of choosing one category as the core category of the study that describes the interrelationship of all other categories (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

Theoretical Analysis

North Dakota

The selective coding process revealed a core category or phenomenon from the North Dakota data: Educators use retention as an alternative to social promotion for students not meeting performance expectations. I developed a Grounded Theory Diagram (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) to illustrate the interrelationships of causal conditions to contextual and intervening conditions (see Figure 3) and to frame the theory that teachers and principals in a North Dakota school district continue to retain elementary students even though research does not support retention.

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

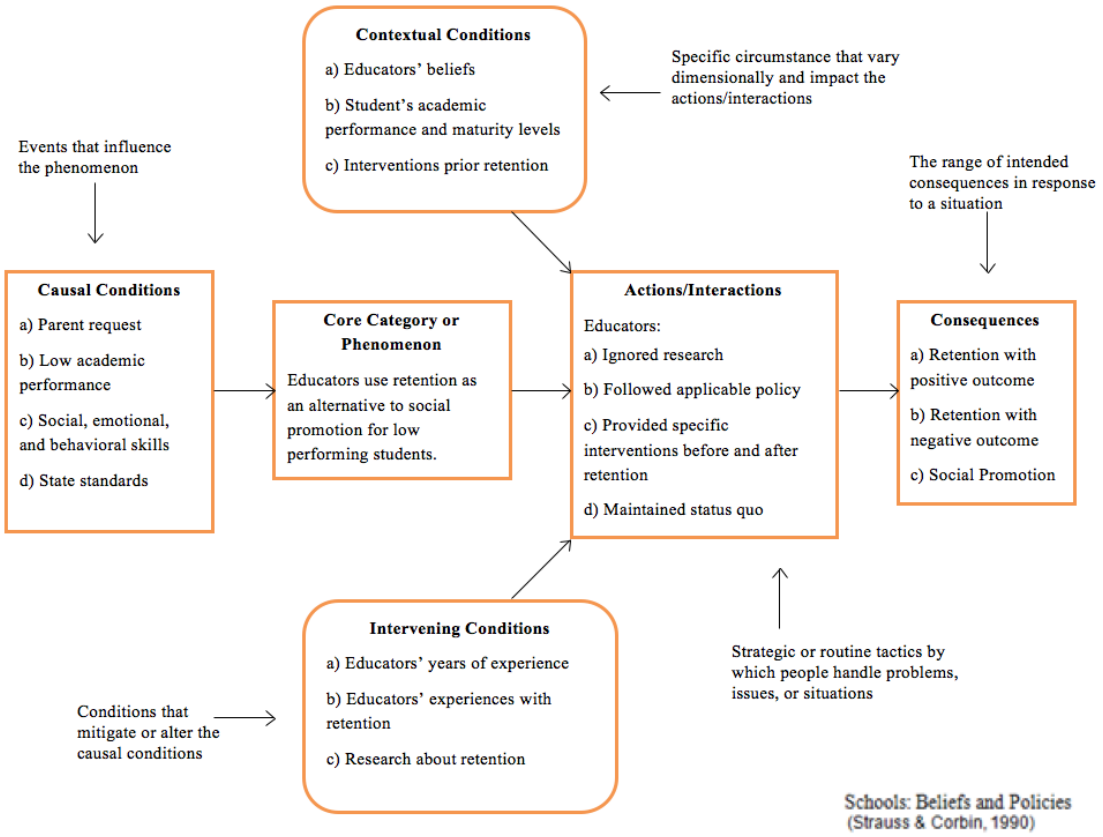

Figure 3. North Dakota Grounded Theory Diagram.

Causal conditions of phenomenon related to retention of elementary school students. According to Shepard and Smith (1989), teachers believe retention is appropriate depending on certain circumstances; specific causal conditions contribute to the occurrence of a central phenomenon regarding retention. The grounded theory research model requires that a researcher go beyond the obvious and break data down into the smallest detail (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). During this data break down, four casual conditions became apparent: (a) parents making request for retention, (b) low academic performance, (c) poor social/emotional/behavioral skills, and (d) state standards and accountability due to *No Child Left Behind*. These casual conditions developed into

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

the phenomenon of teachers and administrators continuing to retain students, regardless of relevant research.

Parent(s) request retention. In five of the seven interviews conducted, educators' most common reason for retention was the request of the parents. Grace commented on this many times in her interview; in the past two years, she has had two parents request retention. When talking about her experience with retention last year, she stated that the "parents really wanted him to be retained. I do not think it would have mattered. I think he would have done fine going on and not being retained." This year she also has parents who want their child to be retained. She hopes that the education team can educate the parents that it is in the student's best interest to move on to the next grade. Gayle shared a story about her brother being retained: He felt dumb, kids teased him, and he struggled all through high school. More than ever, Gayle believed that students "should stay with their same age peers and receive instruction at their academic level." Cody noted that "getting the parents on board [with social promotion] is sometimes hard and sometimes it is impossible," even when they were told about the negative consequences.

While not all of the interviewees necessarily believed that retention was the best solution for low performing students, they all have and will retain students when parents request it. Ultimately, it is the parents who make the final decision, despite an educator's professional opinion. The message that I received throughout the study was 'yes, we retain per parents request, but we strongly discourage it.'

***Low academic performance*.** All three classroom teachers believed that academic performance as measured by standardized assessments had a role to play when considering whether or not to retain a student. Abbey, a fourth-grade teacher, believed

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

that retaining a child in the upper grades might not be the best practice. However, she did consider retention when she had a student who was not making academic gains as a fourth grader and who was the lowest-performing student in all of her math and reading groups. Not only was this student not making adequate academic progress as compared to her peers, but she also had no drive or will to push herself. Olivia used the district's grading scale to determine retention: She considered retention an option for a child with a lot of 'partially proficient' or 'novice' scores on their report card. She clarified her practice by saying that this had to be the case in more than one academic area. She went on to say that a student in kindergarten, first grade, or second grade might be retained if their learning was severely limited or if their performance raised drastic academic concerns. Grace referenced certain title services that would automatically cause a retention referral, which would then be discussed by a team including the teacher, the principle, and a school psychologist.

Olivia, a second-grade teacher, noted that she had never retained a student and believed that they will be fine academically with support. On the other hand, a fourth-grade teacher who understands that retention is not supported in the upper elementary grades stated:

> He was not making adequate progress compared to the rest of the class. He was a high math student but couldn't keep up with the reading. His language skills were poor and couldn't transfer anything from one subject to the next.

She believed that she did not have any other option than to retain him when his needs were in more than one area. Cody stated the educators' beliefs succinctly: "There are some times when retention might be appropriate. For me, it has been along the lines of . . . are [the students] ready for the [academic] things that they are being asked to do?"

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

Poor social/emotional/behavioral skills. All seven interviewees believed that students who were immature, who appeared younger than the rest of the class, who were lonely, or who appeared "lost" would benefit from retention. Olivia, a second-grade teacher, believed that retention should only happen in kindergarten, and then only if a student was "very young," as retention might allow the student time to develop some maturity to handle school better. As educators, we need to step back and ask ourselves: Are we giving our students the skills and time that they need to become ready for learning? Are we asking our students to learn faster than they are able to developmentally?

State standards and accountability due to No Child Left Behind. The push for higher standards and expectations in our schools has resulted in more retention policies that rely heavily on high stakes testing as a tool to measure a student's performance (American Youth Policy Forum, 1998, p. 1). In my study, only one teacher eluded to increased accountability and the stress that it put on teachers. The other teachers remarked that grade-level expectations were higher and they had to work harder, but none felt the pressure that they perceived their middle school and high school peers to feel. Cody, one of the principals, believed that there had been a huge change in accountability at the elementary level and that the teachers were being held more accountable for the learning of their students. However, he went on to say that his school district had not increased the number of retentions as the standards raised student-learning expectations.

Resulting phenomenon. The causal conditions discussed above revealed this phenomenon: Educators use retention as an alternative to social promotion for low performing students. This phenomenon reinforces the findings of researchers Xia and

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

Glennie (2005), who stated that the public (parents) and educators believe that 1 more year in the same grade will help a student "catch-up" with their peers. While all seven interviewees—whether a teacher, an administrator, a special education teacher, or a school psychologist—had different reasons for considering retention, the message was clear: they would retain a student when they deemed it necessary.

Contextual conditions that influenced retention actions. Specific circumstances influenced the educators' actions and interactions regarding their decisions about retention. Certain contextual variables related to both the causal conditions and the phenomenon further influenced these actions/interactions: (a) the educators' beliefs, (b) a student's academic performance and maturity levels, and (c) the interventions applied prior to considering retention.

Educators' beliefs. The teachers interviewed expressed beliefs about retention that ranged from little or no opinion to a strong belief that retention should only be used as a last resort. The administrators strongly believed that retention should only be implemented when requested by a parent. They also noted that their beliefs were well known throughout the school: It was understood that any request for retention coming from an educator needed to be sufficient documented to support the reason for the request.

Academics and maturity. A student might have been considered for retention when either their academic performance or their maturity level did not align with grade-level expectations. An immature student might perform at grade level or a very mature student may not make adequate progress during the school year. As a result, the decision to retention a student was made more difficult for some of the teachers in this study.

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

Prior interventions. Educators typically implemented interventions for students who were not meeting expectations in some way. The number of interventions used to support a student in the classroom varied based on what services were available in the school district. Such services included Title 1 for reading and math, Reading Recovery, social skill groups, and differentiated lessons. Not all students had the opportunity to receive all services, as not all schools offered all possible interventions. The effectiveness of planned interventions also depended upon the extent to which the teacher implemented them.

Intervening conditions that influenced retention actions. Besides contextual conditions, there were intervening conditions that were "broad, general conditions" (Strauss & Corbin, 1990); these conditions played a critical role in the participants' decisions to retain an elementary school student: (a) the level of experience of the educators, (b) their personal/professional experiences with retention, and (c) the research about retention.

Educators' experience level. The educators in the study had a range of professional experience levels. The teachers had been in the classroom from four years to 18 years, and they included those who taught at the primary and the upper levels of elementary school. The school psychologist had 10 years of professional experience, while the administrators each had spent more than three decades in education. Even though there was a wide range in their years of experience, all of the educators had one commonality: working at the elementary school level.

Educators' experience with retention. Each participant had some experience with retention, whether it was having a retained student in their classroom or having

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

requested that a student be retained. As discussed above, Gayle had personal experience with retention. The three classroom teachers spoke extensively about having had a retained student in their class at some point in their teaching career. Abbey, a fourth-grade teacher, found that one such student's academics were still low, that they still lacked social skills, and they acted immaturely at the end of the year. She also stated, "You would have never known this child should be in fifth grade." Grace and Olivia, both primary-grade teachers, also recalled that retained students in their room still struggled with behaviors, social skills, and academics at the end of the school year. Olivia was very direct with her comment: "I found it did not make much difference for that student as the years went on. He continued to have difficulties in school." She was reluctant to retain, but if she did she would want a clear, concise plan in place for that child, otherwise the retention would be counterproductive.

Retention research. The study participants had varying knowledge of the research on retention, so their use of it when considering retention likewise varied. The administrators, the school psychologist, and the special education teacher were very informed about the consequences of retention, while the classroom teachers were not aware of what current research says about the implications of retaining a student. Abbey, the fourth-grade teacher, had "heard" that students in and beyond third grade should not be retained, but had not read anything specifically. Grace and Olivia, the primary-grade teachers, believed that it was acceptable to retain a child prior to third grade, and that retention should especially be considered in kindergarten. Would these teachers still view retention as an acceptable practice in the primary grades if they knew that research says that "a retained child's test scores in the primary grades will decline after a couple

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

years of retention" (Jimerson, 2001). Knowledge of current research about retention might influence a teacher's perspective on retention such that they seek other interventions for students struggling to meet grade level expectations.

