



Should my child repeat a grade?

The decision to promote or retain a child is significant. It should be made only after carefully considering your child's situation, your district's policies and what the research says about retention.

The school's responsibility

When the school recommends retention, it is important to have a thorough conversation with the teacher, the principal and anyone else involved. The California Department of Education (CDE) says that decisions to retain students should be based primarily on proficiency in reading between 2nd and 3rd grades and between 3rd and 4th grades. For other grades the decision should be based on proficiency in reading, English-language arts, and mathematics. If a child is in danger of being retained, the school must notify the parent as soon as possible in the school year and offer extra instruction so that retention can be avoided.

What could be considered instead of retention?

In-school supplemental services such as learning labs, reading intervention, or summer school.

After-school support: homework clubs, tutors and adjustments in how work is completed at home.

Changes that can be made in your child's current classroom or class placement.

If a child has an Individual Education Plan (IEP), request a meeting to review the current plan and see what can be changed. It might be necessary to change or add services.

If a child is not in special education, ask for a student study meeting to talk about what other options are available.

Children with disabilities

Children may have learning or other disabilities and this should be considered. If a child does have a disability, they may need different instruction. Another year of the same instruction will not address the underlying problems. IEPs are meant to prevent students from failing. If you think that your child may have a disability, you can request that your school to do an assessment to see if your child is eligible for special education.

What the research says

The National Association of School Psychologists says that holding a child back is "unlikely to address the problems a child is facing" and promoting a student "without additional support is not likely to be an effective solution either." The social and emotional consequences can be very harmful and difficult to overcome. The stigma of being "held back" can be long-lasting. On the whole, studies have shown that children who are retained do not do better over time. If the decision is made to retain your child, it is critical that you know what will be done differently during the grade that is repeated.

For more information see the websites for the National Association of School Psychologists [www.nasponline.org] and the California Department of Education [www.cde.ca.gov/re/lr/pr/].

Rather than focusing on whether or not a child should be held back a grade, the focus should be on what specific interventions can be used to help a child be a more successful student.



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