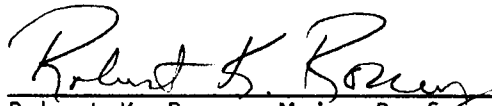
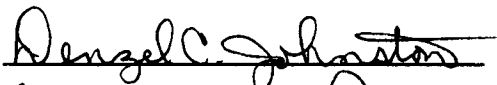


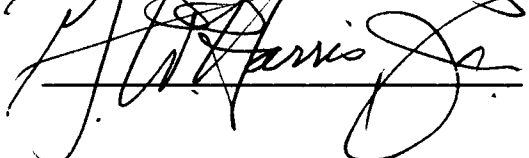
To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Rebecca Fitzgerald Tucker entitled "Elementary Classroom Teachers' Knowledge of and Agreement with the Local School Board Policy on Student Promotion and Retention." I have examined the final copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education, with a major in Educational Administration and Supervision.


Robert K. Roney, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation
and recommend its acceptance:





Accepted for the Council:


Vice Provost
and Dean of the Graduate School

ELEMENTARY CLASSROOM TEACHERS' KNOWLEDGE OF AND AGREEMENT
WITH THE LOCAL SCHOOL BOARD POLICY ON
STUDENT PROMOTION AND RETENTION

A Dissertation
Presented for the
Doctor of Education
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Rebecca Fitzgerald Tucker

December 1989

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My immediate family, Truman and Andy, have provided continual support throughout this endeavor. Other friends and family members had critical roles in completion of my graduate program.

The idea for this research project originated during my internship with Joe Sherlin, Superintendent in Sweetwater. His encouragement and cooperation throughout this project are appreciated.

Dr. Susan Hudson, Tennessee Department of Education, was instrumental in locating local school board policies on promotion and retention.

William and Sarah Dycus were also vital to the completion of this dissertation. I will always be grateful for the hours of computer assistance and encouragement from these Sweetwater friends.

Professors at the University have given excellent instruction and guidance throughout my graduate program. A special thank you to Dr. Robert K. Roney for his assistance and suggestions in the writing of this dissertation.

ABSTRACT

This research study resulted from a concern about the effectiveness of school administrators in communicating local board policies to those expected to implement the policies. The study addressed the local student promotion-retention policy and the elementary classroom teachers' knowledge of that particular board policy. The purpose of the study was to evaluate the effectiveness of school administrators in 10 small school systems (fewer than 6,500 students) in East Tennessee in communicating vital information to classroom teachers. It was also the purpose of the study to identify any differences in knowledge of system policy or personal philosophy that could be discerned among teachers in specific school systems or in various demographic categories. Demographic information requested from the teachers in this study included age, years of teaching experience, gender, and grade level taught. Teachers were also asked to report the number of promotion-retention articles they had read during the past five years.

Participants were selected classroom teachers from two school faculties in 10 different school systems were selected as participants. Those teachers who were directly responsible for providing input in a promotion-retention decision were asked to complete a survey instrument which questioned the teacher's knowledge of and philosophical agreement with the local board policy. A total of 310 (83%) were returned.

It was found that just over one-fourth of the teachers were unaware of the existence of a written board policy on retention and promotion.

This suggested that, as a whole, school systems were ineffective in communicating their administrative policy on this issue to classroom teachers. Those teachers who were aware of a policy identified written notification as the method which was most often used for communicating the policy to them.

Chi square statistical treatment was used to test for any significant relationships between certain research questions and the descriptive features of the teachers. The number of promotion-retention articles read was found to be the factor which had the greatest effect on teachers' attitudes about promotion and retention.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER	PAGE
I. INTRODUCTION	1
General Introduction	1
Statement of the Problem	3
Purpose of the Study	3
Importance of the Study	4
Assumptions	5
Limitations	5
Delimitations	6
Definition of Terms	7
Research Questions	8
Procedures	11
Organization of the Study	16
II. A REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE	17
Introduction	17
Communication Essentials	17
Local School Board Policies Concerning Student Promotion and Retention	22
The Promotion-Retention Issue	38
Chapter Summary	44
III. FINDINGS	46
Introduction	46
Research Participants	46

CHAPTER	PAGE
III. FINDINGS (Continued)	
Demographic Features	47
Data Reported	49
Chapter Summary	56
IV. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION	58
Introduction	58
Relationships	58
Discussion of Findings	73
Chapter Summary	78
V. SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS	81
Summary	81
Conclusions	84
Recommendations	86
BIBLIOGRAPHY	89
APPENDICES	94
APPENDIX A. ORIGINAL RESEARCH INSTRUMENT	95
APPENDIX B. REVISED RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE	99
APPENDIX C. LETTER TO SUPERINTENDENTS CONCERNING RESEARCH PROJECT	102
APPENDIX D. LETTER ON DATA COLLECTION TO PRINCIPALS	104
APPENDIX E. POST CARE REMINDER TO PRINCIPALS	106
APPENDIX F. THANK YOU LETTER TO RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS	108
VITA	110

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE	PAGE
1. Results of Chi Square Analysis on Promotion and Retention Policy	59
2. Chi Square Analysis for Teachers' Age by Perception of Long-Term Benefits of Retention	61
3. Percentage of Perceived Benefits of Retention by Age Group	62
4. Chi Square Analysis for Teachers' Gender by Opinion of Philosophical Agreement on Retention of Teachers and Administrators	64
5. Chi Square Analysis for Number of Promotion-Retention Articles Read by Agreement of Personal Philosophy with Local Board Policy	65
6. Percentage of Agreement of Teachers' Philosophy with Local School Administrators by Number of Articles Read	67
7. Number of Promotion-Retention Articles Read	68
8. Chi Square Analysis for Number of Promotion-Retention Articles Read by Perception of Benefits of Retention	69
9. Percentage of Perceived Benefits of Retention by Number of Promotion-Retention Articles Read	71
10. Chi Square Analysis for Number of Promotion-Retention Articles Read by Attitude of Teachers Toward Promotion Based on Mastery of Minimum Competencies	72
11. Communication of Local School Board Policy on Student Promotion and Retention to Classroom Teachers	74

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE	PAGE
1. Demographic Variables of Classroom Teacher Respondents	48
2. Knowledge of Promotion-Retention Policy by Classroom Teachers in Individual School Systems	50
3. Communication of Local Board Policy to Parents	53
4. Teachers' Responses Concerning the Long-Term Benefits of Retention for Low-Achieving Students	54
5. Percentage of Promotion-Retention Articles Read by Teachers in Individual School Systems	57

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Most administrators and classroom teachers are concerned with providing a successful environment for the low-achieving student. The present school structure of distinctive grade levels requires an annual decision regarding whether a child with marginal or unsatisfactory academic performance will be retained at the current grade level or be promoted to the next higher grade.

Educational leaders debate the merits and effects of student retention, yet the practice still exists in schools throughout this country. (Riffell and Switzer, 1986) Jackson's (1975) review of the research in this area concluded that "There is no reliable body of evidence to indicate that grade retention is more beneficial than grade promotion for students with serious academic or adjustment difficulties." (p. 627) An opposing view from Finlayson (1977) was that nonpromotion of primary age students does not appear to affect the self concepts of those students adversely.

As more emphasis has been put on education reform in this country, local school systems have been required to address various issues related to academic performance. The demand for accountability in the area of student achievement has led to renewed interest in competency testing and in meeting academic standards. This accountability issue

has resulted in greater interest in retaining those students who do not measure up to the established standards. (Norton, 1983)

How is the decision to retain a student made? Rose, et al. (1983) found that less than one half of the school systems they surveyed had written policies concerning retention. Decisions concerning the student's need for retention appear to be made in a subjective manner. Lack of structured criteria or established school system policy could lead to litigation by disgruntled parents against the school system. (Walker, 1984)

Establishment of promotion-retention policies is viewed as a deterrent to legal action against local school systems. Establishment of such policies is also considered to be an educationally sound procedure. Written policies are intended to prevent an arbitrary decision made by one individual concerning the student's year-end fate.

In an effort to assist school systems in setting a needed policy on student promotion and retention, the Tennessee State Department of Education required that such a policy be submitted for review by the Department during the fall of 1987. The State Department of Education established guidelines which must be addressed in the school system's promotion-retention policy. The local school board, however, had considerable leeway in structuring its procedures to comply with each of the guidelines. Once policies were in accord with State Department criteria, school systems were expected to implement those policies.

B. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

School administrators have the crucial role in articulating a system's written policy on student promotion and retention. Once the policy has been finalized, school administrators communicate that policy to classroom teachers who are responsible for implementing the policy. In addition to knowledge of the policy, equally important to the implementation of a written policy is the teacher's personal acceptance of the policy. The effectiveness of the school administrators' communication and the teachers' knowledge of the policy were the issues which constituted the basis for this research study since there was no evidence that these functions were currently being carried out.

C. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The primary reason for undertaking the study was to evaluate the effectiveness of school administrators in communicating the school system's policy of promotion and retention to individual teachers. The study was not concerned with examining the merits of this policy, but instead the teachers' knowledge of the current policy. In addition the study was designed to identify any differences between individual school systems in communicating their policy to elementary classroom teachers.

Another purpose of this study was to determine the relationship between the written policy of promotion and retention in selected

Tennessee school systems and the classroom teachers' knowledge of, and philosophical agreement with, the policy in these systems.

The study was designed in such a way that teachers could be grouped according to years of teaching experience, gender, grade-level taught, and age. It was also the purpose of this study to identify any differences in knowledge of system policy or personal philosophy that could be discerned between teachers in various demographic categories.

The study sought to determine any relationship between reading professional literature on promotion and retention and teachers' knowledge of and agreement with the local school board policy on this issue. The design of the questionnaire allowed the researcher to calculate the number of articles read on this subject by teachers in individual school systems.

D. IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

The study may have implications for system-level administrators concerning channels of communication within their organizations. A statistical analysis of research data will also give administrators in the research sample the opinions of their current teachers regarding the promotion-retention issue. The comparison of the teachers' understanding of the promotion-retention issue and the teachers' demographic categories may reveal a greater need for training with certain teacher groups. Findings may also have implications for in-service training sessions for all teachers, implications for selections of volumes for professional libraries in local systems, or

implications for selections of research abstracts to be distributed to teachers.

The state administrators' academies or university classes for prospective administrators may use the results of this study to incorporate training in policy development, communication, or monitoring of teachers' implementation of system policy.

E. ASSUMPTIONS

The following assumptions were made concerning the research study:

1. Teachers gave truthful responses to the questions on the survey instrument.
2. Practicing teachers had definite opinions about the issue of promotion and retention.
3. Written policies on student promotion and retention reflected the philosophy of the majority of school system administrators.

F. LIMITATIONS

Administrators were generally very receptive to their school system's participation in the research project. Only one school superintendent from the originally selected sample was unwilling to participate.

The results of the study could have been skewed if administrators gave additional attention to the dissemination of information relating to the local policy concerning promotion and retention of students.

In one school system, the local board had passed a new promotion-retention policy just prior to the data collection. Copies of the new policy were distributed to all teachers in the school system. The findings for that one system may have been affected since the teachers had been given the information so recently.

Another factor over which the researcher had no control was the attitude and instructions of the individual school's principal concerning the research questionnaire.

All principals were cordial toward the researcher and appeared to be pleased for faculty members to participate in the research study. However, since the questionnaire was left in the school for ten days, it is impossible for the researcher to know what additional comments may have been made to the teachers.

The return of the surveys may have been limited by the principal's management skills in keeping up with the completed questionnaires.

G. DELIMITATIONS

This research was delimited by the existence of an approved system-level policy on promotion and retention on file in the office of the State Department of Education.

The study was completed in the school year of 1988-89 and was subject to the philosophies and practices of educators during that period.

It was further delimited to the selection of 10 small school systems, all located in East Tennessee. Only elementary schools (K-8)

were selected to participate in the research project. Within those elementary schools, only those classroom teachers who provided input into a decision on student promotion or retention were asked to complete questionnaires.

H. DEFINITION OF TERMS

Chapter 1 Teachers. The instructional personnel given the assignment of providing remedial education are Chapter 1 teachers. The August E. Hawkins-Robert T. Stafford Elementary and Secondary School Improvement Amendment of 1988 to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 authorized federal funding for these professional positions. Teachers work only with a select population which is composed of students who are considered to be in the severest need of remediation and are ineligible for other academic services.

Communication Channel. The established path for the dissemination of information within the school and school system is the communication channel.

Competency Testing. The practice of testing students to determine if they can demonstrate minimal levels of performance in certain subject areas is competency testing.

Elementary Classroom Teachers. Instructional personnel who teach students in grades K-8 are elementary classroom teachers. For the purpose of this study, only those teachers who are responsible for decision making about a student's promotion or retention are identified

as elementary classroom teachers. Special music, art, and physical education teachers are not included.

Local School Board Policy. An approved statement adopted by majority vote in a formal meeting of the School Board explaining the position of the school board concerning a specific issue is recognized as a local school board policy.

Promotion. The practice of advancing a student from one grade to the next higher grade at the end of a school year is referred to as student promotion.

Retention. Retention is the practice of requiring a student who has been in a given grade level for a full year to remain at the same level for a subsequent school year. Nonpromotion may be used synonymously for retention.

School Administrators. Those individuals responsible for making management decisions, communicating those decisions to subordinate employees, and then monitoring the implementation of those decisions are school administrators. Both school superintendents and principals are examples of school administrators.

Small School System. School systems with an average daily membership of 6,500 or fewer students are classified as small school systems for the purpose of this study.

I. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

All Tennessee school systems were required by the State Department of Education to approve a local board policy on student promotion and

retention. A review of policies on file in the Nashville State Department of Education office further revealed that most school systems had complied with the requirement. Whether these written and filed policies had been communicated to the classroom teacher was another matter. The research questions listed below focus on this study's main issue--how knowledgeable were teachers of those approved policies?

1. Was the classroom teacher knowledgeable of the existence of a written school system policy concerning student promotion and retention?

2. Was there a difference between school systems in the number of teachers who were knowledgeable of a local school board policy on promotion and retention?

3. Who was involved in the development of the system's policy regarding retention and promotion of students?

4. How had the administrators of the school system communicated any policy regarding promotion and retention to classroom teachers?

5. Did the professional philosophy of the majority of teachers agree with the system's promotion-retention policy?

6. Were teachers knowledgeable of the specific guidelines of the promotion-retention policy?

7. Had teachers participated in any formal meetings which addressed the issue of student promotion and retention?

8. Were parents informed of the system's retention-promotion policy?

9. Were parents involved in the final decision regarding the student's promotion or retention?

10. What were teachers' attitudes concerning the need for student retention?

11. In the opinion of teachers, was the personal philosophy of the majority of individual teachers concerning student promotion and retention congruent with the majority of the system's administrators?