Actions resulting in and from retention. Based on the contextual and intervening conditions outlined above, teachers and administrators engaged in four different actions when responding to a request to retain a student: (a) they ignored research, (b) they followed the applicable policy, (c) they provided specific interventions before and after retention, and (d) they maintained the status quo.

***Ignored research*.** The administrators interviewed knew and ignored relevant research about retention; they stated that they would let a teacher retain a child if it met their own personal criteria, such as the student missing a lot of school; the parents making the request or supporting the teacher's request; the student being more immature than was developmentally appropriate; or the student struggling with the transition from another school. Therefore, the administrators were ignoring research and basing their decision about whether or not to retain a student on their own personal beliefs and not on what research clearly stated.

As stated earlier, the classroom teachers were not aware of current research on retention. Not surprisingly, I never heard any of them begin a comment with "research says . . .;" instead, I always heard "I believe . . ." or "I think . . ." They also stated that teachers lacked the time, resources, and support to implement other interventions that might mitigate the perceived need for retention. However, when I asked if they would continue to retain students if they knew that research strongly stated that social promotion was in the best interest of the child, two of the three teachers said, "yes," they would

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

continue to retain students. They felt like at times there simply were not any other options.

Followed applicable policy. All of the participants felt that they needed a clear, concise policy about student retention, but that "as a district there was never any written policy." The educators were willing to look at other districts for examples of such a policy; however, many districts that I analyzed had only vague retention policies. The teachers and administrators all stated that any applicable policy was more building specific and that most decisions were made on case-by-case basis. Grace and Olivia noted that their building had a "Response to Intervention" process: teachers with a child that they were concerned about brought the student to a team that implemented different interventions while monitoring the student's progress. This process was "loosely" done, and there was no specific policy.

Provided specific interventions. Educators provide specific interventions for retained students, both before and after the student was retained. Abbey, Grace, and Olivia noted specific interventions they had either tried before retention became an option or during the year following retention. As none of the teachers kept their retained students the second year, they worked on post-retention interventions with students who were new to them that year. If the student had been retained for social or behavioral reasons, then they joined small social groups that met with the guidance counselors; such groups work on developing appropriate social skills and on changing negative behaviors. If the student had been retained for academic reasons, then they worked on "reading and/or math with a small group."

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

Maintained status quo. When a student struggles to meet grade level expectations, the curriculum needs to be altered in order for them to become successful (Xia & Glennie, 2005). However, Grace stated:

> I do not do anything differently. We do not have any extra support. I can use my para[professional] and individualize the curriculum, but other than that I do nothing. They just do the normal curriculum, and they get pulled for interventions such as literature group or Reading Recovery.

A student who has been "held back" should have adequate and effective modifications, accommodations, and support set in place for the years following retention. Researchers have noted that teachers need to be trained in best practices and to be offered other alternatives to retention (Brooks, 2008). They further stated that teachers who are well informed and who come to their classroom with a variety of strategies will most likely help a student repeating a school year become successful learners. Abbey summed this up clearly by stating that she "gears in on [her students'] learning styles, differentiates their learning, implements interventions for their individual needs, and clearly communicates with the parents."

Consequences of the actions surrounding retention. When teachers and parents evaluate a student who is struggling, the involved parties ask themselves: Do we retain the student, which can be a positive or negative decision, or do we socially promote the student to the next grade? Whichever action is chosen, there will be consequences.

Positive outcome of retention. All of the participants shared that if everyone—parents, teachers, administrators, and perhaps a counselor—could come to a mutual agreement about what would be best for the child, then maybe retention could be

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

effective. Other than this comment, there was no evidence that respondents supported retention as a positive decision.

Negative outcome of retention. Retention typically has negative consequences, as outlined in previous chapters. Brooks (2008) noted that some long-term consequences of retention—such as dropping out of high school—happen regardless of which grade the student repeats. Olivia shared some of the negative consequences that she has seen: "stigma from peers, [and] lowered self-esteem in academics and in relationships with teachers and peers." None of the participants noted a time when a retention was positive or turned out in the child's favor. Grace commented that "we found that a lot of the behaviors did not change," and remarked that "the same issues followed [one student] the second year." Abbey mentioned that another student's "academics kind of stayed the same but even plateaued a little bit." So why do we retain?

Social promotion. The final action available when retention is considered is to socially promote the student. Based on the comments made during each of the 7 interviews, this was evidently preferred to making a student repeat a grade level. The teachers believed that when they had a student who was struggling in their classroom, they should try to find the interventions that would support that student's learning style, so that the student would not have to be retained. Abbey noted that the first thing she did every school year was to look at the data for her students in order to prepare herself to best reach each student in her class.

Conclusion. Regardless of their position on retention, the administrators, teachers, and school psychologists in North Dakota all agreed that they would use and modify different resources to best meet the student's needs, and that they always kept

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

high expectations for the student. All of the participants considered the issue of retention challenging. Cody simply statement best captured their various sentiments, "It is not an easy decision to make, do we retain or promote? It is a difficult decision to make, but we are doing what we think is best for this child at this time."

Surrey, England

According to the *National Curriculum in England: Primary Curriculum* (United Kingdom Department of Education, 2013), every "state-funded school must offer a curriculum which is balanced and broadly based," and it needs to promote the "spiritual, moral, cultural, mental and physical development of pupils at the school and of society," as well as "preparing pupils at the school for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of later life" (p. 5). English society and policy makers insist that teachers set high expectations for every child: The national curriculum standards ask teachers to prepare for students "significantly above the expected standards" (p. 5); most importantly, it points out that teachers "have an even greater obligation to plan lessons for pupils who have low levels of prior attainment or come from disadvantaged backgrounds and [that teachers] should use appropriate assessments to set targets which are deliberately ambitious" (p. 8). Throughout the data collection process, it became evident that the participants were well aligned with the national curriculum. In interviews, they stated the importance of addressing the needs of the whole child, of setting high expectations through individual learning, and of providing interventions for low-achieving students. I observed them practicing these values, as well. Esther summed up the British teacher's attitude best when she stated that her teaching approach was

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

"holistic. It's not just about that long scoring endurance, it's about the whole development of the child."

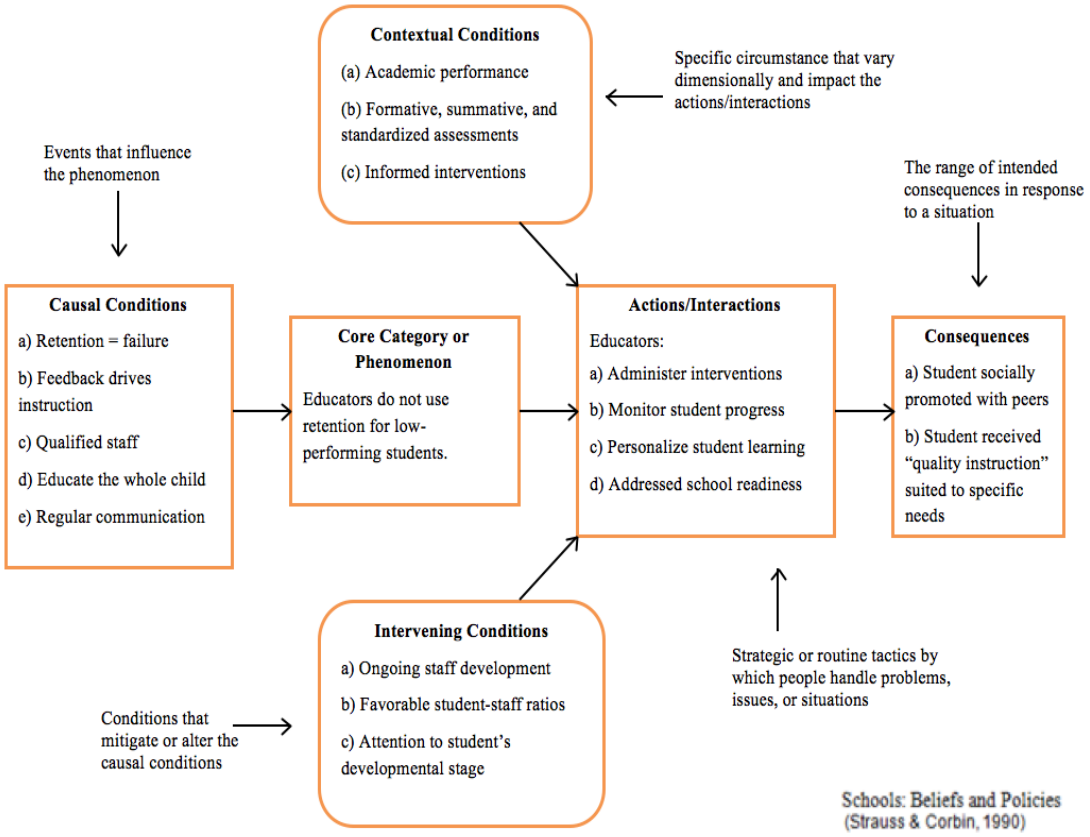

Figure 4. Surrey Grounded Theory Diagram.

Causal conditions of phenomenon related to non-retention of primary level students. In order to discover the causal conditions that contributed to the occurrence of the British central phenomenon regarding the non-retention—or social promotion—of students, I used the grounded theory research model to go beyond the codes and to break down my data into the smallest details (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). My data analysis revealed five casual conditions that influenced the Surrey phenomenon of socially promoting students who were not meeting the expectations of their Key Stage. First, Surrey teachers believed that retention sends the message that students were failures.

www.manaraa.com

Second, they used performance feedback from regular assessments to drive their instruction. Third, the staff was qualified. Fourth, in accordance with the national curriculum, they believed in educating the whole child. Fifth and finally, the staff, parents, and students engaged in regular communication about the student's needs.

Resulting phenomenon. All of the participants noted that teaching to the whole child was not only what was stated in the national curriculum, but it was also what they believed and valued. Surrey County Council leaders supported these values by providing funding to employ quality teachers and well-trained teaching assistants. Such funding further allowed head teacher's flexibility in hiring assistants to meet the needs of each school's specific student body, as well as to maintain good student-to-teacher ratios. Most importantly, each of the seven participants expressed the belief that retention was not an option. For example, Karina stated that "retention gives the message that the child is a failure;" such a message directly conflicted with Surrey's system-wide commitment to the whole child.

Contextual conditions that influenced social promotion actions. The specific actions and interactions that influenced a teacher's decision regarding retention—or the lack thereof—were influenced by certain contextual conditions related to both the causal conditions and the phenomenon. These variables were (a) the student's academic performance as measured by (b) the formative, summative, and standardized assessments, and (c) the resulting interventions that were administered and changed accordingly. All of the educators reported that they were able to identify and meet the needs of their students through the continued use of a variety of forms of assessments. By analyzing

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

these assessments, the teachers were able to provide personalized interventions to students who were struggling to meet Key Stage expectations.

Intervening conditions that influence non-retention actions. In addition to the contextual conditions, certain intervening conditions played a critical role in the participants' decisions to not retain students: (a) the importance of continued staff development, (b) the favorable staff-pupil ratios, and (c) the staff's understanding of an individual student's developmental stage.

Staff development. Karina, Esther, and Margaret—the head teachers interviewed—each spoke about the importance of staff development and the vital role that it played in preparing and enhancing an educator's knowledge of effective teaching practices. For example, Margaret shared that she had the opportunity to send teaching assistants to training in an intervention called TRACKS. Karina and Esther noted that they could move a teacher who was underperforming to "another area" that better suited the teacher's educational strengths; this might mean changing content areas or age groups. The head teachers also had the option to provide a teacher who was struggling with some "extra support" to improve their professional skills.

