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Grade Retention: Knowledge and Attitudes of Teacher Educators and Preservice Teachers

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Grade Retention: Knowledge and Attitudes of Teacher Educators and Preservice Teachers

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ABSTRACT

Grade retention, otherwise known as "failing" or "being held back", is a common practice for schools when they feel a student is not performing at or meeting school standards. While grade retention is a popular practice, very little research supports the use of it as an effective intervention over other interventions (Jimerson, 2001). A survey, structured around Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1985) was distributed to preservice teachers and teacher educators at a Midwestern university to examine their knowledge and beliefs about grade retention, as well as the prevalence of the topic of grade retention in teacher training. Results from the study indicated that Preservice Teachers were somewhat likely to consider grade retention, but were not sure of the research behind it. Teacher educators were not as likely to consider grade retention and indicated that they are familiar with the research. Results also indicated that grade retention is not consistently covered in the teacher training program. This study shows that preservice teachers may not be prepared to make informed decisions about grade retention because it is not covered in coursework and they are not knowledgeable about the effects.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Grade retention, which is also referred to as "failing" or "being held back," has proceeded as a common practice despite the amount of research that does not support it as a beneficial intervention (Holmes, 1989; Holmes & Matthews, 1984; Jackson, 1975; Jimerson, 2001). As the field of education shifts towards the use of evidence based practices in the schools, the continued use of grade retention, and the state policies that increase this use, bring forth more questions surrounding why this practice is still viewed as beneficial. On one side, backers of grade retention argue that promoting a student who is not prepared for the next grade level is doing a disservice to that student. It is also viewed as a way to hold schools accountable. Instead of continuing to promote students who are not ready, schools must do a better job of making sure all students are achieving or risk having a high grade retention rate. Lastly, those who back grade retention also view it as an effective way for students who are immature or have behavior problems to have an additional year to mature (Hong & Yu, 2008; Byrnes, 1989). On the other side, those who are against grade retention argue that for most students it does not lead to higher levels of achievement (Holmes, 1989; Jimerson, 2001; Jimerson, Carlson, Rotert, Egeland & Sroufe, 1997; McCoy & Reynolds, 1999; Meisels & Liaw, 1993; Schwerdt, West & Winters, 2017; Silberglitt, Appleton, Burns, &

Jimerson, 2006) or lower levels of behavior problems (Jimerson et al., 1997). In addition, they argue that holding students back can also lead to increased dropout rates (Jimerson, 1999; Jimerson, Anderson, & Whipple, 2002; Roderick, 1994).

The use of retention tends to be a teacher backed idea that has limited evidence behind it (Tomchin & Impara, 1992; Faerber & Van Dusseldorp, 1984). Despite the fact that teachers have very little knowledge of retention as an intervention (Witmer, Hoffman, & Nottis, 2004), it has been and continues to be used in schools across the country. While it is not clear why grade retention is still a common practice, it appears that it may continue because of the beliefs that teachers and administrators hold that grade retention is effective (Faerber & Van Dusseldorp, 1984; Gilmore-Hook, 2011; Pouliot, 1999; Range, Holt, Pijanowski, & Young, 2012; Terry, 2011; Tomchin & Impara, 1992). Because of this, it is important that universities and teacher educators do a better job of understanding the research on retention and educating preservice teachers regarding the research. Currently, research has not looked at the prevalence of the topic of grade retention in the coursework that preservice teachers go through during their teacher training.

This study first reviews the research done over the past century including hypotheses prior researchers have had on why grade retention continues to be used. Similar to past studies (Jensen, 2007; Pearson, 2000) that have examined the behaviors of educators, the Theory of Planned Behavior is then used to examine the behaviors of educators and give one possible explanation for why grade retention persists. A survey of preservice teachers and university education faculty at a Midwestern university to

examine the knowledge of preservice teachers and faculty and the prevalence of the topic of grade retention in teacher training.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Grade retention, the act of having a student repeat a grade, is a common practice for schools when they feel a student is not performing at or meeting school standards. While this is most commonly done when students are struggling with academics, it is also an option used by schools when students are having social and emotional issues or are considered immature when compared to same aged peers (Jimerson et al., 1997; Brynes & Yamamoto, 1986). Concerns about the effectiveness, and possible negative effects, of grade retention have been expressed since as early as the 1930s (Rafoth & Parker, 2014). Over the past 20 years, grade retention has been brought to national attention in part due to President Bill Clinton's 1998 State of Union address, where he called for an end to social promotion and then the 2001 revision of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, known as the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) act, which led to a significant increase in student grade retention (No Child Left Behind Act of 2001; Rafoth & Parker, 2014).

The use of grade retention in schools is one of the most controversial and debated practices in education. Those who back grade retention often oppose the idea of social promotion, the act of moving struggling students on to keep them with their same aged peers, by arguing that promoting low-performing students is a disservice because it places them in a classroom where they are ill-equipped to be successful

(Range et al., 2012). The perceived need to decrease social promotion has led to 15 states plus Washington D.C. that require the retention of third grade students who do not meet grade level expectations in reading based on a standardized assessment, with as many as three more states implementing similar policies in the upcoming years (Weyer, 2017). State level grade retention policies began with the state of Florida in the 2002-2003 school year, which led to 21,799 students in Florida alone who were retained because of their failure to meet grade level standards based on one standardized assessment (Schwerdt et al., 2017). Research looking into the effects of Florida's grade retention policy has shown mixed results about the effectiveness of the policy (Greene & Winters, 2007; Greene & Winters, 2009; Schwerdt et al., 2017). While these studies show that short-term effects of the policy indicate that students are able to make gains, these gains seem to disappear with time.

As of October 2015, approximately 2.2% of students in kindergarten through 12th grade nationwide had been retained, a decrease of 0.7% from 1994 when the retention rate was 2.9%, with African American (3.0%) and Hispanic (2.9%) students retained at higher rates than Whites (National Center for Education Statistics, 2017). Having a student repeat a grade means that the district is then responsible for the cost of education for that student for an additional year. Currently, the U.S. average of education spending is $11,392 per student per year (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017). This means that a district that retained 22 out of its kindergarten class of 1000 would be spending at least an additional $250,624 for students to repeat a grade that could have been spent elsewhere. Furthermore, Moran (1989) pointed out that, assuming that a

student who is retained graduates from high school, they will lose at least a year of full time employment, and perhaps what is viewed as the gift of time by many is in the long run taking time away from that student.

Grade Retention Research

Historical Overview

Over the years, the use of grade retention has been widely researched. Past reviews and meta-analyses have examined grade retention studies that covered most of the 20th century (1911-1999). While grade retention does appear to be successful at times, especially in the short term, the consensus has been that grade retention is not an effective intervention for the vast majority of students (Holmes, 1989; Holmes & Matthews, 1984; Jackson, 1975; Jimerson, 2001).

One of the first comprehensive overviews of research focusing on the effects of retention was done by Jackson (1975) and included 30 studies published between 1911 and 1973. Jackson defined grade retention as the "practice of requiring a student who has been in a given grade level for a full school year to remain at that level for a subsequent school year" (p. 613) and viewed it as a widespread issue that was a great expenditure of funds. Jackson's purpose was to determine whether students who were struggling academically or who exhibited social or emotional maladjustment benefited more from being retained than from being promoted. Jackson divided the studies into three groups. Design type 1 studies compared students who were retained under normal school policies to students who were promoted under normal school policies. Design type 2 studies compared the academic performance and social adjustment of

retained students after promotion to how they performed prior to promotion. The majority of the studies included in this review, 27 out of 30, were Design 1 type, Design 2 type, or a combination of both. The other three studies were Design type 3 which compared students with academic or socioemotional difficulties who were randomly assigned to either grade promotion or grade retention. While Design type 1 and Design type 2 were considered by Jackson as inadequate designs, only considering Design type 3 would have allowed for the interpretation of one statistically significant finding. That finding supported the students who were promoted. Other findings were either nonsignificant between the two groups or the researchers did not report whether the differences were significant. Because of this, Jackson stated the need for further research of much higher quality than what was conducted in the past. However, based on the current research, he concluded that the nonsignificant trends were equally distributed among retained and promoted students and determined 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" (Jackson, 1975, p. 627). Additionally, he suggested that educators who retain students do so without valid research evidence that indicates it will benefit students with academic or socioemotional maladjustment difficulties.

Nearly a decade later, Holmes and Matthew (1984) completed a meta-analysis based on 44 studies published between 1929 and 1981 that explored the effects of grade retention on elementary and junior high students in the areas of achievement and socioemotional adjustment. While the dates of the studies overlapped the review

previously done by Jackson (1975), out of these 44 studies, only 13 were included out of the 30 reviewed by Jackson. Studies included in the meta-analysis were reduced from 650 to 44 studies that met the criteria of showing effects in the elementary and junior high school grades, containing sufficient data that allowed for the calculation of an effect size, and comparing a group of students who were retained to a group of promoted students. The calculated effect sizes were then grouped into five major areas: academic achievement, personal adjustment, self-concept, attitude toward school, and attendance. In each area of comparison, Holmes and Matthew's meta-analysis found that there were statistically significant differences that favored the promoted students. Students who were retained had lower academic achievement, poorer personal adjustment, lower self-concept, and held school in less favor when compared to promoted students. Holmes and Matthew (1984) concluded "those who continue to retain pupils at grade level do so despite cumulative research evidence showing that the potential for negative effects consistently outweighs positive outcomes" (p. 232).

In an update of his earlier meta-analysis, Holmes (1989) did a subsequent meta-analysis that included the 44 studies in the 1984 meta-analysis (Holmes & Matthews, 1984) and an additional 19 studies. All studies were published between 1925 and 1989, and fit the criteria of presenting results of effects on students in kindergarten, elementary, or junior high school grades, containing sufficient data to allow for the calculation of an effect size, and describing an examination with an identifiable comparison group. The calculated effect sizes were grouped into the same five major

areas as his previous meta-analysis: academic achievement, personal adjustment, self-concept, attitude toward school, and attendance. Out of a total of 63 studies, 86% indicated overall negative effects associated with grade retention. For studies where retained and promoted students were matched on IQ and past achievement scores, even greater negative effects were shown. The nine studies which showed positive effects, most of which were published in the 1980s, focused on academic achievement although the benefits of retention appeared to diminish over time. Overall, Holmes (1989) concluded that on average students who were retained were worse off than their promoted counterparts in both personal adjustment and academic outcomes.

More recently, Jimerson (2001) completed a review and meta-analysis that focused on the results of analyses that explored academic achievement and socioemotional outcomes of retained students, and what the authors of each paper determined regarding the efficacy of grade retention. In addition, Jimerson also looked at the variables used to match the comparison group to the retained students (i.e., IQ, academic achievement, socioemotional adjustment, SES, and gender), the grades that students are retained and what grade/age the outcomes are examined. Initial search results produced over 400 studies that were then narrowed down to 20 studies that fit the following criteria: research was presented in a professional publication, results addressed the efficacy of grade retention, studies included an identifiable comparison group of promoted students, and research was published during 1990-1999. Overall, Jimerson (2001) concluded that the majority of the analyses had no significant differences between the retained students and the matched comparison group in both

achievement and socioemotional areas. Authors of 16 out of the 20 studies reviewed concluded that grade retention is ineffective as an intervention for academic achievement and socioemotional adjustment. In four out of the 20 studies the authors reached favorable conclusions regarding the effectiveness of grade retention, but concluded that retention alone is not effective and additional remedial strategies are important to help students be successful (Jimerson, 2001).