12. Did teachers agree that promotion should be contingent on the student's mastery of grade-level minimum competencies?

13. What criteria were used in determining promotion or retention?

14. Had teachers read literature related to the promotion-retention question?

15. Was there a relationship between the four demographic categories of age, gender, grade level, and years of experience and

a. knowledge of the system's promotion-retention policy?

b. professional philosophy regarding promotion and retention?

c. the teacher's perceived long-term academic benefits of retention for low achieving students?

d. teachers' opinions of the agreement of teachers' and administrators' philosophies on promotion and retention?

e. teachers' opinion of promotion being contingent on mastery of grade-level minimum competencies?

16. Was there a relationship between the number of promotion or retention articles read and

a. professional philosophy?

b. teacher's opinion on long-term academic benefits from retention?

c. teachers' opinion of promotion being contingent on mastery of grade-level minimum competencies?

17. Was there a difference in the number of promotion-retention articles read by teachers in various systems?

J. PROCEDURES

Sample Selection

The issue of promotion-retention was assessed in 10 school systems in East Tennessee in 1989. The selected sample was chosen from school systems which had fewer than 6,5000 students, since the majority of Tennessee school systems were in this category. Elementary classroom teachers in two schools with grade levels of kindergarten through eighth grade were randomly selected from each of the 10 school systems.

The process of sample selection began with identifying school systems which might be receptive to participation in such a research project. The researcher contacted the chairman of the Public Schools for Cooperative Research to obtain a current membership list. The names of other school systems in the same geographic area were added to that initial list of possible research participants. A total of 36 school systems were identified.

This list was narrowed when the researcher determined the student population in each system. Ten of the 36 school systems had more than 6,500 students enrolled. Two school systems from the original list

were only one-school systems and thus did not meet the criteria for participation. An additional five systems were eliminated because the researcher was unable to find a written policy for them in the School Approval Office of the Tennessee Department of Education. The list which originally included 36 school systems was then narrowed to 19. Participants were randomly selected from the pool of 19 school systems. Only the first school system contacted declined to participate in the research project. The randomized block selection process netted the 10 school systems which participated in the research project. Within each of the 10 systems, two schools were randomly selected to receive the research questionnaires.

Instrumentation Development and Preliminary Testing

To determine whether the survey instrument actually measured the major research questions, the researcher had a jury of local school administrators and the director of the State Office of School Approval to critique the instrument. The instrument was also field tested by having faculty members in grades K-8 in the Sweetwater City Schools respond to the questionnaire.

Individual interviews concerning the research project were held with each of the school principals and the system superintendent in Sweetwater City Schools. A telephone conversation provided an opportunity for input from the director of the State Office of School Approval concerning the items on the research questionnaire and the proposed method for data collection.

Survey instruments were delivered to school principals for distribution to all professional personnel. A reminder concerning collection of the questionnaires was mailed to all participating school principals. Survey instruments were collected after five school days. Appreciation gifts of canned drinks were left for all teachers who had completed the questionnaires.

The purpose of the field testing was to identify any problems in understanding the questions and to identify the need for additional information from teachers. Schools which participated in the field test were not included in the sample of the ten school systems. The combination of jury review and field testing was intended to establish content validity. (Fox, 1969, p. 370, 371)

The following suggestions were given by jury members about the proposed research:

1. Provide more flexibility in the time for collection of data. Distribute the questionnaires to the teachers and allow them several days for completion. Do not attempt to collect data during an after-school faculty meeting as originally proposed.
2. Be specific in the question related to criteria used in determining promotion or retention. Designate whether the question applies only to individual teachers or a system standard.
3. Provide an incentive (monetary or gift) for completion of the questionnaire.

The field testing experience with classroom teachers resulted in the following findings about the survey instrument:

1. The questions were inappropriate for librarians, music teachers, and physical education teachers since their work did not include making decisions on student promotion or retention.

2. "Grade(s) taught" was interpreted by teachers as asking all grades ever taught. That question was changed to "Grade(s) presently taught."

3. The question "Number of students you retained last year" could not be related to the teacher's grade level presently taught since there was no way to know if the teacher currently taught the same grade level as last year. That question was deleted from the questionnaire.

4. The time-consuming process of hand-tallying the questionnaires convinced the researcher that computer assistance was necessary.

5. The cumbersome three-page preliminary questionnaire was also seen by the researcher as a deterrent in fostering returns so the decision was made to print the questionnaire commercially using a one and one-half page format.

After these necessary adjustments were made to the original survey instrument (see Appendix A), the survey was undertaken.

The resulting 12-item survey instrument forced responses by providing multiple choice answers for each question. See Appendix B for final questionnaire.

Data Collection

Copies of written policies for the participating school systems were reviewed. The State Department of Education Office of School Approval was the source for the systems' promotion-retention policies.

School superintendents and principals were contacted to make arrangements for data collection in their respective schools. (See Appendix C.)

The questionnaire was administered to all teachers from the schools in the research sample during the spring of 1989.

The researcher personally distributed research questionnaires, a collection box, and a letter explaining the research procedures to school principals. (See Appendix D.) The principal, in turn, disseminated the questionnaires to faculty members who were responsible for making promotion or retention decisions. This included regular classroom, Chapter I, resource, or other special academic teachers. Excluded in the data collection process were librarians and physical education, art, and music teachers. After five days, a post card was sent to each principal as a reminder to collect the data. (See Appendix E.) Questionnaires were collected from individual schools at the end of 10 days. A letter of appreciation was sent to each school which participated in the research project. (See Appendix F.)

Data Analysis

Results were reported by giving total responses and percentages per question. Question 1 had a possible choice of "unsure". Responses of unsure to that specific question were treated as no when tallying results because the participants were unable to answer yes.

Because of the small population and the lack of true random selection of the sample, nonparametric statistical tests were applied. Chi square was used to test for a relationship between teacher

responses to questions concerning the existence of a local student promotion-retention policy and the teachers' agreement with the provisions of the policy when compared to teacher's age, years of experience, grade level taught, and gender. The teachers' responses regarding the number of retention-promotion articles read was tested against selected questions related to the teachers' opinions about promotion and retention.

K. ORGANIZATION OF THE STUDY

Chapter I is an introduction to the research problem, and outlines the purposes, importance, assumptions, limitations, and delimitations of the study. Definition of terms, research questions, and procedures used in this study are also included in this chapter.

Chapter II is a summary of related literature. The review is divided into three main sections: communication essentials, local school board policies, and the promotion-retention issue.

Chapter III reports the findings of this study. Both total numbers and percentages of the whole are used to report responses to survey questions. An analysis, interpretation, and discussion of those findings are provided in Chapter IV. Various figures and tables in these two chapters are used to present findings in a simplified manner.

Chapter V provides a summary of the major findings and conclusions based on these findings. Recommendations for school systems, local schools, and future research are offered in this chapter.

CHAPTER II

A REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

A. INTRODUCTION

The review of literature is a summary of pertinent writing which is related to communication within an organization and to the promotion-retention issue. The review is divided into three main sections: communication essentials, local school board policies, and the promotion-retention issue. The review is intended to give background information used in formulating the current study.

B. COMMUNICATION ESSENTIALS

An adequate channel of communication is essential for an effective school. An appropriate communication program has open and free lines of multidirectional communication. Current information is shared promptly with the appropriate people. (St. John, 1983, pp. 22, 23)

Communicators achieve credibility by communicating continuously with complete and accurate information. Credibility is also enhanced by the individual if that person is one who is viewed as being helpful by the staff and is straightforward and easily understood by others. Prompt feedback is also welcomed by an effective communicator. (St. John, 1983, pp. 22, 23)

School administrators have the ultimate responsibility in developing an effective communication program. Openness is an

essential quality found among successful communicators. A good communicator must be willing to listen both on a horizontal plane (among peers) and on a vertical dimension (between supervisors and subordinates). The person will strive to be available both by having an open door to those who wish to come in and by circulating and talking with those at various levels of the organization. An astute communicator will recognize that communication problems are only signs of other difficulties in the school. (St. John, 1983, pp. 22, 23)

Many public school administrators, like business and industry managers, recognize the importance of good communication among all employees. Effective communication can enhance job productivity, foster personal satisfaction, and improve working relationships. Hogue (1987, p. 56) believed that the supervisor's ability to analyze and appeal to the natural strengths of another employee may greatly influence the success of any communication program. It is imperative that the supervisor choose a means of communication that will be most effective in conveying his or her message.

School administrators have the major responsibility to ensure that all members of the school's staff, students, and parents have a thorough understanding of school board policies and procedures. Bishop and Essex (1986, p. 41) found that rights of various individuals were often affected by inconsistent interpretation or failure to follow board policies. An even more detrimental condition discovered was that some school personnel had no knowledge of the existence of certain essential board policies.

Communication is the first essential in the adoption of a board policy. It is expected that the school superintendent will communicate with the school board both any data which might influence the board member's vote on a proposed policy and the superintendent's recommendation to the board concerning that policy. In addition, the school superintendent should seek the input of all those who might be affected by the policy and communicate this input to the board.

(Bishop & Essex, 1986, p. 42)

Dissemination of approved policy is a part of school system communication. In many states, approved policies must be reviewed by the chief state school officer before dissemination. The recommended method for sharing new policies is to duplicate the policy and give a copy to each school system employee who will be directly affected. As a minimum, three copies should be available at each school. In addition, a specific time should be designated for discussion of the new policy with school employees. Interpretation is a critical aspect in communicating any newly-adopted policy. In addition to written statements, time for discussion and clarification during faculty meetings or inservice programs is a must to assure that all parties have a basic understanding of the intent of the policy. (Bishop & Essex, 1986, p. 42)

The need for effective means of communicating policies and procedures has increased as a result of the growing number of legal suits against school districts. The board and administrative staff are not relieved of legal responsibility simply by distributing written

copies of approved policies. It should never be assumed that all employees, students, and parents read, in its entirety, every written policy which is disseminated to them. A verbal explanation must follow any written copy if the school system expects to be effective in communicating the policy and its original intent to those who will be affected by it. (Bishop & Essex, 1986, p. 44)

A research study by Bredson (1988, p. 184) documented the importance of communication in the effective performance of school principals. His study of five principals found that 71% of the daily communication actions were verbal interpersonal activities and of those, 54.8% were face-to-face contacts. In summarizing, the researcher identified four major themes regarding effective communication--an open door policy, being a good listener, using an informal communications network, and a preference for one-to-one interpersonal contact.

Cunningham (1985, p. 17) defined leadership as the "exercise of influence." Though the principals in Bredson's study were individualistic in their approach to the principalship, each relied on and believed in the importance of communication skills to the success of their leadership.

A study by the Far West Laboratory for Educational Research and Development sought to discover the behaviors characteristic of effective principals. Communication was one of nine behaviors identified as stimulating and reinforcing teachers' professional development. Data showed that 60-70 percent of a principal's daily

activities fell into the category of communication. Often face-to-face, short conversations were the methods used for communication. These techniques were possibly seen as less threatening than would be a formal meeting. The substance of the informal conversations may also be more appealing and more acceptable to teachers. This somewhat incidental communication seemed to have a great impact on staff development. (McEvoy, 1987, pp. 73, 76)

Both the information and the method for imparting that information are of interest to classroom teachers. Russell (1982, p. 354) stated that school systems often communicate most the information which least interests employees. He questioned whether many systems do any more that give lip service to the importance of communication.

The grapevine was identified as the method of communication most often used and least preferred by teachers. The teachers, instead, identified their immediate supervisor as the person from whom they would most like to receive information. Teachers also wanted better upward communication. This included availability of supervisors to answer questions and to seek teacher opinions when decisions were to be made. (Russell, 1982, pp. 355-357)

School systems which had the best communication systems, exhibited four qualities--(1) administrators were strong and decisive, (2) there was openness, trust, and honesty, (3) teachers were talked to in terms of their own language and experiences, and (4) teachers were consulted before any changes were made which affected their working conditions. (Russell, 1982, pp. 357-358)

There is a need for teacher input in the formation of any new board policy. Even if the policy is the result of a mandated change, teachers will more readily accept the changes and be more supportive of the change if their input is considered. Implementation plans or periodic review may allow avenues for teacher input to extend beyond initial plans for a change. (Jwaideh, 1984, p. 14)

Schmuck and Miles (1971) reinforced this concept by describing the Japanese style of decision making:

It often takes days or weeks to arrive at a decision that an American manager might make by himself in minutes. But in the process, practically everyone who will be affected by the decision is consulted . . . when they finally do reach a decision, they are ready to act with great speed. No time need be wasted trying to convince colleagues that the decision is correct, since they helped make it. (p. 368)

C. LOCAL SCHOOL BOARD POLICIES CONCERNING STUDENT PROMOTION AND RETENTION

The Tennessee State Board of Education initiated action in the mid 1980s which eventually required local school boards to approve a student promotion and retention policy. A 1984 survey commissioned by the State Board of Education found that almost one-third of Tennessee's local school systems had no policy on promotion and retention. The study further found that wide diversity occurred among those systems which did have a written policy.

The Tennessee Code Annotated and the Tennessee State Department of Education's Rules Regulation and Minimum Standards dictate the

relationship between the State Board of Education and local school systems in regard to student promotion and retention:

The State Board of Education shall have the duty of establishing policies related to evaluation of student progress and achievement.

(TCA, 1989, 49-1-302 [a] [2])

Parents shall be informed of their child's progress in each subject area at least every six weeks. Annual promotions shall be in accordance with a plan approved by the local school system. (Rules, Regulations, & Minimum Standards, 1986, Chapter 0520-1- 3-.02 [3] [d])

The classroom teacher shall have the duty of following the state curriculum for his/her class and shall follow the guidelines furnished by the State Commissioner of Education for promotion of pupils. (TCA, 1983, 49-5-201 [a] [9])

A grading policy shall be developed and implemented by each local school system. The policy shall be filed with the Commissioner of Education. A state-established minimum score of 70% shall be required for passing each subject. (Rules, Regulations, & Minimum Standards, 1986, Chapter 0520-1-3-.02 [3] [e])

It shall be the responsibility of the State Board of Education to provide guidelines to local school systems concerning ramifications of students' school attendance record. (TCA, 1983, 49-6-3002)

Continued concern among State Board of Education members led to the development of a policy statement which was issued by that board to local education authorities. On April 25, 1986, the Tennessee State Board of Education took action which required that all school systems

in Tennessee develop a written promotion and retention policy. Such policies must be in accordance with the following guidelines:

Identify students with problems early in the school year. Parents are to be notified as early as possible about any problems concerning their child. Early identification is thought to maximize the possibility for remediation and for avoidance of retention.

Enlist parental support. Parents should be involved in the discussion concerning retention. Before retaining a student, parents should be informed at least six weeks before the closing of school.

Mastery of essential competencies. This guideline is intended to insure that a student has the competencies necessary to be successful at the next higher grade level.