Favorable ratios. Low student-to-staff ratios also contributed to the successful promotion of students to the next Key Stage, as low ratios allowed the teachers to provide their students with more individualized attention; therefore, the students' needs were met more often. Teachers and teaching assistants had the opportunity to "get to know each child in order to identify their academic, social, and emotional needs." During my observations, I noted that one classroom had three teachers with 18 children, and another room had three teachers with 20 students. In both rooms the teachers were able to meet

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

with each of their students within the allotted time for the Joust Writing Project lesson, while also personalizing the lesson to meet each individual student's needs.

Individual developmental needs. Each of the educators believed that by understanding a child's specific developmental stage, a teacher could meet every child where they were "at." These teachers recognized that their students were not all "at the same place" developmentally. Therefore, they individualize each child's learning while providing appropriate interventions to help the student meet Key Stage standards and targets.

Actions resulting in and from non-retention. As a result of the contextual and intervening conditions, the teachers and administrators performed four different actions to avoid retaining a student: (a) they administered specific interventions, (b) they monitored the student's continued progress, (c) they personalized the student's learning, and (d) they addressed school readiness skills.

Administered specific interventions and monitored progress. The classroom teachers addressed students who were struggling academically by implementing specific interventions based on the individual's needs; they then monitored that student's progress through informal observations, one-on-one conferences, and formative assessments. I observed a math lesson in which the teaching assistants took detailed notes on small Post-It notes about who responded and what they said as the teacher presented information on "sequencing." During a short break, the assistant and the teacher spoke briefly about the observations; after the break, the teacher grouped the students according to their grasp of the concept for the next part of the math lesson. The teacher worked with the five students who had more limited knowledge about sequencing events, while the two

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

assistants divided the rest of the children, who appeared to have a more solid understanding of the concept, into two groups. This progress monitoring enabled the teaching staff to make evidence-based decisions. As mentioned above, the staff's ongoing professional learning and the small student-to-staff ratios created an environment in which data sharing conversations lead to lesson modifications that meet the individual student's learning needs.

Personalized the learning. The Surrey school system, in conjunction with the national curriculum, encourages teachers to personalize lessons and materials to meet the needs of the individual; this action further facilitates the decision to promote students rather than to retain them. Lily and Karina mentioned that the national curriculum states specific expectations and targets for student learning, but that each school had flexibility in how they reached those expectations. Lily went on to describe how 1 school had the children vote on their themes for learning; letting the students choose their themes allowed them to be vested in their own learning. The school also had the flexibility to encourage the students to decide how they would get to their end target. For example, I observed three children demonstrating their understanding of how to plan and create a garden by verbally stating their plan to a teaching assistant, as well as by using the correct materials

Addressed school readiness skills. All of the participants shared the belief that each student should master certain school readiness skills. They believed in making sure the children had solid foundational skills; if there were any areas of concern or missed learning, the staff would bring those early foundational skills into the Key Stages 1 and 2. For example, Lily spoke about a child who was "behind" because he missed many days

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

in the reception year. They felt he needed to "play," which was a foundational skill. The child moved on to the next year; however, they provided him with playtime in order to develop this readiness skill that would impact his future learning.

Consequences of the actions surrounding non-retention. The practice of social promotion as practiced in Surrey resulted in the following consequences: (a) students stayed with their peers, and (b) they received "quality instruction" and interventions that met their specific needs. Qualified staff taught the whole child and used assessments to drive their instruction. Several study participants mentioned that by using assessments to drive their instruction, they knew what each of their students needed to be successful. Furthermore, by using various forms of assessments—formative, summative, and standardized—the teachers were able to provide the appropriate interventions before and after social promotion. Finally, all of the participants believed that maintaining clear, concise, and open communication with other staff members, parents, and students meant that no child would fail to receive a "proper education."

Conclusion. During my week of observations and interviews in the Surrey schools, the message was clear: "We teach to the whole child. We will keep the child with their peers and socially promote the child." The educators believed that if a student was struggling in their classroom, then they should try to find the specific interventions that would support that student's learning. Regardless of their position—head teacher, classroom teacher, or home school educator—all agreed that they would modify and provide the necessary interventions to best meet the "whole child's" areas of need. Retention was a foreign subject to these professionals. While the head teachers acknowledged that they had either been part of conversations with other head teachers

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

and/or "inherited" students who had been retained previously, retention was not an option for them and was rarely even discussed. The classroom teachers gave me a puzzled looks when I mentioned retention, and their tone when referring to the practice came across like "huh?" Of the seven participants, five stated several times that "it's about the whole child." They all noted throughout the week that it was their role as a teacher to provide whatever it took to make the children feel successful and happy.

Summary

In order to better understand the relationships between the causal, contextual, and intervening conditions in the process of student retention in both North Dakota and Surrey, I created two Grounded Theory matrixes. This process helped me to more accurately analyze the similarities and differences between the two school systems, and how they meet the needs of students who were underperforming. As a result, I was better able to theorize what actions educators took when students performed poorly on state and local assessments; these actions and their consequences underscored two assertions:

1. When a student was not meeting grade-level expectations academically, socially, or emotionally, North Dakota parents and educators considered retention a viable option, despite the outcomes documented in the applicable research.
2. Educators in Surrey believed that all members of the educational team had a direct impact on student learning through their instructional practices, their use of assessments to monitor student progress and to modify their curriculum, and their ability to provide interventions after identifying specific areas of need.

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

In Chapter VI, I will discuss my findings in relation to my research questions and explain the implications for educational leaders when implementing a school-wide process for students who are not performing at grade level according to state standards.

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS, DISCUSSION, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Introduction

The framework for this international comparative study was influenced by schools in the United States who continue to practice retention when research shows that students who are retained experience little to no academic gain and higher dropout rates than their peers who were not retained (National Association of School Psychologist, 2011). Although grade retention has been researched and scrutinized for over a century, it continues to be a topic of concern; studies have shown that retention rates have steadily increased over the last 25 years (Rafoth & Knickebein, 2008). Research has shown that teachers, especially primary grade teachers, believe that retention is an appropriate choice for students who are struggling (Gillborn & Youdell, 2000; Jimerson et al., 2007). Therefore, it was necessary to examine what interventions teachers tried before retaining students, as well as their beliefs regarding retention. Once the interventions and beliefs were clear, I could draw conclusions and parallelisms between teachers in the United States and teachers in England. Can the United States learn from England's cultural beliefs and policies that students should be promoted to the next grade?

Overview of This Study

Historically many regions of the United States have allowed teachers, administrators, and parents to retain students based on personal beliefs and on school

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

and/or state retention policies, while the United Kingdom has socially promoted all students; retention is not considered as an option in most schools in the United Kingdom. This comparative study had a two-fold purpose as it examined how North Dakota of the United States and Surrey of the United Kingdom supported students who were underachieving as measured by standardized tests. First, by comparing the practices in both countries, I aimed to answer the question: Why do educators in the United States continue to retain students when research has shown that it is not beneficial to them? Second, I sought information to help teachers, parents, school administrators, and school policy makers as they make decisions about whether or not to retain students.

I compared the retention practices of the United States and England in order to address the use of retention in the primary grades by schools in the United States. I used the following questions to guide the qualitative, comparative study:

1. Why do participating educators in North Dakota, United States continue to retain students when research shows it has negative effects on students?
2. Why do educators in Surrey, England avoid retention?
3. How do school systems in North Dakota and Surrey meet the needs of students who are not performing at grade level?
4. What alternatives are being used in North Dakota before retention is considered?

My findings in response to these research questions suggested the following:

1. School districts need to develop clear policies about retention and social promotion.

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

2. Policy makers, teachers, and parents need to make decisions that are based on sound educational research, that provide for academic achievement, and that encourage interventions that prevent the practices of grade level retention.
3. Retention research needs to be effectively and clearly communicated to educational professionals, policymakers, and the public.
4. There are quality alternatives to retention that focus on research-based intervention strategies.
5. Staff development is essential for educating teachers about the implementation of research-based interventions.

Research Question 1

Why do participating educators in North Dakota, United States continue to retain students when research shows negatively effects students?

Based on my interviews with the participants in North Dakota, I contend that educators continue to retain students based on (a) personal beliefs regardless of the relevant research, (b) unclear retention/social promotion policies, (c) parent requests, and (d) a lack of other options for "struggling" students.

First, although the seven participants in North Dakota varied in their beliefs about retention, they all appeared to ignore the relevant research by continuing to retain students based on their personal beliefs and professional experiences. Educators' beliefs about retention ranged from little to no knowledge of the research to a strong belief about retention; the administrators interviewed strongly believed that retention should not be considered unless requested by a parent, and they knew what the research said about retention. However, they would allow a teacher to retain a student if the circumstances

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

met their own personal criteria, such as the student missing a lot of school, the parents agreeing to it, the student being immature for their age, or the student having transitioned poorly from another school. Therefore, the administrators ignored research and based their decision about whether or not to retain a student on their own personal beliefs and not on what the research clearly states.

Second, the North Dakota districts either had unclear policies on retention and social promotion, or they simply lacked such policies; furthermore, their staff was not always aware of the policies that did exist. All five of the non-administrative participants said that they followed a policy when considering retention, but they also stated that they were not aware of an official, written district policy. They each noted that retention practices were building-specific and that they made retention decisions on a case-by-case basis, as there were no specific guidelines or procedures. All of the participants expressed the need for clear, concise policies.

Third, a common reason for retention was the request of the parents: Five of the seven participants shared examples of cases in which a parent requested that their child be retained. As one teacher noted, she had received multiple retention requests over the years from parents whose children would be "fine" moving up to the next grade; ultimately, parents made the final decision, despite an her professional opinion. One administrator stated that he tried to educate parents about the consequences of retention, but he found it to be a hard and sometimes impossible task. Even though not all of the educators in this study believed that retention was the best solution for low-achieving students, they all still retained students at the parents' request.

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

Lastly, the participants all felt that there were no other options for "struggling" students, as the teachers lacked the time, resources, and support to implement interventions. Furthermore, the three teachers were not familiar enough with the current research to act on it. When I asked if they would continue to retain students if they knew it was not in the best interest of the child, two of the three said, "yes." They believed there to be no other options.

Research Question 2

Why do educators in Surrey, England avoid retention?

In Surrey, the participants believed that retention was not an option for learners. Their interview responses revealed the cultural bias against the practice of retaining students. The British system focused on teaching to the whole child, and it emphasized that instructional practices impacted the learning of all students, so there was clear teacher accountability, quality teaching assistants, and good communication among the educational team.

First, the Surrey participants each expressed that all staff had a direct impact on student learning; the head teacher noted that both teachers and teaching assistants were vital to the success of student achievement. The schools placed high expectations on teachers in accordance with the National Curriculum, and they took measures to support those teachers who were not performing to those expectations, so the teachers were able to have direct, positive impacts on student success. I observed a professional development planning session in which all of the staff—including the teaching assistants—played a vital role in carefully planning curriculum that was centered on the needs of the specific students.

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

During my observations in the two schools, I noted that every classroom had several “extra” adults present. According to the three head teachers, their school system “heavily” involved teaching assistants and provided those assistants with continuous, high quality training. The head teachers also shared that the teaching assistants not only had a positive, direct impact on student achievement through small and large group instruction, but that their presence also allowed students to have a better relationship with more adults.

All of the participants, including the counselor and the special education teacher, spoke about the importance of not only communicating a student’s academic, social/emotional, and behavioral progress with the relevant staff throughout the school year, but also between the staff from one year to the next. During the observations, I noted that teaching assistants and teachers communicated and interacted effectively with each other, and I frequently heard the staff refer to “our” students and “our” school.

Second, the interviewees all described the relationship between the lack of retention and the use of assessments to drive instruction and to identify areas of concern. The participants identified their students’ needs through both initial and on-going assessments, and they continual monitored their students’ progress toward the expectations at the end of the applicable key stage. Participants also spoke about what they did when the monitoring showed that a student was not making progress; they asked themselves: What is causing this problem? What are we going to do about it? The head teachers stated that their teachers and teaching assistants were committed to continued change and improvement of both their instructional practices and their assessment-driven interventions.