Academics

Research on the effectiveness of grade retention has heavily focused on academics, largely because it is often cited as the reason for why students are retained. Grade retention is often used as an intervention for students who are struggling academically, however, much of the research points to grade retention as an ineffective intervention for those students (Holmes, 1989; Jimerson, 2001; Jimerson et al., 1997; McCoy & Reynolds, 1999; Meisels & Liaw, 1993; Schwerdt et al., 2017; Silberglitt et al., 2006). In the meta-analyses mentioned earlier, when looking specifically at academic achievement, findings were similar across Holmes and Matthews (1984), Holmes (1989), and Jimerson (2001). Holmes and Matthews found that the analyses produced a mean negative effect size. When only comparing studies that contained matched students, the results produced a negative effect size which was consistent with the analyses that did not contain matched students. In the subsequent meta-analysis done by Holmes, the results were similar to Holmes and Matthews, with a negative mean effect size. In the studies that showed positive results, those positive effects appeared to fade over time. Jimerson looked at 20 different studies specifically between 1990 and 1999. When

looking exclusively at academics, he found that 48% of the analyses had no significant differences between the retained students and the matched comparison group, 47% favored the matched comparison group, and 5% favored the retained students, with a negative average effect size that favored the matched comparison group.

While a few retention studies may show some positive results in the short-term (Greene & Winters, 2007), it is important to also look at the long-term effects that retention has on academic achievement. In a longitudinal study, Jimerson et al. (1997) looked at both the short term and long term effects of retention on students. This study followed a group of 190 children who were participating in the Minnesota Mother-Child Interaction Project, from kindergarten through the age of 16. The subjects were either in the retained group, low-achieving promoted group, or control group. When comparing these groups, they found that the short-term effects of retention showed no significant differences between the retained group and the low-achieving promoted group. During first and second grade, students who were retained exhibited significant growth in math achievement, with no significant gains made in reading or spelling achievement, and were ranked the lowest on emotional health, peer acceptance, and behavior problems when compared to students who were not retained (Jimerson et al., 1997). While there was a significant growth in math, this could be attributed to additional services in math, not simply to being retained. When looking at long term effects of retention, Jimerson et al. (1997) found no significant difference between students who were retained and low–achieving students who were promoted. This

indicates that retaining students has no greater effect on their abilities than if they had been low-achieving and promoted.

In another longitudinal study completed almost a decade later, Silberglitt et al. (2006) looked at the long-term effects of grade retention on reading while following 147 students from kindergarten through 8th grade. Students were divided into three groups: students who were retained, a matched group of promoted students, and a randomly selected control group. Groups were then compared using a reading fluency curriculum based measurement (R-CBM) to track progress. Hierarchical Linear Modeling (HLM) was used to compare reading growth trajectories across the three comparison groups. Results indicated that while students who were retained did not experience any benefit or deficits in growth rates as a result of retention when compared to similarly performing promoted students, the growth curve of the randomly selected group was significantly greater than the growth curve of the students who were retained. These results are similar to Jimerson et al. (1996) that indicated that retaining students had no greater effect on their abilities than if they had been low-achieving, promoted students. Because of this, Silberglitt et al. (2006) indicated that instead of focusing on retaining or promoting students, the focus should be on facilitating student specific evidence-based interventions for low achieving students.

This past research covering most of the last century, shows that there is very little evidence that retaining students is more beneficial at increasing academic achievement than promoting them in both the short and long term. More currently, research has been published that examines the results of the grade retention policy in

Florida that required students who did not meet reading standards on a standardized assessment by third grade to be held back. Greene and Winters (2007) compared the data for students who had been retained to those who were promoted before the policy was in place or who were just barely promoted based on their test score. He found that after two years, students who were retained had increased reading proficiency, stating that "students who were subjected to the treatment of Florida's test-based retention policy made significant and economically substantial gains in reading relative to promoted peers" (p. 336). However, it is important to consider the limitations of this study, with a major one being that the comparison groups were not matched across any variable. To look at possible long term effects, Winters and Greene (2012) looked at the outcomes of Florida's retention policy after five years and found similar results. However, they note that students who are retained are then required to be assigned a high-quality teacher the following year and are required to attend summer school. Therefore, it is impossible to determine if the results are from the interventions of a high-quality teacher and summer school or from being retained. Schwedt et al. (2017) looked at the long-term effects on retained students in Florida and determined that even when accompanied with the additional services there is not enough evidence that retention based on testing in third grade is beneficial for students in the long run. Results from Schwedt et al. indicated that the positive gains students made in the first couple years fade out and are nonsignificant after five years when compared to same-age peers.

Social-Emotional Impacts

While most studies look at the academic effects grade retention has on students, a few studies discuss the social-emotional effects that retention may have on students. Most educators argue that retaining students who are struggling academically may give them a boost of self-esteem and increased level of competence when compared to their new classmates (Hong & Yu, 2008). In kindergarten, when students are retained it is often because teachers and parents view them as being socially and emotionally immature, and therefore not ready to move onto first-grade (Byrnes, 1989). Even though these reasons make sense on the surface, very little research shows support for retaining for behavioral reasons, with some studies showing possible social and emotional harm for students who have been retained.

Jimerson et al. (1997) compared the characteristics of students who were retained and those who were not retained but achieved at comparable academic levels. What they found was that the two groups did not differ significantly on measures of intellectual functioning but did differ significantly in relation to social and personal adjustment variables, such as the ability to be confident, curious, self-assured, and engaging. This indicates that the use of retention cannot be explained in terms of achievement or ability alone, but that nonacademic variables may be significant factors in decisions regarding retention. Jimerson et al. stated that "retained children are perceived as poor students in large part because of their behavior in the classroom, since their school achievement does not distinguish them, but their behavior is

distinctive" (p. 20). This would indicate that the use of retention is more often used for a behavior intervention than an academic intervention.

While past research has looked at the views of teachers on the social-emotional impacts grade retention has on children, exploring children's views on retention is an aspect that has yet to be deeply studied. Yamamoto and Byrnes (1987), asked children to rate 20 stressful life events. The results suggested that children viewed only the loss of a parent and going blind as more stressful than being retained. When this study was more recently replicated, it was found that grade retention was rated as the most stressful event among sixth-graders, similar only to the loss of a parent and going blind (Anderson, Jimerson, & Whipple, 2004). Based on the results of these studies, it appears that children see grade retention as a stressful life event. As more states begin implementing grade retention policies, there may be an increase in anxiety and stress related to being retained. Further studies are needed in states that implement grade retention policies to determine this.

In addition to being a stressful life event, children in grades as low as first grade can understand the concept of retention and view it as a punishment (Brynes, 1989). In one study that looked at elementary school children who had been retained, Byrnes and Yamamoto (1985) interviewed 71 children who had been retained. When asked if they or students in their grade had ever been retained, 81% of the boys named themselves but only 57% of girls named themselves and were more likely to name other students even when the question was clarified or repeated. One first grade girl even had a friend lie for her to convince the researcher that she had never been retained. When asked

about how retention made them feel, 87% stated that being retained led to feelings that centered around “sad”, “bad”, “upset” or embarrassment (Brynes & Yamamoto, 1985). While more research is necessary to assess the views of children who have experienced grade retention, these findings indicate that students who have been retained do not view it as a positive thing. These findings contradict the views of teachers who felt that retaining students helps their self-esteem (Hong & Yu, 2008).

Even though some studies indicate a positive effect size when retaining students in kindergarten, it is still very small and does not indicate that retaining students in kindergarten will have great benefits for students’ social-emotional development (Hong & Yu, 2008; McCoy & Reynolds, 1999). While some students may struggle with social-emotional development, retention has not been demonstrated to be the most effective intervention for those students. Other research on the impact of grade retention on social-emotional development has shown negative effects, and may lead to higher emotional and behavior problems (Holmes, 1989; Holmes & Matthews, 1984; Jimerson, 2001; Meisels & Liaw, 1993). These findings again indicate that in general retaining a student has no greater positive impact in the long run than if the student had been promoted, and in some cases, retaining students may even lead to negative effects.

Dropout rates

Many of the studies on retention examine the short-term effects that happen in elementary or middle school while a few examine the long-term effects outside of academic achievement that can occur or what happens to those students once they reach high school. Research as early as 1972 indicated that retention was the greatest

predictor of dropping out among African American males when compared to other factors such as excessive absence, school changes, juvenile police record, sexual experience before age 15, childhood home status, drinking alcohol before age 15, family life style, IQ score, father absence, education of mother, and number of full siblings (Stroup & Robins, 1972). After 50 years of subsequent research, the findings have remained consistent: children who are retained during elementary school are at an increased risk of dropping out (Jimerson, 1999; Jimerson et al., 2002; Roderick, 1994; Tuck, 1989). Tuck (1989) looked at dropout rates in the District of Columbia public schools and found that 78% of students who dropped out were retained at least once. Another study found that 69% of students who were retained once dropped out, while 94% of students who were retained twice or more dropped out of high school (Roderick, 1994). Other studies suggest that retaining a student increases their chances of dropping out by 20-50% (Bachman, Green, & Wirtanen, 1971; Jimerson, 1999). In addition, students who are retained are 2 to 11 times more likely to drop out than comparable low achieving students who were not retained (Barro & Kolstad, 1987; National Center for Education Statistics, 1992; Rumberger, 1995; Rumberger & Larson, 1998).

While many studies focus on the short-term effects of retention, it is important to consider this long-term effect of dropping out. Many educators who suggest retention are often unaware of how retained students do years after they have been retained. In the schools, teachers will often only be aware of the retained student for a year or two after the student has been retained. While they may see some positive

effects during those years, they do not see the long-term effects. This may be a reason why teachers and other educators view retention as an effective intervention for struggling students.

Who is Being Retained

The use of grade retention in the schools is largely tied to the idea that students should be retained because they have not met the necessary academic standards. However, as noted earlier, past studies (Jimerson et al., 1997; Brynes & Yamamoto, 1986) have shown that academics alone is not the sole reason why students are retained and other risk factors among students may increase a student's chance of being retained.

Winsler et al. (2012) recently examined characteristics in students that led to higher retention rates. They examined over 10,000 students in the Chicago area and looked for predictors of kindergarten retention. What they found was that predictors of grade retention include ethnicity, gender, poverty status, parent marital status, maternal education, and preschool type. These findings are consistent across other studies that have looked at characteristics of students who are retained (Greene & Winters, 2009; Jimerson et al., 1997; McCoy & Reynolds, 1999; Meisels & Liaw, 1993; Shepard & Smith, 1989). When looking at ethnicity, students who are African American or Hispanic are more likely to be retained when compared to children of Caucasian descent. This is a statistic that is consistent across all studies that compared it, as well as the current national statistics that were noted earlier (Greene & Winters, 2009; Jimerson et al., 1997; Meisels & Liaw, 1993; National Center for Education Statistics,

2017; Shepard & Smith, 1989; Winsler et al., 2012). There is also a discrepancy across genders, with boys almost twice as likely to be retained than girls (Jimerson et al., 1997; McCoy & Reynolds, 1999; Meisels & Liaw, 1993; Winsler et al., 2012). Children who come from families with a higher social economic status are less likely to be retained, while students who qualify for free or reduced lunches have about four times greater odds of being retained (Meisels & Liaw, 1993; Winsler et al., 2012). Studies have also looked at parental factors, such as education and involvement, and found that higher parent education and the more involvement in their child's education led to the less likely chance of being retained (Jimerson et al., 1997; McCoy & Reynolds, 1999).