Special procedures for special students. High risk students, those with I.E.P.'s, and other students with special needs should be given special consideration.

Flexible placement. Various approaches, such as conditional promotion, remedial summer programs, and transitional classes should be considered.

Attendance. The area should be considered when excessive absenteeism has caused an educational problem.

Conduct. Retention should not be used as a disciplinary action.

Previous retention. Except under unusual circumstances, a student should not be retained more than once in the same grade.

Grade level. Retention is considered to be more appropriate during the primary grades.

Teacher involvement. The teacher should be consulted if the teacher's decision to promote or retain a child is to be reversed.

Develop an appropriate instructional program. The student should not simply repeat the same instruction from the previous year. Alternate materials, different instructional methods, and a change of teachers should all be explored.

Follow the progress of students retained. The local school system is expected to monitor the progress of any retained student for at least the 3 years following that retention.

Appeals. Procedures for appealing any decision must be specified. (Tennessee Department of Education, 1986, pp. 4-7)

The 1987 edition of the Rules, Regulations, and Minimum Standards records the results of the official action of the State Board of Education: Each local board of education had the responsibility of developing and implementing a system-side policy on student promotion and retention. Such policies were to be in accordance with guidelines distributed by the State Board of Education. System policies were to be on file with the State Commissioner of Education by September 1, 1987. Students and parents were to be informed of the stipulations within the policy. (Tennessee State Department of Education, 1986, p. 2)

Policymaking is the responsibility of the local school board. In the American School Boards: the Positive Power (1987, p. 5) policies were defined as "general rules about what will be done, who will do it, and how it will be done." The writer cautioned about the inefficiency

of school systems with boards which mix policymaking and administration. A distinct line must exist between the policymaker (the school board) and the policy implementer (the school administration).

Student performance standards has been identified as one area which demands consideration by local school boards. Substantial time should be spent on establishing board policy related to this issue. (The Institute of Educational Leadership, 1987, p. 6) Hunter (1986) stated that good policy depends on two essential factors: "1. knowing what to do and 2. knowing how best to achieve the desired result." (p. 110) Knowledge of research into the learning process and the learning environment is required in order for board policy to meet Hunter's criteria for a good policy. In generalizing all areas of policy development, school board members were admonished to stay informed. (American School Boards, 1987, p. 12)

Local board policies are often influenced by state law. Many states have sections of law which are devoted specifically to the duties and requirements of public schools. Particularly in this time of educational crisis, present-day legislators have begun to take a more visible role in educational policymaking and implementation. Several state legislatures have passed prescriptive legislation without the research knowledge or expertise required to anticipate the results of such legislation. These "band aid" solutions have resulted in a conflict of expectations. Without the freedom of local level implementation, the results may comply with broad, sweeping objectives but may be ineffective in meeting specific educational needs of a

particular community. Thus, the intended legislation for better schools may lead instead to unreal situations, false claims and charges, and obstacles that actually disrupt the educational process. (Hunter, 1986, p. 110)

School systems across the country have recognized the need for specific guidelines to direct teachers in making the decision to promote or retain a student. Such policies are intended to incorporate the findings of the most recent research on this issue.

Local school systems have even found themselves in legal disputes related to promotion. Zirkel & Gluckman (1982, p. 57) found that judges were reluctant to rule in cases involving promotion and retention of students. Judges recognized the training and experience of instructors as factors which qualified the educators to make decisions about students' academic progress. Interference from noneducational bodies was deemed as a hindrance to efficient instruction. Judges were only willing to become involved in cases of abuse in decisions regarding promotion and retention. Generally, school systems that have multiple criteria stated in a promotion-retention policy and those systems that have allowed adequate time to phase-in any new requirement have had their policies upheld by the courts.

In contrast, two cases which were heard and ruled on by the courts were Debra P. v. Turlington and Anderson v. Banks. In both cases, minority students were denied graduation from high school because of failure to pass a standardized test. The decisions were similar in each

instance. The court ruled that a single criterion could not be used to sanction a high school diploma since each of the school systems involved had a history of segregation and a disproportionate number of minority students failed to perform satisfactory on the tests. (Stroup & Zirkel, 1983, p. 216)

Several school systems' promotion-retention policies have been influenced by the action of the state legislatures. In 33 states students were required to pass a state competency test and/or standardized achievement tests. (Hall & Wallace, 1986, p. 76)

The general population has also expressed its opinion on this issue. The majority (75%) of the respondents to a 1983 Gallup Poll favored promoting only those students who passed an end-of-the-year examination. (Gallup, 1983, p. 38) In 1978 the National Science Board expounded the following position:

Every state should establish rigorous standards for high school graduation and local school districts should provide rigorous standards for grade promotion. We should curtail the process of social promotion. (Johnson, 1984, p. 66)

Since many school districts periodically update their promotion standards, there are no descriptions of, or data on, promotions standards nationwide (Rose, et al., 1983, p. 202). The following policies and programs are a sampling of the efforts of school systems to deal with this sensitive issue of promotion and retention of students.

South Carolina Policies

Shortly after the passage of basic skills legislation in South Carolina, Rose and others (1983, pp. 202, 203) examined the promotion-retention policies of 25 local school districts there. Of those districts surveyed:

1. eleven had written policies that addressed certain grade level standards,
2. seven had one policy for the entire district or just two grade structures identified,
3. thirteen had no official policy or were in the process of revising their policy.

Those systems which had written policies tended to have flexible standards to be used in making a final decision about promotion. Most policy statements made reference to the following factors--(1) student's achievement level, (2) previous retention, (3) family factors, and (4) "best interest" of the student. (Rose, et al., p. 203)

In many districts without official policies, the principal had a major role in decision making regarding student promotion. Often the principal conferred with the classroom teacher and school psychologist before making the final decision on the student's placement. (Rose, et al., 1983, p. 203)

Even though students in South Carolina were routinely retained if they failed to meet test standards, a review of board policies in 59 school systems, found the following:

1. seven policies addressed the futility of retention;

2. fifteen policies required agreement by the teacher, student's parents, and the principal before student retention;
3. fourteen systems specified in which grade levels retention could occur;
4. eighteen addressed multiple criteria, including attendance, achievement, social maturity, age, and individual needs;
5. four discouraged retention;
6. two addressed promotion and retention of special students; and
7. two made no reference to retention. (Hall & Wallace, 1986, p. 76)

After reviewing local board policies in South Carolina and several other states, Hall and Wallace made the following recommendations:

1. alternative programs should be considered for students who are unable to meet minimum standards for promotion,
2. student's parents should be consulted before making the decision to retain the student,
3. any retention that is deemed necessary should be made during the early grades,
4. any promotion/retention policy should include multiple criteria, and
5. school systems should follow federal and state laws regarding retention of handicapped students. (Hall & Wallace, 1986, pp. 72, 73)

This limited research in one state suggests that school systems across the country will be rewriting board policies to coincide with

legislative action related to student achievement levels. (Rose, et al., 1983, p. 203)

Pinellas County, Florida

In 1977 Pinellas County, Florida, adopted what was seen as a very stringent policy governing promotion and retention. Students' achievement was the primary criterion which led to promotion. Students in grades 2-5 were required to make a minimum score on achievement tests which were administered countywide. In grades 6-8, students' promotion was based on the number of courses they passed. In addition, students in the 8th grade were required to pass a state-wide mandated proficiency test. However, test scores were not always the final deciding factor in student promotion or retention. The school administrators and classroom teachers could review students' progress and make a promotion-retention decision which did not follow the test score standard. If such a decision was made, the administrator was required to document the reasons for the decision. (Elligett & Tocco, 1983, p. 733)

School board members asked to be kept informed of the impact of this policy. The policy went into effect in 1978. The percentage of students who were retained at both the elementary school level and the middle school level more that doubled the first year of implementation. Retention percentages fluctuated during the next few years and in 1982 (the last year reported in this article) they were still considerably above the figures reported prior to implementation of the new policy. (Elligett & Tocco, 1983, p. 733)

An evaluation of subsequent year test scores showed that academic performance of retained students had substantially improved between the years prior to retention and the year following promotion. Monitoring of student performance also showed that students retained during earlier grades made greater gains than older students who were retained. System evaluators concluded that the policy had a positive impact on students' achievement, not only during the year of retention but also during the following year. (Elligett and Tocco, p. 735)

The community also seemed receptive of this policy. Parents have not made demands to promote their children regardless of their academic performance. School administrators attributed this parental acceptance to three factors:

1. the new policy was promoted as providing additional educational opportunities, not penalties;
2. the policy resulted in more retentions, making the practice more commonplace; and
3. parents are informed in January, not May, of the possibility of retention for their child. (Elligett & Tocco, 1983, p. 735)

Another study on promotion and retention argued strongly that parental support is one of the three factors that best predicted the success of student retention. (Saradoval & Hughes, 1981, p. 35)

New York City

The Promotional Gates Program, initiated in 1981 in New York City, introduced a system-wide policy to promote students according to achievement. The basis of this program was to establish "promotional

gates" at the end of the fourth and seventh grades which students must pass through in order to advance to the next higher grade. Student performance on the California Achievement Test (CAT) determined whether that individual would be promoted or retained. The school system established a cutoff score and required those who made lower than that score to repeat the same grade the following year. Labaree (1984, pp. 76, 77) questioned the validity of the test score as the only criterion used in making a decision about a student's grade advancement or retention. Students who fell below the cutoff mark on the CAT were placed in small remedial classes where particular emphasis was given to math and language arts skills. (Labaree, 1984, p. 77)

A major problem for the Gates Program was the student who had been retained several times. This problem was particularly apparent at the seventh grade level where students with multiple holdovers were approaching the dropout age. Initially 7th grade retainees were tracked into vocational classes. Eventually, students who failed the 7th grade test for a third time, were socially promoted to high school. (Labaree, 1984, p. 77)

Critics of the Gates Program complained about the use of a single test score to decide which fourth and seventh graders would be promoted. The cutoff score, which was set well below grade level, was deemed by some to be too low to be meaningful. The process was also described as arbitrary, since only the one criteria was used in the decision-making process. After the first year of the program, the single test score standard was eliminated. Promotion was instead

determined by the classroom teacher's recommendation and by the student's performance on a variety of tests. (Toch, 1984, p. 175)

An attempt was made to determine the effectiveness of the Gates program in increasing the level of student achievement. The scores of the students who had participated in the Gates program were compared to the scores of the students in a constructed control group who were retained or socially promoted prior to the initiation of the Gates program. Statistical comparisons of the test scores of the two groups led to the following conclusion: "there is no evidence that retention and remedial instruction under the Gates program produced any gains in achievement which had not already been produced in the absence of these interventions." (Labaree, 1984, p. 81)

While this study's comparison of test scores fails to show the effectiveness of the program, it is premature to conclude that it is ineffective. The Gates program may prove to be effective in improving students' performance over a long period of time. A non-measured value of the program may be that it stimulates the achievement level of students who surpass the promotional standard rather than those who do not meet the minimal standard. It may also be that the positive effect of the program is on learning that is not measured by the California Achievement Test. (Labaree, 1984, p. 81)

Greensville County, Virginia

Because of low ranking of their students on the Science Research Associates Achievement Test, the administrators of Greensville County, Virginia, Schools initiated a new promotion policy based on mastery of

grade-level skills. In 1973 the school system announced that every student would be required to take a standardized achievement test twice a year and that no student would be promoted until he had passed the test appropriate for his grade level. At the end of that school year 1,300 of the 3,750 students in Greenville County were retained. Eventually 500 of these retainees were promoted.

The philosophy of The Greenville County Schools was based upon the belief that children's grades should reflect solid achievement; that promotions should be based on achievement, enabling students to handle more advanced work properly; and that the diploma should represent achievement rather than attendance in school. (Owen & Ranick, 1977, p. 532)

After three years of this competency-based promotion program, the following results were identified:

1. a continued reduction in the number of students who were required to repeat a full grade;
2. an increase in the achievement test scores;
3. a decrease in the dropout rate;
4. an increase in satisfaction level in regard to school performance among both teachers and students;
5. an increase in emotional support from the community; and
6. an acknowledgement that by 1979 students will have to demonstrate certain literacy skills, computational skills, and knowledge of United States history and culture in order to receive a high school diploma. (Owens & Ranick, 1977, pp. 533-534)

The "Commonsense Approach to Basics," the name given to the competency-based promotion program, was terminated in 1981. A law suit, reopened in 1980, alleged discrimination against minority students by disproportionately retaining them and locking them in to a "low" track curriculum. Researchers Cates and Ash (1983, pp. 137-138) collected data which showed the allegations to be unfounded. However, a newly formed school board negotiated with the plaintiffs and effectively agreed to end the "promotion through achievement program." The agreement between the two parties terminated the litigation, averted a trial, and was signed by a federal judge as a consent decree. Specifically, the agreement phased out special classes for partially promoted students and removed standardized test scores as factors to use in determining promotion or retention of students. The school board also committed to formulation of system-wide policies designed to ensure better racial balance throughout the educational program.

"The biggest challenge of new promotion standards seems to be paying for them." (Toch, 1984, p. 175) The expense of this competency-based standard begins with test development. According to Barry Anderson in an address he made to the Education Commission of the States and the National Institute of Education, the cost for development of a single test item averaged \$100. Factors, such as number of test items, number of overall tests for various grade levels, and number of subjects to be tested, could result in costs from \$15,000 to \$63,000 for test development in a single school system. (Thompson, 1979, p. 12)

An alternative to local test development is use of a standardized test. Caution must be taken with that approach if the test scores are used in determining student promotion or retention. A large number of test failures could result in law suits from families who believe the test discriminates against certain students. (Thompson, 1979, p. 12)

Test administration is another cost to local systems. Those systems which score their own tests and screen their own results increase their administrative costs. (Thompson, 1979, p. 12)

Remedial costs for students who do not meet the minimal standards are considered to be the heaviest financial burden of all. During 1971-72, the calculated cost for retraining these retained students was between \$700 million and \$900 million. Adjusting these figures to reflect present-day education costs clearly shows the financial magnitude of the retention issue. (Walker, 1984, p. 1) The state of New Jersey estimated its cost for compensatory education to be \$30 million in 1976-77. (Thompson, 1979, p. 13)

In 1983, the mayor's office of New York City allocated \$20 million to help defray the cost of remedial instruction. That money was earmarked for use with the 20,500 students who did not meet the promotion standards that year. (Toch, 1984, p. 13) Bernard Kelner, associate superintendent of schools in Philadelphia, estimated that a modest summer school program of three hours a day for four weeks would cost \$400 to \$600 per student in 1984. If the estimated 40,000 students were retained under their new promotion policy, the cost of

summer school alone would be \$16 million (figured at the rate of \$400 per student). (Toch, 1984, p. 176)

Many states do not provide funding for remedial education. Local systems often use money from special federally-funded programs to provide instruction for students who qualify for these programs. It is left to the local system to finance other aspects of the remedial instruction. (Thompson, 1979, p. 13) The State of Tennessee has assisted local systems in financing remedial programs by funding some teachers' salaries through the extended contract portion of the Career Ladder Program. (Sherlin, 1989)

D. THE PROMOTION-RETENTION ISSUE

"Research on the effects of retention has been mixed--partly because of the difficulty of designing studies on such a question" (Johnson, 1984, p.67) Jackson (1975, pp. 618-624) reviewed the available research studies on the issue of promotion and retention. He found that three research designs prevailed:

1. First were studies which compared the achievement levels of students who were retained with those who had been promoted to the next higher grade. These students were matched on various factors, such as age, sex, achievement test scores, adjustment indices, academic grades, and grade level.