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

Third, the focus on the whole child further influenced the Surrey educators' choice to socially promote all of their students. Each of the seven participants firmly believed that retention was not a common practice because of the possibility of negative consequences, including the social stigma and the belief that retention would send a message of failure to the students. All of the participants shared the same belief that it was important to look at the individual child's current needs and to meet those needs through differentiation and continuous assessment of learning. Karina summed up the group's philosophy: Retention was not an option because they focused on the development of the whole child, and retention would "forcefully affect [the student's] development."

Lastly, specific instructional practices impacted the learning of all students, including academic interventions, early year's education, and the personalization of student learning. The Surrey participants felt that it was imperative that students and parents alike knew and understood the student's learning goals. They adapted materials to match each child's learning style in order to engage them. Many of their interventions consisted of sharing ideas, activities, resources, and materials between year groups. The educators felt that differentiation should take place throughout the daily instruction and that students should be placed into literacy, numeracy and foundational groups based on their skills rather than their age. One participant shared their experience of a situation when a child was able to be with his peers for academics, but he needed to receive "extra" support for social skills development; this flexible grouping allowed the student to be socially promoted. By having these key elements in place, the schools supported the success of all of the students that I observed in the Surrey schools.

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

Research Question 3

How do school systems in the North Dakota and Surrey meet the needs of students who are not performing at grade level?

In both settings, North Dakota and Surrey, all of the participants stated that they met the needs of their students by implementing best practice interventions through small groups. The teachers in North Dakota and Surrey were aware of the importance of implementing research-based interventions when students had special academic and/or social and emotional needs. The administrators, head teachers, and classroom teachers all believed that they had a professional duty and responsibility to find interventions to support the students who were struggling in their classrooms and schools. They all agreed that the modification and differentiation of instruction involved the identification of different resources to best meet the student's needs; they also expressed the need to maintain high expectations for the student. In North Dakota, the teachers noted that the most effective teachers were knowledgeable and came to their classroom with a variety of strategies to help students become successful learners; such teachers were able to identify learning styles, differentiate learning, implement interventions for their students' individual needs, and clearly communicate with the parents. The Surrey educators also referred to the importance of this approach, but they then stressed the importance of providing training for those teachers and teaching assistants who did not yet have sufficient knowledge and expertise to meet these standards of professional effectiveness.

Another difference in the two settings was that North Dakota teachers stated that they had implemented specific interventions either before considering retention or during the year following retention. However, the Surrey teachers noted that they implemented

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

continuous intervention that was designed to prevent retention; their instructional practices included academic interventions, a focus on early years education (ages two to five), and the personalization of student learning. They also adapted materials to match each child's learning style in order to more directly engage their students.

The educators' approach to their students' social and emotional skills was an important factor in the choices to socially promote or to retain a student. Only two of the seven interviewees in Surrey used the word "immature" to describe students who displayed behaviors such as "baby" talk, inappropriate social skills, limited on-task behaviors, or poor attention skills, whereas all seven of the participants in North Dakota noted that "immature" behaviors were a common reason for retention. I concluded that because the Surrey education system focused on the whole child and on the importance of play, they addressed "immature" behaviors early in the students' education. They promoted struggling students and continually addressed the students' areas of need instead of believing that a "gift" of time was more beneficial. Berliner and Glass (2014) contended that holding an "immature" student back to spend a year with younger students may cause that student to "appear" older, but that they would be continually exposed to inappropriate, "immature" behaviors. However, promoting a student would allow them to learn more appropriate behaviors from their age peers (Berliner & Glass, 2014).

Lastly, and I believe most importantly, the schools in North Dakota and Surrey had very different perceptions of the value of early education. The North Dakota participants did not discuss the importance of pre-kindergarten education or of early interventions, whereas the Surrey participants noted the pivotal nature of the reception years when the students' play was valued more than academics.

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

Research Question 4

What alternatives are being used in North Dakota before retention is considered?

The data from the North Dakota participants showed that the teachers were implementing researched-based interventions and were modifying and differentiating instruction while keeping the needs of their students in the forefront when addressing their academic and social/emotional needs. They believed that they were seeking interventions that would best support learning in the classroom. The guidance counselor worked on social skills and social/emotional needs, and the teachers used small-group instruction for students struggling in reading or math. In spite of these interventions, the North Dakota participants still relied on retention as a viable option for students who were not meeting grade-level expectations. One administrator stated that he understood that research does not support retention, but he also believed that some students could benefit from retention. Furthermore, he claimed that the social/emotional needs of a less mature student were hard to address: "I just don't think the ability to make up maturity is always there. You can make up academically but not maturity." As a researcher, I observed the stark contrast between his attitudes and those of the educators in Surrey.

The schools in North Dakota had access to some services—such as Title 1 funding for reading and math activities and the Reading Recovery program—that afforded the teachers options of interventions. These varied based on the school district, and their effectiveness was tied to the extent that teachers choose to implement them. Over the course of my observations and interviews, it became apparent that students had unequal access to these services based on which ones their school offered.

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

Lastly, at no time during my interviews, observations, and casual conversations in North Dakota, or during my review of the various North Dakota policies, did I find any references to other possible alternatives—such as summer school or after school programs—to retention. Berliner and Glass (2014) noted that if we want to end retention, then the stakeholders need to invest in tutoring, after school and summer programs, and most importantly in "high quality, [early childhood] programs with long-range benefits" (p. 98).

Emerging Theory: How Schools Decide to Retain a Student

Across the United States, educators have accepted retention as an appropriate intervention for under-achieving students, despite the fact that the relevant research and literature do not support the practice. Research clearly shows that student retention is "almost always ineffective, often biased, likely to be a waste of money, and will end up hurting the local economy" (Berliner & Glass, 2014, p. 94). Berliner and Glass (2014) supported other researchers by noting that using retention for students who struggle academically, socially, emotionally, or appear to be "immature" does not solve the real problem. In order to analyze my own research results, I used the grounded theory approach; this model proved appropriate for my research for several reasons: It allowed me to develop a theory that emerged through data analysis, to analyze the current literature on retention, and to compare the North Dakota and Surrey data sets. Based on the data, I concluded that the balance of power and cultural beliefs in the two contrasting educational communities determined whether or not retention was considered as an option for struggling students (see Figure 5).

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

In North Dakota, the research suggested that the decision-making power was in the "hands" of parents. Teachers and administrators were more likely to accept parental pressure for retention and less likely to act on professional knowledge. Does this suggest a lack of regard for professional expertise? Are teachers aware of the research-based arguments against retention? To further understand their actions and to develop a theory regarding retention in the United States, I needed to take cultural beliefs into account. The evidence suggested that retention practices were embedded in the traditions and cultural beliefs of the actors. While the practice was not considered an option in the English schools, those in North Dakota have considered retention an acceptable practice since the early 1800s for students who struggle to meet school expectations. Due to the lack of communication about the relevant research and the absence of clear, concise policies, retention has and will remain a quick, easy fix in North Dakota Schools for students who do not meet academic, social, and emotional grade-level expectations.

The Surrey research data showed that the head teachers held the decision-making power when considering retention for under-achieving students. For example, one head teacher noted a time when a parent requested that their child to be retained. After the head teacher said "no," the parents were invited to seek an alternative school for their child. Even though the parents were dissatisfied, they also respected the head teacher's opinions, "She knows best, she is the professional." The British cultural belief that retention is not "the best" option for struggling students means that retention is not used.

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

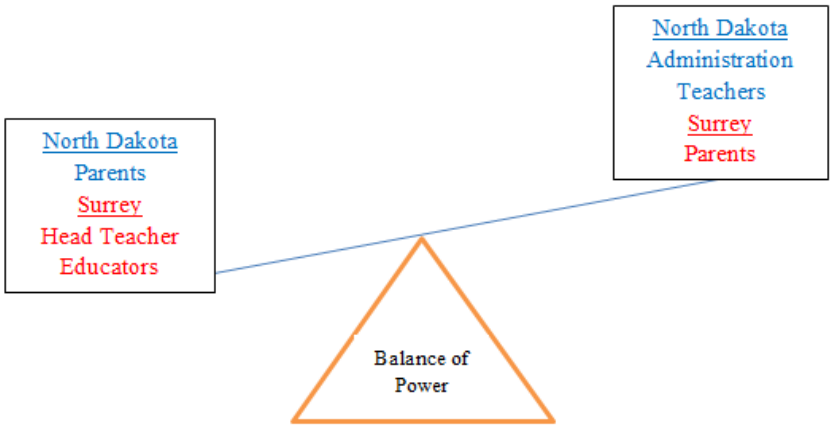

Figure 5. The Balance of Power Regarding the Decision to Retain or Socially Promote a Student.

Limitations of the Study

In qualitative research, the researcher attempts to build a "complex, holistic picture" (Creswell, 2009, p. 15) of the issue being studied. My qualitative study involved classroom teachers, administrators, special education teachers, and school counselors from a North Dakota school district and from the Surrey school system.

Limitations of this study included the number of participants, the settings, and the time spent in each setting; my lack of claim to represent the United Kingdom or the United States as a whole also limited the study. Despite these limitations, I believe that the participants' interviews and my classroom observations support the study's findings. As with most studies, this one raised more questions than its scope could answer. The consistency of the messages offered by the interviewees provided clear insight into both educators' beliefs and practices regarding retention and their knowledge of the relevant research in North Dakota and Surrey.

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

Recommendations to Encourage Social Promotion in North Dakota

The schools in North Dakota and in Surrey shared many common responses to struggling learners, and both showed distinct similarities to other schools in their respective countries as born out in the research regarding retention. Why then does the United States retain students, but the United Kingdom promotes ALL learners? After discerning the emerging theory in my research, I identified three specific recommendations for North Dakota schools to increase the more effective practice of social promotion: (a) implement best practice interventions; (b) improve teacher accountability; and (c) provide clear, concise information to all of the stakeholders.

Table 5. Recommendations to Encourage Social Promotion.

Recommendations	Specific Actions
1. Implement Best Practice Interventions	1a. Implement quality early childhood programs. 1b. Identify areas of academic and social/emotional concerns early. 1c. Implement alternative programs. 1d. Establish activities to increase parental involvement in their child's education.
2. Improve Teacher Accountability	2a. Provide high-quality staff development. 2b. Seek assistance from other professionals 2c. Improve communication between educators, parents, and other staff members.
3. Provide Clear and Concise Information	3a. Educate staff about the research on retention 3b. Write clear, concise retention/social promotion policies.

Recommendation 1: Implement Best Practice Interventions

Implement quality early childhood programs. School districts need to provide quality early childhood programs. By proactively providing developmentally appropriate programs that focus on not only academic skills but also social/emotional skills, interventions can be implemented before students "fail" or fall behind their peers. Effective early childhood programs need to include five essential learning activities: "(a)

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

language and literacy development, (b) cognition and general knowledge, (c) social and emotional development, (d) physical well-being and motor development, and (e) approaches to learning" (Kagan et al., 1995, as cited in Malm, 2011, p. 120). In order to address the needs of the whole child, early childhood programs should also have "early learning standards that fit the learning styles and developmental needs of their student[s]" (Malm, 2011, p. 121).

Identify areas of academic and social/emotional concerns early. To ensure that students are not retained, North Dakota schools need to identify the academic and social/emotional needs of students early in their education. In order to identify potential areas of concern early enough, it is vital for educators to administer assessments promptly at the beginning of the school year and to monitor students' progress periodically. Schools should also implement a Response to Intervention Model (RTI) and student support teams. This process allows teachers to collaborate with other professionals to identify students' academic and/or social/emotional needs. Assessments should be administered after the RTI model and team assistants have identified those students who are not on par with age-appropriate expectations. The assessments results should then drive instruction. It is essential that students who are struggling academically, socially, and/or emotionally receive support and targeted interventions to help them reach proficiency. All students are different, and they learn at different rates; therefore, it is important that each student receives effective, quality instruction that supports their individual needs from the beginning of their education.

Implement alternative programs. Alternative programming allows teachers to reach all students and to keep the whole child in mind, and it needs to be available school

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

wide and to consist of "developmentally appropriate, intensive, direct instruction strategies that promote the psychosocial and academic skills of all students as well as school-based mental health program which promote the social and emotional adjustment of children" (Jimerson et al., 2004, p. s3-63). Examples of such programming include multiage classrooms; "double dose" interventions that accelerate learning; after-school, weekend, and/or summer programs; and extended day and extended year options.

Establish activities to increase parental involvement in their child's education. Parent involvement is vital for the success of all students. It is necessary for parents to understand the expectations of the classroom, the school, the school district, and the state. Educators can involve parents by having parent nights to educate them about classroom procedures such as homework and behavior policies; about their student's academic curriculum; and about the resources that the school has for when they have concerns about their student's progress. Educators must communicate to parents that they are in a partnership, they are all on the same side: They all want the students to become successful, life-long learners.

Recommendation 2: Improve Teacher Accountability

Provide high-quality staff development. School leaders need to provide high-quality and on-going professional development for all teachers in their school system. First and foremost, professional development should focus on educating teachers about the disadvantages of and alternatives to retention. It should also focus on gender education, students' learning styles, and differentiation, how to get parents involved, and research-based interventions. Staff development can take place during professional learning time, before or after school, or during the summer. Most importantly,

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

professional development can be presented by "expert" teachers from within the district and by professional trainers from outside of the district; it can also take the form of visiting other districts who have successfully implemented specific anti-retention programs.

Seek assistance from other professionals. In order to help all of their students, educators should seek assistance from other professionals in their district. Most importantly, teachers need to view students as "ours" instead of "mine." Classroom teachers cannot solve all learning problems within the classroom; the entire educational staff has a "shared" responsibility for all students. The RTI model encourages collaboration between professionals; more collaboration means that teachers would receive the support that is vital for the success of all students.

Improve communication between educators, parents, and other staff members. Open, honest, and consistent communication among all stakeholders in the North Dakota schools would discourage the use of retention as an option for "struggling" students. Teachers, parents, and teaching assistants must maintain effective communication in order to ensure the success of all students. This communication can vary. Face-to-face conversations are most effective, but communication can be enhanced by technology or by old-fashioned paper and pencil.

Recommendation 3: Provide Clear and Concise Information

Educate staff about the research on retention. Educators and leaders need to be aware of the research about retention, and they need to communicate that information to all of the stakeholders. It is essential that leaders communicate the research on retention, even when they believe that "teacher knows best." There are many ways to

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

educate teachers about the life-long impacts of retention including staff meetings, research articles shared between teachers, and face-to-face conversations. Most importantly, many parents and community members do not understand the long-term effects that retention has on children as they grow into adults. Therefore, educational professionals need to educate all of the stakeholders about the pros and cons of retention and to work collaboratively with them to consider alternatives.

Write clear, concise retention/social promotion policies. In order for educators to have a clear understanding of the expectations of what needs to be "done" with struggling students, districts need to write and implement clear, concise policies. Once they have done so, they must share the policies with all educators in the district. The policy needs to lay out specific expectations, timelines, procedures, and criteria for retention, and it needs to include teacher accountability guidelines. The RTI process would assist educators as they follow the policy, seek clarification of its details, and communicate the policy with parents and other stakeholders.

Final Thoughts

As stated in Chapter I, I conducted my research in order to gain an understanding of retention and why it is continually being used in the United States for students who are underachieving according to standardized assessments. In addition, I compared the retention/social promotion practices in North Dakota, United States with those of Surrey, England in order to understand how each location addressed the needs of underachieving students. I wanted to provide North Dakota with alternatives to retention. My qualitative study examined the thoughts, feelings, and perceptions of participants in both locations regarding retention and social promotion. Both school systems used assessments to guide

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

appropriate interventions for students' learning, and both noted that they continued to monitor progress and make necessary changes along the way. However, the Surrey schools kept the whole child in mind when implementing interventions, so they included students' social and emotional needs in their considerations about their students' academic promotion.

The implications of this study suggest that school systems in the United States will continue to use retention as an alternative for underachieving students while school systems in England will continue to socially promote all students. In order to promote a school culture in North Dakota similar to that of Surrey, educational leaders should work to make sure that (a) school educators embrace characteristic early school readiness skills as well as intervene early with students who are struggling; (b) the whole child is taken into consideration socially, emotionally, and academically; (c) differentiated professional development for all educators is provided; and (d) clear, concise communication is implemented for all stakeholders—parents, teachers, teaching assistants, and students. In doing so, perhaps educators in the United States will strongly consider the long-term effects that retention has on a child and work towards socially promoting more students.

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

APPENDICES

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

Appendix A

IRB

University of North Dakota Human Subjects Review Form

All research with human participants conducted by faculty, staff, and students associated with the University of North Dakota, must be reviewed and approved as prescribed by the University's policies and procedures governing the use of human subjects. It is the intent of the University of North Dakota (UND), through the Institutional Review Board (IRB) and Research Development and Compliance (RD&C), to assist investigators engaged in human subject research to conduct their research along ethical guidelines reflecting professional as well as community standards. The University has an obligation to ensure that all research involving human subjects meets regulations established by the United States Code of Federal Regulations (CFR). When completing the Human Subjects Review Form, use the "IRB Checklist" for additional guidance.

Please provide the information requested below. Handwritten forms are not accepted – responses must be typed on the form.

Principal Investigator: Kim Englund

Telephone: 218-233-3026 E-mail Address: kenglund@moorhead.k12.mn.us

Complete Mailing Address: 601 Lexington Lane Moorhead, MN 56560

School/College: Education and Human Development Department: Educational Leadership

Student Adviser (if applicable): Pauline Stonehouse

Telephone: 701-777-4163 E-mail Address: pauline.stonehouse@email.und.edu

Address or Box #: 231 Centennial Drive Grand Forks, ND 58202

School/College: Education and Human Development Department: Educational Leadership

Project Title: Grade Level Retention: A Comparative Study of Practices in US and UK Elementary Schools

Proposed Project Dates: Beginning Date: February 1, 2012 Completion Date: August 31, 2015 (Including data analysis)

Funding agencies supporting this research: none

Did the contract with the funding entity go through UND Grants and Contracts Administration? ☐ YES or ☒ NO
Attach a copy of the contract. Do not include any budgetary information. The IRB will not be able to review the study without a copy of the contract with the funding agency.

☐ YES or ☒ NO Does any researcher associated with this project have an economic interest in the research, or act as an officer or a director of any outside entity whose financial interests would reasonably appear to be affected by the research? If yes, submit on a separate piece of paper an additional explanation of the financial interest. The Principal Investigator and any researcher associated with this project should have a Financial Interests Disclosure Document on file with their department.

☒ YES or ☐ NO Will any research participants be obtained from another organization outside the University of North Dakota (e.g., hospitals, schools, public agencies?

☒ YES or ☐ NO Will any data be collected at or obtained from another organization outside the University of North Dakota?

If yes to either of the previous two questions, list all organizations: Shalford Infant School

Letters from each organization must accompany this proposal. Each letter must illustrate that the organization understands its involvement and agrees to participate in the study. Letters must include the name and title of the individual signing the letter and should be printed on organizational letterhead.

Revised 02/07/12 1

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

Does any external site where the research will be conducted have its own IRB? ☐ YES ☒ NO ☐ N/A

If yes, does the external site plan to rely on UND's IRB for approval of this study? ☐ YES ☐ NO ☒ N/A
(If yes, contact the UND IRB at 701 777-4279 for additional requirements)

If your project has been or will be submitted to other IRBs, list those Boards below, along with the status of each proposal.

_____ Date submitted: _____ Status: ☐ Approved ☐ Pending

_____ Date submitted: _____ Status: ☐ Approved ☐ Pending

(include the name and address of the IRB, contact person at the IRB, and a phone number for that person)

Type of Project: Check "Yes" or "No" for each of the following.

☒ YES or ☐ NO New Project

☐ YES or ☒ NO Continuation/Renewal

☐ YES or ☒ NO Is this a Protocol Change for previously approved project? If yes, submit a signed copy of this form with the changes bolded or highlighted.

☐ YES or ☒ NO Does your project involve abstracting medical record information? If yes, complete the HIPAA Compliance Application and submit it with this form.

☐ YES or ☒ NO Does your project include Genetic Research?

☒ YES or ☐ NO Dissertation/Thesis/Independent Study

☒ YES or ☐ NO Student Research Project

Subject Classification: This study will involve subjects who are in the following special populations: Check all that apply.

- ☐ Children (< 18 years)
- ☐ Prisoners
- ☐ Cognitively impaired persons or persons unable to consent
- ☐ Other _____
- ☐ UND Students
- ☐ Pregnant Women/Fetuses

Please use appropriate checklist when children, prisoners, pregnant women, or people who are unable to consent will be involved in the research.

This study will involve: Check all that apply.

- ☐ Deception (Attach Waiver or Alteration of Informed Consent Requirements)
- ☐ Radiation
- ☐ New Drugs (IND) IND # _____Attach Approval
- ☐ Investigational Device Exemption (IDE) # _____Attach Approval
- ☐ Non-approved Use of Drug(s)
- ☐ None of the above will be involved in this study
- ☐ Stem Cells
- ☐ Discarded Tissue
- ☐ Fetal Tissue
- ☐ Human Blood or Fluids
- ☐ Other _____

I. Project Overview

Please provide a brief explanation (limit to 200 words or less) of the rationale and purpose of the study, introduction of any sponsor(s) of the study, and justification for use of human subjects and/or special populations (e.g., vulnerable populations such as children, prisoners, pregnant women/fetuses).

My study, tentatively titled Grade Level Retention: A Comparative Study of Practices in US and UK Elementary Schools will compare what the two school systems do when elementary students are not at academic grade level as determined by standands. This study will also address what alternative actions can be taken, besides retention, in US schools. I will start by researching the retention policies of several school districts in Minnesota, North Dakota, and Wisconsin which will be randomly choosen based on various school district size and within driving distance. I will then interview teachers and administrators of those districts. I plan to interview and observe teachers and administrators in the UK school system, where retention is rare, to learn what they do when students are not at grade level. I will also research topics that emerge as I talk to study participants and continue to read the literature.

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

II. Protocol Description

Please provide a thorough description of the procedures to be used by addressing the instructions under each of the following categories.

1. Subject Selection.

a) Describe recruitment procedures (i.e., how subjects will be recruited, who will recruit them, where and when they will be recruited and for how long) and include copies of any advertisements, fliers, etc., that will be used to recruit subjects.

I will recruit participants for the study myself, asking individuals in person to participate, and using informal contacts and other participants to suggest people who might be appropriate to contact. In the UK my advisor Pauline Stonehouse has contacted the Head Teacher of a local school, Caroline Herlihy, to help set up contacts to interview and observe. Once schools are confirmed, I will file a protocal change when I get permission from the schools.

b) Describe your subject selection procedures and criteria, paying special attention to the rationale for including subjects from any of the categories listed in the "Subject Classification" section above.

Initial participation will be sought from schools (to be determined) to examine their retention policies. After examining, I will interview administrators and/or teachers of those schools. In the UK I will be able to observe classrooms where they have an alternative approach to retention. From those obsevations I will be able to interview teachers, administrators, and parents. In the UK, Caroline has set up opportunities to observe and interview in various settings - sitting in on a learning community (Cobwebs Group 7) and a full governing body as well as visiting a pre-school and a junior school to look at how they have mix age groups and the problems they face.

c) Describe your exclusionary criteria and provide a rationale for excluding subject categories.

I do not anticipate excluding participants who are in some way knowledgeable about or stakeholders in retention in their school district.

d) Describe the estimated number of subjects that will participate and the rationale for using that number of subjects.