In regard to these findings, Jimerson (2001) reminds us to consider other characteristics that can influence a student's development (i.e., low SES, single-parent families). "Simply having a student repeat a grade is unlikely to address the multiple factors influencing the student's poor achievement or adjustment that resulted in the decision to retain the student" (p. 432).

Why Might Grade Retention Still Be Occurring?

Teacher Perspectives

When it comes to making decisions about retention in schools the recommendation is usually made by the teacher, who often must convince the parents (Smith, 1989). The recommendation by a teacher for retention often goes unchallenged and alternatives to retention are not pursued (Jimerson et al., 1997). In addition to the considerable research done on the effects of grade retention on students, some research has been done on the teacher perspectives of grade retention and why it is still

viewed as a valid intervention for low-achieving students. The first research of this type emerged almost 10 years after the first major meta-analysis (Jackson, 1975) that showed retention having negative effects. Faerber and Van Dusseldorp (1984) looked at the perspectives of practicing teachers in regard to grade repetition. The teachers were all graduate students at the University of Alaska, Anchorage campus. A total of 90 questionnaires were distributed to teachers, with 31 returned and included in the final results. Results from the questionnaire indicated that the total group of respondents agreed that retention is a positive step and ultimately beneficial, that it can help students catch up academically, and that it does not have negative effects on a child's self-concept, attitudes, or academic growth. These findings were similar to those found by Tomchin and Impara (1992) in a study that gave 135 classroom teachers the Teacher Retention Beliefs Questionnaire (TRBQ). These results also indicated that teachers from all grade levels accepted retention and viewed it as a positive step (Tomchin & Impara, 1992). In a similar study (Pouliot, 1999), a questionnaire was given out to 300 schoolteachers in Quebec, Canada. Responses indicated that teachers at grade levels kindergarten through sixth grade believed that grade retention is an effective means of preventing students from facing daily failure. In addition, responses indicated that the teachers felt it does not harm the child's self-concept and the majority of teachers felt that retention during the elementary grades does not permanently label the child. However, most teachers were not sure of the effect on students in higher grades.

More recent studies have shown similar results. In 2011, two studies were done that looked at the beliefs of teachers and how those beliefs changed when presented

with an online presentation on grade retention. Teachers in an urban (Gilmore-Hook, 2011) and a rural (Terry, 2011) elementary school were asked to complete a pre-survey using the Teacher Opinion Survey (TOS), view an online presentation on grade retention, and then complete a post-survey. Despite the similarity of the studies, the results showed different outcomes. Results from teachers in the urban elementary school showed that overall the online presentation was effective in changing teacher's responses from the pre- to post-survey on eleven out of the twelve statements and showed that there was a significant difference in teachers' beliefs after being provided a research and evidence-based presentation on grade retention (Gilmore-Hook, 2011). The statement that did not change was "Retention is my only alternative when students do not successfully master grade level material by the end of the year," which all participants answered false on both the pre- and post- survey. Teacher results from the rural elementary school showed that after watching the presentation on grade retention, results between the pre- and post-surveys showed change on five out of the twelve statements, indicating that the presentation was not as effective in changing teacher's attitudes toward grade retention (Terry, 2011). Following the presentation, there was a change in perspective on the statement "Retention provides children an opportunity to raise their current level of academic achievement"; however, other statements where there were changes, went against the research. Following the presentation more teachers thought that grade retention is an effective intervention for girls and gives immature students a chance to catch up. In addition, teachers still

believed that grade retention does not harm a student's self-esteem or increase a student's chance of dropping out after watching the presentation.

Furthermore, it is possible that one contributing factor to the continued use of retention is that teachers are not knowledgeable about the current findings of research on grade retention. When teachers were asked to rate their knowledge of current research on retention, most teachers reported that they had extremely limited or somewhat limited knowledge, with no teachers indicating that they had extensive knowledge on retention (Witmer et al., 2004). It appears that teachers' knowledge of retention comes from personal experiences and talking with colleagues, rather than journal articles, attending workshops on retention, or research that was presented to them (Witmer et al., 2004, Terry, 2011).

Despite the amount of research on teacher perspectives, there has also been little research done on principals' perspectives on grade retention. Principals' perspectives are important because of the impact they have on policies and decisions that are made within the schools. In a study done by Range et al. (2012) teacher and principal perspectives were compared in regard to reasons and views of retention. Overall, teachers agreed significantly more than principals that retention is effective. Teachers also agreed significantly more than principals that retention can help prevent failure, motivate students and parents, and maintain standards. In addition, teachers felt that retention can help aid students who are immature. Both principals and teachers agreed that perceived self-concept is positively impacted by retention. This

study supports the idea that teachers and principals have different views on retention, with teachers being more supportive of the use of retention.

Another area that is lacking in research regarding beliefs and knowledge of retention are the perspectives of the parents. In a large study done three decades ago, Brynes and Yamamoto (1986) attempted to understand the perspectives of parents, as well as the perspectives of students, principals, and teachers, by surveying 1063 parents. Out of the 1063 parents, 285 had a child who was retained. Responses indicated that there was no significant difference between parents who had a child retained and those who did not in their support of grade retention, what they believed was an appropriate reason for retention, or who should have the final say in retention (Brynes & Yamamoto, 1986). Parents in this study were unclear with who should have the final say in retention decisions, which may suggest that parents rely on the school's input instead of their own information when making decisions about grade retention.

While there is very little research surrounding the views of principals and parents, what has been done shows the main backers of grade retention are teachers. As mentioned earlier, many teachers view that grade retention as a positive intervention for a struggling student. Therefore, using grade retention as an intervention has developed into a social norm.

Theory of Planned Behavior

The question of why teachers are continuing to use grade retention as an intervention can be possibly explained by the theory of planned behavior (Ajzen, 1985), which has been used in past studies (Jensen, 2007; Pearson, 2000) to explain educator's

behaviors. The theory of planned behavior (TPB) provides a basis for understanding and predicting behavior by taking into account a person's attitudes, the person's perceived control of the situation, and the social norms surrounding the behavior and that person's intentions. TPB indicates that a person's attitudes, combined with the social norms and the perceived sense of control leads to the intentions of that person which then leads to one's behavior. For example, in regard to grade retention, a teacher's positive attitude toward retention being an effective intervention combined with the social norms of the teacher's colleagues also using retention and the sense of being able to control the situation by having a plausible solution for a struggling student can all lead to the intention of retaining a student. This intention will then lead to the behavior of using grade retention. While TPB states that all three components lead to a person's intentions, changing one aspect may lead to a change in the intentions. If the attitudes toward grade retention of educators can be changed or better informed, this may lead to the decrease in the use of grade retention. To do this, it is important to not only look at what those beliefs are, but also how they are developed. While there is a large amount of research on teacher's beliefs regarding grade retention (Faerber & Van Dusseldorp, 1984; Gilmore-Hook, 2011; Pouliot, 1999; Range, Yonke, & Young, 2012; Terry, 2011; Tomchin & Impara, 1992), most of it fails to look at the development of those beliefs and knowledge. As mentioned above, the past research on teacher perspectives surrounding grade retention has shown that it is a practice that is supported by teachers. When a lot of teachers believe that grade retention is a positive thing, this creates a social norm. In addition, the lack of knowledge increases the

importance of social norms when a person is considering a decision. Furthermore, according to TPB, having a sense of perceived control is an important component that leads to a person's decision. When a student is struggling, having control over a reasonable solution for that student impacts how a decision is made. Having knowledge about reasonable solutions can impact a person's perception of that control. If teachers do not know about or have access to reasonable solutions, they do not feel as if they have as much control. In addition, teachers may not want to be seen as the reason a student is failing and instead look for something to be wrong with a kid.

In order to change the behavior of using grade retention, the attitudes of the individual, social norms surrounding them, and their perceived sense of control must also be changed. With grade retention, a potential place to intervene would be when preservice teachers are going through their teacher training programs and are still in the process of building their attitudes and beliefs. While a large amount of research has been done surrounding teachers' beliefs, knowledge, and attitudes toward retention, very little research has been done to evaluate the beliefs and knowledge of grade retention in preservice teachers. Range et al. (2011) looked at preservice teacher's beliefs about retention. Students in a college education department were given the Teacher Perceptions about Retention Survey (TPARS) and findings indicated that, overall, preservice teachers viewed retention as a positive thing and necessary for students who are struggling academically, had low ability and were immature. Range et al. also asked the preservice teachers to rate interventions aimed at keeping students from being retained on their effectiveness and found that they viewed parental

involvement as the most effective, with special education services and additional reading programs coming in next. Additional research is needed, not only on the beliefs that preservice teachers hold, but where those beliefs come from.

Knowing where a teacher's beliefs and knowledge comes from can help with the understanding of how teachers and preservice teachers are building the attitude that grade retention is effective. In a study that looked at teachers' knowledge, Buehl and Fives (2009) explored where this knowledge comes from and if it changes. Buehl and Fives analyzed the responses of both preservice and practicing teachers on the Open-Ended Teaching Belief Questionnaire (OTBQ) that was developed to evaluate teacher beliefs about the nature of teaching and the source, stability, and content of their knowledge. Both preservice and practicing teacher responses indicated six different themes that are related to the source of teaching knowledge: formal education, formal bodies of information, observational or vicarious learning, interactions or collaboration with others, personal or professional teaching experiences, and self-reflection.

Levin and He (2008) also looked at the sources of preservice teachers' knowledge by having participants self-report on their personal practical theories (PPTs) and what sources contributed to their PPTs. According to the 94 preservice teachers who self-reported their PPTs, there were three major categories that contributed to their knowledge and PPTs: family background and personal experiences, observations and teaching experiences during field experience, and coursework during their teacher education program. In addition, the results indicated that 66% of the PPTs were based on either the explicit curriculum of their teacher education program or the learning

experiences obtained through field experiences. Levin, He, and Allen (2013) did a follow-up study of 22 in-service teachers who were from the original study of 94 preservice teachers. They found that teachers with one to six years of teaching experiences attributed their beliefs to what they learned during their teacher education program, their family values and experiences as K-12 students, their own teaching experiences, recent professional development, and observations of other teachers (Levin, He, & Allen, 2013).

As past research has shown (Levin & He, 2008; Buehl & Fives, 2009; Levin et al., 2013), the coursework during a person's teacher education program is one of the main sources of teacher knowledge. The majority of teacher training programs in the United States follow the Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC) that was developed by the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). InTASC was first developed in 1992 as learning standards for beginning teachers, but has now been updated to be professional practice standards for all teachers (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2013). The current ten standards laid out by InTASC are: learner development, learning difference, learning environments, content knowledge, application of content, assessment, planning for instruction, instructional strategies, professional learning and ethical practice, and leadership and collaboration. These standards are then used by teacher training programs to guide coursework and to assess the development of preservice teachers. Since these standards are relatively broad, they do allow for teacher training programs to vary in the specific topics that are covered. With the topic of grade retention, it is not a focus that is a major component

of one of the standards, which may be a reason why grade retention is not covered in teacher training program coursework. However, very little research has been done to look at whether grade retention is included in teacher training coursework.