2. The second design compared the outcomes of retained students, before and after their retention.

3. The only truly experimental design compared low-achieving students who had been randomly selected for promotion or retention.

Jackson's review concluded simply that no research findings are available to show that retention is better than promotion for the underachieving child. (p. 627) Several problems existed with the research that Jackson reviewed:

1. The studies involving experimental research were more than 30 years old.

2. The studies investigated only short-term effects of promotion or retention.

3. The subjects represented only a limited sample from a large, diverse population.

4. The research summaries did not carefully define the treatment in each study.

Jackson concluded that the issue of promotion and retention was in need of additional research. (p. 628)

Research studies have examined the claim by some that retention helps to remedy inadequate academic achievement. A study by Dobbs and Neville (1967, p. 472) showed that low performing students who were promoted made a 2-year academic gain while retained students of the same grade made only a 1-year gain academically. Abidin (1971, p. 414) found deficit scores in achievement tests and Intelligence Quotient (IQ) tests of 4th-6th grade students who had been retained at 1st or 2nd grade levels. In a summary of the review of 25 studies of the effects of student achievement, Rose (1983, p. 206) found that, on the

average, promoted pupils made gains of 8-12 months a year while retained pupils made gains of only about 6 months. When summarizing the literature, Carstens (1985, p. 58) concluded that retention is not an effective strategy for either slow learners or learning disabled children. Even though some educators claim that students benefit from retention, these studies would seem to refute that assertion.

Holmes and Matthews (1984) reviewed 44 research studies and concluded that there are negative relationships between retention and academic achievement, personal adjustment, self concept, attitude toward school, and attendance. They summarized their finding by saying:

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. Because this cumulative research consistently points to negative effects of nonpromotion, the burden of proof legitimately falls on proponents of retention plans to show there is compelling logic indicating success of their plans when so many other plans have failed. (p 90)

Another educator (Norton, 1983) expressed a similar conclusion in his article, *It's Time to Get Tough on Student Promotion--Or Is It?:*

Non-promotion is not an aid to pupil achievement or to personal development Non-promotion of pupils as a means of fostering high standards for learning is not supported by research which has extended over a sixty-year period of time. (p 286)

A review of available research led Hall and Wallace (1986) to make the following generalizations:

1. Low achievers do not necessarily benefit from retention.
2. Threat of retention does not motivate students.
3. Retention does not enhance student morale.

4. Retention is not recommended for students above the fifth grade level, even those student with academic problems.
5. Repetition of the same material using the same or a similar instructional method is not considered effective.
6. Students in the first or second grade who have made some academic progress and who have some social skills are most likely to benefit from retention.
7. Repeating a grade is no guarantee of mastery of the subject matter.
8. Retention is not effective in creating more homogeneous groups among students at specific grade levels.
9. Retention results are somewhat more positive if the students are retained because of their immaturity.
10. The child's personality adjustment does not appear to be enhanced by repeating a grade. (pp. 72-73)

There seems to be consensus among educators that retention is generally more successful in early grades. Lieberman (1980) wrote

Students retained beyond the fourth grade are usually victims of inappropriate disciplinary action or a lack of special education services or both. Also the self-concept issue seems to take on much greater importance beyond the third grade. (p. 41)

Educators seem to agree that multiple retentions are not effective. Research by White and Howard (1973, pp. 184-186) studied the effect of retention on the student's self concept. Results of their research showed that students retained more than once had lower scores on a self-concept index than those retained only once.

A retention scale, developed by H. Wayne Light, (1977) looks at various categories which may be used as an aid in making a year-end decision about student promotion or retention. His widely disseminated materials included a teacher's manual, a student worksheet to record physical and academic history, a parents' guide to grade retention, an appeal form, and the retention scale form to be completed by the teacher. Light's scale was described as a "counseling tool" and required that the teachers assign a point score in each of nineteen categories. Those categories along with Light's philosophy about each follow:

Student sex. Boys are generally considered better candidates for retention.

Student's age. If retention would make the child much more than one year older than his classmates, it is discouraged.

Knowledge of English language. A bilingual child who is still struggling with the language is the best candidate.

Physical size. Students who are smaller than their classmates are more likely to benefit from retention.

Present grade placement. Kindergarten or first grade are considered to be the best years for retention.

Previous retention. Those who have never been retained or started kindergarten at age 5 are the best candidates for retention.

Brother and sisters. Narrowing the span between sibling's grade levels or placing sibling in the same grade may result in difficulties in family relationships.

Parent's school participation. Parent support of the school and participation in school activities is more likely to make a student's retention a successful experience.

Child's life experiences. Inclusion of enriching experiences by parents may provide greater opportunities for success during the year of grade retention. If many enriching activities have been provided previously, it is unlikely that retention will help.

Family moves. Frequent family moves may limit the student's opportunities for learning. Students who have been uprooted by many moves are less likely to benefit from retention.

School attendance. Retention is likely to be beneficial to a child who has missed school due to illness, rather than truancy.

Intelligence. The child of average intelligence is likely to gain the most from retention.

History of learning disability. Any student with a professionally-identified learning disability is a poor candidate for grade retention.

Present level of academic achievement. Students about one grade level below their classmates have the best chance of "catching up" through retention.

Student attitude about possible retention. Students who view grade retention as an opportunity to break the failure cycle are most likely to benefit from retention.

Student's interest in school work. Students who make genuine attempts to complete school assignments have the best chance of being helped by retention.

Immature behavior. Generally an "immature" child who is academically capable will do better if promoted rather than retained.

Emotional problems. Retention is usually not the answer for the child who is easily upset and finds it hard to concentrate on school work.

History of delinquency. Students with a history of behavior problems usually show even more antisocial behavior when retained.

The total score calculated on the scale was used to assist the teacher in making a year-end decision about a certain student. These nineteen factors, while not the only factors considered by teachers, were viewed as highly important areas in decision making about the promotion/retention issue. (Light, 1977, pp. 6-22)

E. CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter looked at the need for effective communication within an organization. Particular attention was given to successful strategies used by educational administrators to communicate to personnel in the school and/or school system.

The responsibilities of the local school systems in Tennessee to communicate information on student promotion and retention was detailed. In addition, this chapter examined various promotion and retention policies in school systems in the Eastern and Southeastern

parts of the United States. The successes and pitfalls in implementing individual policies were noted.

The final section of this chapter discussed both the research findings and established theories of professional educators on the issue of promotion and retention. While there are still some conflicting opinions on this issue, the overwhelming majority of the reports in the literature point to the negative aspects of grade retention.

CHAPTER III

FINDINGS

A. INTRODUCTION

At the time of this study, little research had been conducted on communication of board policies to classroom teachers. This study attempted to provide data on classroom teachers' knowledge of the local school board policy on student promotion and retention, as well as data on the teachers' agreement or disagreement with that policy. The data were collected during the last month of school year 1988-89 when teachers were faced with decisions related to the promotion-retention issue.

B. RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

A total of ten school systems participated in the research study. Each school system involved in the data collection had an approved promotion-retention policy on file with the Tennessee State Department of Education. Selected faculty members from two schools in each system completed the research questionnaires. Only those faculty members who were responsible for providing input into a promotion-retention decision were selected for the study. All those who participated were assigned to teach in schools with students no lower than kindergarten level and no higher than eighth grade. A total of 372 questionnaires were distributed and 310 usable instruments were returned. This

represented a 83% return rate. Four questionnaires with incomplete responses were returned but were not reported in the findings. See Appendix for a copy of the questionnaire.

C. DEMOGRAPHIC FEATURES

Teacher respondents were grouped according to several demographic features. Grade level was asked of each participant. The grade levels were reported as primary (K-2), intermediate (3-5), middle (6-8), and other, which included special education, resource, and Chapter I teachers. The largest group, 136 (44%) of the teachers, taught at the primary level; 109 (35%) were intermediate level teachers; 37 (12%) were grouped as other; and 28 (9%) were in the middle level category.

Participants were also identified by years of teaching experience. The majority of the teachers, 198 (64%), were veteran teachers with greater than 10 years of teaching experience. The group of 84 teachers with 4-10 years of teaching experience comprised 27% of the total. The inexperienced group with fewer than 4 years of teaching experience was the smallest group with only 28 teachers (9%).

Gender and age of individual teachers were other demographic questions asked. Most respondents, 291 (94%), were females; 19 (6%) were males. Most of the teachers, 161 (52%), were in the 36-50 years age range. Teachers who identified their ages as less than 36 years made up 105 (34%) of the total. Only 43 (14%) were in the 51 and older age group. Figure 1 displays the four demographic variables.

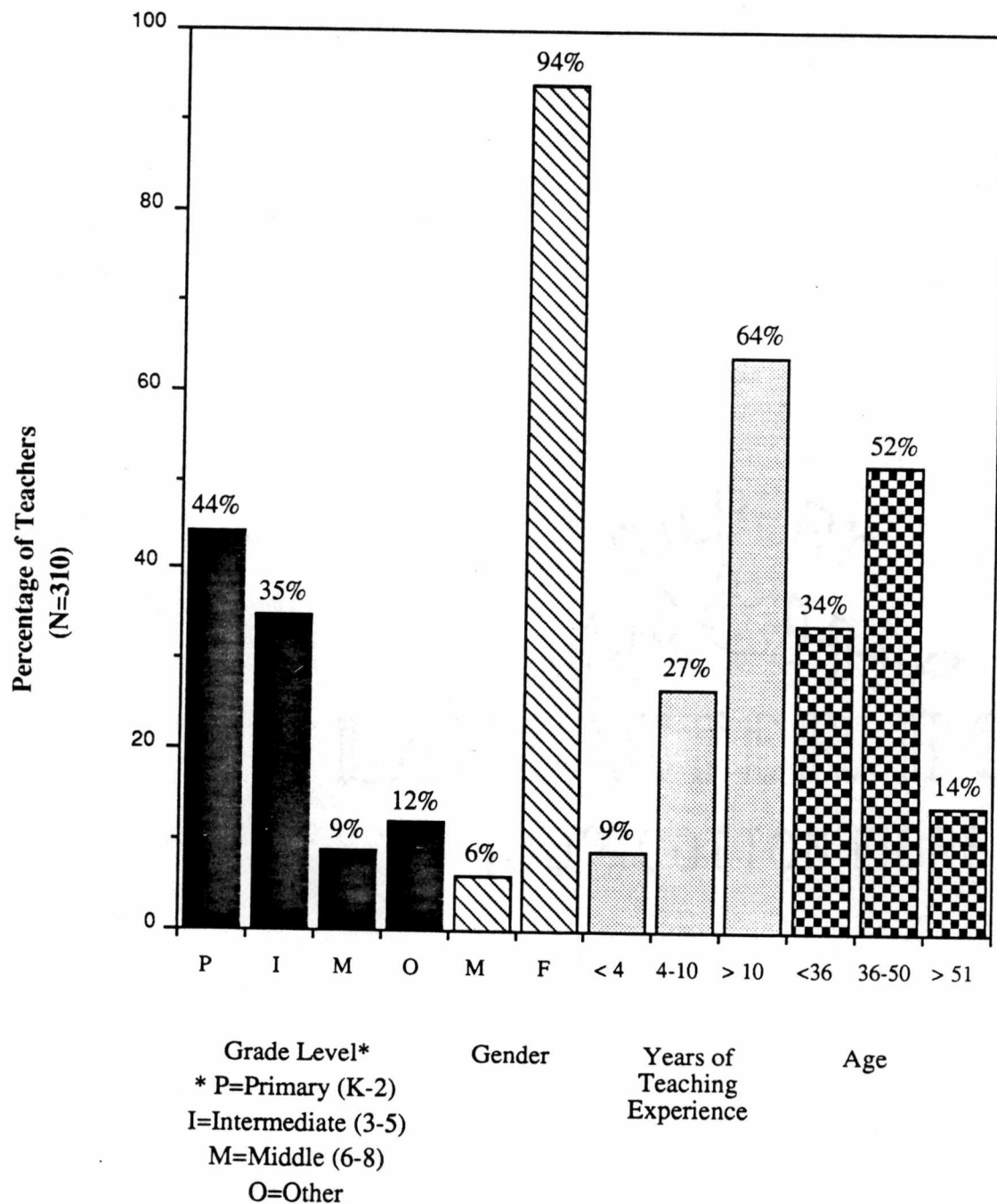


FIGURE 1

DEMOGRAPHIC VARIABLES OF CLASSROOM TEACHER RESPONDENTS

D. DATA REPORTED

Total responses to questions are given for each item on the survey instrument. When apparent differences occurred between systems, responses from individual systems were given using percentages. School systems' anonymity was protected. The numbers 1-10 were randomly assigned to designate school systems.

The initial question to teachers concerned their knowledge of a promotion-retention policy. Of the 310 who responded, 227 (73%) were aware of a written board policy related to this issue. Those who answered "no" or "unsure" totaled 83 (27%). Differences in affirmative responses from teachers of individual school systems ranged from 38% to 100%. See Figure 2.

The 227 teachers who were aware of a written policy, were asked to identify the groups who were responsible for the development of their board policy. In rank order, the following groups were listed: school administrators, classroom teachers, school board members, parents, and others (students, school psychologist, State Department guidelines). The "unsure" response was given by 83 (37%) of those who were asked to respond to that question.