I do not have a specific number of participants in advance. I will use an emergent research design (Maxwell, 2006) that might necessitate anywhere from 10 to 40 participants. This is in line with accepted qualitative, ethnographic methods that require purposive sampling rather than random sampling. Validity in this case is based on theoretical saturation (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) rather than quantitative measures.

e) Specify the potential for valid results. If you have used a power analysis to determine the number of subjects, describe your method.

I will use accepted methods of qualitative validity, including member checks, an audit trail, peer debriefing, triangulation, and reflexive journaling (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Power analysis is not applicable.

2. Description of Methodology.

a) Describe the procedures used to obtain informed consent.

Upon meeting participants for interviews, I will give each a copy of the consent form and explain it in detail, including that they will be given pseudonyms and that their identity will be kept confidential. I will have them sign the form if they consent and then give them a copy to keep.

b) Describe where the research will be conducted. Document the resources and facilities to be used to carry out the proposed research. Please note staffing, funding, and space available to conduct this research.

Most of the research will be conducted on location where participants work or go to school. Little infrastructure is needed.

c) Indicate who will carry out the research procedures.

المنارة للاستشارات

www.manaraa.com

The collection and analysis of data will be carried out exclusively by the principal investigator. Peers will be asked to carry out validity checks (peer debriefing, interrater reliability checks of coding, etc), but only after names and identifying information are removed.

d) Briefly describe the procedures and techniques to be used and the amount of time that is required by the subjects to complete them.
For most subjects, their participation will involve short semi-structured interviews of 30 to 90 minutes. Other subjects will be asked to allow me to shadow them (that is, I will observe and ask informal questions) during their daily work activities. These observations may take anywhere from an hour to an entire workday.

e) Describe audio/visual procedures and proper disposal of tapes.
With participants' permission, I will record interviews using a digital recording device. Recordings will be not be destroyed unless the participants request this. I will, in cases where the participants are unidentified or agree to have them used, use the recordings as examples in teaching my qualitative research classes. This will be clearly explained on the consent form.

f) Describe the qualifications of the individuals conducting all procedures used in the study.
I have been a teacher for 16 years.with experience of preschool, Kindergarten, and First Grade classrooms. During the past 16 years of teaching I have retained students. I have my Master's of Education and an adminsitrator's license and am currently in my second year of pursuing a doctoral degree. I have taken 510 Qualitative Research class and am currently taking 520 Advance Qualitiative Research. I have also successfully completed IRB training.

g) Describe compensation procedures (payment or class credit for the subjects, etc.).
Participants will not be compensated.

Attachments Necessary: Copies of all instruments (such as survey/interview questions, data collection forms completed by subjects, etc.) must be attached to this proposal.

3. Risk Identification.

a) Clearly describe the anticipated risks to the subject/others including any physical, emotional, and financial risks that might result from this study.
I anticipate no more than minimal risks to the participants in the study. There is a small risk of participants becoming emotionally upset in answering questions. Financial, legal, or reputation risks could accrue to individuals or organizations if a participant (or documentation) reveals unflattering or damaging information about their organization or its practices. Other normal risks include the time spent interviewing and being observed.

b) Indicate whether there will be a way to link subject responses and/or data sheets to consent forms, and if so, what the justification is for having that link.
There will be no way to link consent forms to any collected data. Consent forms will be stored separately in a locked cabinet.

c) Provide a description of the data monitoring plan for all research that involves greater than minimal risk.
Most participants and organizations will be given pseudonyms and only pseudonyms will be used in the transcripts of the interviews. Transcripts will be stored in a locked cabinet and in password protected files on the researcher's office computer.

d) If the PI will be the lead-investigator for a multi-center study, or if the PI's organization will be the lead site in a multi-center study, include information about the management of information obtained in multi-site research that might be relevant to the protection of research participants, such as unanticipated problems involving risks to participants or others, interim results, or protocol modifications.
NA

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

4. **Subject Protection.**

a) Describe precautions you will take to minimize potential risks to the subjects (e.g., sterile conditions, informing subjects that some individuals may have strong emotional reactions to the procedures, debriefing, etc.).

Participants will be warned of potential emotional reactions. I will make referrals available to community resources. After visiting with Caroline Herlihy and Dr. Stonehouse, I will have a local agency in the UK for participants to contact if they need an agency. I will also warn participants during the informed consent process of the potential for financial or legal risk of any negative disclosure to me.

b) Describe procedures you will implement to protect confidentiality and privacy of participants (such as coding subject data, removing identifying information, reporting data in aggregate form, not violating a participants space, not intruding where one is not welcome or trusted, not observing or recording what people expect not to be public, etc.). If participants who are likely to be vulnerable to coercion and undue influence are to be included in the research, define provisions to protect the privacy and interests of these participants and additional safeguards implemented to protect the rights and welfare of these participants.

To protect the participants' privacy and confidentiality, I will restrict my observations and interviews to their public behavior in their work environments, not intrude on spaces or topics they want restricted, remove or alter any identifying information, and use pseudonyms in all data and reports.

c) Indicate that the subject will be provided with a copy of the consent form and how this will be done.

At the first interview with each participant, I will provide a consent form to be signed and returned to me. I will also have a separate, identical copy for the participant to keep.

d) Describe the protocol regarding record retention. Please indicate that research data from this study and consent forms will both be retained in separate locked locations for a minimum of three years following the completion of the study.
Describe: 1) the storage location of the research data (separate from consent forms and subject personal data)
2) who will have access to the data
3) how the data will be destroyed
4) the storage location of consent forms and personal data (separate from research data)
5) how the consent forms will be destroyed

The interview and observation data will only be handled by the researcher. Transcripts and recordings will be kept in a locked file in the researcher's office separately from the consent forms as well as on my office computer under password protection. At the conclusion of three years, the consent forms will be shredded.

e) Describe procedures to deal with adverse reactions (referrals to helping agencies, procedures for dealing with trauma, etc.).

Any adverse reactions will be referred to community mental health agencies or, in the case of minors, school resources like counselors.

f) Include an explanation of medical treatment available if injury or adverse reaction occurs and responsibility for costs involved.

No injury or physical reactions are anticipated. Participants who are emotionally upset by the research process will be referred to appropriate local agencies for mental support, but the researcher will not be able to provide these services or pay for them.

III. Benefits of the Study

Clearly describe the benefits to the subject and to society resulting from this study (such as learning experiences, services received, etc.). **Please note:** extra credit and/or payment are not benefits and should be listed in the Protocol Description section under Methodology.

Individual participants can expect few benefits. They may feel slight gratification for helping a researcher or having the opportunity to talk about themselves, their experiences and beliefs. The Education world will benefit from a deeper understanding of the process of rentetion, the politics that go into it, and the many economic, political, and cultural issues that circulate in communities about rentetion.

IV. Consent Form

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

6) The language understood by the prospective participant or the legally authorized representative
7) The information to be communicated to the prospective participant or the legally authorized representative

The researcher will conduct the interviews and give each participant two copies. Before the interviews take place, the researcher will provide consent forms. One consent form will be need to be signed by the interviewee before interviews take place and the second copy will be given for the interviewee to keep for his/her records. The researcher will make it clear that participation is voluntary and they withdraw at any time. The consent form will be presented before the start of the interview.

A copy of the consent form must be attached to this proposal. If no consent form is to be used, document the procedures to be used to protect human subjects, and complete the Application for Waiver or Alteration of Informed Consent Requirements. Refer to form IC 701-A, Informed Consent Checklist, and make sure that all the required elements are included. **Please note:** All records attained must be retained for a period of time sufficient to meet federal, state, and local regulations; sponsor requirements; and organizational policies. The consent form must be written in language that can easily be read by the subject population and any use of jargon or technical language should be avoided. **The consent form should be written at no higher than an 8th grade reading level**, and it is recommended that it be written in the third person (please see the example on the RD&C website). A two inch by two inch blank space must be left on the bottom of each page of the consent form for the IRB approval stamp.

Necessary attachments:

- ☒ Signed Student Consent to Release of Educational Record Form (students only);
- ☒ Investigator Letter of Assurance of Compliance;
- ☒ Consent form, or Waiver or Alteration of Informed Consent Requirements (Form IC 702-B)
- ☒ Surveys, interview questions, etc. (if applicable);
- ☐ Printed web screens (if survey is over the Internet); and
- ☐ Advertisements.

By signing below, you are verifying that the information provided in the Human Subjects Review Form and attached information is accurate and that the project will be completed as indicated.

Signatures: Kim Engfer 2/11/12

(Principal Investigator) Date:

H Stockhouse 02-10-12

(Student Adviser) Date:

Requirements for submitting proposals:
Additional information can be found on the IRB web site at **www.und.nodak.edu/dept/orpd/regucomm/IRB/index.html.**

Original Proposals and all attachments should be submitted to: Institutional Review Board, 264 Centennial Drive Stop 7134, Grand Forks, ND 58202-7134, or brought to Room 106, Twamley Hall.

Prior to receiving IRB approval, researchers must complete the required IRB human subjects' education. Please go to http:// http://www.und.edu/dept/rdc/regucomm/IRB/IRBEducation.htm for more information.

The criteria for determining what category your proposal will be reviewed under is listed on page 3 of the IRB Checklist. Your reviewer will assign a review category to your proposal. Should your protocol require full Board review, you will need to provide additional copies. Further information can be found on the IRB website regarding required copies and IRB review categories, or you may call the IRB office at 701 777-4279.

In cases where the proposed work is part of a proposal to a potential funding source, one copy of the completed proposal to the funding agency (agreement/contract if there is no proposal) must be attached to the completed Human Subjects Review Form if the proposal is non-clinical; 5 copies if the proposal is clinical-medical. If the proposed work is being conducted for a pharmaceutical company, 5 copies of the company's protocol must be provided.

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

INVESTIGATOR LETTER OF ASSURANCE OF COMPLIANCE WITH ALL APPLICABLE FEDERAL REGULATIONS FOR THE PROTECTION OF THE RIGHTS OF HUMAN SUBJECTS

I Kim Englund
(Name of Investigator)

agree that, in conducting research under the approval of the University of North Dakota Institutional Review Board, I will fully comply and assume responsibility for the enforcement of compliance with all applicable federal regulations and University policies for the protection of the rights of human subjects engaged in research. Specific regulations include the Federal Common Rule for Protection of the Rights of Human Subjects 45 CFR 46. I will also assure compliance to the ethical principles set forth in the National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research document, The Belmont Report.

I understand the University's policies concerning research involving human subjects and agree to the following:

1. Should I wish to make changes in the approved protocol for this project, I will submit them for review PRIOR to initiating the changes. (A proposal may be changed without prior IRB approval where necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the subjects or others. However, the IRB must be notified in writing within 72 hours of any change, and IRB review is required at the next regularly scheduled meeting of the full IRB.)

2. If any problems involving human subjects occur, I will immediately notify the Chair of the IRB, or the IRB Coordinator.

3. I will cooperate with the UND IRB by submitting Research Project Review and Progress Reports in a timely manner.

I understand the failure to do so may result in the suspension or termination of proposed research and possible reporting to federal agencies.

Kim Englund
Investigator Signature

2-11-12
Date

Revised 05/01/09 7

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

STUDENT RESEARCHERS: As of June 4, 1997 (based on the recommendation of UND Legal Counsel) the University of North Dakota IRB is unable to approve your project unless the following "Student Consent to Release of Educational Record" is signed and included with your "Human Subjects Review Form."

STUDENT CONSENT TO RELEASE OF EDUCATIONAL RECORD[1]

Pursuant to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974, I hereby consent to the Institutional Review Board's access to those portions of my educational record which involve research that I wish to conduct under the Board's auspices. I understand that the Board may need to review my study data based on a question from a participant or under a random audit. The study to which this release pertains is _____

_____

_____.

I understand that such information concerning my educational record will not be released except on the condition that the Institutional Review Board will not permit any other party to have access to such information without my written consent. I also understand that this policy will be explained to those persons requesting any educational information and that this release will be kept with the study documentation.