While not specifically laid out in the InTASC standards for teacher training, I did a brief overview of textbooks used by instructors in undergraduate teacher training programs and found that grade retention is a topic that is at least mentioned. For example, in textbooks focused on educational psychology and child development, Woolfolk and colleagues include a point and counter point section that lays out the arguments of those who support grade retention and those who support social promotion (Woolfolk, 2014; Woolfolk, 2016; Woolfolk, Winne, & Perry, 2016). In Slavin's (2015) educational psychology text, he includes a segment on the research on grade retention and supports the idea that there are better options for struggling students. While these textbooks lay out the arguments against grade retention, they do not specifically state that grade retention does not work. Other textbooks, such as *Collaborative Consultation in the Schools* by Kampwirth and Powers (2016) and *Early Childhood Education Today* by Morrison (2015) both explicitly state that grade retention does not work. While it appeared that some textbooks addressed grade retention, there were others that only briefly mentioned it or left it out completely (Eggen & Kauchak, 2016; Ormrod, 2014; Ormrod, 2015). Even when textbooks at least briefly cover grade retention, this does not guarantee that those chapters will be assigned for students to read, that students will read the materials assigned or that instructors will

address this topic. This increases the importance of including instruction and discussion surrounding the topic if it is something that needs to be addressed.

When looking at teacher education programs, there may be a lack of focus or discussion regarding grade retention, which may be a leading reason as to why teachers are continuing to use grade retention as an academic or socioemotional intervention. This absence may come from the lack of knowledge amongst professors, the absence of the topic in education textbooks or coursework, or a combination of both.

Purpose of the Study

The extensive amount of research that has been done in the past fifty years has been conclusive – grade retention as an intervention is not effective in the long run for most students who are struggling academically (Holmes, 1989; Jimerson, 2001; Jimerson et al., 1997; McCoy & Reynolds, 1999; Meisels & Liaw, 1993; Schwerdt et al., 2017; Silberglitt et al., 2006), or who are struggling behaviorally (Holmes & Matthews, 1984; Holmes, 1989; Jimerson, 2001; Meisels & Liaw, 1993). Not only is it generally not effective as an academic or behavioral intervention, the use of grade retention leads to higher dropout rates (Jimerson, 1999; Jimerson et al., 2002; Roderick, 1994; Tuck, 1989). However, this practice continues to be used as seen in the current state policies that fifteen states plus Washington D.C. are implementing (Weyer, 2017). To better understand why this is, researchers have explored the beliefs of teachers, administrators, and parents and revealed that no group opposed the use of grade retention (Brynes & Yamamoto, 1986; Faerber & Van Dusseldorp, 1984; Gilmore-Hook, 2011; Pouliot, 1999; Range et al., 2011; Range et al., 2012; Terry, 2011; Tomchin &

Impara, 1992). This leads to TPB, which theorizes that a person's attitudes, the social norms, and sense of control all contribute to the decisions a person makes. While it seems that many teachers view grade retention as a positive thing, it is unclear if these attitudes are formed during preservice teacher training. Therefore, this study will begin to look at the attitudes of preservice teachers toward grade retention and how those attitudes may be influenced by their coursework and views of their instructors and supervisors.

The purpose of this study is to examine the attitudes of preservice teachers, and where those attitudes come from. In addition, it also examines the attitudes of the faculty who work with the preservice teachers, and whether the topic of grade retention is covered in coursework or discussion. The study was guided by these research questions:

1. When contemplating interventions for struggling students, do teacher educators and preservice teachers consider grade retention?
2. Are preservice teachers and teacher educators knowledgeable about the effects of grade retention?
3. What resources will Preservice Teachers and Teacher Educators rely on to decide whether grade retention is appropriate?
4. Do teacher educators discuss the topic of grade retention with preservice teachers?

CHAPTER III

METHOD

Participants

Participants were preservice teachers and teacher educators from a small mid-western university. Preservice Teachers were juniors and seniors who were working towards a degree in early education or elementary education during the spring semester. Out of 339 surveys sent out, 61 surveys were started and 44 were completed. This yielded a response rate of 13%. Of the surveys returned, 48(90.6%) of the respondents were female and 5(9.1%) were male. Ages of the Preservice Teacher respondents ranged from 19 to 41, with a mean age of 23. Of the respondents who started the survey, 23 indicated that they were seniors, 26 juniors, and 4 other (i.e., transfer students). All the respondents were working towards a degree in education, with 37 (67.3%) in the elementary education program, 8(14.5%) in the early education program and 8(14.5%) indicated they were in a different education program (special education, secondary). All Preservice Teachers had experience in education as either practicum students or student teachers. Ten also indicated they have had experience volunteering at a school or working in a school or daycare.

University faculty were from the education department, and included instructional faculty and field experience supervisors. A total of 61 surveys were sent out to faculty and supervisors. Out of the 61 sent out, a total of 22 surveys were

started, with 21 being completed. This yielded a response rate of 34%. Of the Teacher Educator survey respondents, 15(53.6%) were female and 6(21.4%) were male. The respondents' amount of time spent working in the Preschool through 12th grade settings ranged from 5 years to 45 years, with an average of 23 years. While working in the preschool through 12th grade setting, 14 of the respondents spent time working as a general education teacher, 9 as administrators, 6 as a special education teacher, and 2 as a paraprofessional, with some serving in multiple positions. Five of the respondents also indicated that they spent time in a different role such as supervisor, English Language Learner instructor, or support staff (i.e., school psychologist, speech language pathologist, counselor, Title One). The number of years working in higher education for each respondent ranged from 1 to 30, with an average of 9 years. Of the 21 respondents, 7 were currently employed as course instructors, 6 were field placement supervisors, 6 were both and 2 indicated "other".

Materials

Two different surveys were used in this study, one for Preservice Teachers and one for Teacher Educators (See Appendices A and B). The surveys, while not identical, contained parallel questions related to grade retention. In addition, questions about demographic variables were included. The Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1985) structure of looking at the influence of attitudes, social norms, and control on a person's decision was used to structure the survey around the person's attitude towards grade retention, sense of social norms about the topic, and their perceived control in making decisions. Some questions were adapted from the Teachers Retention Beliefs and

Knowledge Questionnaire (TRBKQ) used by Witmer et al. (2004), while I developed the remainder to reflect the Theory of Planned Behavior components and components addressed in prior research teachers' knowledge (Levin & He, 2008).

On both surveys, questions were formatted using a 5-point Likert scale or a multiple-choice format. There were also opportunities for comments following most questions. Depending on the question, the response scale ranged from very unlikely to very likely, not effective at all to highly effective, or strongly disagree to strongly agree. The survey was designed to take approximately 10 to 15 minutes to complete.

The Preservice Teacher survey included 14 questions and began with questions about the respondents' gender, age, major, and year in school. Questions were also asked about the person's personal experiences with grade retention and what they thought their personal knowledge level of grade retention was. The Teacher Educator survey had 23 questions and began with questions about the respondents' gender, age, experience in Preschool through 12^{th} grade settings, and higher education experience. The Teacher Educator survey also included questions about their personal experiences with grade retention and current knowledge level of grade retention. In addition, it included questions about their past experiences while working in a school, such as policies and views of the last school district in which they worked.

Both surveys included questions about the person's knowledge of the current research on grade retention, and their attitudes regarding its effectiveness as an intervention. Scenarios were included to gain an understanding of the likelihood that Preservice Teachers and Teacher Educators might consider grade retention when

presented with a student who is struggling. Questions on the survey also addressed the prevalence of the topic of grade retention in the coursework and supervision of preservice teachers.

Procedures

Approval for the research was given by the University Institutional Review Board. Emails for the Preservice Teachers and Teacher Educators were obtained from the Information Technology department at the university. The two separate surveys were designed to be distributed via Qualtrics, an online survey system, through emails sent out to Preservice Teachers and Teacher Educators via their university email account. Initially, participants were given two weeks to complete the survey, however, the deadline was extended five more days because of low participation. The initial email (Appendix C) was sent out to all possible participants and included information about the study, why it was being done, and a brief definition of grade retention. The first email was sent out on March 22, 2018, towards the end of the spring semester. An email reminder was then sent out on March 26, April 5, and April 8. The survey closed on April 9, 2018. After the study, a debriefing form (Appendix D) was sent out to all respondents. It included information about the study, where the results could be found, and contact information for any additional questions.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

Qualtrics was used to compile the data on participants' demographics and analyze the frequency, percentages, and ranges of the responses from the 44 Preservice Teachers and 21 Teacher Educators who completed the survey. The data were then exported to an SPSS file. Means and standard deviations were calculated using SPSS for items that were answered using a 5-point Likert scale.

The design of the survey allowed for respondents to skip questions. Because of this, questions had varying numbers of responses. In addition, some respondents did not fully complete the survey, allowing for earlier questions to have a higher number of responses. The number of responses for each question are indicated in each table.

Demographics

To gain a better understanding of the background of the participants, questions were asked about their personal experiences with grade retention and how much they felt they already know about grade retention. Responses showing Preservice Teachers' and Teacher Educators' personal experiences with grade retention are listed in Table 1. Respondents could select more than one response with the number of responses for Preservice Teachers ranging from 1 to 4 and ranging from 1 to 3 for Teacher Educators.

Table 1

Preservice Teachers' (N=54) and Teacher Educators' (N=21) Personal Experiences with Grade retention

Personal Experience	Frequency	Percentage
I was retained.		
Preservice Teachers	2	3%
Teacher Educators	0	0%
As a child, I worried about being retained.		
Preservice Teachers	2	3%
Teacher Educators	0	0%
I have/had a family member who was retained.		
Preservice Teachers	10	14%
Teacher Educators	7	17%
I have/had a friend who was retained.		
Preservice Teachers	8	11%
Teacher Educators	4	10%
I knew someone other than family/friends who was retained.		
Preservice Teachers	16	22%
Teacher Educators	11	26%
I have worked with a student who was retained.		
Preservice Teachers	15	21%
Teacher Educators	16	38%
I have had no experience with grade retention.		
Preservice Teachers	18	25%
Teacher Educators	1	7%

Note: People could check more than 1 item, totals will not equal 100%

The majority of Preservice Teachers indicated that they had some personal experience with grade retention, whether it was a family member or friend, a student they worked with, or themselves who was retained. Only 18 (25%) Preservice Teachers indicated that they had no experience with grade retention.

Out of the Teacher Educator respondents, the majority had known of someone who was retained or worked with a student who was retained, but none had personally been retained or worried about it. Only one Teacher Educator indicated that they have had no experience with grade retention.

Preservice Teachers and Teacher Educators were also asked about how much they think they know about grade retention. Responses showing their perceived levels of knowledge are reported in Table 2.

Table 2

Preservice Teachers' (N=45) and Teacher Educators' (N=21) Level of Knowledge about Grade Retention

Personal Experience	Frequency	Percentage
I know nothing about grade retention.		
Preservice Teachers	4	8%
Teacher Educators	0	0%
I know very little about grade retention.		
Preservice Teachers	23	51%
Teacher Educators	0	0%
I know a few things about grade retention.		
Preservice Teachers	16	36%
Teacher Educators	10	48%
I know a good amount about grade retention.		
Preservice Teachers	2	4%
Teacher Educators	3	14%
I know a lot about grade retention.		
Preservice Teachers	0	0%
Teacher Educators	8	38%

When asked about their level of knowledge on grade retention, the majority of Preservice Teachers believe they know either very little or a few things about grade retention. Four respondents indicated that they know nothing about grade retention, while two respondents believe that they know a good amount. No Preservice Teachers indicated that they know a lot about grade retention.

Teacher Educators indicated that they either knew a few things, a good amount, or a lot about grade retention. None of the Teacher Educators believed that they knew nothing or very little about grade retention.

Overall, most Preservice Teachers (59%) and Teacher Educators (95%) who took part in the study have had some experience with grade retention. Most of the respondents (92% Preservice Teachers, 100% Teacher Educators) also indicated that they have at least a little bit of knowledge about grade retention.