Another question directed to the teachers who were knowledgeable of a policy was related to communication of the system's policy to teachers. When asked to indicate all methods used to make them aware of the policy, 160 of the teachers responded that they had received written notice, 93 indicated that their principal had given the information to them, 47 had gained their policy knowledge from another

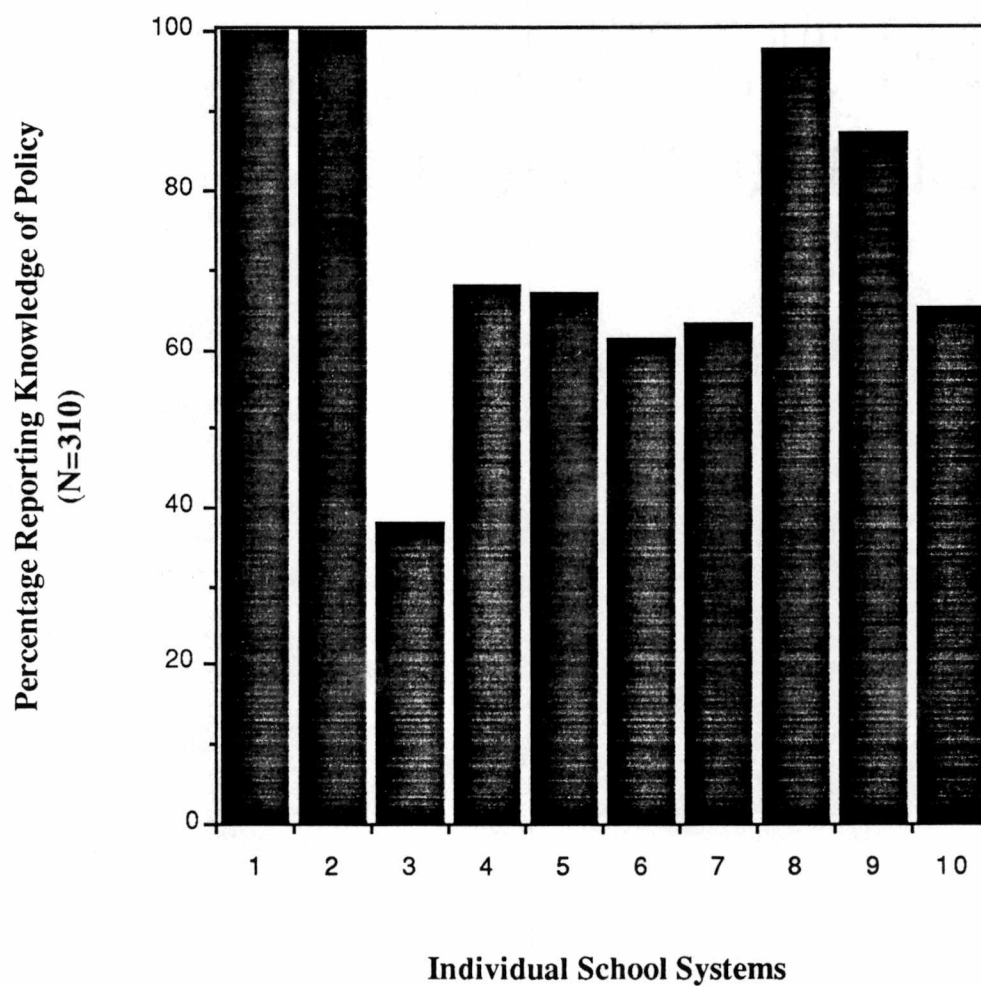


FIGURE 2

KNOWLEDGE OF PROMOTION-RETENTION POLICY BY CLASSROOM
TEACHERS IN INDIVIDUAL SCHOOL SYSTEMS

teacher, and 16 marked the "other" category. Responses most often given in the other category were the policy handbook, the supervisor, or personal inquiry.

A comparison of the philosophy of individual teachers concerning promotion and retention with the school board's policy was undertaken. Asked if their personal philosophy agreed with their school systems' board policy, 180 teachers (58%) responded "yes," 20 (6%) responded "no," 33 (11%) responded "unsure," and 77 (25%) gave no response. In each school system, a plurality of the teachers philosophically agreed with their system's local policy.

Also on the survey instrument were questions which asked for specific information about the board policy and current practices related to student promotion and retention. When asked if the policy made reference to guidelines for retention at various grade levels, 120 teachers (38%) answered "yes," 55 (18%) answered "no," 58 (19%) were "unsure," and 77 (25%) did not answer the question. Teachers were then asked to list specific guidelines which they could recall. Only 42 teachers gave a written response. All answers were correct, but no respondent gave all the guidelines listed in their local policy.

Teachers were asked specifically about the use of in-service or faculty meetings to address the promotion-retention issue. Of the 310 respondents, 155 (50%) acknowledged that they had participated in such a meeting, 142 (46%) indicated that they had not, 10 (3%) answered "unsure" and 3 teachers (1%) did not respond.

Teachers who were aware of a local board policy were also asked if the board policy was communicated to parents. Teachers answered "yes" on 158 (51%) questionnaires, "no" on 32 (10%), and "unsure" on 55 (18%). For this question, the response portion on 21% of all questionnaires (65) was left blank. See Figure 3. Teachers were then asked to identify all methods used to communicate the policy to parents. "Written notification," "oral presentation," "student," "other," and "media coverage" were the methods, listed in rank order, which were used to communicate the policy to parents. Conferences and student handbook were most commonly specified as other methods.

When asked about the practice of consulting with parents before students were retained, 295 (95%) of the teachers responded "yes" parents were consulted, 6 (2%) of them answered "no," and 9 (3%) were "unsure." All 310 teachers responded to this question.

The study also sought to discern individual teachers' opinions about promotion and retention of students. A total of 309 teachers responded to the question, "Do you believe low-achieving students receive long-term benefits from retention?" Respondents were divided in their answers. On the affirmative side, 25 (8%) of the teachers responded "yes"; and 130 (42%) said "usually yes." With negative responses, 102 (33%) of the teachers responded "usually no"; and 22 (7%) said "no." "Unsure" was the response of 31 (10%) of the teachers. See Figure 4.

A question related to professional philosophy asked teachers if the majority of teachers and the majority of administrators agree on

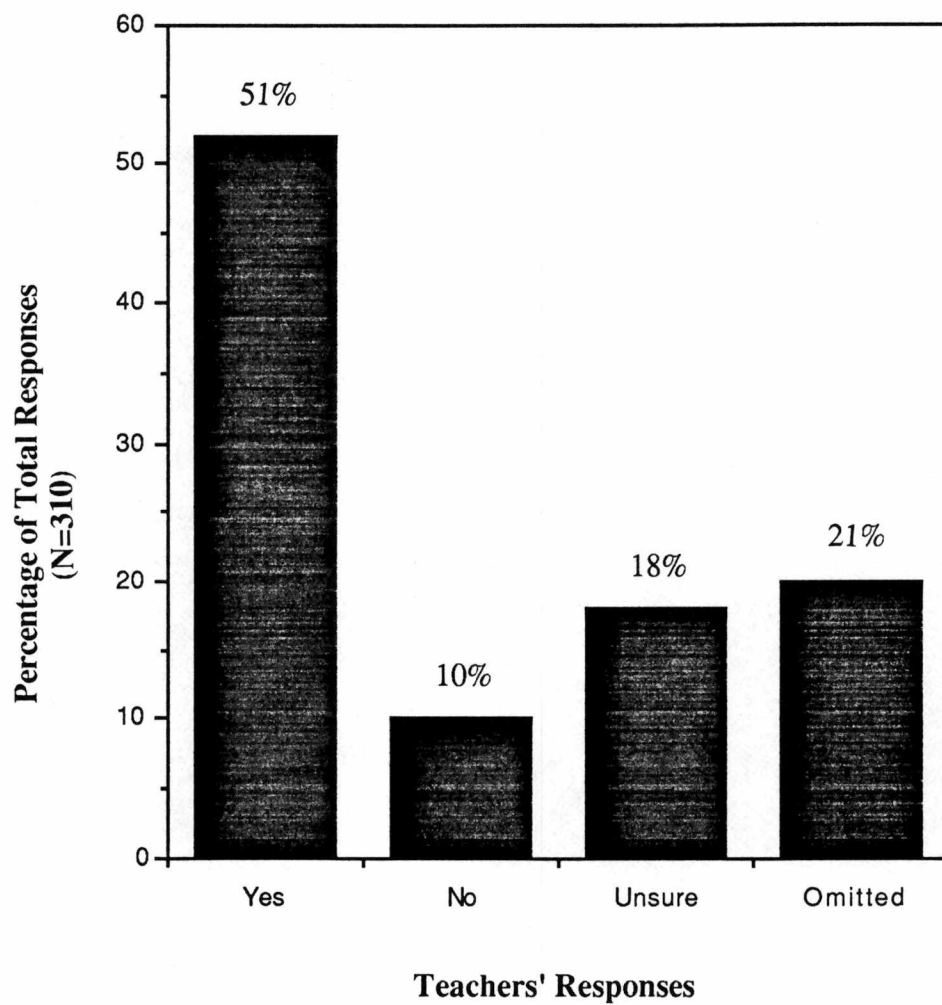


FIGURE 3

COMMUNICATION OF LOCAL BOARD POLICY TO PARENTS

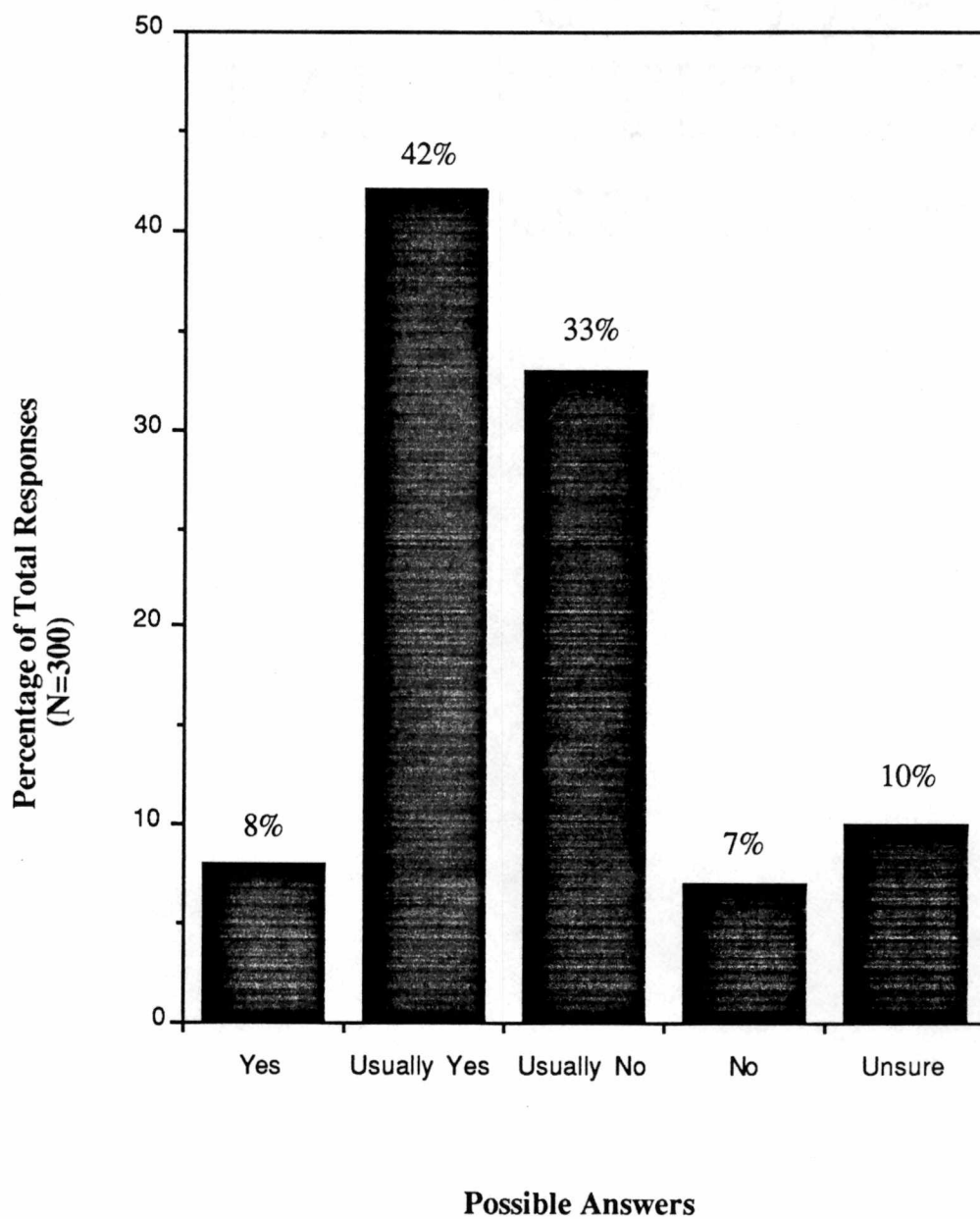


FIGURE 4

TEACHERS' RESPONSES CONCERNING THE LONG-TERM BENEFITS
OF RETENTION FOR LOW-ACHIEVING STUDENTS

the promotion-retention issue. In response to this question, 154 teachers (50%) answered "yes"; 107 (35%) were "unsure"; 44 teachers (14%) answered "no"; and 5 teachers (2%) did not respond.

Another opinion question asked teachers if promotion should depend on mastery of grade level minimum competencies? Teachers responded "yes" on 192 (62%) of the questionnaires; "no" was checked on 61 questionnaires (20%); 47 (15%) indicated "unsure"; and 10 (3%) failed to respond to the question.

Teachers were asked to indicate what criteria were used by their school system to determine retention or promotion of a student. Teachers indicated the following criteria, listed in rank order: classroom performance, attendance, standardized test scores, student behavior, and "other." Specific criteria listed as "other" included maturity, previous retentions, IEP, parent input, grade level, size, effort, and teacher opinion.