W0876562
ID #

Kim Englund
Printed Name

2-11-12
Date

Kim Englund
Signature of Student Researcher

[1]Consent required by 20 U.S.C. 1232g.

Revised 05/01/09 8

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

Kim Englund
601 Lexington Lane
Moorhead, Mn 56560

February 3, 2012

Dear Superintendent/HeadTeacher,

My name is Kim Englund and I invite you to participate in a study I am conducting for my doctoral research at University of North Dakota, Grand Forks. I would like your school district to participate in my research.

My research purpose is to interview administrators and teachers on the subject of retention of elementary students. Participating in this research will help educators know your perspectives on the issue of retention and may help other educators who face this same issues.

If you would like to participate, or would like more information before deciding, please contact me by phone 218-233-3026 or email kenglund@moorhead.k12.mn.us.

Sincerely,

Kim Englund

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

Title of Study: Grade Level Retention: A Comparative Study of Practices in US and UK Elementary Schools

Study Investigator: Kim Englund

INVITATION
You are invited to participate in research examining retention of elementary students, alternatives to retention, and what education programs look like for retained students. You are invited because you may have opinions or knowledge about this issue. Your participation is voluntary. Between 10 and 30 people will take part in this study.

WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE STUDY?
This study seeks to find out the implications of retention and/or alternatives to retention. The researcher will use this information to write scholarly articles about the debate over retention of elementary students.

WHAT WILL MY PARTICIPATION INVOLVE?
If you decide to participate in this study, you may be interviewed about your knowledge, experiences, or opinions on retention. These interviews will typically last thirty (30) minutes to ninety (90) minutes.

You will be asked if voice recordings can be made of your interview. Such recordings will be used only for writing down exactly what you say. Your name will remain secret. Digital recording will be stored in a locked cabinet after use. Being recorded is voluntary. You may still participate without being recorded.

WILL MY CONFIDENTIALITY BE PROTECTED?
Information learned from this study will be used in a dissertation, journal articles, or in presentations. None of these will identify you personally. You will be referred to by a made up name instead. Interviews, notes, and any video or audio recordings will be stored in a locked cabinet when not in use. Any information from the data that could identify you will be removed.

ARE THERE ANY RISKS?
The risks involved with this study include the possibility of loss of confidentiality. Though I take many steps to ensure secrecy, the identity of participants might accidentally become known. This may cause embarrassment or discomfort. Some questions I ask about your experiences and opinions might cause worry, embarrassment, discomfort, or sadness. You may choose not to answer such questions. Referrals to counseling will be available should you experience bad feelings, but no money is available from the study to pay for such services. Another drawback for you might include the amount of time spent in interviews or answering questionnaires.

ARE THERE ANY BENEFITS?

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

No direct benefit is guaranteed to you from participating in this study. Your participation in this research, however, may benefit you or other people in the future by helping us learn more about retention and possible alternatives to retention.

WILL I BE PAID FOR PARTICIPATING IN THE STUDY?
No participants will receive pay for taking part in the study.

IF I DECIDE TO START THE STUDY, CAN I CHANGE MY MIND?
Your decision to participate in this research is entirely voluntary. You may choose not to participate. If you do decide to take part, you may change your mind at any time without penalty or loss of benefits that you had before the study. Your decision to participate or not in this study will not affect any relationship you might have with employers or service providers. You may choose not to participate in certain interviews and you can skip any questions you do not want to answer.

WHAT IF I HAVE QUESTIONS?
If you have questions about this research in the future, please contact the researcher, Kim Englund, at (218) 233-3026 or by E-mail (kenglund@moorhead.k12.mn.us). If you have questions regarding your rights as a research participant, or if you have any concerns or complaints about the research, you may contact the University of North Dakota Institutional Review Board at (701) 777-4279. Please call this number if you cannot reach research staff, or if you wish to talk with someone else.

Authorization to participate in the research study:
I have read the information in this consent form, had any questions answered, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I have received a copy of this consent form.

_____
Participant's Name (please print)

_____ _____
Signature of Participant Date

_____ _____
Signature of Investigator or Person Obtaining Consent Date

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

Sample Interview Questions

Because of the diversity of respondents and the semi-structured nature of the interviews, it is impossible to outline all of the specific questions I will ask. Each respondent will be asked questions pertinent to their realm of knowledge or expertise, and my questions will evolve as I learn more and as I need to follow up on new directions. Nevertheless, I have noted some questions below that demonstrate the kinds of questions to be asked of participants.

- Do you feel retention is beneficial?
- What is your philosophy on retention?
- Describe the key elements of your retention program.
- Describe the key elements of the philosophy that informs your policies, practices and procedures in the area of retention.
- What alternatives are there to retention?
- How many years have you been teaching?
- What are your educational views about retention?
- Have you ever retained a student?
- What were your reasons for retaining students?
- If you have, up to this point, not retained a student, would you and why?
- In your opinion, how did the student you retained do educationally in the repeated year? Socially? Emotionally?
- Have you ever followed up on the progress of a student you retained? If you did, what did you find?
- Do you presently have any retained students in your classroom? How are they doing?
- What is your school district's view on retention?
- What is your school's policy for retention?

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

Appendix B

Approval Letter

REPORT OF ACTION: EXEMPT/EXPEDITED REVIEW
University of North Dakota Institutional Review Board

Date: 2/17/2012 **Project Number:** IRB-201203-300

Principal Investigator: Englund, Kim

Department: Education and Human Development

Project Title: Grade Level Retention: A Comparative Study of Practices in US and UK Elementary Schools

The above referenced project was reviewed by a designated member for the University's Institutional Review Board on March 4, 2012 and the following action was taken:

☒ Project approved. **Expedited Review** Category No. 6+7
Next scheduled review must be before: March 3, 2013
☒ **Copies of the attached consent form with the IRB approval stamp dated** March 4, 2012 **must be used in obtaining consent for this study.**

☐ Project approved. **Exempt Review** Category No.
This approval is valid until _____ as long as approved procedures are followed. No periodic review scheduled unless so stated in the Remarks Section.
☐ **Copies of the attached consent form with the IRB approval stamp dated _____ must be used in obtaining consent for this study.**

☐ Minor modifications required. The required corrections/additions must be submitted to RDC for review and approval. **This study may NOT be started UNTIL final IRB approval has been received.**

☐ Project approval **deferred. This study may not be started until final IRB approval has been received.** (See Remarks Section for further information.)

☐ Disapproved claim of exemption. This project requires Expedited or Full Board review. The Human Subjects Review Form must be filled out and submitted to the IRB for review.

☐ Proposed project is not human subject research and does not require IRB review.
☐ Not Research ☐ Not Human Subject

PLEASE NOTE: Requested revisions for student proposals MUST include adviser's signature. All revisions MUST be highlighted.

☒ Education Requirements Completed. (Project cannot be started until IRB education requirements are met.)

cc: Pauline Stonehouse

Signature of Designated IRB Member — Date 3-4-12
UND's Institutional Review Board

If the proposed project (clinical medical) is to be part of a research activity funded by a Federal Agency, a special assurance statement or a completed 310 Form may be required. Contact RDC to obtain the required documents.

(Revised 10/2006)

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

Appendix C

Fargo Consent Letter

District Administration

FARGO PUBLIC SCHOOLS

415 4th Street North
Fargo, ND 58102-4514
701.446.1000
Fax: 701.446.1200
www.fargo.k12.nd.us

Dr. Rick Buresh
Superintendent
701.446.1005

Mr. Broc Lietz
Business Manager
701.446.1027

Dr. Robert Grosz
Assistant Superintendent,
Instruction
701.446.1010

Mrs. Nancy Jordheim
Assistant Superintendent,
Human Resources
701.446.1038

3/1/2012

To:
Kim Englund
601 Lexington Lane
Moorhead, MN 56560

From:
Fargo Public School

Date:
March 1, 2012

Re: Agreement for Fargo teachers and administrators to participate in a field research study.

The Fargo Public School District has agreed to participate in a research study to gather information on beliefs of retention and the alternatives that are used when students are not at academic grade level. The research results will provide a comparison study with UK schools where retention is not used for students who are not a grade level. It is understood all participation is voluntary and individuals can withdraw from the project at any time.

Sincerely,

Robert Grosz
Fargo Public School District

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

Appendix D

Shalford Letter

Shalford Infant School
Station Row
Shalford
Surrey GU4 8BY
Tel: 01483 562 143
Email: info@shalford.surrey.sch.uk

District Permission Letter and Consent Document for Research Study in Shalford Infant School on Retention.

To:
Kim Englund
601 Lexington Lane
Moorhead, MN 56560

From:
Shalford Infant School

Date:
February 15, 2012

Re:
Agreement for Shalford Infanst teachers and administrators to participate in a field research study.

The Shalford Infant School has agreed to participate in a research study to gather information on what alternatives are used when students are not at academic grade level. The research results will provide a comparison study with US schools where retention is used for students who are not a grade level. It is understood all participation is voluntary and individuals can withdraw from the project at any time.

Sincerely,

Head Teacher
Shalford Infant School

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

REFERENCES

Anderson, R. H., & Pavan, B. (1993). *Nongradeness: Helping it to happen.* Lancaster, PA: Technomic Publishing.

Allen, C. S., Chen, Q., Wilson, V. L., & Hughes, J. N. (2009). Quality of research design moderates effects of grade retention on achievement: A meta-analytic, multilevel analysis. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 31*(4), 480-499.

Arthur, G. (1936). A study of the achievement of sixty grade 1 repeaters as compared with that of non-repeaters of the same mental age. *The Journal of Experimental Education*, *5*(2), 2003-2005.

Algozzine, B., Ysseldyke, J. E., & Elliot, J. (2002). *Strategies and tactics for effective instruction*. Longmont, CO: Sopris Wes

Bali, V. A., Anagnostopoulos, D., & Roberts, R. (2005). Toward a political explanation of grade retention. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 27*(2), 133-155.

Barnett, K. P., Clarizio, H. F., & Payette, K. A. (1996). Grade retention among students with learning disabilities. *Psychology in the Schools*, 33(4), 285-293.

Beebe-Frankenberger, M., Bocian, K. M., MacMillan, D. L., & Gresham, F. M. (2004). Sorting second-grade students: Differentiating those retained from those promoted. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 96*(2), 204-215.

Berliner, D. C., & Glass, G. (2014). *50 myths and lies that threaten America's public schools: The real crisis in education*. New York: Teachers College Press

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

Bonvin, P. (2003). The role of teacher attitudes and judgment in decision-making: The case of grade retention. *European Educational Research Journal, 2*(2), 277-294.

Bowman, J. (2005). Grade retention: Is it a help or hindrance to student academic success? *Preventing School Failure, 49*(3), 42-46.

Brooks, R. B. (2008). *School retention: A common practice but is it effective*? Retrieved from http://www.drrobertbrooks.com

Burkam, D. T., LoGerfo, L., Ready, D., & Lee, V. E. (2007). The differential effects of repeating kindergarten. *Journal of Education for Students Placed At Risk, 12*(2), 103-136.

Cannon, J. S., & Lipscomb, S. (2011). *Early grade retention and student success: Evidence from Los Angeles*. Retrieved from http://www.ppic.org/content/pubs/report/R_311JCR.pdf

Cardigan, D., Entwisle, D. R., Alexander, K. L., & Palls, A. M. (1988). First-grade retention among low achieving students: A search for significant predictors. *Merrill Palmer Quarterly, 34*, 71-88.

Caswell, H. L. (1933). *Non-promotion in elementary schools*. Nashville, TN: George Peabody College for Teachers, Center for Labor Market Studies.

Central Advisory Council for Education (England). (1967). *The Plowden report: Children and their primary schools*. London: Author.

Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Emerson, R. M., Fretz, R. I., & Shaw, L. L. (1995). *Writing ethnographic fieldnotes.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

Galton, M., Simon, B., & Croll, P. (1980). *Inside the primary classroom* (The ORACLE Report). London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

Gillard, D. (2011). *Education in England: A brief history*. Retrieved from: www.educationengland.org.uk/history

Gillborn, D., & Youdell, D. (2000). *Rationing education: Policy, practice, reform, and equity* (1st ed.). United Kingdom: Open University Press.

Glaser, B. G. (1978). *Theoretical sensitivity*. Mill Valley, CA: The Sociology Press.

Glaser B. G., & Strauss A. L. (1967). *The discovery of grounded theory: Strategies for qualitative research.* New York: Aldine de Gruyter.

Glesne, C. (2011). *Becoming qualitative researchers: An introduction* (4th ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson.

Goodland, J. (1954). Some effects of promotion and nonpromotion upon the social and personal adjustment of children. *Journal of Experimental Education, 22*, 301-328.

Goos, M., Schreier, B. M., Knipprath, H. M. E., Fraine, B. D. F., Damme, J. V., & Trautwein, U. (2013). How can cross-country differences in the practice of grade retention be explained? A closer look at national educational policy factors. *Comparative Education Review, 57*(1), 54-84.

Goos, M., Van Damme, J., Onghena, P., & Petry, K. (2011). *First-grade retention: Effects on children's actual and perceived performance throughout elementary education.* Evanston, IL: Society for Research on Educational Effectiveness.

Griffith, C. A., Lloyd, J. W., Lane, K. L., & Tankersley, M. (2010). Grade retention of students during grades k-8 predicts reading achievement and progress during secondary schooling. *Reading and Writing Quarterley, 26*(1), 51-66.

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

Hattie, J. A. C. (2009). *Visible learning: A synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to achievement*. Abingdon, OX: Routledge.

Hauser, R. M. (1999). *Should we end social promotion? Truths and consequences* (Working Papers). Madison, WI: Center for Demography and Ecology, University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Hauser, R., Pager, D., & Simmons, S. (2000). *Race-ethnicity, social back ground, and grade retention*. Madison, WI: Center for Demography and Ecology, University of Wisconsin-Madison.

Holmes. C. T. (1989). Grade-level grade level retention effects: In S. Shepard & M. Smith (Eds.), A meta-analysis of research studies. *Flunking grades: Research and policies on grade level retention* (pp. 16-33). Philadelphia PA: Palmer Press.

Holmes, C. T., & Matthews, K. M. (1984). The effects on nonpromotion on elementary and junior high school pupils: A mea-analysis. *Reviews of Educational Research*, 54(2), 225-236

Hong, G., & Raudenbush, S. W. (2005). Effects of kindergarten retention policy on children's cognitive growth in reading and mathematics. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 27*(3), 205-224.

Jackson, G. B. (1975). The research evidence on the effects of grade retention. *Review of Educational Research*, *45*, 613-635.

Jimerson, S. R. (2001). Meta-analysis of grade retention research: Implications for practice in the 21st century. *School Psychology Review*, *30*, 420-437.

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

Jimerson, S. R., & Ferguson, P. (2007). A longitudinal study of grade retention: Academic and behavioral outcomes of retained students through adolescence. *School Psychology Quarterly, 22*(3), 314-339.

Jimerson, S. R., & Renshaw, T. L. (2012). Retention and social promotion. *Principal Leadership, 13*, 12-16. Retrieved from: http://www.nasponline.org/resources/principals/NASSP_Grade_Retention_Sept_2012.pdf

Jimerson, S. R., Anderson, G. E., & Whipple, A. D. (2002). Winning the battle and losing the war: Examining the relation between grade level retention and dropping out of high school. *Psychology in the Schools, 9,* 441-457.

Jimerson, S. R., Pletcher, S. M. W., & Kerr, M. (2005). Alternatives to grade retention. *Counseling 101, 11-15*. Retrieved from http://www.nasponline.org

Jimerson, S. R., Woehr, S. M., & Kaufman, A. M. (2007). Grade retention and promotion: Information for parents. *Helping Children at Home and School II: Handouts for Families and Educators,* S65-S67.

Jimerson, S. R., Woehr, S. M., Kaufman, A. M., & Anderson, G. E. (2004). Grade retention and promotion: Information and strategies for educators. *Helping Children at Home and School II: Handouts for Families and Educators,* S3-64. Retrieved from http://www.nasponline.org

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

Kagan, S. L., Moore, E., & Bredekamp, S. (Eds.). (1995). *Reconsidering children's early development and learning: Toward shared beliefs and vocabulary.* Washington, DC: National Education Goals Panel. Retrieved from www.negp.gov/reports/child-ea.htm

Keyes, C. (1911). *Progress through the grades of city schools*. New York: AMS Press.

Klene, V., & Branson, E. (1929). Trial promotion versus failure. *Educational Research Bulletin, 8*, 6-11.

Lazarus, P. J., & Ortega, P. (2007). Universal pre-kindergarten in conjunction with universal screenings: An antidote to grade retention. *Journal of Educational Research and Policy Studies, 7*(1), 54-75.

Malm, R. (2012). *Perceptions of five low-income parents on school readiness* (Unpublished doctoral dissertation). University of North Dakota, Fargo, ND.

Martin, A. J. (2010). Holding back and holding behind: Grade retention and students‟ non- academic outcomes. *British Educational Research Journal, 37*(5), 739-763. doi:10.1080/01411926.2010.490874.

Maxwell, J. A. (2005). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach* (2nd. ed). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

McLeskey, J., & Grizzle, K. (1992). Grade retention rates among students with learning disabilities. *Exceptional Children, 58*(6), 548-554.

McCollum, P., Cortez, A., Maroney, Oanh, H., & Montes, F. (1999). *Failing our children: Finding alternatives to in-grade retention. A policy brief.* San Antonio, TX.

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

National Association of School Psychologists. (2003). *Position statement on student grade retention and social promotion*. Retrieved from http://www.nasponline.org/about_nasp/pospaper_graderetent.aspx

National Association of School Psychologists. (2011). *Student grade level retention and social promotion.* Retrieved from http://.naspweb.org/information/pospaper

National Center for Education Statistics. (2006). *The condition of education 2006* (NCES Publication No. 2006-071). Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

National Commission on Excellence in Education. (1983). *A nation at risk: The imperative for educational reform*. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.

National Research Council. (1999). *High stakes: testing for tracking, promotion, and graduation*. Edited by J. Heubert and R. M. Hauser. Washington, DC: National Academy Press.

No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, Pub. L. No. 107-110, 115 Stat. 1425 (2002).

Okpala, C. O. (2007). The perceptions of kindergarten teachers on retention. *Journal of Research in Childhood Education, 21*(4), 400-405.

Owings, W. A., & Magliaro, S. (1998). Grade retention: A history of failure. *Educational Leadership,* 56(1), 86-88.

Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Phillips, M. (2005). *Creating a culture of literacy: A guide for middle and high school Principals*. Reston, VA: National Association of Secondary School Principals.

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

Picklo, D. M., & Christenson, S. L. (2005). Alternatives to retention and social promotion: The availability of instructional options. *Remedial and Special Education, 26*(5), 258-268.

Poland, S. (2009). *Grade retention: School districts are leaving too many children behind. District administration*. Retrieved from http:www.districtadministration.com/article/grade-retention

Powell, P. (2010). A perilous policy path: Grade retention in the age of NCLB. *EJournal Educational Policy.* Retrieved from https://www4.nau.edu/cee/jep/journals.aspx?id=326

Protheroe, N. (2007). Alternatives to retention in grade. *Principal*, January/February, 2007, 30- 34. Retrieved from www.naesp.org

Rafoth, M., & Knickelbein, B. (2008). Best practices in preventing academic failure and promoting alternatives to retention. *Best Practice in School Psychology, 70*(4), 1137-1149.

Range, B. G., Yonke, D., & Young, S. (2011). Pre-service teacher beliefs about retention: How do they know what they do not know? *Journal of Research in Education*, 21(2), 77-99.

Robelen, E. W. (2012). Civil rights data show retention disparities. *Education Week, 31* (23), 18-20.

Roderick, M. (1995). Grade level retention and school drop out: Policy debate and research questions. *Research Bulletin of Phi Delta Kappa Center for Evaluation, Development, and Questions*. Retrieved from http// wwwpdkintora/edresbul

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

Roulston, K. (2010). *Reflective interviewing: A guide to theory and practice*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications.

Royce, J., Darlington, R., & Murray, H. (1983). Pooled analyses: Findings across studies. In the Consortium for Longitudinal Studies (Ed.), *As the twig is bent: Lasting effects of preschool programs* (pp. 411-459). Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.

Saldaña, J. (2009). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage Publications

Schwerdt, G., & West, M. R. (2013). *The effects of test-based retention on student outcomes over time: Regression discontinuity evidence from Florida*. Cambridge, MA: Program on Education Policy and Governance, Working Papers Series.

Shepard, L. A., & Smith, M. L. (1989). *Flunking grades: Research and policies on retention.* London: Falmer Press.

Silberglitt, B., Appleton, J. J., Burns, M. K., & Jimerson, S. R. (2006). Examining the effects of grade retention on student reading performance: A longitudinal study. *Journal of School Psychology, 44*, 255-270.

Smink, J. (2001). Alternatives to retention. *NASSP Bulletin, 85*, 3-17.

Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1990). *Basics of qualitative research: grounded theory procedures and techniques.* Newbury Park, CA: Sage Publications.

Strauss, A., & Corbin, J. (1998). *Basics of qualitative research: Techniques and procedures for developing grounded theory* (2n ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

Tanner, K. C., & Galis, S. A. (1997). Student retention: Why is there a gap between the majority of research findings and school practice? *Psychology in the Schools, 34*(2), 107-114.

Tomchin, E. M., & Impara, J. C. (1992). Unraveling teachers' beliefs about grade retention. *American Educational Research Journal, 29*, 199-223.

United Kingdom Department of Education. (2013). *National curriculum in England: primary curriculum: Key Stage 1 and 2 framework document*, Retrieved from: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/335133/PRIMARY_national_curriculum_220714.pdf

Warren, J. R., & Saliba, J. (2012). First through eighth grade retention rates for all 50 states: a new method and initial results. *Educational Researcher, 41*(8) 320-329.

Williams. R. (1961). *The long revolution*. London: Chatto and Windus.

Wilson, V. L., & Hughes, J. N. (2009). Who is retained in first grade? A psychosocial perspective. *The Elementary School Journal, 109*(3), 251-266.

Witmer, S. M., Hoffman, L. M., & Nottis, K. E. (2004). Elementary teachers' beliefs and knowledge about grade retention: How do we know what they know? *Education, 125*(2), 173-193.

Wu, W., West, S. G., & Hughes, J. N. (2008). Effect of retention in first grade on children's achievement trajectories over 4 years: A piecewise growth analysis using propensity score matching. *Journal of Educational Psychology, 100*(4), 727-740.

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com

Wu, W., West, S. G., & Hughes, J. N. (2010). Effect of grade retention in first grade on psychosocial outcomes and school relationships. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 102, 135-152

Xia, N., & Glennie, E. (2005). *Grade retention: The gap between research and practice*. Retrieved from http://www.childandfamilypolicy.duke.edu/pdfs/pubpres/FlawedStrategy_PartThree.pdf

Xia, N., & Kirby, S. N. (2009). *Retaining students in grade: A literature review of the effects of retention on students' academic and nonacademic outcomes*. Retrieved from http://www.rand.org/pubs/technical_reports/TR678

Zinth, K. (2005). *Student promotion/retention policies*. Retrieved from http://www.ecs.org/clearinghouse/65/51/6551.htm

المنارة للاستشارات
www.manaraa.com