Research Question One

Research Question One addressed whether Teacher Educators and Preservice Teachers would consider grade retention for students who are struggling behaviorally and/or academically. It was addressed through scenarios and Likert scale ratings of possible interventions on both the Preservice Teacher and Teacher Educator survey. On the scenarios given, which were identical across surveys, the mean and percentage of Preservice Teachers and Teacher Educators who would consider grade retention was calculated (See Table 3).

Table 3

Ratings, Means and Standard Deviations of Preservice Teachers (N=41) and Teacher Educators (N=21) Likelihood of Retaining a Student Based on Scenarios

Scenario/Raters	Very Unlikely	Not Likely	Somewhat Likely	Likely	Very Likely	*M*	*SD*
Andy: Kindergartener who is struggling with academics and behavior. Parents asked about grade retention.							
Preservice Teachers (*N*=45)	0%	18%	11%	71%	0%	3.53	0.79
Teacher Educators	38%	29%	10%	19%	5%	2.24	1.30
Griffin: Kindergartener who is struggling with academics.							
Preservice Teachers	17%	51%	27%	5%	0%	2.20	0.78
Teacher Educators	43%	48%	5%	5%	0%	1.76	0.94
Jason: Kindergartener who has no academic concerns but is struggling behaviorally.							
Preservice Teachers	15%	54%	24%	7%	0%	2.24	0.79
Teacher Educators	29%	48%	10%	10%	5%	2.14	1.11
Kolten: Kindergartener who is struggling with academics and is having behavior problems.							
Preservice Teachers	5%	24%	46%	22%	2%	2.93	0.87
Teacher Educators	29%	43%	14%	10%	5%	2.19	1.12
Ben: Third grader who is struggling academically.							
Preservice Teachers	22%	49%	27%	2%	0%	2.10	0.78
Teacher Educators	67%	24%	5%	0%	5%	1.52	0,98
Josh: Third grader who has no academic concerns but is having significant behavior problems.							
Preservice Teachers	29%	66%	2%	2%	0%	1.78	0.61
Teacher Educators	76%	19%	0%	0%	5%	1.38	0.92
Grant: Third grader who is behind academically and is having behavior problems.							
Preservice Teachers	12%	29%	46%	12%	0%	2.59	0.86
Teacher Educators	57%	38%	0%	0%	5%	1.57	0.92

Note: 1 = Very unlikely, 2 = Not likely, 3 = Somewhat likely, 4 = Likely, 5 = Very likely

To decrease the number of variables, all scenarios included male students who were either in kindergarten or third grade. The first scenario was in the beginning of the survey and included additional information about the student's academic levels and behavior problems. In addition, in the first scenario the parents were the ones who brought forth the idea of grade retention, whereas the other scenarios asked only for the Preservice Teachers' or Teacher Educators' views. In the first scenario, the Preservice Teachers were more likely than they were for any other scenario to support grade retention for the student (Andy), with 71% indicating they would likely suggest grade retention. Teacher Educators were also slightly more likely than they were for the other scenarios to support grade retention for Andy, with 19% indicating they would suggest grade retention.

To determine if the differences in responses between the groups is significant an independent samples *t* test was performed comparing the Preservice Teachers' and Teacher Educators' responses on the likelihood to consider grade retention for the first scenario (Andy). Preservice Teachers (M = 3.53, SD = .79, N = 45) were more likely to consider grade retention than Teacher Educators *(*M = 2.24, SD = 2.24, N = 21), t (64) = 5.02, p = .003. Another independent samples *t* test was performed on an additional scenario (Grant), and the results were not significant. Preservice Teachers (M = 2.59, SD = .87, N = 41) were not more likely to consider grade retention than Teacher Educators (M = 1.57, SD = .93, N = 21), t(60) = 4.27, p = .588. Since the second independent samples *t* test was not significant, further *t* tests were not performed on the remaining scenarios.

Overall, when the students were in kindergarten and struggled both academically and behaviorally, Preservice Teachers were more likely to consider grade retention than if the student was in third grade or struggled either academically or behaviorally. When the scenarios included kindergarten students, Preservice Teachers were slightly more likely to consider grade retention than if they were third graders. When comparing Preservice Teachers and Teacher Educators' likelihood to consider grade retention, Preservice Teachers had a greater likelihood than Teacher Educators. Teacher Educators were unlikely to consider grade retention for all the scenarios.

Research Question #1 also was addressed by asking preservice teachers and teacher educators to rate the effectiveness of 11 different interventions, including grade retention, using a 5-point Likert scale. Respondents had the option to select "I don't know what this is" if they were unfamiliar with the intervention. Means and standard deviations of Preservice Teachers and Teacher Educators are listed in Table 4 below. The percentage of respondents who selected each of the five effectiveness ratings (1 = Not effective at all, 5 = Very effective) for each intervention appear in Appendix E.

Overall, when comparing the viewed effectiveness of interventions, Preservice Teachers and Teacher Educators had similar ratings across most interventions, and rated them all as being more effective than grade retention. When looking at the effectiveness of grade retention as an intervention, Preservice Teacher ratings indicated that they felt that grade retention was somewhat effective, with 42% selecting "Somewhat Effective". However, Teacher Educators had a lower rating that indicated grade retention as not effective, with 48% selecting "Not Effective At All".

Table 4

Preservice Teachers (N=43) and Teacher Educators (N=21) Ratings of Effectiveness of Interventions for Struggling Students

Intervention	*M*	*SD*
Differentiated Instruction		
Preservice Teachers	4.68	0.57
Teacher Educators	4.71	0.46
Direct Instruction by teacher		
Preservice Teachers	4.42	0.79
Teacher Educators	4.81	0.40
Small group instruction		
Preservice Teachers	4.37	0.82
Teacher Educators	4.43	0.60
One on One Instruction		
Preservice Teachers	4.79	0.47
Teacher Educators	4.57	0.60
Tiered Interventions (RTI/MTSS)		
Preservice Teachers	4.56	0.70
Teacher Educators	4.55	0.61
Reading Corps/Math Corps		
Preservice Teachers	4.05	0.79
Teacher Educators	4.19	0.87
Title One Services		
Preservice Teachers	4.30	0.76
Teacher Educators	4.20	0.83
Special Education		
Preservice Teachers	4.44	0.77
Teacher Educators	4.14	0.79
Tutoring		
Preservice Teachers	3.98	0.67
Teacher Educators	4.00	0.89
Summer School		
Preservice Teachers	3.07	0.94
Teacher Educators	3.57	0.98
Grade Retention		
Preservice Teachers	2.68	0.96
Teacher Educators	1.86	1.11

Note: 1 = Not effective at all, 2 = Not usually effective, 3 = Somewhat effective, 4 = Effective, 5 = Highly effective

Preservice Teachers were given the option on this question to mark "I don't know what this is" if they were not familiar with the intervention. While most Preservice Teachers knew of the interventions, two respondents indicated that they did not know what grade retention was.

Research Question Two

The second research question asked about Preservice Teachers' and Teacher Educators' knowledge of current grade retention research that Preservice Teachers and Teacher Educators have. Research Question Two was addressed by asking Preservice Teachers and Teacher Educators to respond to statements about the effects of grade retention. Similar responses (Strongly Disagree/Disagree, Strongly Agree/Agree) were combined to create three ratings of Disagree, Not Sure, and Agree. The frequency, mean and standard deviations of each are presented in Table 5.

When asked about statements regarding the effects of grade retention, the majority of Preservice Teachers responded that they were Not Sure. Only on one statement did they indicate an overall rating that suggested they disagreed with the statement. Preservice Teachers disagreed with the statement that most students who are retained do not view it as a stressful event. This indicates that they do not have much knowledge about the effects of grade retention except that it may be a stressful event for students, which is aligned with what research has found.

When asked about statements regarding the effects of grade retention, the majority of Preservice Teachers responded that they were Not Sure. Only on one statement did they indicate an overall rating that suggested they disagreed with the

Table 5

Knowledge of Preservice Teachers (N=43) and Teacher Educators (N=21) about the Effects of Grade Retention

	Disagree	Not sure	Agree	*M*	*SD*
Most students who are retained able to catch up academically during the repeat year and no longer struggle after the repeated year.					
Preservice Teachers	28%	44%	28%	3.02	0.80
Teacher Educators	81%	10%	10%	2.00	0.89
Most students who are immature can benefit socially and emotionally from being retained for a year.					
Preservice Teachers	30%	26%	45%	3.16	0.97
Teacher Educators	66%	0%	34%	2.38	1.36
Most students who are retained do not view being retained as a stressful event.					
Preservice Teachers	75%	14%	11%	1.98	1.08
Teacher Educators	86%	5%	10%	1.67	1.11
Repeating a grade can lead to higher emotional and behavior problems for a student.					
Preservice Teachers	21%	26%	54%	3.40	1.05
Teacher Educators	5%	14%	81%	4.14	0.85
Children who are retained during elementary school are at an increased risk of dropping out.					
Preservice Teachers	23%	54%	24%	3.09	0.95
Teacher Educators	10%	29%	62%	3.95	1.20

Note: Disagree = ratings of 1 and 2; Not Sure = ratings of 3; Agree = ratings of 4 and 5

statement. Preservice Teachers disagreed with the statement that most students who are retained do not view it as a stressful event. This indicates that they do not have much knowledge about the effects of grade retention except that it may be a stressful event for students, which is aligned with what research has found.

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As mentioned earlier, Preservice Teachers were also asked how much they felt they know about grade retention. Out of the 44 respondents who answered the question, 3(7%) felt that they knew nothing about grade retention, 23(52%) felt like knew very little about grade retention, 16(36%) knew a few things about grade retention, and 2(5%) knew a good amount grade retention. Overall, most Preservice Teachers do not feel like they know very much about grade retention which may be reflected in their responses to the statements about grade retention.

Unlike the responses given by the Preservice Teachers, whose responses indicated they were not sure about the statements, the Teacher Educators on average agreed or disagreed with each statement in a way that was consistent with the research. However, this was not universally true indicating that some Teacher Educators are not aware of the research on grade retention.

Research Question Three

Research Question Three asked about the resources that Preservice Teachers and Teacher Educators would rely on when making decisions about grade retention. The question was answered by asking Preservice Teachers and Teacher Educators to rate the likelihood they would rely on a list of resources when considering grade retention. Table 6 displays the frequency, means and standard deviations of these resources.

Research, school policy and the opinions of the child's parent were the most likely resources that Preservice Teachers' would use when considering grade retention. For Teacher Educators, the most likely resource they would turn to was research followed by the opinion of the child's parent and previous experience. Both Preservice Teachers and Teacher Educators rated friends/family's opinions as the least likely resource they would use when considering grade retention.