Participants were also asked for the number of promotion-retention articles they had read. The largest response, 139 (46%), came from the group of teachers who reported they had read 1-3 articles. Teachers who said they had read 4-8 articles comprised 108 (35%) of the total. More than 8 articles were reported read by 46 (15%) of the teachers. Of all teachers who completed the questionnaire, only 12 (4%) reported that they had read no articles related to student promotion and retention. Individual school systems differed in the number of articles read. The findings of individual school systems ranged from one system in which 12% of the teachers reported reading no articles to

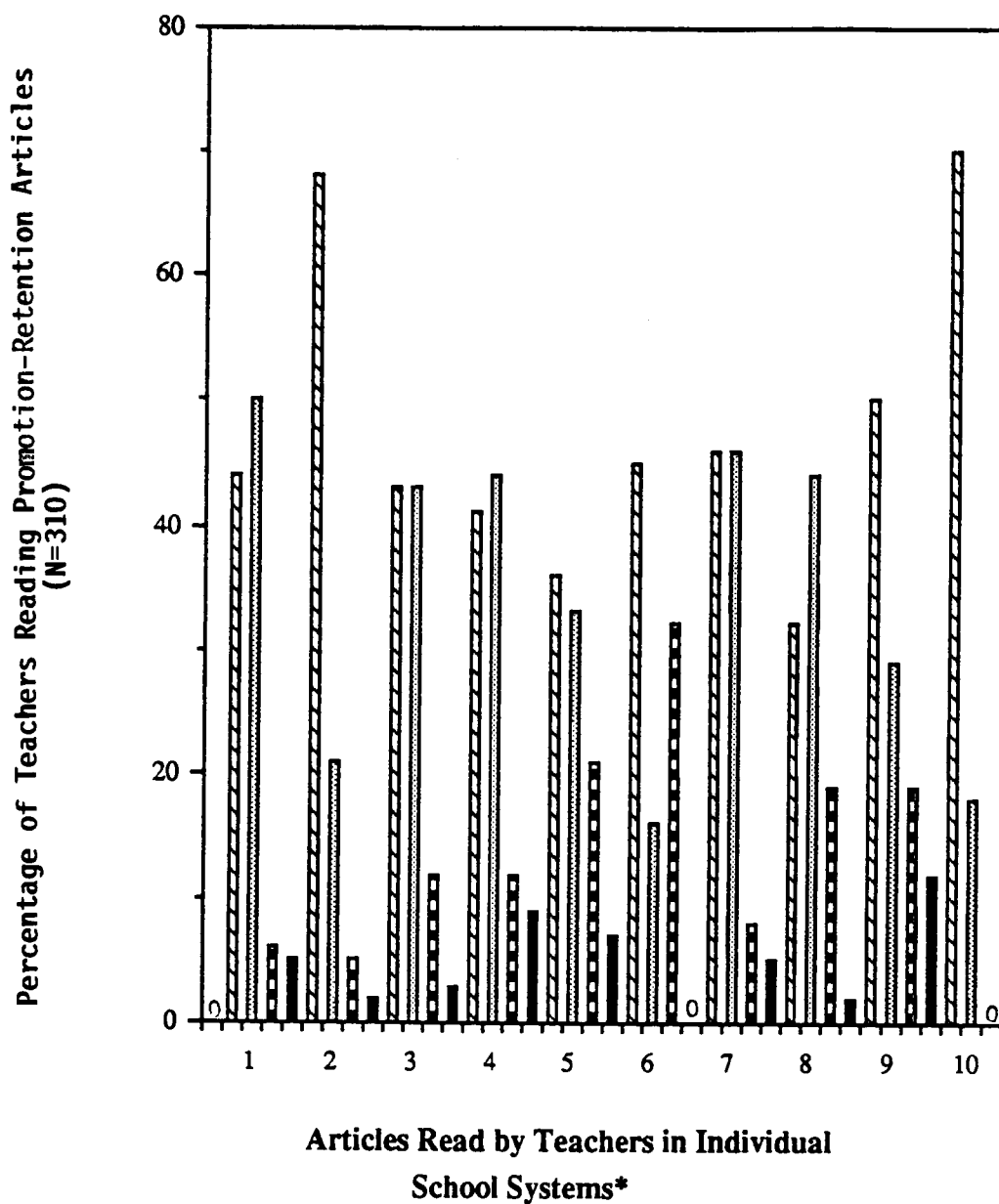
one system which had 32% of its teachers reporting more than 8 promotion-retention articles read. See Figure 5 for reported percentages of promotion-retention articles read by teachers in individual school systems.

E. CHAPTER SUMMARY

The research study solicited the responses of classroom teachers to questions concerning student promotion and retention. Demographic information given by the respondents showed the majority to be: (1) female, (2) teachers of grades K-2, (3) 36-50 years of age, and (4) teachers with more than 10 years of teaching experience.

The majority of teachers surveyed were aware of a written local school board policy regarding student promotion and retention. The majority of those who responded also reported that the local school board policy was communicated to the parents of students. Findings showed that most teachers consult with parents before a decision is made to retain their child.

Attitude questions were used to derive classroom teachers' personal opinions about student promotion and retention. The majority of respondents favored mastery of grade-level competencies before promotion to the next higher grade. Slightly more than half of the teachers believed that students usually received long-term academic benefits from grade retention. Teachers also registered their opinion that the local school board policy agreed with their personal philosophy.



* Bars represent number of articles read:
0; 1-3; 4-8; 8, respectively.

FIGURE 5

PERCENTAGES OF PROMOTION-RETENTION ARTICLES READ BY TEACHERS
IN INDIVIDUAL SCHOOL SYSTEMS

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

A. INTRODUCTION

In addition to calculating total responses to each question, an objective of this study was to identify any significant relationships which existed between teachers in certain demographic categories and their knowledge and views on the promotion-retention issue. This chapter presents and discusses both significant and nonsignificant relationships. In addition a discussion of findings is included in the second part of the chapter.

B. RELATIONSHIPS

Chi square statistical treatment was used to test for a relationship between certain items on the questionnaire and teacher's age, years of teaching experience, grade level taught, gender, or number of promotion-retention articles read. The tests showed five areas of significance. There were no significant relationships between any of the four demographic variables and knowledge of the systems' promotion-retention policy. There were also no differences among demographic groups on their professional philosophy regarding promotion and retention or on their philosophy's agreement with the local school board policy. See Table 1.

TABLE 1
RESULTS OF CHI SQUARE ANALYSIS ON PROMOTION
AND RETENTION POLICY

Item	Age	Gender	Grade Level	Years Teaching Experience	Number of Articles Read
Knowledge of Policy	.87	.26	3.62	3.22	
Professional Philosophy	2.68	3.43	6.82	6.85	14.49*
Perceived Long-Term Academic Benefits	15.92*	2.07	14.02	5.87	27.63*
Agreement on Teacher and Administrator Opinions	7.40	11.55*	11.04	8.33	
Opinion Regarding Mastery of Minimum Competencies	9.11	.67	7.79	1.39	13.84*

*Significant at .05 level.

A significant relationship was revealed between age and the perception of long-term benefits of retention for low-achieving students. See Table 2. The teachers in the youngest age category gave more positive than negative responses about the benefits of retention. The teachers in the 36-50 age group were the least positive about the benefits of retention.

The under 36 age group gave positive responses ("yes" or "usually yes") on 61% of their questionnaires. In contrast, negative responses ("no" or usually no") were given on 35% of their survey responses. The "unsure" response accounted for 4% of their answers.

A near-equal division of positive and negative responses came from the 36-50 age group. The 44% positive responses of "yes" or "usually yes" and 43% negative responses of "no" or "usually no" showed no appreciable difference in the opinions of this age group. The most notable finding from this age group was that 13% of the respondents marked "unsure" as their answer to the question concerning their beliefs about the long-term benefits of retention. This age group showed a larger proportion of "unsure" responses than any other group.

When age and promotion-retention benefits were compared, differences were noticed in the "unsure" category between the younger teachers and others. In the 50 and over age group, 12% indicated "unsure," 13% of the responses from teachers age 36-50 were in the "unsure" category, and only 4% were "unsure" in teachers under 36 years of age. See Table 3. Gender, grade level taught, or years of teaching

TABLE 2
CHI SQUARE ANALYSIS FOR TEACHERS' AGE BY
PERCEPTION OF LONG-TERM BENEFITS
OF RETENTION

Benefits	Age			Total
	<36 Years	36-50 Years	>50 Years	
Yes	9	9	6	24
Usually Yes	56	60	14	130
Usually No	32	55	14	101
No	5	15	3	23
Unsure	4	21	5	30
Total	106	160	42	308

$$\chi^2 = 15.92.$$

$$\text{c.v.}, d = .05, 8df : \chi^2 \geq 15.507.$$

TABLE 3
PERCENTAGE OF PERCEIVED BENEFITS OF
RETENTION BY AGE GROUP

Benefits	<36	36-50	>50
Yes	8%	6%	14%
Usually Yes	53%	38%	34%
Usually No	30%	34%	33%
No	5%	9%	7%
Unsure	4%	13%	12%

Total	100%	100%	100%

experience were not found to be significant when tested against the respondents' opinions of the long-term benefits of retention.

A significant relationship was also determined when the factor of gender was measured in relation to responses concerning philosophical agreement of teachers and administrators on the promotion-retention question. See Table 4. Females were more likely to state that there was agreement in philosophy between teachers and administrators. The comparatively small number of males who participated in the study may have influenced the results of this test. Only 20 (6%) of the respondents were males and 285 (94%) respondents were females. No significance was found when other demographic features were tested in relation to responses concerning philosophical agreement of teachers and administrators on the promotion-retention question.

The number of promotion-retention articles read by individual teachers showed a significant relationship with three items: (1) agreement of the local board policy with teachers' philosophy, (2) perception of long-term benefits of retention, and (3) opinion that promotion should be contingent on master of grade-level competencies. See Table 5 for the chi square analysis related to the number of articles read and the teachers' agreement with local school board policy. The more articles read by the teacher, the less likely the teacher was to respond with "unsure." Only 3% of teachers who read more than 8 articles answered "unsure"; while 15% who read 4-8 articles, 15% who read 1-3 articles, and 36% who had read no articles answered "unsure." The additional reading may have caused the teacher

TABLE 4
CHI SQUARE ANALYSIS FOR TEACHERS' GENDER BY OPINION
OF PHILOSOPHICAL AGREEMENT ON RETENTION
OF TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS

Agreement	Gender		Total
	Male	Female	
Yes	8	146	154
No	8	36	44
Unsure	4	103	107
Total	20	285	305

$$\chi^2 = 11.57.$$

$$\text{c.v.}, d = .05, 2df : \chi^2 \geq 5.991.$$

TABLE 5
CHI SQUARE ANALYSIS FOR NUMBER OF PROMOTION-RETENTION
ARTICLES READ BY AGREEMENT OF PERSONAL
PHILOSOPHY WITH LOCAL BOARD POLICY

Agreement	Number of Articles Read				Total
	0	1-3	4-8	>8	
Yes	6	83	60	30	179
No	1	4	12	3	20
Unsure	4	15	13	1	33
Total	11	102	85	34	232

$$\chi^2 = 14.495.$$

$$\text{c.v.}, d = .05, 6df : \chi^2 \geq 12.592.$$

to develop a definite opinion about his/her professional philosophy and whether it was in agreement with the local policy. See Table 6 for percentage comparisons. Only 232 of the 310 (75%) teachers had responded to this question. The research participants were instructed to skip the question if they were unaware of a local written policy on promotion and retention. If teachers were not knowledgeable of a policy, it was deemed impossible for them to be able to state whether that policy agreed with their professional philosophy.

No definite pattern emerged between number of articles read and agreement of the individual teacher's philosophy with the local board policy. When reviewing the results, the following data were noted for the various categories: "no articles," 55% agreement; "1-3 articles," 81% agreement; "4-8" articles, 71% agreement; and "over 8 articles," 88% agreement. See Table 6.

Also noteworthy was the fact that only 4% of the respondents reported reading no articles. This would lead one to believe that the majority of teachers attempt to keep updated by reading professional articles or that teachers were embarrassed to report failure to read professional journals. See Table 7.

Table 8 displays the chi square analysis of the relationship of promotion-retention articles read and the perception of the long-term benefits of retention. Of those who read any articles related to promotion and retention, the teachers who had read more than 8 articles gave the most negative responses (53%) when asked if students benefited from grade retention. This calculation was based on the addition of

TABLE 6
PERCENTAGE OF AGREEMENT OF TEACHERS' PHILOSOPHY
WITH LOCAL SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS BY
NUMBER OF ARTICLES READ

Agreement	Number of Articles Read				Total
	0	1-3	4-8	>8	
Yes	55%	81%	71%	88%	77%
No	9%	4%	14%	9%	9%
Unsure	36%	15%	15%	3%	14%

TABLE 7
NUMBER OF PROMOTION-RETENTION ARTICLES READ

Number of Articles Read	Totals	
	Frequency	Percentage
0	13	4.2
1-3	140	45.3
4-8	109	35.3
>8	47	15.2
Total	309	100.0

TABLE 8
CHI SQUARE ANALYSIS FOR NUMBER OF PROMOTION-
RETENTION ARTICLES READ BY PERCEPTION
OF BENEFITS OF RETENTION

Benefits	Number of Articles Read				Total
	0	1-3	4-8	>8	
Yes	1	8	13	2	24
Usually Yes	3	72	38	16	129
Usually No	5	41	39	16	101
No	3	6	5	9	23
Unsure	1	13	13	4	31

Total	13	140	108	47	308

$$\chi^2 = 27.636.$$

$$\text{c.v.}, d = .05, 12df : \chi^2 \geq 21.026.$$

"no" and "usually no" responses. See Table 9 for the percentage of responses of various groups.

When examining only those groups which reported reading any promotion-retention articles, a definite trend was noticeable. As respondents reported reading more articles, they were less positive about the long-term benefits of retention. The group of respondents who read "1-3 articles" reported 57% positive responses; the "4-8 articles" group, 47% positive; and the "over 8 articles" group reported 38% positive responses.

The groups of teachers who reported reading no articles were similar to the "over 8 articles" group in their responses. Negative responses were given by 61% of those who reported reading no articles. It is also important to note that only 13 of the 310 teachers comprised the "no articles read" group.

A third significant measure involving articles read was the relationship between articles read and the personal opinion that promotion should be contingent on mastery of grade level competencies. Regardless of the number of articles read, the majority of teachers reported the need for students to master certain competencies. The group which read the most articles had the least percentage of responses in the "unsure" category. See Table 10 for chi square analysis.

TABLE 9
PERCENTAGE OF PERCEIVED BENEFITS OF
RETENTION BY NUMBER OF PROMOTION-
RETENTION ARTICLES READ

Benefits	Number of Articles Read			
	0	1-3	4-8	>8
Yes	8%	6%	12%	4%
Usually Yes	23%	52%	35%	34%

Total Yes and Usually Yes	31%	58%	47%	38%

Usually No	38%	29%	36%	34%
No	23%	4%	5%	19%

Total Usually No and No	61%	33%	41%	53%

Unsure	8%	9%	12%	9%

TABLE 10

CHI SQUARE ANALYSIS FOR NUMBER OF PROMOTION-
RETENTION ARTICLES READ BY ATTITUDE OF
TEACHERS TOWARD PROMOTION BASED ON
MASTERY OF MINIMUM COMPETENCIES

Attitudes	Number of Articles Read				Total
	0	1-3	4-8	>8	
Yes	6	94	63	28	191
No	4	23	19	15	61
Unsure	3	17	24	3	47
Total	13	134	106	46	299

$$\chi^2 = 13.848.$$

$$\text{c.v.}, d = .05, 6df : \chi^2 \geq 12.592.$$

C. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

The timing of the study corresponded to the last month of the school year. During this time, teachers were probably most concerned with the promotion-retention issue. Classroom teachers were required to make an end-of-the-year decision about each student's promotion or retention. It is very unlikely that any new faculty members were added to the staff during the last month of school. Any teachers who completed the research questions were probably not complete novices about board policies. It is also likely that school principals had recently discussed elements of the board policy with faculty members. If teachers had not been informed of the local policy, then teachers were likely to have made individual inquiries during this time when promotion-retention decisions were being considered.

A review of the responses to the questionnaire revealed a large difference in the awareness among teachers of the existence of a local board policy on retention and promotion. Since just over one-fourth of all respondents indicated that they were unaware of a policy, this is evidence that some of the ten school systems were ineffective in communicating that board policy to all classroom teachers. (See Table 11.)

It is also of interest to note that classroom teachers believed that more input in the development of the board policy came from administrators than teachers. If teachers were correct in their perceptions concerning who developed the policy, then school administrators had the task of convincing classroom teachers of the

TABLE 11
 COMMUNICATION OF LOCAL SCHOOL BOARD POLICY
 ON STUDENT PROMOTION AND RETENTION
 TO CLASSROOM TEACHERS

Item	Teacher Responses			
	Yes	No	Unsure	None
Knowledge of Policy	73%	27%		
Participation in training session on promotion and retention	50%	40%	3%	1%
Method of Communication*				
Written notice	71%			
Principal	41%			
Another teacher	21%			
Other	7%			

*Teachers responded with all methods applicable to them.

value of the policy that the teachers would be responsible for implementing. Also of concern was the finding that 19% of the respondents were unsure who was responsible for developing the policy. That response implies that 19% of the teachers had no input into the policy development either via fellow teachers or building level administrators.

Of those teachers who were knowledgeable of a policy, a majority responded that they had learned of the policy by written notification. That, plus a verbal explanation, appeared to be the most often-used methods of communication. (See Table 11.) Legal consultants have noted the importance of adding verbal explanation to written notification in order to assure an understanding rather than just a knowledge of the existence of written policies.

More than two-thirds of the respondents stated that their local school board's policy was in agreement with their professional philosophy. This was seen as very important by the researcher since enthusiastic implementation depends on personal agreement with the policy.

One question on the research instrument was intended to check content accuracy concerning the teachers' knowledge of the local policy. Research participants were asked if their local board policy had guidelines for retention at various grade levels. The board policies of all ten school systems made reference to various grade levels in their guidelines. In analyzing the data, it is necessary to note that only those who responded yes to the existence of a written

policy (227) were instructed to answer the guidelines questions. However, a total of 233 teachers answered the questions. Of those 233 teachers, 120 (52%) answered that there are guidelines for various grade levels. When asked to list those specific guidelines, 78 of those 120 (65%) left that area blank.

Teachers' responses indicated an effort to communicate with parents on the promotion-retention issue. A total of 158 respondents (65%) reported that parents are informed of the local board policy. In addition, 295 teachers (95%) acknowledged that parents are consulted before a final decision to retain a student is made. These responses suggest that efforts have been made by the school to foster school-home cooperation.

When asked their opinion on the long-term benefits of retention for the low-achieving student, there was a 154-124 split with 154 responses (55%) being affirmative and 124 (45%) registering negative benefits. This is in keeping with the premise of several journal articles. Some authors laud the merits of competency-based education programs. Conversely, no experimental research has concluded that retention for the student is advantageous.

Just over one-half (51%) of the teachers reported participating in any formal meetings which dealt with the promotion-retention issue. This finding may help explain why more than one-fourth (27%) of the teachers surveyed were unaware of a local board policy on promotion and retention. The fact that 3% of the teachers were "unsure" about whether they participated in any such session would cause one to

question the attentiveness of that group of teachers during formal presentations. (See Table 11.)

Student's attendance was second on the list of criteria used to determine promotion or retention. That factor was listed on 225 questionnaires. State guidelines specify that attendance should be a deciding factor only when excessive absences cause an educational problem.

Age was determined to be significantly related to teachers' perceptions of the long-term benefits of grade retention. Teachers were most positive about their responses in the youngest age groups and more "unsure" after they became older. Possibly teachers began their careers with definite opinions on the promotion and retention issue, and then by mid-career years they questioned their opinions because of a variety of teaching experiences.

Teachers who read the greatest number of articles on promotion and retention were the least positive about the long-term benefits of retention for low-achieving students. This would lead one to believe that many journal articles refute the benefits of grade retention. It could also be speculated that teachers were receptive to research findings and authors' opinions presented in professional journals. Teachers apparently evaluated the content of the promotion-retention articles and determined that retention does not have long-lasting positive effects.

A number of factors may have influenced the teachers' responses to the question concerning performance of minimum competencies. Laws

passed by state legislatures have emphasized the demand for quality public education. The word accountability has become an important word in the professional vocabulary of educators. Teachers feel the need for quality control (minimum competencies) in the products (educated students) they produce. Public attention on the success and/or failure of individual schools and systems has made individual teachers conscious of their responsibility of providing an adequate education for those assigned to the teacher's classroom. Teachers may view the success of their students as a measure of their professional success.

Increased outcries from business and industry leaders may have influenced teachers' attitudes toward the need for promotion based on achievement of minimum competencies. Often educators acknowledge a need for students to meet minimum competencies before attempting to advance in their educational pursuits.

D. CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter presented the five significant relationships determined to exist between teachers in certain demographic categories and their knowledge and opinions concerning the promotion-retention issue. Age, gender, and number of professional articles read were all found to be significant when tested against certain philosophy and personal opinion questions.

The second part of this chapter was comprised of a discussion of responses to individual survey questions and the significant relationships. Time of school year when the questionnaire was administered was

thought to be an influencing factor in teacher responses. A major concern for discussion was the fact that over one-fourth of all respondents reported that they were unaware of a written local board policy on student promotion and retention. Less than one-half of that number listed any specific guidelines of their local policy. While these two findings regarding teacher awareness were major areas of concern, this chapter included a general discussion of all responses given by classroom teachers.

Teachers responded that they believed that teachers had less input than school administrators in the development of their system's promotion-retention policy. The method most often used to inform teachers of the established policy was written notification. The majority of respondents stated that the local promotion-retention policy was in agreement with their personal philosophy. When asked, few teachers listed any specific guidelines of their local promotion retention policy.

Teachers reported efforts to communicate with students' parents. According to the responses given on the questionnaire, most teachers believed that the local board policy on promotion and retention was shared with parents. Teachers also reported that parents were consulted before a decision was made to retain a student.

Teachers responded with a near-equal split on the long-term positive and negative effects of retention. Just over one-half of the respondents reported involvement in any formal meeting which dealt with the promotion-retention issue.

The discussion of significant relationships recognized the influence of legislators and business and industry leaders in molding teachers' attitudes toward minimum levels of student academic performance. The number of promotion and retention articles read by teachers was also shown to have a significant influence on teachers' opinions about the professional philosophy of retention and the necessity of students meeting minimum academic competencies.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. SUMMARY

A survey of faculty members at two schools in each of ten school systems in eastern Tennessee produced noteworthy findings on classroom teachers' knowledge and opinions related to the issue of student promotion and retention. The study was conducted only in small-size school systems to test their effectiveness in communicating local board policies to classroom teachers. The researcher held the premise that board policies must be explained to classroom teachers if the teachers are effectively to implement the specifics of any policy.

Examination of teachers' responses given on the questionnaires revealed a number of differences among individual teachers and differences when comparing school systems. A summary of survey responses is given below:

1. The majority of classroom teachers were aware of a local board policy concerning student promotion and retention, but 27% of those surveyed were not aware of such a policy.

2. In one system, few teachers knew of the existence of the policy; while in two other systems, all teachers had knowledge of the policy.

3. Teachers held that school administrators had greater involvement in developing the local system's promotion-retention policy than any other school or parent group.

4. The method most often identified for communicating the policy to teachers was written notification.

5. Of those teachers who were aware of a local board policy on promotion and retention, the majority stated that the local policy agreed with their professional philosophy.

6. Respondents were rarely able to list specific grade-level guidelines which were addressed by the policy.

7. The majority of parents were informed of the local school system's promotion-retention policy. However, there was no consistency among the ten school systems in regard to informing parents of the policy.

8. Teachers reported a near-equal split on the negative and positive effects of retention. A slight majority registered positive long-term benefits of retention for low-achieving students.

9. Just over one-half of the respondents reported attending a formal session addressing the promotion-retention issue.

10. The majority of teachers reported that parents were contacted before a final decision was made to retain their child.

11. The majority of the teachers reported that promotion should be contingent on performance of minimum grade-level competencies.

12. Given in rank order are criteria used by the school systems to determine student promotion or retention were: classroom performance,

student attendance, standardized test scores, student behavior, and "other."

Five significant relationships were determined when demographic features were tested against various survey questions.

1. Age was a significant factor when compared to perceived benefits of retention. The middle age group of teachers was most negative about the benefits of retention. The younger teachers were more strongly in favor of retention. This same group of younger teachers were also more certain about their responses; while the two older groups had a larger, near-equal percentage of teachers who were "unsure" of the benefits of retention.

2. Females were more likely than males to state that there was agreement in philosophy on promotion and retention between teachers and administrators.

3. The more promotion-retention articles read, the less likely the teacher was to be unsure about the agreement between his/her philosophy and that expressed in the local board policy.

4. The number of articles read and the perceived benefits of retention were shown to have a significant relationship. The two extremes of the scale (those reading "no articles" and those reading "more the 8 articles") had the greatest similarities in their responses. Both groups were more negative about the benefits of retention. The middle two groups (those reading "1-3 articles" and those reading "4-8 articles") were more positive than negative about the benefits of retention. An examination of the responses of only

those teachers who reported reading any promotion-retention articles showed a definite trend. The more articles read, the more negative the responses were concerning retention benefits.

5. The opinion that promotion should be contingent on the mastery of minimum competencies was significant when compared to the number of promotion-retention articles read. Those teachers who had read more than 8 articles were most certain about their opinions.

B. CONCLUSIONS

The Tennessee State Department of Education officials required a written statement defining each school system's policy on promotion and retention. Administrators complied with the state regulation, but many administrators had been ineffective in communicating that policy to classroom teachers. In the ten school system surveyed, there was a lack of consistency in communicating the policy even though the systems were similar in size.

The major implementers (teachers) of the promotion-retention policy were not significantly involved in the policy development or the communication of the policy to fellow teachers.

Teachers perceived their local school board policy on promotion and retention to be representative of the philosophy of their system's teachers. While teachers reported limited involvement in developing a local policy, they did believe the majority of teachers agreed with the provisions of that policy. Personal agreement should result in more enthusiastic implementation.

Those teachers who were aware of a written local school board policy on student promotion and retention were not able to list specific guidelines of that policy. Their basic awareness of the policy was not sufficient to indicate an in-depth understanding of the provisions of that policy.

Classroom teachers were cognizant of the value of parental input in placement decisions concerning individual students. The involvement of parents by teachers denoted an effort to foster positive school-home relationships.

Faculty meetings and in-service programs were not used effectively in addressing the promotion-retention issue.

It can be concluded that teachers were influenced by professional articles on promotion and retention. Their opinions, after additional reading, indicated their willingness to be persuaded by research findings and opinions of professional educators.

Teachers' opinions concerning (1) the long-term benefits of retention and (2) promotion based on the performance of minimum competencies could influence the number of students who are retained. The classroom teachers could comply with their local board policy and at the same time, increase the number of students being retained.

Teachers rely more on year-long performance by students than performance on one test instrument. It can also be concluded that local school system administrators do not emphasize the use of scores from achievement tests or basic skills tests in making a final decision about student promotion or retention.

While the various age groups responded differently concerning the benefits of retention, the researcher concluded that the differences could be due to other influencing factors and not just age categories. Since this study was not a longitudinal study which measured changes within individuals over time, it is impossible to conclude that teachers move through a cycle of promotion-retention beliefs which change with age.

C. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Effective communication between administrators and classroom teachers is essential if teachers are to implement policies. A planned system for communication should be established in school systems currently lacking such a plan. The communication system should place more emphasis on multiple means of sharing information with employees.

2. A written notice of any mandated policies should be given to all employees who are involved in their implementation. An oral discussion between administrators and teachers should be held in order to ensure adequate understanding of the written document. Building level administrators should give particular attention to new staff members throughout the year in order to ensure their awareness of pertinent board policies. Visual reminders and appropriate discussions at staff meetings are recommended throughout the year in order to ensure a timely compliance with policy guidelines.

3. The differences in responses of teachers on their awareness of this policy would lead the researcher to recommend that school systems

survey their teachers on their knowledge of promotion and retention as well as various other board policies. School systems might use the research questionnaire from this study as a prototype for surveying their teachers.

4. It is also recommended that school system administrators solicit input from classroom teachers when establishing system-wide policies which will affect their work.

5. Inservice training sessions are recommended as one appropriate time for addressing promotion and retention. This recommendation includes communicating the policy and presenting research findings and information about experimental programs related to this issue. It is further recommended that any session incorporate active participation and feedback by those attending in order to facilitate assimilation of the information.

6. Since reading journal articles was determined to be a factor which had great effect on teachers' attitudes about promotion and retention, it is recommended that established researchers write more articles on this issue. In addition, it is recommended that publishers of professional journals give more attention and space to this issue. Journals of professional organizations are a target for this recommendation since many individuals have easy access to these publications. Future researchers might also poll teachers on the names of journals that they regularly read. This information would influence which publishers were then encouraged to include promotion-retention articles in their journals.

7. In order to provide access to professional articles on to subject of promotion and retention, it is suggested that copies of journal articles on this subject be distributed to classroom teachers throughout the school system. The supervisor of education is recommended as the person in the school system who would be responsible for dissemination of the articles.

8. Teacher responses indicated a difference in the opinions of older teachers. For this reason, a longitudinal study of teacher attitudes concerning promotion and retention of students is recommended. This research study could be conducted over a five or ten-year period for the purpose of examining any changes in personal philosophy that might occur over several years. The recommended population for this study is graduates of teacher preparation programs who actually enter the teaching profession.

9. Educators are currently required to make an annual decision on students' promotion or retention; and, in addition, they find themselves in a day-to-day demand for adequate communication. For these reasons, it is recommended that the issues of promotion-retention and communication should also be included in teacher-preparation and administrator-preparation programs.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abidin, R., Galladay, W., & Howerton, A. (1971). Elementary school retention: An unjustifiable discriminatory and noxious educational policy. Journal of School Psychology, 9, 410-414.
- American school boards: The positive power (symposium). (1987). American School Board Journal, 174, supplement 31, 1-27.
- Bishop, H. & Essex, N. (1986). Better leadership through effective communication of board policies, procedures. NASSP Bulletin, 70, 41-44.
- Bredson, Paul V. (1988). Communications as a measure of leadership in schools: A portraiture of school principals. The High School Journal, 7, 178-186.
- Carstens, A. A. (1985). Retention and social promotion for the exceptional child. School Psychology Review, 14, 48-63.
- Cates, J. N. & Ash, P. (1983). The end of a commonsense approach to basics. Phi Delta Kappan, 65, 137-138.
- Cooke, F. & Stammer, J. (1985). Grade retention and social promotion practices. Childhood Education, 61, 302-308.
- Cunningham, L.L. (1985). Leaders and leadership: 1985 and beyond. Kappan, 67, 17-20.
- Dobbs, V. & Nevelle, D. (1967). The effects of nonpromotion on the achievement of groups matched from retained first graders and promoted second graders. The Journal of Educational Research.
- Elligett, J. K. & Tocco, T. S. (1983). The promotion/retention policy in Pinellas County, Florida. Phi Delta Kappan, 64, 733-735.
- Finlayson, H. J. (1977). Nonpromotion and self-concept development. Phi Delta Kappan, 59, 205-206.
- Fox, D. J. (1969). The research process in education, New York, New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, Inc.
- Gallup, G. H. (1983). The fifteenth annual Gallup poll on the public's attitude toward the public schools. Phi Delta Kappan, 65, 33-47.