Table 6

Preservice Teachers' (N=42) and Teacher Educators' (N=20) Likelihood of Using Available Resources When Considering Grade Retention

Resources	Very unlikely	Not likely	Somewhat likely	Likely	Very likely	*M*	*SD*
Previous Experience							
Preservice Teachers	0%	2%	33%	45%	19%	3.81	0.77
Teacher Educators	5%	5%	15%	40%	35%	3.95	1.10
Teacher Training Program							
Preservice Teachers	2%	5%	19%	50%	24%	3.88	0.92
Teacher Educators	5%	30%	35%	20%	10%	3.00	1.08
Research							
Preservice Teachers	0%	0%	10%	54%	37%	4.27	0.63
Teacher Educators	0%	0%	10%	20%	70%	4.60	0.68
Friends/Family opinions							
Preservice Teachers	19%	38%	12%	21%	10%	2.64	1.28
Teacher Educators	20%	30%	30%	15%	5%	2.55	1.15
Coworker influence							
Preservice Teachers	0%	14%	36%	33%	17%	3.52	0.94
Teacher Educators	15%	20%	55%	5%	5%	2.65	0.99
Administrator influence (i.e., principal)							
Preservice Teachers	0%	2%	19%	50%	29%	4.05	0.76
Teacher Educators	10%	5%	40%	40%	5%	3.25	1.02
School policy							
Preservice Teachers	0%	0%	12%	52%	36%	4.24	0.66
Teacher Educators	5%	0%	20%	60%	15%	3.80	0.89
Parent of child's opinion							
Preservice Teachers	0%	2%	17%	36%	45%	4.24	0.66
Teacher Educators	5%	0%	5%	53%	37%	4.16	0.96

Note: 1 = very unlikely, 2 = not likely, 3 = Somewhat likely, 4 = Likely, 5 = Very likely

Research Question Four

The fourth research question asked if Teacher Educators are discussing the topic of grade retention with Preservice Teachers. This question was addressed by asking Preservice Teachers if the topic has ever been discussed in class, through assigned reading, or had come up in other situations (i.e. practicum, supervisor meetings). Table 7 and 8 display the frequency and percentage of the responses to these questions.

Overall, most Preservice Teachers did not recall either covering grade retention in their coursework or discussing the topic at other points during their teacher training. While some Preservice Teachers indicated that it was discussed in class, included in coursework, or was discussed during training, it does not appear that the topic of grade

Table 7

Preservice Teacher (N = 45) *Report of* T*opic of Grade Retention Discussed with Practicum or Field Experience Supervisor*

Question	Frequency	Percentage
During field experiences, have you ever discussed with your supervisor his or her perspectives on grade retention?		
Yes, I have discussed grade retention with my practicum/field experience supervisor	9	20%
Yes, I have discussed grade retention with my university supervisor.	0	0%
No, I have not discussed the topic during my training.	34	77%
Other	1	2%

Table 8

Preservice Teacher Report of
Topic of Grade Retention in Teacher Training Courses

	Frequency	Percentage
Has the topic of grade retention been discussed in any of your college courses? (*N* = 44)		
Yes, we talked about it during class.	10	23%
Yes, we read about it in at least one of our textbooks.	1	2%
Yes, we talked about it during class AND read about it in at least one of our textbooks.	3	7%
No, I do not recall.	30	68%
If yes, do you remember which class it was discussed in? (*N* = 17)		
Child Development	3	18%
Educational Psychology	5	29%
Assessment	1	6%
Other (i.e., Reading Methods, Social Studies, Foundations of Education)	8	47%

retention is covered consistently during the teacher training program. When covered in classes, it appears that there is not a specific class that it is always covered in. Instead, Preservice Teachers indicated that it was covered in different classes, which may indicate that it is not a consistent part of the curriculum.

In addition, Teacher Educators were asked if they had ever discussed the topic of grade retention within their courses or as field supervisors. The frequency and mean response of each question is listed in Table 9.

Based on the Teacher Educator responses to the questions regarding grade retention in coursework, it appears that the topic rarely comes up. The coincides with the Preservice Teachers' responses.

Table 9

How Often Teacher Educators Reported Discussing Grade Retention with Preservice Teachers

Question	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Frequently	Always	Mean
If you teach courses, do you ever include the topic of grade retention in your assigned readings or lectures?						
Teacher Educators (*N* = 15)	47%	13%	27%	13%	0%	2.07
If you do field experience, do you ever discuss grade retention with the students you supervise?						
Teacher Educators (*N* = 15)	33%	40%	13%	7%	7%	2.13
In your experience with higher education, how often have you discussed the topic of grade retention with undergraduate students?						
Teacher Educators (*N* = 20)	35%	30%	15%	20%	0%	2.20

Note: 1 = Never, 2 = Rarely, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Frequently, 5 = Always

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Concerns about the effectiveness and use of grade retention in schools have been a subject of research since the early 1900s. Despite the large amount of research about its ineffectiveness, grade retention remains to be a popular practice across the country, with many teachers continuing to believe it is an effective practice (Faerber & Van Dusseldorp, 1984; Gilmore-Hook, 2011; Jimerson et al., 1997; Range et al., 2011; Smith, 1989; Tomchin & Impara, 1992). In the present study, when given scenarios and asked to make a decision regarding grade retention the Preservice Teachers, on average, indicated that they would be "Somewhat Likely" to consider grade retention. On the other hand, Teacher Educators, on average, would "Very Unlikely" or "Not Likely" to consider grade retention. This suggests that Preservice Teachers are not willing to strongly agree or disagree with the decision to retain a student, perhaps because they may not be informed enough about the effects of grade retention to make a confident decision, or are not sure if it is the best solution. However, most Teacher Educators are more confident when having to make a decision and on average are much less supportive of considering grade retention for a struggling student.

This is also reflected in Table 4, when Preservice Teachers were asked to rate effectiveness of interventions and rated grade retention as "Somewhat Effective". On

the other hand, nearly half of the Teacher Educators indicated that they believed grade retention is “Not Effective At All”. Both groups also indicated that they viewed grade retention as the least effective intervention out of the 11 interventions listed in the survey. The Theory of Planned Behavior would predict that if preservice teachers do not have much knowledge about grade retention, then when faced with a decision in the schools they will most likely rely on other aspects, such as sense of control or social norms, to make the final decision.

When asked if they agree or disagree about the effects of grade retention using a five point Likert scale, the majority of Preservice Teachers indicated that they were “Not Sure”. The results are similar to the study done by Witmer et al. (2004), which showed that most educators are not knowledgeable of the effects of grade retention. The majority of Preservice Teachers also indicated that they were more likely to consider grade retention if the student was struggling both academically and behaviorally. This finding is consistent with past research on preservice teacher beliefs, which showed that preservice teachers perceived grade retention as a necessary step when students were struggling academically, had low ability, and were immature (Range et al., 2011).

The results of this study indicate that Preservice Teachers are not knowledgeable about the effects of grade retention, which means that they will rely more on their sense of control and the social norms surrounding grade retention when making a decision. This may mean that if new teachers are working in a school that has teachers who support grade retention, they will also begin to support grade retention. However,

if preservice teachers are knowledgeable about the effects of grade retention, they may take that knowledge into consideration before making that decision.

When asked about the current research on grade retention, overall Preservice Teachers indicated that they were not sure about what research has shown about the effects of grade retention. While they did not disagree with the research, they did not necessarily agree either. Teacher Educators' responses suggest that their beliefs are, for the most part, consistent with research. However, some Teacher Educators' responses were not consistent with research indicating they are not familiar with what research has shown about the effects of grade retention. This could mean that preservice teachers could potentially receive information about grade retention that is not supported by research.

If Preservice Teachers are not knowledgeable about grade retention, which this study suggests is the case, then it is important to consider what types of resources they might rely on to help them make a decision regarding grade retention. While most Preservice Teachers indicated that they are "Not Sure" about the research on the effects of grade retention, they indicated that research would be one of the most likely resources that they would use. Providing Preservice Teachers with the research before they have to make this decision may help them make a decision that is based on research and not social norms. However, the other top resources that Preservice Teachers would use are school policy and parent of child's opinion. These both could potentially carry a heavy social norm; therefore, Preservice Teachers may turn to the opinions of the school or parents before consulting their own knowledge. Surprisingly,

Preservice Teachers did not indicate that their teacher training would be one of the top three resources that they would use. Instead, it appears that they are already leaning towards the social norms that surround it.

In addition to the information found regarding Preservice Teachers' knowledge and beliefs, this study also investigated the prevalence of the topic of grade retention in the Preservice Teachers training program and the knowledge and beliefs of their supervisors and professors. Results indicated that the topic is rarely covered in coursework or discussed with field experience supervisors. While some respondents indicated that it was discussed at some point, when it was discussed varied. This suggests that grade retention is not a consistent part of the curriculum, but instead may depend on who is teaching that course for the semester or if it comes up in conversation. Since no other study has yet to look at this component of grade retention, these results cannot be compared to past studies. As one of the last questions on the survey, teacher educators were asked if they felt it is important to discuss the topic of grade retention with preservice teachers. The majority, 79%, of teacher educators agreed or strongly agreed that it is a topic that needs to be discussed. The rest of the Teacher Educators either disagreed (5%) or were not sure (15%). However, despite the majority of Teacher Educators viewing it as an important topic, it does not appear to be fully covered. This could be due to Teacher Educators assuming that it is covered elsewhere, since it does not fit into a specific area or class, and then it ends up not being covered at all.

Overall, both Preservice Teachers and Teacher Educators indicated that they were unlikely to consider grade retention. This is not consistent with past research that has found that most educators back grade retention (Gilmore-Hook, 2011; Terry, 2011; Pouliot, 1999; Tomchin & Impara, 1992; Faerber & Van Dusseldorp, 1984). However, most of the research done has looked at practicing teachers instead of preservice teachers or teacher educators, which may indicate that support of grade retention may come from the sense of control and social norms that are associated with working in a school. In addition, Preservice Teachers did not appear confident in their answers and would select ratings such as "Somewhat Likely" or "Not Sure". This could indicate that while it appears that they are unlikely to back grade retention, it may be more of an indication that they are uncertain whether they should or should not consider it. Teacher Educators were more confident in their responses, and were more likely to select answers such as "Unlikely" or "Disagree".

Results of this study also show that Preservice Teachers were not knowledgeable about the research on grade retention, and are not being taught about it in their teacher training. Most Preservice Teachers indicated that they were not sure about the effects of grade retention, which indicates that they have yet to develop an attitude towards it and may still be open to becoming informed about the effects. If they are not informed during teacher training, then they might rely on other resources to build their knowledge. While they did state they would use research as a resource when making a decision, the views of the school they are working in may have a larger impact. Because

of this it may be important to provide Preservice Teachers with the research and knowledge before they are put in that situation.

Limitations of the study

The results of this study should be viewed with its limitations in mind. First of all, the response rate of the Preservice Teacher surveys (12.6%) was low. The attitudes and knowledge of those who chose to do the survey may differ from those who did not complete the survey. While the response rate of the Teacher Educators (34%) was higher, it reflected the responses of only 21 participants. The attitudes and knowledge of those who chose not to respond may be different.

This study was also limited by the time of year the survey was distributed. The survey was distributed close to the end of the spring semester, which may be a busier time for preservice teachers and teacher educators. Distributing the survey during a different semester or earlier in the semester may have generated a higher response rate.

Additionally, the study was limited to one mid-western university, so the prevalence of the topic of grade retention in teacher training programs across programs is unknown. Even though the majority of teacher training programs follow the same learning standards that are laid out by the Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium (InTASC), this does not mean that they do not have a different perspective on including the topic of grade retention in their coursework. In addition, some states have statewide grade retention policies, which may influence what is or is not covered in teacher training programs in those states.

Another limitation of this study is the potential that some respondents did not know what was meant by "grade retention." When asked to rate the effectiveness of interventions, two Preservice Teacher respondents indicated that they did not know what grade retention was. While the definition was included in the introduction email, this could have been easily missed. This may also be an indication that they are unaware of it, or know of it as a different name, such as "being held back."

This study was also limited by the ability for questions to be skipped on the survey. This allowed for respondents to skip questions causing questions to have varying amounts of respondents. This allowed for the response rates to drop depending on the question.

Future Research

Future research in this area should continue to investigate the prevalence of the topic of grade retention in the teacher training programs. Findings from this study show that Teacher Educators may be aware of the research, but it is not something that is discussed with Preservice Teachers. Preservice Teachers do not appear to understand the effects of grade retention, so when confronted with the decision to retain a student, they may rely on their perceived control or social norms to make the decision, which may not be consistent with the current research on grade retention. Future researchers may also want to address how important teacher educators think it is to teach about the effects of grade retention in teacher training programs.

In addition, future researchers should continue to look at the views of educators, such as preservice teachers, administrators, or working teachers, regarding the

importance of the topic. Investigating the views of administrators and working teachers can help us gain a better understanding of where the support for grade retention is coming from. This could help us figure out where the topic needs to be addressed, whether it is preservice teacher training, administration coursework, or professional development for working teachers.

If we are to change practices in schools, future research should address when and where the topic of grade retention should be discussed. Currently, in teacher training programs, there is no clear place for grade retention to be discussed or addressed. Understanding where grade retention would fit in best with the coursework could increase the consistency of all preservice teachers receiving instruction on the topic.

Summary

The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of topic of grade retention in one teacher training program in the Midwest, which was a topic that has yet to be fully explored. Having a deeper understanding of teacher behavior and knowledge surrounding the topic may help provide some insight into the use of grade retention. While the overall rates of grade retention have decreased from 2.9% in 1994 to 2.2% in 2015 (nces.ed.gov. 2017), there has been an increase in states that are beginning to implement grade retention policies requiring grade retention under some circumstances (Weyer, 2017). These policies may be creating a stronger social norm that teachers are relying on instead of their knowledge or other resources when making grade retention decisions.

Because of previous studies showing the belief held by teachers is that grade retention is effective (Faerber, 1984; Gilmore-Hook, 2011; Pouliot, 1999; Range et al., 2012; Terry, 2011; Tomchin & Impara, 1992), it is important for universities and teacher educators to do a better job of educating preservice teachers about the research on the effects of grade retention. While these studies are older, and attitudes could have changed, this study indicates that while Preservice Teachers do not necessarily find it effective, they do not know enough about grade retention to say confidently that it is not effective.

Results from this study indicate that Teacher Educators are rarely discussing grade retention with their students, but the majority agree that it is an important topic to be discussing with Preservice Teachers. The absence of the topic in teacher training programs could lead to Preservice Teachers leaning on their own sense of control and the social norms when making a decision about grade retention because they do not have the knowledge to back their decision. If we want teachers to consider alternative options and no longer consider grade retention as a viable option, then we must give them the tools to make an educated decision.

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APPENDIX A

PRESERVICE TEACHER SURVEY

Preservice Teacher Survey

1. **Gender**
   a. Male
   b. Female
   c. Other:

2. **Age** (open ended)

3. **What year in your undergraduate education are you?**
   a. Junior
   b. Senior
   c. Other:

4. **What licensure are you working towards?**
   a. Early Education
   b. Elementary Education
   c. Other:

5. **What are your past experiences in education? Check all that apply.**
   - Practicum/Student Teaching Only
   - Volunteering
   - Working in a school
   - Other:

6. **Please check any experiences you have had with grade retention. Check all that apply.**
   - I was retained
   - As a child, I worried about the possibility of being retained
   - I have a family member who was retained
   - I have a friend who was retained
   - I knew someone other than family or friend who was retained
   - I have worked with a student who was retained
   - I have had no experiences with grade retention
   - Other:

7. **Please read the following scenario and respond to the following questions:**

   Imagine that this is your second year as a teacher. It's the end of March and Andy, a 6-year-old first grader in your classroom, is struggling academically in both reading and math. As of March, Andy can read 20 words correct per minute on an oral reading fluency assessment. This puts him in the 10th percentile when compared to students his same age. In addition, Andy, whose birthday is in May, is also immature when compared to his classmates and is often not paying attention or doing what he is told. You have already tried different interventions with little success.

   If Andy was a student in your classroom, what would you suggest or do to help him be more successful for the rest of the school year and in the future?

   If Andy's parents asked about whether he should repeat first grade, what is the likelihood that you would consider it?

   - Very likely (I would go forward with holding him back)
   - Likely (I would consider it, but also look at other interventions, too)
   - Somewhat likely (I'm not sure what I would do)
   - Unlikely (I would rather do something else)
   - Very Unlikely (I would not consider it)

   Comments:

8. **How much do you know about grade retention?**
   - I know nothing about grade retention
   - I know very little about grade retention
   - I know a few things about grade retention
   - I know a good amount about grade retention
   - I know a lot about grade retention

   Comments:

9. **Please respond to the following:**

   - Most students who are retained, are able to catch up academically during the repeat year and no longer struggle after they have repeated a year.

     Strongly disagree Disagree Not Sure Agree Strongly Agree

- Most students who are immature can benefit socially and emotionally from being retained. for a year.

  Strongly disagree Disagree Not Sure Agree Strongly Agree

- Most students do not view being retained as a stressful event.

  Strongly disagree Disagree Not Sure Agree Strongly Agree

- Repeating a grade can lead to higher emotional and behavior problems for a student.

  Strongly disagree Disagree Not Sure Agree Strongly Agree

- Children who are retained during elementary school are at an increased risk of dropping out.

  Strongly disagree Disagree Not Sure Agree Strongly Agree

10. Has the topic of grade retention been discussed in any of your college courses?

- Yes, we talked about it during class
- Yes, we read about it in at least one of our textbooks
- Yes, we talked about it during class AND read about it in at least one of our textbooks
- No, not that I recall

--If yes, do you remember which class it was discussed in:

- Child Development
- Educational Psychology
- Assessment
- Other:

11. During field experiences, have you ever discussed with your supervisor his or her perspectives on grade retention?

- Yes, I have discussed grade retention with my _____ (check all that apply).
  - Practicum/Field Experience supervisor
  - University supervisor
  - Other:
- No, I have not discussed the topic during my training

12. Grade retention is one of a number of intervention methods used in schools. Rate these interventions based on how effective you think they are at helping students who are struggling on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being highly effective and 1 being not effective at all.

	Not effective at all		Somewhat effective		Highly effective	I don't know what this is
Differentiated instruction	1	2	3	4	5	
Direct Instruction by teacher	1	2	3	4	5	
Small group instruction	1	2	3	4	5	
One on one instruction	1	2	3	4	5	
Tiered interventions (RTI/MTSS)	1	2	3	4	5	
Title One services	1	2	3	4	5	
Reading Corps/Math Corps	1	2	3	4	5	
Tutoring	1	2	3	4	5	
Special Education	1	2	3	4	5	
Grade retention	1	2	3	4	5	
Summer School	1	2	3	4	5	
Other:	1	2	3	4	5	

13. What is the likelihood you would consider grade retention at the END of the school year for each of these scenarios?

	Very Unlikely	Not Likely	Somewhat Likely	Likely	Very Likely
Griffin is a kindergarten boy who is struggling academically with math and reading. He currently identifies all the letters but does not know the letter sounds, and only knows a few numbers. He is not disruptive in class and appears to be paying attention.	1	2	3	4	5
Jason is a kindergarten boy who is average in academics but is having behavior problems. He is young for his grade and is very immature when compared to his classmates. He routinely will throw tantrums, cry when he doesn't get his way, and be disruptive during lessons.	1	2	3	4	5
Kolten is a kindergarten boy who is struggling academically, he does not know all the letters or numbers. He also is having some behavior problems, such as not staying in his seating, blurting, being disruptive during worktime, and not listening to instructions.	1	2	3	4	5
Ben is a third-grade boy who is behind academically. While he does okay in math, he currently reads at a beginning second grade level and is struggling in other subjects such as science and social studies.	1	2	3	4	5
Josh is a third-grade boy who is doing well academically and is reading at a third-grade level, but is having significant behavior problems. He does not pay attention in class, is disruptive during work time, and will act immature when compared to his classmates.	1	2	3	4	5
Grant is a third-grade boy who is having behavior problems. He struggles with keeping his hands to himself and is disruptive during classroom lessons. He does not listen to instructions and will throw tantrums when he is asked to do something. In addition, he is behind academically. Currently he is reading at an early second grade level and still struggles with simple multiplication and division.	1	2	3	4	5

Comments:

14. Please rate the likelihood that you would rely on the following resources when considering grade retention for a student:

	Very Unlikely	Not likely	Somewhat Likely	Likely	Very likely
Previous experience	1	2	3	4	5
Teacher training program	1	2	3	4	5
Research	1	2	3	4	5
Friends/family opinions	1	2	3	4	5
Coworker Influence	1	2	3	4	5
Administrator Influence (i.e. principal)	1	2	3	4	5
School Policy	1	2	3	4	5
Parent of the child's opinion	1	2	3	4	5
Other:	1	2	3	4	5

APPENDIX B

TEACHER EDUCATOR SURVEY

Teacher Educator Survey

1. **Gender**
   a. Male
   b. Female
   c. Other:

2. **How many years have you spent working in Preschool through 12th grade settings**? (Open ended)

3. **How many years have you been working in higher education?** (Open ended)

4. **When you were working in the schools what was/were your position(s)? Select all that apply.**
   - Paraprofessional
   - General education teacher
   - Special education teacher
   - Administrator
   - Support staff (Speech Language Pathologist, Title I, Counselor)
   - Other:

5. **When you were working in PreK-12, what levels did you work at? (Check all that apply):**
   - Early Education (PreK)
   - Elementary Education (K-5)
   - Middle (6-8)
   - Secondary (9-12)

6. **What is your current role in higher education?**
   - Instructor/ Course Instructor
   - Field Placement Supervisor
   - Both
   - Other

7. **Please check any experiences you have had with grade retention. Check all that apply.**
   - I was retained
   - As a child, I worried about being retained
   - I have/had a family member who was retained
   - I have/had a friend who was retained
   - I knew someone other than family/friends who was retained
   - I have worked with a student who was retained
   - I have had no experiences with grade retention
   - Other:

8. **Please read the following scenario and respond to the following questions:**

   Imagine that you are a classroom teacher. It's the end of March and Andy, a 6-year-old first grader in your classroom, is struggling academically in both reading and math. As of March, Andy can read 20 words correct per minute on an oral reading fluency assessment. This puts him in the 10th percentile when compared to students his same age. In addition, Andy, whose birthday is in May, is also immature when compared to his classmates and is often not paying attention or doing what he is told. You have already tried different interventions with little success.

   If Andy was a student in your classroom, what would you suggest or do to help him be more successful for the rest of the school year and in the future?

   Andy's parents ask whether he should repeat first grade. What is the likelihood that you would consider it?

   - Very likely (I would go forward with holding him back)
   - Likely (I would consider it, but also look at other interventions, too)
   - Somewhat likely (I'm not sure what I would do)
   - Unlikely (I would rather do something else)
   - Very Unlikely (I would not consider it)

   Comments:

9. **How much do you know about grade retention?**
   - I know nothing about grade retention
   - I know very little about grade retention
   - I know a few things about grade retention
   - I know a good amount about grade retention
   - I know a lot about grade retention

   Comments:

10. Please respond to the following:

- Most students who are retained, are able to catch up academically during the repeat year and no longer struggle after they have repeated a year.

  Strongly disagree Disagree Not Sure Agree Strongly Agree

- Most students who are immature can benefit socially and emotionally from being retained. for a year.

  Strongly disagree Disagree Not Sure Agree Strongly Agree

- Most students do not view being retained as a stressful event.

  Strongly disagree Disagree Not Sure Agree Strongly Agree

- Repeating a grade can lead to greater emotional and behavior problems for a student.

  Strongly disagree Disagree Not Sure Agree Strongly Agree

- Children who are retained during elementary school are at an increased risk of dropping out.

  Strongly disagree Disagree Not Sure Agree Strongly Agree

11. If you teach courses, do you ever include the topic of grade retention in your assigned readings or lectures?

Never Rarely Sometimes Frequently Always I don't teach courses

--If included in courses, what course(s)? (Optional)

12. If you do field supervision, do you ever discuss grade retention with the students you supervise?

Never Rarely Sometimes Frequently Always I don't do field supervision

13. In your experience in higher education, how often have you discussed the topic of grade retention with undergraduate students?

Never Rarely Sometimes Frequently Always

14. Grade retention is just one of a number of intervention methods used in schools. Rate these interventions based on how effective you think they are at helping students who are struggling on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being highly effective and 1 being not effective at all.

	Not effective at all		Somewhat effective		Highly effective	I don't know what this is
Differentiated instruction	1	2	3	4	5	
Direct Instruction by teacher	1	2	3	4	5	
Small group instruction	1	2	3	4	5	
One on one instruction	1	2	3	4	5	
Tiered interventions (RTI/MTSS)	1	2	3	4	5	
Title One services	1	2	3	4	5	
Reading Corps/Math Corps	1	2	3	4	5	
Tutoring	1	2	3	4	5	
Special Education	1	2	3	4	5	
Grade retention	1	2	3	4	5	
Summer School	1	2	3	4	5	
Other:	1	2	3	4	5	

15. What is the likelihood you would consider grade retention at the END of the school year for each of these scenarios?

	Very Unlikely	Not Likely	Somewhat Likely	Likely	Very Likely
Griffin is a kindergarten boy who is struggling academically with math and reading. He currently identifies all the letters but does not know the letter sounds, and only knows a few numbers. He is not disruptive in class and appears to be paying attention.	1	2	3	4	5
Jason is a kindergarten boy who is average in academics but is having behavior problems. He is young for his grade and is very immature when compared to his classmates. He routinely will throw tantrums, cry when he doesn't get his way, and be disruptive during lessons.	1	2	3	4	5
Kolten is a kindergarten boy who is struggling academically, he does not know all the letters or numbers. He also is having some behavior problems, such as not staying in his seating, blurting, being disruptive during worktime, and not listening to instructions.	1	2	3	4	5
Ben is a third-grade boy who is behind academically. While he does okay in math, he currently reads at a beginning second grade level and is struggling in other subjects such as science and social studies.	1	2	3	4	5
Josh is a third-grade boy who is doing well academically and is reading at a third-grade level, but is having significant behavior problems. He does not pay attention in class, is disruptive during work time, and will act immature when compared to his classmates.	1	2	3	4	5
Grant is a third-grade boy who is having behavior problems. He struggles with keeping his hands to himself and is disruptive during classroom lessons. He does not listen to instructions and will throw tantrums when he is asked to do something. In addition, he is behind academically. Currently he is reading at an early second grade level and still struggles with simple multiplication and division.	1	2	3	4	5

**Please respond to the following questions with the last district you worked in in mind:

16. **While working in the schools, the district I worked in was supportive of grade retention.**

    Strongly disagree Disagree Not Sure Agree Strongly Agree

17. **While working in the schools, my colleagues were supportive of grade retention.**

    Strongly disagree Disagree Not Sure Agree Strongly Agree

18. **While working in the schools, when it was suggested that a student be retained, usually the parents were supportive.**

    Strongly disagree Disagree Not Sure Agree Strongly Agree

19. **Have you noticed a change from when you were working in the schools to now?**
    - Yes, there is more support for the use of grade retention
    - Yes, there is less support for the use of grade retention
    - No, it appears that not much has changed

20. **When working in the schools, were there any grade retention policies in place?**
    - Yes, there was a policy against the use of grade retention
    - Yes, there was a policy for the use of grade retention
    - No, there was no policy around the use of grade retention
    - I don't know

21. **What have you noticed are the current attitudes of school districts about grade retention?**
    - Generally, it is an accepted practice
    - Generally, it is not as acceptable practice
    - The degree to which is it accepted and used varies greatly between districts

22. **Grade retention is an important topic to discuss with preservice teachers during their training.**

    Strongly disagree Disagree Not Sure Agree Strongly Agree

    Comments:

23. Please rate the likelihood that you would rely on the following resources when considering grade retention for a student:

	Very Unlikely	Not likely	Somewhat Likely	Likely	Very likely
Previous experience	1	2	3	4	5
Teacher training program	1	2	3	4	5
Research	1	2	3	4	5
Friends/family opinions	1	2	3	4	5
Coworker Influence	1	2	3	4	5
Administrator Influence (i.e. principal)	1	2	3	4	5
School Policy	1	2	3	4	5
Parent of the child's opinion	1	2	3	4	5
Other:	1	2	3	4	5

Comments:

APPENDIX C

EMAIL INTRODUCTION

(Faculty Introduction Email)

Hello,

This is an invitation to participate in a survey about grade retention. You are receiving this email because you are currently a faculty member in the School Teaching and Learning at Minnesota State University Moorhead.

My name is Jenny Pearson and I am currently a graduate student in school psychology here at MSUM. While working in schools, I developed an interest in the practice of grade retention. I found that not a lot is known about how teachers develop their knowledge about grade retention or the role of their preservice training in this process. This survey is being conducted as part of my Master's thesis research to gain a better understanding of the knowledge of grade retention in faculty members and the prevalence of the topic in teacher training programs. Grade retention, commonly known as "being held back" or "failing a grade", is the practice of having a student who is struggling with academics or behavior problems repeat a grade.

I would appreciate your participation in taking this survey. The survey should take approximately 10 minutes. Please click on the link below for more information and to begin the survey.

(Link)

Thank you,

Jenny Pearson

Jenny Pearson
Graduate Student
MSU Moorhead School Psychology Program

Peg Potter

Margaret (Peg) Potter
Professor
MSU Moorhead School Psychology Program

(Preservice Teacher Introduction Email)

Hello,

This is an invitation to participate in a survey about grade retention. You are receiving this email because you are currently a junior or senior in the Early Education or Elementary Education program at Minnesota State University Moorhead.

My name is Jenny Pearson and I am currently a graduate student in school psychology here at MSUM. While working in schools, I developed an interest in the practice of grade retention. I found that not a lot is known about how teachers develop their knowledge about grade retention or the role of their preservice training in this process. This survey is being conducted as part of my Master's thesis research to gain a better understanding of the knowledge of grade retention in faculty members and the prevalence of the topic in teacher training programs. Grade retention, commonly known as "being held back" or "failing a grade", is the practice of having a student who is struggling with academics or behavior problems repeat a grade.

I would appreciate your participation in taking this survey. The survey should take approximately 10 minutes. Please click on the link below for more information and to begin the survey.

(Link)

Thank you,

Jenny Pearson

Jenny Pearson
Graduate Student
MSU Moorhead School Psychology Program

Peg Potter

Margaret (Peg) Potter
Professor
MSU Moorhead School Psychology Program

APPENDIX D

DEBRIEFING FORM

Grade Retention: Knowledge and Attitudes of Preservice Teachers and Teacher Educators

Recently you were invited to take a Qualtrics survey about your knowledge and attitudes about grade retention. If you completed the survey, thank you for participating in this study! We appreciate the time and effort you put into completing the survey.

The purpose of this study was to gain a better understanding of the knowledge of grade retention in faculty members and preservice teachers, and the prevalence of the topic in teacher training programs.

Grade retention, which is also referred to as "failing" or "being held back", has continued as a common practice despite many years of research that does not support it as a beneficial intervention (Holmes, 1989; Holmes & Matthews, 1984; Jackson, 1975; Jimerson, 2001). Results from the current study showed that preservice teachers are not familiar with the research behind grade retention and the topic of grade retention is not consistently covered in teacher training programs.

All responses to the survey will be reported in group format only as part of Jenny Pearson's Master's thesis. The complete thesis will be available later this summer in electronic format through the MSU Moorhead Library.

If you have questions about this study, or if you would like to receive a summary report of this research when it is completed, please contact Dr. Margaret L. Potter at potter@mnstate.edu or 218 – 477–2805, or Jenny Pearson at pearsonje@mnstate.edu.

If you are concerned, or would like more information, about your rights in this experiment, please contact the Chair of MSUM Institutional Research Board, Dr. Lisa I. Karch at lisa.karch@mnstate.edu or 218-477-2699.

If you feel that you are experiencing adverse consequences from this study, please visit Hendrix Clinic and Counseling Center at 1308 9th Avenue South, Moorhead, MN 56563, or contact them via phone at 218-477-2211 to receive services.

If you are interested in learning more about the topic of this research project, you may want to consult:

Range, B. G., Davenport-Yonke, D. A., & Young, S. (2011). Preservice teacher beliefs about retention: How do they know what they don't know?, *Journal of Research in Education, 21*(2), 77-99.

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

Thank you,

Jenny Pearson

Jenny Pearson
Graduate Student
MSU Moorhead School Psychology Program

Peg Potter

Margaret (Peg) Potter
Professor
MSU Moorhead School Psychology Program

APPENDIX E

RESPONDENTS RATINGS OF INTERVENTION EFFECTIVENESS

Percentages of Preservice Teachers' *(N = 43)* and Teacher Educators' (*N* = 21) Ratings of Effectiveness of Interventions

Intervention	Not effective at all	Not usually effective	Somewhat effective	Effective	Highly Effective	I don't know what this is
Differentiated Instruction						
Preservice Teachers	0%	0%	5%	21%	70%	5%
Teacher Educators	0%	0%	0%	29%	71%	0%
Direct Instruction by teacher						
Preservice Teachers	0%	2%	12%	28%	58%	0%
Teacher Educators	0%	0%	0%	19%	81%	0%
Small group instruction						
Preservice Teachers	0%	2%	14%	28%	56%	0%
Teacher Educators	0%	0%	5%	48%	48%	0%
One on One Instruction						
Preservice Teachers	0%	0%	2%	16%	81%	0%
Teacher Educators	0%	0%	5%	33%	62%	0%
Tiered Interventions (RTI/MTSS)						
Preservice Teachers	0%	0%	12%	21%	67%	0%
Teacher Educators	0%	0%	5%	35%	60%	0%
Reading Corps/Math Corps						
Preservice Teachers	0%	0%	26%	35%	30%	9%
Teacher Educators	0%	0%	29%	24%	48%	0%
Title One Services						
Preservice Teachers	0%	0%	16%	33%	44%	7%
Teacher Educators	0%	0%	25%	30%	45%	0%
Special Education						
Preservice Teachers	0%	2%	9%	30%	58%	0%
Teacher Educators	0%	0%	24%	38%	38%	0%
Tutoring						
Preservice Teachers	0%	0%	23%	56%	21%	0%
Teacher Educators	0%	0%	38%	24%	38%	0%
Summer School						
Preservice Teachers	5%	19%	49%	21%	7%	0%
Teacher Educators	5%	5%	33%	43%	14%	0%
Grade Retention						
Preservice Teachers	9%	30%	42%	9%	5%	5%
Teacher Educators	48%	33%	10%	5%	5%	0%

Note: 1 = Not effective at all, 2 = Not usually effective, 3 = Somewhat effective, 4 = Effective, 5 = Highly effective