- Hall, F. and Wallace, S. (1986). Promotion vs. retention: What are the implications for policy development? NASSP Bulletin, 70, 72-77.
- Hogue, J. (1987). Focus on communication strengths. NASSP Bulletin, 71, 56-60.
- Holmes, C. T. & Matthews, K. (1984). The effects of non-promotion on elementary and junior high pupils: A meta analysis. Review of Educational Research, 54, 225-236.
- Hunter, Brother E. (1986). Schools face crisis issues--time for leadership. NASSP Bulletin, 70, 109-112.
- The Institute for Educational Leadership. (1987). What makes an effective school board? Education Digest, 52, 6-10.
- Jackson, G. B. (1975). The research evidence on the effects of grade retention. Review of Educational Research, 45, 613-35.
- Johnson, J. R. (1984). Synthesis of Research on grade retention and social promotion. Educational Leadership, 41, 66-68.
- Jwaideh, A. R. (1984). What can the principal do? Educational Review, 63, 11-15.
- Kersting, R. (1984). Administrative jargon as a barrier to effective communication. NASSP Bulletin, 68, 97-99.
- Labaree, D. F. (1984). Setting the standard: Alternative policies for student promotion. Harvard Educational Review, 54, 67-87.
- Lieberman, L. (1980). A decision-making model for in-grade retention (nonpromotion). Journal of Learning Disabilities, 13, 40-44.
- Light, H. W. (1977). "Light's retention scale and recording form." ERIC Document No. ED 191895.
- McClements, R. J., Taylor, C. M. & Schmidit, C. K. (1987). How to streamline policy development. American School Board Journal, 174, 40-41.
- McEvoy, B. (1987). Everyday acts: How principals influence development of their staffs. Educational Leadership, 44, 73-77.
- Medway, F. J. (1985). To promote or not to promote? Principal, 64, 22-25.

- Norton, M. S. (1983). It's time to get tough on student promotion--or is it? Contemporary Education, 54, 283-286.
- Overman, M. (1986). Student promotion and retention. Phi Delta Kappan, 67, 609-613.
- Owen, S.A. & Ranick, D. L. (1977). The Greensville program: A commonsense approach to basics. Phi Delta Kappan, 58, 531-533, 539.
- Riffell, J. A. & Switzer, M. (1986). Student promotion and retention towards a model policy. Education Canada, 26, 4-8.
- Rose, J. S., Medway, F. J., Cantrell, V.L., & Marus, S. H. (1983). A fresh look at the retention-promotion controversy. Journal of School Psychology, 21, 201-211.
- Rules, Regulations, and Minimum Standards, Tennessee Department of Education. (1986). Nashville, Tennessee.
- Russell, Robert V. (1982). The disparity of information between administrators and teachers. Education, 102, 354-358.
- Sandoval, J. & Hughes, G. (1981). Success in nonpromoted first grade children. Final report. California University at Davis epartment of Education (ERIC Document Reproduction Service No. ED 212 237).
- Schmuck, R. A. & Miles, M. (Eds.) (1971). Organization Development in Schools. Pala Alton, California: National Press Books.
- Sherlin, J. (1989). Speech at teacher in-service meeting, Sweetwater, Tennessee.
- St. John, W. (1983). How to plan an effective school communications program. NASSP Bulletin, 21-27.
- Stroup, S. W. & Zirkel, P. A. (1983). A legal look at the retention-promotion controversy. Journal of School Psychology, 21, 213-217.
- Taylor, R. (1984). Assessing the strengths of communication channels using sociographic techniques. Education, 104, 300-304.
- Tennessee Code Annotated. (1983)
- Tennessee Code Annotated. (1989)
- Tennessee State Department of Education. (1986, April). Promotion and retention policy. Nashville, Tennessee.

Thompson, M. (1979). Social promotion: Going, going, . . . gone? Education Digest, 44, 11-13.

Toch T. (1984). The dark side of the excellence movement. Phi Delta Kappan, 66, 173-176.

Walker, N. W. (1984). Elementary school grade retention: Avoiding abuses through systematic decision-making. Journal of Research and Development in Education, 18, 1-6.

White, K. & Howard, J. (1973). Failure to be promoted and self-concept among elementary school students. Elementary School Guidance and Counseling, 7, 182-187.

Zirkel, P. A. & Gluckman, I. B. (1982). Holding students back. Principal, 61, 56-57.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

ORIGINAL RESEARCH INSTRUMENT

RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

As a classroom teacher, you are asked to complete the following questionnaire regarding your knowledge, attitudes, and practices concerning promotion and retention of students. Please answer each of the following questions by putting a check mark by your response. Be assured that your anonymity will be protected when reporting findings. While your participation is urgently solicited, it is entirely voluntary; return of the questionnaire will be considered your informed consent to participate.

1. Does your school system have a written policy concerning student promotion and retention?

☐ 1. Yes
☐ 2. No
☐ 3. Unsure

If no, go to question 7.

2. Who was responsible for developing the policy? (check all that apply)

☐ 1. Classroom teachers
☐ 2. School board members
☐ 3. School administrators
☐ 4. Parents
☐ 5. Others, please specify _____
☐ 6. Unsure

3. How were you made aware of the school system's policy? (check all that apply)

☐ 1. Written notice
☐ 2. Oral presentation by the principal
☐ 3. Information from another teacher
☐ 4. Others, please specify _____

4. Does the policy agree with your professional philosophy?

☐ 1. Yes
☐ 2. No
☐ 3. Unsure

5. Does the policy make reference to guidelines for retention at various grade levels?

_____ 1. Yes
_____ 2. No
_____ 3. Unsure

If yes, please list as many guidelines as you can recall:

6. Are parents informed of the system's retention-promotion policy?

_____ 1. Yes
_____ 2. No
_____ 3. Unsure

If yes, what method(s) is used? (check all that apply)

_____ 1. Written notification
_____ 2. Student
_____ 3. Oral presentation
_____ 4. Media coverage
_____ 5. Other, please specify _____

7. Do you believe that low achieving students receive long-term academic benefits from retention?

_____ 1. Yes
_____ 2. No
_____ 3. Unsure

8. Do the majority of teachers and the majority of administrators in your system agree in philosophy on the question of promotion or retention?

_____ 1. Yes
_____ 2. No
_____ 3. Unsure

9. Have you participated in an inservice training session or a faculty meeting where the promotion-retention issue was addressed?

_____ 1. Yes
_____ 2. No
_____ 3. Unsure

10. After the teacher recommends retention for a student, are parents consulted before a final decision is made to retain a student?

☐ 1. Yes
☐ 2. No
☐ 3. Unsure

11. Should student promotion be contingent on his mastery of grade level minimum competencies?

☐ 1. Yes
☐ 2. No
☐ 3. Unsure

12. Check the criteria which are used to determine retention or promotion:

☐ 1. Standardized test scores
☐ 2. Classroom performance
☐ 3. Student behavior
☐ 4. Student attendance
☐ 5. Other, please specify _____

Please complete the following demographic information:

1. Grade(s) taught _____
2. Number of years of teaching experience less than 4 _____
4-10 _____, over 10 _____
3. Gender: Male _____ Female _____
4. Age: less than 36 _____, 36-50 _____, 51 or older _____
5. Number of students you retained last year _____
6. Number of articles related to promotion-retention which you have read in the last 5 years: None _____, 1-3 _____, 4-8 _____, over 8 _____

APPENDIX B

REVISED RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

As a classroom teacher, please complete the following questionnaire regarding your knowledge and attitudes, concerning promotion and retention of students. Please answer each of the following questions by putting a check mark by your response. Be assured that your anonymity will be protected when reporting findings. While your participation is urgently solicited, it is entirely voluntary; return of the questionnaire will be considered your informed consent to participate.

- (1) 1. Does your school system have a written policy concerning student promotion and retention?
_____ 1. Yes
_____ 2. No
_____ 3. Unsure
If no or unsure, go to question 7.
2. Who was involved in developing the policy? (check all that apply)
- (2) _____ 1. Classroom teachers
(3) _____ 2. School board members
(4) _____ 3. School administrators
(5) _____ 4. Parents
(6) _____ 5. Others, please specify _____
(7) _____ 6. Unsure
3. How were you made aware of the school system's policy? (check all that apply)
- (8) _____ 1. Written notice
(9) _____ 2. Oral presentation by the principal
(10) _____ 3. Information from another teacher
(11) _____ 4. Others, please specify _____
- (12) 4. Does the policy agree with your professional philosophy?
_____ 1. Yes
_____ 2. No
_____ 3. Unsure
- (13) 5. Does the policy make reference to guidelines for retention at various grade levels?
_____ 1. Yes
_____ 2. No
_____ 3. Unsure
If yes, please list as many guidelines as you can recall:
- (14) 6. Are parents informed of the system's retention-promotion policy?
_____ 1. Yes
_____ 2. No
_____ 3. Unsure
If yes, what method(s) is used? (check all that apply)
- (15) _____ 1. Written notification
(16) _____ 2. Student
(17) _____ 3. Oral presentation
(18) _____ 4. Media coverage
(19) _____ 5. Other, please specify _____
- (20) 7. Do you believe that low achieving students receive long-term academic benefits from retention?
_____ 1. Yes
_____ 2. Usually yes
_____ 3. Usually no
_____ 4. No
_____ 5. Unsure
- (21) 8. Do the majority of teachers and the majority of administrators in your system agree in philosophy on the question of promotion and retention?
_____ 1. Yes
_____ 2. No
_____ 3. Unsure
- (22) 9. Have you participated in an inservice training session or a faculty meeting where the promotion-retention issue was addressed?
_____ 1. Yes
_____ 2. No
_____ 3. Unsure
- (23) 10. After the teacher recommends retention for a student, are parents consulted before a final decision is made to retain a student?
_____ 1. Yes
_____ 2. No
_____ 3. Unsure

(continue on back)

(24) 11. Should student promotion be contingent on his mastery of grade level minimum competencies?

- ☐ 1. Yes
☐ 2. No
☐ 3. Unsure

12. What criteria are used by your system to determine retention or promotion? (check all that apply)

- (25) ☐ 1. Standardized test score
 (26) ☐ 2. Classroom performance
 (27) ☐ 3. Student behavior
 (28) ☐ 4. Student attendance
 (29) ☐ 5. Other, please specify _____

Please complete the following demographic information:

(30) 1. Grade(s) taught presently

K	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

Other (please specify) _____

(31) 2. Number of years of teaching experience

- ☐ 1. less than 4
☐ 2. 4-10
☐ 3. more than 10

(32) 3. Gender:

- ☐ 1. Male
☐ 2. Female

(33) 4. Age:

- ☐ 1. less than 36
☐ 2. 36-50
☐ 3. 51 and older

(34) 5. Number of articles related to promotion-retention which you have read in the last 5 years:

- ☐ 1. None
☐ 2. 1-3
☐ 3. 4-8
☐ 4. more than 8

Please fold completed questionnaire and place in envelope. Seal envelope and return to your principal's office by Monday, May 15, 1989.

THANK YOU!

APPENDIX C

LETTER TO SUPERINTENDENTS CONCERNING RESEARCH PROJECT

Route 3, Box 1985
Sweetwater, Tennessee 37874

Dear Superintendent:

I am writing to thank you for your school system's willingness to participate in my research project. University regulations require that I must have in writing, on your official stationery, your approval for your school system to participate. Please be assured that your school system will not be listed in any of my research descriptions. The office which is requiring your written agreement is designed to protect participants from harm while participating in university research. Your letter of agreement will simply be in a file in the office at the university.

Following is a sample letter which may be helpful to you:

" This is to inform you that our school system will participate in your research related to student promotion and retention policies. I understand that you will distribute questionnaires to teachers in two schools in our system and you will be responsible for collecting those same questionnaires. I further understand that while you solicit the cooperation of the teachers in completing the questionnaire, return of the questionnaire is voluntary."

Enclosed is a self-addressed, stamped envelope to use in returning your letter. Thanks for your cooperation in this matter.

Sincerely,

Rebecca F. Tucker

APPENDIX D

LETTER ON DATA COLLECTION TO PRINCIPALS

Route 3, Box 1985
Sweetwater, Tennessee 37874
May 4, 1989

Dear Ms. :

Thank you for your willingness to participate in the promotion-retention research project. The following guidelines are meant to assist you with this project:

1. Please distribute the research questionnaires to teachers in your school who are responsible for making student promotion-retention decisions. (Include resource, Chapter I, or other special academic teachers. Do not include librarians, guidance counselors, or music or physical education teachers.)
2. Remind teachers on Friday, May 12 that questionnaires should be turned in to your office on the following Monday.
3. Collect questionnaires on Monday, May 15.
4. Please do not discuss the survey questions with teachers until after questionnaires have been returned.

I do appreciate your help in collecting this data!

Sincerely,

Rebecca F. Tucker

Rebecca F. Tucker

APPENDIX E

POST CARD REMINDER TO PRINCIPALS

JUST A REMINDER

Please announce to your teachers that the research
questionnaires are to be turned in by Monday, May 15.

Thank you for your help with this project.

Deby Fisher

APPENDIX F

THANK YOU LETTER TO RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Route 3, Box 1985
Sweetwater, Tennessee 37874
May, 1989

Dear Principal and Faculty:

Thank you for participating in my research project related to student promotion and retention. I have been receiving a very high percentage of returns of the survey. I appreciated all of you taking time to complete the questionnaire. Have a good summer!

Sincerely,

Rebecca F. Tucker

VITA

Rebecca Fitzgerald Tucker was born in Dayton, Tennessee to Mr. and Mrs. Clyde Fitzgerald. She was graduated as valedictorian from Rhea Central High School in 1968. Her additional study was at The University of Tennessee in Knoxville where she received a Bachelor of Science degree in economics, a Master of Science degree in industrial education and a Doctor of Education degree in educational administration and supervision.

She began her professional career as a classroom teacher at Gatlinburg-Pittman High School. After two years there, she moved back to Dayton and taught at Rhea County High School. Other professional experience included work as an educational specialist with the Tennessee Department of Education, school food service supervisor in Lenoir City Schools, coordinator for Sweetwater Valley Citizens for the Arts, and classroom teacher in Sweetwater City Schools. In 1987, she took an educational leave from Sweetwater City Schools to complete residency requirements for the Doctor of Education degree at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville.