

ELEMENTARY SCHOOL COUNSELORS' ATTITUDES ABOUT INTERVENTIONS
RELATED TO COUNSELING CHILDREN RETAINED IN GRADE

By

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To my family

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Abstract of Dissertation Presented to the Graduate School
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By

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The purpose of this study was to identify elementary school counselors' attitudes relative to addressing the academic, personal/social and behavioral developments of students involved in the retention process. A review of the literature revealed that although there is research that offers recommendations for enhancing student success in school in general, specific literature for counseling students retained in grade is extremely rare. Therefore, determined in this study were elementary school counselors' attitudes about the importance and frequency of use of interventions they use to counsel students retained in grade. Four hundred and one elementary school counselors participated in and provided data for the study. Respondents represented a distinct group of credentialed and employed elementary school counselors who maintained a professional membership with the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) during the 2007–2008 school year.

Means and standard deviations of survey item ratings were calculated and analyzed. The findings of this study included ordered lists of item importance and frequency of use. Correlations between importance and frequency ratings also were computed for each counseling intervention (i.e., item). Finally, a *post hoc* multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) revealed no significant differences among the importance and frequency item means for gender,

race/ethnicity, school setting, number of students served or number of school counselors employed by school.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

The waters are roiling in my elementary school today and the conditions are unpredictable. As I encounter my two-hundredth-something student, I am faced with a day I could have never anticipated—a day where I would be completing a suicide lethality assessment for a third grade retainee, desperate for my assistance. As an elementary school guidance counselor, for the first time in my career I am concerned about mandatory grade retention: a reality that many youngsters face today.

—Author

Grade retention is both an educational policy and a practice issue that has been debated extensively among professional educators, politicians, and the general public (Alexander, Entwisle, & Dauber, 2003). At the heart of the issue is a question: is it better to retain low-performing students or to socially promote them so they can stay with their age-mates? Advocates of grade retention suggest it allows children who are falling behind and performing poorly academically to catch up developmentally and socially (e.g., Alexander et al., 2003). Proponents of grade retention suggest that it allows students to progress academically at a pace appropriate for their ability level, thus enhancing the possibility for academic success eventually. Conversely, opponents argue that retention is a message that says the student is a failure and unable to handle the curriculum in which his/her age-mates are successful. They suggest that grade retention sends a discouraging message to students who may already lack confidence in their school abilities, thus decreasing the students' chances for eventual academic success (e.g., Holmes, 1989; Newman, 2003; Shepard & Smith, 1990). However, regardless of whether struggling students are retained in grade or socially promoted, it is obvious that students retained

in grade (retainees) need academic, social/emotional, and behavioral support. Therefore, how school counselors meet those needs warrants thoughtful and careful investigation.

Students retained in grade may be at-risk for future, presumably more serious academic and personal difficulties. For example, shown in the pertinent research is that being retained in grade is linked to dropping out of school (Roderick, 1994). Although Alexander et al. (2003) suggested that there are many variables that might contribute to a student's drop-out potential such as socioeconomic level, family structure, maternal age/employment status, and family stress, the *Youth in Transition Study* reported that, "one grade retention increases the risk of dropping out [of school] by 40 to 50 percent and being two grades behind increases the risk by 90 percent" (p. 733). Hauser (1999) approximated that 15 to 20 percent of students in the United States had been retained one or more times during their school career. He asserted that these percentages are significantly higher for poor and racial/ethnic minority students, for example, approximately 50 percent of Hispanic and African-American children are below their corresponding age-mates' grade level by the time they reach ages 15 to 17 (Hauser, 1999). The implications for student dropout are significant because many dropouts are at increased risk for incarceration and/or dependence on social services and unemployment or low paying jobs (Christenson, Sinclair, Thurlow, & Evelo, 1995). Manifestations of these risks are costly to both the individual students and to society at large.

Because of the issues surrounding grade retention, school administrators and educational policy makers, among others, are beginning to reconsider pupil progression plans to ensure that alternative learning strategies are given thorough consideration for students who are falling behind (e.g., Florida Department of Education [FDOE], 2000; Texas Legislature, 2006). In particular, development of appropriate intervention programs can help students improve their

academic performance and impact their psychological well-being and behavior (e.g., Brigman & Webb, 2004; Campbell & Bowman, 1993). School counselors can and should be involved in the development and implementation of appropriate interventions for students who are struggling academically because a school counselor is in a unique position to facilitate student growth in academic, career and personal/social development (American School Counselor Association [ASCA], 2005). Thus, the interventions that school counselors provide could, and should, help reduce dropout rates and improve the quality of lives of students who are struggling academically and, ultimately, society.

There is substantial research and literature surrounding the debate about grade retention, i.e., about social promotion versus retention in grade (e.g., Alexander et al., 2003). Yet, apparently educators, including school counselors, do not always utilize alternative, presumably effective, practices to enhance the learning environment for struggling students (e.g., Jimerson & Kaufman, 2003). Interestingly, recent legislation has urged school administrators to reform their practices. However, even these admonitions become confounded because children can be retained more than once (FDOE, 2000; Texas Legislature, 2006). A comprehensive solution is needed. And although school counselors should be involved in developing such a solution, there is a dearth of literature about how school counselors can or should participate in developing alternative plans for students.

Examination of strategies that school counselors utilize with grade retainees should lead to a better understanding of the issues surrounding grade retention as well as of appropriate ways to address them. With such understanding, administrators and teachers could incorporate school counselors' services within intervention plans designed specifically for struggling learners. Thereafter, educational policy-makers could consider the psychological impact of grade retention

and thus assist school districts to meet the academic and social/emotional needs of the struggling students.

Scope

Holmes (2006), who estimated that 15 to 20% of schoolchildren are retained in grade each school year in the United States, compared that rate to the annual retention rates of Japan, Denmark, Sweden, Norway and the United Kingdom. He found that those countries had a 0% retention rate (UNESCO 2003/4, cited in Holmes, 2006). However, he also indicated that retention rates in ‘undeveloped’ countries (e.g., Rwanda, Togo, Congo, and Chad) exceeded the United States’ retention rate. Interestingly, in Florida, the state’s “A+ Accountability Plan” mandates retention for children in third grade who are not reading on grade level as measured by the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT). Noteworthy is that the first year of this new plan resulted in a retention rate increase of over 28% (FLDOE, 2006). Therefore, apparently, high FCAT score-accountability for teachers and students has contributed to rising retention rates in Florida. Holmes (2006) cautioned that, “one danger of the high retention rates is that large gains in district-wide test scores sometimes are obtained, [which encourages]... many individuals to believe wrongly that the [grade retention] policy has been successful” (Owens & Ranick, 1977, cited in Holmes, 2006). Unfortunately, regardless of the presumed educational benefits, there seems to be little evidence that children’s personal/social and other education-related needs are being met effectively by responses such as Florida’s A+ Accountability Plan. Consequently, if children’s social/emotional and behavioral needs are not addressed, they cannot perform at a level at which optimal learning occurs.

Theoretical Framework

Researchers often assess attitudes to determine potential solutions to complex problems. For example, Creswell (2007) recommended the use of surveys to describe individuals' opinions, behaviors or attitudes of a particular population regarding a specific topic. Information thus obtained can be useful for researchers to describe trends about a particular topic within a targeted population. According to Myers (2006), attitude development is the result of the beliefs and feelings that affect an individual's behavior as s/he interacts with people or events. Although expressed attitude and behavior are subject to outside influences (e.g., social desirability), "attitudes and actions generate one another" (Myers, 2006, p. 131). Therefore, expressed attitude can be (and usually is) a good predictor of behavior when (a) outside influences on attitudinal statements are minimized, (b) individuals are prompted to consider their behavior(s) before acting, and (c) the expressed attitude is specifically related to the observed behavior(s) (Myers, 2006).

One way to determine the attitudes about addressing the unique needs of students retained in grade is to survey elementary school counselors about how to help children retained in grade. For example, questioning elementary school counselors' attitudes about how retainees should be helped should enable elementary school counselors, administrators, policy makers, and other educators to use the results to inform decisions about their respective practices.

The research methodology used in this study was based in an objectivist perspective, and is grounded by positivism. This epistemology assumes that knowledge is acquired through experimentation and direct observation, which can be observed and measured quantitatively. Therefore, using survey methodology, attitudes about school counseling practices for working with students involved in a retention process were investigated.

Statement of the Problem

The overall problem to be addressed in this study is that elementary school counselor attitudes about interventions related to counseling students retained in grade are unknown. More specifically, their attitudes about the importance and frequency of use of academic, personal/social, and behavioral interventions related to counseling grade retainees are unknown. Also unknown are the levels of agreement among elementary school counselors' attitudes about working with students retained in grade. And finally, unknown are the extents to which elementary school counselors' attitudes about working with retainees vary as functions of some of their personal characteristics and/or characteristics of their employment situations.

Jimerson (2003) presented three meta-analyses that demonstrated both the academic and socio-emotional affects of grade retention. However, although Jimerson (2003) suggested that school-based mental health programs “are promising interventions for promoting social and emotional competence” (p. 630), there is a lack of research that addresses the specific counseling interventions appropriate for students retained in grade. Further, when prescribing interventions for students retained in grade, most authors/researchers have focused strictly on the academic needs of the student (e.g., Bowman, 2005; Holmes, 2006; Walters & Borgers, 1995). However, by surveying elementary school counselors' attitudes about how best to work with retainees, a valuable perspective for addressing the specific needs of students retained in grade may be gained. For example, the interventions elementary school counselors consider important in addressing the academic, personal, social, emotional and behavioral needs of the students can be determined. Further, gathering importance and frequency of use ratings of specific counseling interventions would enable elementary school counselors to understand further the unique needs of students retained in grade. Consequently, those needs can be addressed more successfully through the interventions used by school counselors when they work with this population.

Although school counselors' intentions always are to help students, the resources available to them often limit their practice. Therefore, by understanding an intervention's importance and comparing it to the degree to which school counselors utilize the intervention, a general understanding of the limitations of school counselors' resources as well as the value they place on each specific intervention in meeting the unique needs of retainees can be determined. Thereafter, derived from the relative consensus reached among school counselors about important counseling interventions for students retained in grade, administrators, educators, and policy makers should be able to make informed decisions about including or excluding personal/social and behavioral interventions for students retained in grade in their respective policies/practices.

Need for the Study

Knowledge of professionals' attitudes about counseling students retained in grade has implications for theory, research, training and practice of school counseling as well as the development of educational policies pertaining to interventions prescribed for students experiencing learning difficulties. For example, combined with data on impact the knowledge can be used to identify and recommend highly endorsed practices. Further, the level of endorsement found can qualify the degrees of endorsement or discouragement. Once data on intervention impact are collected there are also associated implications for school counselor preparation. For example, highly endorsed practices could be included in school counseling, teaching/learning, and educational leadership program curricula, while those practices not receiving endorsement could be withheld.

Finally, knowledge of professionals' attitudes about counseling students involved in retention processes has implications for research. For example, although relative agreement may lead to increased use for a practice, future research would be needed to evaluate the success of

the practice when applied. Future research also might address familial and societal issues contributing to the situations in which students retained in grade find themselves, therefore influencing preventative measures that educators can use to encourage a positive learning environment for all students. Of course, if agreement is not found for elementary school counseling practices for retainees, future research should examine both alternative recommendations for elementary school counseling practice and sources inhibiting agreement among elementary school counselors.

Purpose of the Study

The primary purpose of this study was to assess elementary school counselors' attitudes about the importance and frequency of use of interventions used to address the academic, personal/social and behavioral developments of students involved in the retention process. More specifically, relative levels of potential importance and frequency of use for the various practices presented were determined based on respondents' attitudes. Differences in the respective levels of beliefs about potential importance, and frequency of use based on selected respondent characteristics of gender, race/ethnicity, and school type were investigated. Finally, relationships among levels of potential importance/frequency of use and school size and number of school counselors employed in the school were determined.

Rationale for the Methodology

A wide variety of methods could be used to investigate elementary school counselors' attitudes about counseling students in the retention process, including methodologies such as use of focus groups, mailed surveys, personal interviews, and telephone interviews, among other possibilities. The methodology used in this study was a web-based, nationwide survey that assessed elementary school counselors' beliefs about counseling practices for students retained in grade. Participants were selected through use of the *ASCA Membership Directory & Resource*

Guide, which published voluntary information provided by the members. The participants were asked to rate counseling interventions (items) on a Likert-type scale according to their perceived importance and degree of utilization. Participants responded to three open-ended questions regarding counseling elementary students retained in grade and completed a demographic questionnaire.

Methodological Limitations

There are a few limitations to this methodology. For example, self-administered, web-based surveys have potential for difficulties caused by technological incompatibilities. In addition, there may be problems associated with extent of coverage, sampling, and nonresponding (Creswell, 2005). Effort was made to reduce coverage and sampling error by selecting a large sample of individuals who met predetermined criteria based on their history of involvement in the school counseling profession from among a comprehensive list of practicing school counselors. Nonresponse error was anticipated for this study, so every attempt was made to utilize rigorous administration procedures to encourage a large return rate for the survey (e.g., those proposed by Dillman, 2007). Finally, because the survey items were created by the researcher, effort was made to provide clear and concise questions and response options based on existing professional literature and focus group feedback in order to reduce outside influences that tend to affect expressed attitude as well as measurement error.

Overall, however, this methodology had the primary advantage of utilizing a relatively simple format that is familiar to most respondents that would provide a wealth of information. Further, as opposed to mail surveys, a web-based survey allowed for relatively quick turnaround time for implementation, automated data entry and complex graphics, and detailed instructions to ensure a user-friendly survey.

Also at issue in this methodology was whose attitudes should be investigated, and a variety of professionals could have been included. For example, presumably counselor educators should have good knowledge of school counseling practices and research related to them. Thus, they could have provided valuable perspective. Similarly, polling actual students involved in the retention process, or their parents, or even their teachers might have offered insight into “consumer perspectives” about what is needed and/or should be done. However, because school counselors are the ones who actually implement the endorsed practices and who have direct experience in counseling children involved in the retention process, focusing on them was an essential first step for improvement of elementary school counseling practice.

Another important consideration was the source of the practices presented for evaluation by the respondents. Again, several sources were possible, including practices identified in journal articles, presented during professional forums, and/or listed in various school counselor role and function statements. However, a specific literature review was used to identify potentially appropriate practices because prior research often demonstrates practices proven effective (or ineffective) for similar populations (e.g., students at-risk of school failure). The final survey design was reviewed by members of a pilot study because obtaining feedback from professionals in the field of school counseling is important for the validation of the instrument.

Research Questions

The following research questions were addressed in this study:

- What is the level of agreement among elementary school counselors in their ratings of *importance* of school counseling interventions intended to benefit students involved in the retention process?
- What is the level of agreement among elementary school counselors in their *frequency of use* of counseling interventions intended to benefit students involved in the retention process?

- To what extent are school characteristics associated with elementary school counselors' utilization of the respective potential interventions?
- To what extent are selected characteristics of the respondents associated with their ratings of potential effectiveness, importance, and frequency of use of potential elementary school counseling practices for students retained in grade?

Definition of Terms

The following definitions are used throughout this dissertation.

ACADEMIC DEVELOPMENT (AD). Encompasses school counseling interventions intended to help students attain the skills, attitudes, and knowledge that support effective learning in school and across the lifespan (ASCA, 2005).

AMERICAN SCHOOL COUNSELOR ASSOCIATION. A nonprofit organization founded in 1952. It offers over 20,000 members professional development opportunities, research, publications and advocacy services internationally. ACSA “supports school counselors' efforts to help students focus on academic, personal/social and career development so they achieve success in school and are prepared to lead fulfilling lives as responsible members of society” (ASCA, 2007, p.1).

BEHAVIORAL DEVELOPMENT (BD). Encompasses school counseling interventions intended to help students understand how the interpersonal skills, attitudes, and knowledge are influenced by environmental surroundings (ASCA, 2005).

DROPPING OUT. The process of withdrawing from school after a student reaches the legal age to do so.

GENDER. Respondent self-reported designation as male or female.

PROFESSIONAL SCHOOL COUNSELOR. An individual who has received at least a master's degree in counseling, or the equivalent, and meets the credentialing criteria for school (guidance) counselors as defined by the state in which the school counselor resides.

NUMBER OF SCHOOL COUNSELORS IN THE SCHOOL. Respondent self-reported indication of the total number of school counselors practicing in the school within which the counselor is employed.

PERSONAL/SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT (PSD). Involves school counseling interventions intended to enable students to attain interpersonal skills, attitudes and knowledge that contribute to understanding and respect self and others (ASCA, 2005).

RACE. Respondent self-reported designation of the race/ethnicity with which the participant identifies (i.e., American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian or Pacific Islander, Black, White, Hispanic or Multiracial).

RETENTION. The educational practice of retaining students in their current grade level when they have not satisfied the academic and performance standards required to move to the next grade (USDOE, 1999).

SCHOOL SIZE. Respondent self-reported designation of the total number of students enrolled in the school in which the participant works at the time of the survey administration.

SCHOOL TYPE. Respondent self-reported designation of urban, suburban or rural school location.

SOCIAL PROMOTION. The educational practice of “passing” students to the next grade level even though they have not satisfied grade level academic and performance standards to warrant progression (USDOE, 1999).

SURVEY RESEARCH DESIGN. Quantitative research procedures used to determine trends in characteristics, behaviors, beliefs, attitudes, or attitudes regarding a particular issue among a targeted population (Creswell, 2005).

YEARS OF EXPERIENCE AS A SCHOOL COUNSELOR. Respondent self-reported designation of the total number of years employed as a school counselor.

Overview of the Remainder of the Study

An introduction to the study has been presented in Chapter 1. A review of the related literature is provided in Chapter 2 and the methodology and analyses are presented in Chapter 3. The study results are presented in Chapter 4. In Chapter 5, a summary, discussion, implications, and recommendations for the research are provided.

CHAPTER 2 REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

A review of the literature relevant to this study is presented in this chapter, and includes information about the history, prevalence and impact of retaining children in grade in general and the psycho-educational effects of nonpromotion in particular. In addition, theoretical bases for survey research methodology and for social/emotional development as it relates to pupil progression are presented.

History of Grade Retention Policy

According to Owings and Kaplan (2001), teachers in the United States began grouping students by relative academic achievement in the 1860s. Students were grouped according to age and achievement (grades), and progressed to the next grade level once they mastered predetermined content for their current grade level. Academic progress information was recorded in narrative form on a report card. Such practices eventually evolved into a promotion policy.

In the early 1900s, it became difficult for educators to define curriculum mastery and, in turn, promotion criteria became more difficult to determine. In response, the New York City School System examined the issue, and an age-grade progress study was implemented to determine retention, promotion, and dropout rates (Maxwell, 1904, cited in Owings & Kaplan, 2001). Grade retention then was used to encourage underachieving students to improve their academic skills. However, the negative effects of retention often outweighed the positive effects. Further, other studies in the early 1900s (e.g., Thorndike, 1908, cited in Owings & Kaplan, 2001) determined that grade retention was associated with “elimination,” a term then used as “dropout” is today. Midway through the 20th century, the need to prevent students from dropping out of

school became evident when research demonstrated a direct association between grade retention and student dropout likelihood (Owings & Kaplan, 2001).

In the 1960s and 1970s, social promotion (i.e., allowing students to move to the next grade level regardless of academic achievement in the current grade level) was popularized in hope that promoting underachieving students with their peers to the next grade would benefit them socially and psychologically, and allow them to “catch up” academically. However, in the 1980s the promotion-decision pendulum swung back toward retention, and social promotion lost its appeal. Owings and Kaplan (2001) reasoned that this swing resulted from public loss of confidence in schools because the public saw increasing levels of violence, poor teacher performance, and low student achievement. *A Nation at Risk* (1983), a report compiled by the (U.S.) National Commission on Excellence in Education, generally is considered to have resulted in schools’ implementation of strict promotion and retention policies despite the lack of evidence supporting the practice of grade retention. This trend encouraged schools to set strict standards for promotion for students, and also for teachers. However, even though retention was supposed to be a solution, it became problematic again because the academic gains were short-lived (Bowman, 2005).

More recently, resurgence of interest in retention has been kindled by the *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB) act. It was enacted to “close the achievement gap” by offering students learning flexibility, providing parents educational options, and teaching students based on research-based best practices (USDOE, 2004). Importantly, the NCLB laid the groundwork for, and indeed required, states to reevaluate their state educational accountability plans. For example, the state of Texas increased and more strictly delineated its accountability practices through its *House Bill 136*, which stated that a student could not be promoted to the fourth, sixth, or ninth grades unless

s/he performed satisfactorily on the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) (Texas Legislature, 2006). However, if a student failed to meet promotion criteria, the school's grade placement committee could promote the child if they concluded that with "accelerated instruction. . .the student is likely to perform at grade level" (e.g., there was evidence to support the student's promotion via alternative assessment, such as portfolios, work samples, or other diagnostic tools) (Texas Legislature, 2006, p. 1–2).

The State of Florida also implemented a grade retention policy as a way to meet federal accountability requirements. The NCLB supports and is reflected in key elements of Florida's A+ Plan of state accountability. The A+ Plan, approved by the Florida legislature in 1999, was developed to ensure that "each student should gain a year's worth of knowledge in a year's time and that no student will be left behind" (Governor's Office, 2000, p. 2). This plan suggested that all children, regardless of race, socioeconomic status, or special needs should show adequate yearly progress as tracked by the "value added" system that monitors individual students' progress as measured by statewide assessments (Governor's Office, 2000). The plan also highlighted educators' accountability, educational choices for parents, resource allocation, rewards for improvement, and curriculum change for poor performing students.

Currently, the Florida plan enforces mandatory retention for children in third grade who are not reading on grade level as measured by the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT). Noteworthy is that the first year under this new plan resulted in retention rates increasing over 28% (FLDOE, 2006). Subsequently, this increase in rate of retention yielded large test score gains in some districts, which encouraged individuals to incorrectly assume that the policy was "successful" (Holmes, 2006). Unfortunately, "success" was measured in purely an academic sense and did not account for students' social/emotional and/or behavioral needs in

the plan. It is difficult for a student to perform at an optimal learning level if his/her basic (i.e., social/emotional and behavioral) needs have not been met (Maslow, 1943). Therefore, it became school counselors' and teachers' responsibility, in conjunction with students and their parents, to address the child's social and emotional needs in order to allow the child to be successful in school both academically and socially/emotionally.

What implications do the state and national mandates have at the local school level?

Recently, Florida school districts modified their pupil progression plans to comply with the new state statutes. Florida school districts are examining schools at the local level to insure that all are implementing the state mandate that requires all schools to develop academic improvement plans for all students who do not perform at grade level as measured by statewide standardized assessments. Teachers are required to meet with parents of students who have specific academic improvement plans at least three times during the school year to discuss the child's progress and to "brainstorm" strategies to be implemented at school and home. Parents are informed early in the school year whether their child is being considered for retention.

In Florida's elementary schools, teachers of Head Start, kindergarten, first, second, fourth, and fifth grade students have more flexibility than do third grade teachers in regard to student retention in grade. According to the current Florida statute, Head Start, kindergarten, first, second, fourth and fifth grade teachers may *request* that a child be promoted for "good cause" based on the child's classroom performance regardless of her/his performance on the statewide assessment. However, if the child's reading deficiency has not improved by third grade, a teacher *must* retain the child unless promotion for good cause is justified (e.g., classroom performance, observations, tests, district and state assessments, and other pertinent information) (FDOE, 2004).

Prevalence

It is difficult to estimate the number of students who have been retained or socially promoted because of variations in state policies/practices and reporting. Rates of retention and reporting methods are inconsistent, making inferences for national data near impossible. However, inferences can be made based on specific state non-promotion rates. For example, the Florida Department of Education (FDOE) 2006 *Statistical Brief* reported that for the 2002–2003 academic (school) year, over 208,000 students were retained across grades K–12. Further, over 936,000 children have been retained in grade in Florida since 2000 (FDOE, 2006). Similarly, in Texas, the Comprehensive Annual Report on Texas Public Schools (2001) indicated that over 171,000 students (approximately 4%) were retained in the 1999–2000 school year. Hauser (1999) approximated that 15 to 20 percent of students in the United States have been retained one or more times during their school career. He also asserted that these percentages are significantly higher for (financially) poor and racial/ethnic minority students. For example, approximately 50 percent of Hispanic and African-American children are below their grade level by ages 15 to 17 (Hauser, 1999).

Arguments for Retention

Studies have shown that the long-term effects of retention are unclear. For example, some researchers purport that student achievement increases as a result of the repetition of a grade (e.g., Newman, 2003; Rightsell, 2002) while others explain that such achievement is only temporary (e.g., Holmes, 1989; Peterson, DeGrade, & Ayabe, 1985, cited in Walters et al., 1995; Rightsell, 2002). Further, from a social/emotional perspective, some studies suggest that retention results in unchanged perception of self (e.g., Tweed, 2002) while others explain that grade repetition results in poor (lower) self perception (e.g., Evans, 2001; Hagborg, Masella, Palladino, & Shepardson, 1991). Although the long-term effects of retention are unclear,

proponents assert prime directives that say, “the only reason a child should be retained is that the retention will result in some substantial improvement in the child’s growth, learning and total life. . .[and] each case for promotion/retention is unique” (Pierro, 1984, p. 12). Thus, children are (often) considered for retention when the repetition of the grade is presumed to be beneficial for their personal and academic growth. However, suggested in the professional literature is that students are retained primarily for reasons such as (a) lack of readiness (Peel, 1997), (b) immaturity (Light & Morrison, 1990, cited in Bowman, 2005), (c) that successful outcomes can be produced from an extra year of school (Natale, 1991, cited in Bowman, 2005), (d) that promotion criteria not met (Dawson, 1998, cited in Bowman, 2005), that is, “low academic skills” (Peel, 1997), and (e) unexcused absences and nonattendance (Light et al., 1990, cited in Bowman, 2005).

Pierro (1984) proposed a pro-retention viewpoint that suggested that the cause of learning issues lies within the child; thus, the child should be held back if s/he hasn’t worked hard, behaved, and learned. According to Pierro (1984), the beliefs that underlie this viewpoint hold that children who are unable to “measure up” to the school’s standards should be retained in grade because not to retain them is unfair to the “better” students. Specifically, the underlying assumptions are that: (a) students earn promotion, (b) students should progress with others who are learning at the same rate, (c) progression through school is like a “stair-step operation” in which the student steps up only if they do well enough in the previous grade, (d) people learn sequentially and hierarchically when it relates to skills, information and concepts, (e) when threatened with the idea of retention, children will perform well, (f) children can “do passing work” if they want to, (g) children are motivated by competition because it is a real life occurrence, (h) failure makes children stronger, (i) weak students hold stronger students back, (j)

if given more time in the same grade, children will do better, and (k) retaining children will encourage those who have not been retained to work harder in order to move up in the system.

A study conducted by Plummer and Graziano (1987) examined the impact of grade retention on social development. They found that grade repetition resulted in higher self-esteem than that for non-retained peers. Tweed (2002) also found that “being retained was not detrimental to [the child’s] perception of self” (p. 3295). In addition, it was observed that some of the participants (5 out of 12) shared that other students “liked them better” after they had been retained, and reported “retention helped them do better in school” (p.3295). Similarly, Evans (2001) examined the affective consequences of grade retention and concluded that:

“Regardless of the initial reaction to the retention decision most students eventually accepted the decision, . . . and retention appeared to be an appropriate intervention for students whose problems stemmed from being chronologically and/or developmentally behind their classmates.” (p. 2026)

Therefore, there appear to be benefits to grade retention. However, educators must ensure that the benefits of conducting such a practice far outweigh the drawbacks as they consider the unique needs of each individual child. Further, it is clear that individually designed intervention strategies should be implemented for struggling students that would attend to both academic and developmental considerations. Peel (1997) suggested that such intervention strategies could be easily implemented in the early grades with few costs to the school system and/or the child’s social/emotional development. Interestingly, Alexander et al., 2003 suggested that the negative findings related to grade retention are overstated and positive findings may be neglected in the literature.

Arguments Against Retention

Pierro (1984) offered an anti-retention viewpoint that suggested researchers examine what and how children learn rather than claim that the child is the cause of the learning problem. Thus, if the student is not learning, what can be done to motivate and support them in their learning? He asserted eight basic beliefs supporting the anti-retention viewpoint: (a) learning is hierarchical and individuals learn at different rates, times and sequences, (b) success motivates more than failure, (c) children do not fear retention until it actually occurs because they don't understand what it means, (d) some students will experience failure in a grading system, (f) the "failures" are *children* with low ability and they need encouragement (rather than failure experience) to do their best, (g) children who are creative struggle in a structured environment present in the "usual classroom" and become frustrated and disinterested, and (h) "children are more cooperative than competitive" (p. 22).

Three meta-analyses have examined studies concerning grade retention published between 1925 and 1999 (Holmes, 1989; Holmes & Matthews, 1984; Jimerson, 2001). Their collective results (Table 2–1) suggested no demonstrated academic advantages to retaining students in grade when compared to promoting low-performing peers (Jimerson & Kaufman, 2003). Few studies analyzed the social/emotional effects of grade retention, and those that have reported that the practice is harmful to social/emotional and behavioral adjustment (e.g., Holmes, 2006 and Rightsell, 2002).

Table 2–1. Mean effect sizes from meta-analyses that investigated the results of studies examining the effects of grade retention

	Jimerson (2001)	Holmes (1989)	Holmes & Matthews (1984)
Overall effect size	-.31 [246]	-.15 [861]	-.37 [575]
Academic achievement	-.39 [169]	-.19 [536]	-.44 [367]
Language arts	-.36 [11]	-.16 [106]	-.40 [85]
Reading	-.54 [52]	-.08 [144]	-.48 [75]
Mathematics	-.49 [48]	-.11 [137]	-.33 [77]
Total/Composites	-.20 [13]	n/a	n/a
Grade point average	-.18 [45]	-.58 [4]	-.58 [4]
Socioemotional adjustment	-.22 [77]	-.09 [234]	-.27 [142]
Social	-.08 [12]	-.09 [101]	-.27 [60]
Emotional	-.28 [13]	-.03 [33]	-.37 [9]
Behavioral	-.11 [30]	-.13 [24]	-.31 [13]
Self-concept	-.04 [16]	-.13 [45]	-.19 [34]
Adjustment composite	-.15 [4]	n/a	n/a
Attitude toward school	n/a	-.05 [39]	-.16 [26]
Attendance	-.65 [2]	-.18 [7]	-.12 [6]

* Table reprinted with permission from Jimerson, Shane R., & Kaufman, Amber M. (2003, April). Reading, writing, and retention: A primer on grade retention research. *The Reading Teacher*, 56(7), 622-635. Copyright 2003 by the International Reading Association. Adapted from Jimerson, 2001.

Note: Bracketed numbers reflect the number of effect sizes used to calculate mean effect size. Analyses favoring the matched comparison group of students compared to the retained students are represented by negative numbers.

The Jimerson (2001; cited in Jimerson et al. 2003) review suggested that grade retention is costly not only monetarily, but academically and developmentally as well. Eide and Showalter (2001; cited in Newman, 2003) estimated the monetary cost of retention to be approximately \$13 billion per year at a retention rate of 5% (i.e., more than 2 million children). For example, the Florida School Board Association (cited in Barry, 2006) estimated a cost of retention to be \$5,000 per regular education student and \$8,000 per special education student. Therefore, if a school system retained 15 regular education students, the cost to the school would be approximately \$75,000. Presumably, this money could be (better) spent on hiring additional

personnel to implement comprehensive intervention programs for the students in need of individualized remediation and related programs (e.g., Summer and/or after school programs).

The costs of retention also are associated with student dropout because of the link between retention and student dropout rate (Bowman, 2005; Haddad, 1979; Holmes, 2006; Roderick, 1994). The implications for student dropout are significant because many dropouts have increased likelihood for incarceration and/or dependence on social services and unemployment/low paying jobs (Christenson, Sinclair, Thurlow, & Evelo, 1995). For example, Roderick (1994) suggested that there are three aspects of retention that increase the risk of dropout: (a) remediation strategies are more effective than retention, (b) being retained in grade sends a message to the student that the teacher and school see the child as a failure, and (c) retention creates an age-difference between the retainee and the new grade peers. These increased risks are costly to both the individual and society.

Grade retention can be especially troublesome for students with social/emotional and behavioral difficulties. Academic failure and increased acting out behavior have been associated with, and in some cases, lead to grade retention (Holmes, 2006; Roderick, 1995). Further, perception of failure associated with retention can lead to increased absenteeism (Light & Morrison, 1990), which can impede learning and/or result in learning difficulties, which consequently result in retention. Pierro (1984) discussed a “which came first, the chicken or egg?” phenomenon with regard to student dropout. He questioned whether students who don’t like school end up being retained and eventually drop out, or do they drop out as a consequence of being retained in school? Regardless, school counselors can assist students who exhibit high absenteeism rates or demonstrate social/emotional or behavioral issues that interfere with their

learning. School counselors also are in position to offer struggling students study and test-taking skills (e.g., Brigman & Webb, 2004) that would aid in improving their classroom performance.

Support for Counseling Children Retained in Grade

Retention can have negative effects on a child's social/emotional and behavioral development (e.g., Hagborg et al., 1991; Jimerson & Kaufman, 2003). Studies about the long-term effects of retention on academic variables (e.g., achievement tests or grades), have shown that positive academic gains resulting from retention typically are temporary (e.g., Holmes, 1989; Peterson, DeGrade, & Ayabe, 1985, cited in Walters et al., 1995; Rightsell, 2002). The lack of momentum associated with academic gains post-retention can have a ripple effect on students' social/emotional needs, behavior, and peer relations. For example, Hagborg, Masella, Palladino, and Shepardson (1991) compared 38 high school students who had a history of retention with a matched control group of non-retained students. They found that the retained students had lower achievement scores, grades, and intelligence test scores, were absent more than their non-retained peers, and scored lower on self-esteem measures. They also determined that later retention was associated with lower educational expectations, lower grades, more discipline referrals, lower self-control, an external locus of control, lower ratings on attitudes about school, and less time spent on homework. Similarly, Shepard and Smith (1987) conducted a quantitative study that examined the effects of retaining kindergartners at the end of first grade. The results of the teacher ratings demonstrated that there was no difference between retained and control children on (a) reading achievement, (b) math achievement, (c) social maturity, (d) learner self-concept, or (e) attention. A qualitative follow-up that analyzed parent-related interview data as related to the teacher ratings was conducted. Teacher ratings concurred with the parent interviews, leading to the conclusion that "children who had spent an extra year before first grade were not much different from those deemed at risk but not retained" (p. 356).

However, the data from the parents of the retained students revealed that they had “more negative attitudes toward school” (Shepard et al., 1987, p.356).

Byrnes and Yamamoto (2001) used qualitative methodology and interviewed 71 children, and their teachers, in grades one, three and six who were retained in grade. They concluded that, “children do feel anxious about the reactions of their peers and others to their status as ‘school failures’,” many of the participants reported that they saw their retention as punishment, and most viewed it as “a testimony to one’s inability to succeed in school” (p. 213). Interestingly, there was little response to addressing students’ need to process their reservations and fears about the retention experience. Teachers often assumed (60%) that the parents would handle the responsibility of sharing and processing constructively the news of retention with their child. In this particular study, some children (47%) reported that they were punished for their failure to be promoted.

The social/emotional effects of retention seem to have a negative impact on student development. There are some studies that demonstrate positive effects of retention (e.g., Plummer et al., 1987; Tweed, 2002); however, a marked number refute them (e.g., Byrnes et al., 2001; Hagborg et al., 1991; Shepardson et al., 1987; Smalls, 1997; Walters & Borgers, 1995). For example, Byrnes and Yamamoto (2001) conducted a qualitative study in which 71 retained students and their teachers were interviewed about their views on grade retention. The children interviewed (84%) shared feelings of “sad,” “bad,” and/or “upset” when asked about how they would feel or have felt about being retained. When questioned about how their parents would feel about the retention, 74% responded with “mad” or “sad.” In addition, 47% said they were punished at home after being retained (e.g., time out, spanking, or having money or privileges withheld). Further, 42% learned of their retention from their report card, 21% from their parents,

and 20% from their teacher, and 7% included other responses such as “the list of names on the door at the beginning of the school year” (p. 210). Finally, when the participants were questioned about the negative effects of being retained in grade, most replied that they were concerned about being teased and not being with their peers. Unfortunately, the interviews revealed no mention of school counselor involvement in the retention process. “There [were] few, if any attempts to help children deal with their fears and reservations about the experiences. The responsibility of [the] task [was] often left to chance” (Byrnes et al., 2001, p. 213). However, professionally, there is clearly a place in the retention-decision process for school counselors to help individual students and their parents with retention.

Theoretical Framework

To perform optimally academically in school, it is important that basic social/emotional needs be met. Maslow’s (1943) *Theory of Motivation* speaks to the issues involved. To have a meaningful and accomplished life (i.e., moving toward self-actualization), one must live to her/his potential by being the best s/he can be creatively and productively (Maslow, 1943). Maslow (1943) asserted that “human needs arrange themselves in hierarchies of prepotency” (p. 370). For example, humans have primary and basic *physiological* needs that require satiation to maintain a state of balance, or homeostasis (i.e., breathing, food, water, sex, sleep, and excretion). Humans are inherently motivated to behave in ways to accomplish fulfillment of these basic needs. After (and only after) physiological needs are relatively gratified, humans strive for safety (i.e., security of body, employment, resources, morality, family, health, and property), then love/belonging (i.e., friendship, family, and sexual intimacy), next, esteem (i.e., self-esteem, confidence, achievement, respect of others, and respect by others), and finally, self-actualization (i.e., morality, creativity, spontaneity, problem solving, lack of prejudice, and acceptance of facts). Maslow (1943) argued that “the appearance of one need usually rests on

the prior satisfaction of another, more pre-potent need” (p. 370). Therefore, a person who is lacking food, safety, love and esteem would behave in ways to first fulfill the hunger need before attempting to resolve needs for safety, love and esteem.

In applying Maslow’s hierarchy to children retained in grade, consideration is given to the student’s motivation to satisfy “basic needs” prior to addressing successively “higher needs.” It can be argued that a child’s academic success (i.e., achievement) lies within Maslow’s (1943) need for “esteem.” Therefore, in order for a child to satisfy her/his need for esteem, s/he must first experience relative satisfaction in more basic needs (e.g., physiological, safety, and love/belonging needs). Before a child can perform well academically, s/he must feel a relative sense of homeostasis as it relates to her/his emotionality, one of Maslow’s “basic needs.” Therefore, based on Maslow’s hierarchy of needs, it is reasonable to posit that a child who is being scrutinized for his/her academic performance is struggling to maintain an already unstable sense of safety and love/belonging.

More specific to grade retention in particular is a paper presented by Goodlad (1952). Goodlad (1952) reviewed the research related to promotion and non-promotion, and presented recommendations that contributed to existing learning and developmental theories of the time. He concluded, “blanket promotion policies are not justified by the [grade retention-related] evidence” (Goodlad, 1952, p. 154). Since Goodlad’s (1952) assertions, there has not been another paper that specifically proposes a theory of retention. Goodlad also offered three recommendations for consideration for a child: (a) consider the individuality of each child rather than just a system-wide policy, (b) teachers should have a strong, fact-based rationale for making the decision, and (c) the needs of the student should supercede those of the administration. Interestingly, Goodlad’s (1952) closing remarks suggested that educators investigate the

foundation of the student's failure experience and facilitate growth to prevent its perpetuation, activities that are clearly within the realm of school counselors' professional functioning.

One way to investigate the foundation of students' experience about being retained in grade is to investigate the attitudes of the professionals who interact with them on a regular basis (e.g., school counselors). By exploring the attitudes that school counselors hold about counseling retained students, better understanding of the needs of students who undergo the retention process can be achieved. Thus, assessing the attitudes of school counselors is of particular interest because attitudes represent the beliefs and feelings that affect an individual's resultant behavior as they relate to other people or events (Myers, 2006).

Social psychologists originally thought that private thoughts and feelings determined public behavior (i.e., attitudes predict behavior) (Myers, 2006). However, in the early 1960s, that idea was contradicted by social psychologist Leon Festinger (Gerard, 1994, cited in Myers, 2006), who concluded that behavior predicts attitudes. For example, implementing a classroom management plan fosters an attitude about the value of the concept. Social psychologists theorized that actions affect attitudes for three reasons: (a) self-presentation (i.e., individuals behave in ways to create desired impressions through self-monitoring), (b) self-justification (i.e., individuals are motivated to maintain cognitive consistency), and (c) self-perception (i.e., when uncertain of one's attitudes, individuals view their behavior as though an outsider were observing) (Myers, 2006). However, attitude can be a good predictor of behavior when certain conditions are present: (a) outside influences (e.g. social) on attitudinal statements are minimized, (b) individuals are prompted to consider their behavior before acting (i.e., attitude potency), and (c) the expressed attitude is specifically related to the observed behavior (Myers, 2006). For example, whether school counselors facilitate an anger management activity in a

small group counseling session has more to do with their attitudes about the specific costs and benefits of anger management activities than on their attitude about conflict resolution in general.

Myers (2006) concluded that both expressed attitude and behavior are subject to other factors (p. 126).

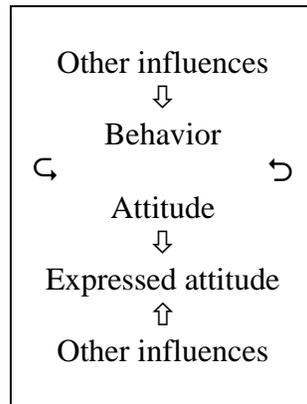


Figure 2–1. How actions influence attitude

Therefore, “attitudes and actions generate one another” (p. 131).

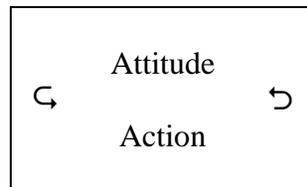


Figure 2–2. The influence of outside effects on behavior and attitude

Rationale for the Study

According to the ASCA’s *ASCA National Model for School Counseling Programs* (2005), it is within the school counselor’s role to “support the school’s overall mission by promoting academic achievement, career planning and personal/social development” (p. 2). Thus, school counselors can (and should) be leaders in making positive changes in their schools because they are specifically trained in childhood and adolescent development. Obviously, for a comprehensive school counseling program to be effective, it must involve parents, students, administrators, teachers and support personnel for it to benefit all students (ASCA, 2005).

School counselors can support research-based interventions that have demonstrated proactive effectiveness with students who are struggling in school (e.g., Jimerson & Kaufman, 2003). For example, Barry (2006) suggested several alternatives to retention including (a) having Pre-Kindergarten classes taught by certified teachers, (b) reducing class size for struggling students, (c) utilizing educational planning teams to design appropriate interventions for struggling students, (d) offering an extended school year to enhance the curriculum for and remediate struggling and “under challenged” learners, (e) having comprehensive guidance programs that address behavioral and emotional impediments to learning, (f) offering technical, vocational, and career training for middle and high school students, (g) providing struggling readers with specialized reading instruction, (h) increasing parent and community involvement, and (i) providing in-service for parents in reading strategies helpful to children. Also, Holmes (2006) suggested that frequent assessment and individualized student instruction would benefit struggling students. School counselors can offer classroom guidance lessons that address student success skills (e.g., Brigman & Webb, 2006) and test-taking tips (Bender, 2004). For example, Brigman and Webb’s (2006) *Student Success Skills* program is a large- and/or small-group guidance unit that encourages students to develop academic, social, and self-management skills needed to be successful in school. The authors purported that the implementation of such program in Florida raised standardized test scores for approximately 78% of students in reading and approximately 86% in math in grades 5, 6, 8, and 9 (Brigman & Webb, 2004). This study was replicated subsequently and the authors reported similar positive outcomes (Brigman & Webb, 2005). Programs of this nature address the whole child and therefore can be beneficial for all students, the school and, ultimately, society.

Students targeted as struggling learners also can benefit from small-group and individual counseling sessions that address social/emotional and behavioral challenges related to academic achievement. Failure is a major point worth addressing in such counseling sessions, because regardless of how educators present the idea of grade repetition, most students identify retention with “flunking” (e.g., Alexander et al., 1994; Smalls, 1997). No matter how failure manifests, acceptance of failure is a great feat for all. To reach a point at which one feels at peace with a failure experience means much internal, psychological growth has occurred. At some point in life, most mentally healthy individuals can pinpoint a defining moment that can be attributed to some major success or failure. A failure experience has many feelings associated with it, much like those presented in Kubler-Ross’s (1992) *Five Stages of Grief*. First denial and isolation, then anger, bargaining, sometimes depression, and then finally acceptance of the failure experience. Once the individual reaches the acceptance stage, emotional growth can occur. Regardless of the student’s history, school counselors are in an influential position to help them progress through the stages associated with a failure experience.

Small-group and individual counseling interventions related to retention in grade also might be focused on students who exhibit high absenteeism and/or discipline referral rates. In addition to counseling, educational planning teams can convene to conduct functional behavior analyses to develop individualized behavior plans for poorly performing students. Social skills training might be offered to students needing assistance in peer relations, and anger management/feeling identification could be beneficial to help students process feelings associated with failure in school (e.g., Campbell & Bowman, 1993; Hobby, Rubin, & Rubin, 1982). It also is essential to educate non-retained peers about the importance of treating others kindly and respecting differences.

With grade retention a “practice of the times,” it is essential that appropriate supports be in place to address the needs of the students experiencing retention. According to ASCA’s *Ethical Standards for School Counselors* (2004), school counselors have both a professional and ethical obligation to “encourage the maximum development of every student” (p. 1). To fulfill this ethical obligation, school counselors should be involved in educational decisions such as grade retention (e.g., through providing counseling, parent education, teacher in-service, and academic improvement planning). Indeed, it is a disservice to students for school counselors not to be involved in the retention process. Therefore, if a student’s needs are addressed on a developmental level, they “have an opportunity to learn more about themselves and others in advance of problem moments in their lives” (Myrick, 1997, p. 11).

Although there is little mention in the professional literature of school counselors’ involvements in grade retention processes, Jimerson et al., (2003) asserted that school-based mental health care programs are proving to be “promising interventions for promoting social and emotional competence” (p. 630). Therefore, research is needed to determine the rate of school counselor involvements with potential retainees, and also the effectiveness of practices in working with such a population. In addition, research is needed to establish how children/adolescents process failure emotionally and to identify interventions that could be effective in working with them. This study proposes to address the lack of literature by assessing the unique considerations for counseling children retained in grade.

Support for Survey Research Methodology

In order to assess the unique considerations for counseling children retained in grade, several research methodologies could be employed for this study. However, to gain a comprehensive knowledge of the issues surrounding the topic, some research methods are better suited for the specific circumstances of this study. Therefore, measures that offer the most valid

and comprehensive responses to the proposed questions should be used to address questions including: (a) What is the level of agreement among elementary school counselors in their ratings of *importance* of school counseling interventions intended to benefit students involved in the retention process, (b) What is the level of agreement among elementary school counselors in their *frequency of use* of counseling interventions intended to benefit students involved in the retention process, (c) To what extent are selected characteristics of the respondents associated with their ratings of potential effectiveness, importance, and frequency of use of potential elementary school counseling practices for students retained in grade, and (d) To what extent are school characteristics associated with elementary school counselors' utilization of the respective potential interventions?

To gather data from which to respond to these research questions, a cross-sectional survey research design was selected. The survey method is a "procedure in quantitative research in which investigators administer a survey to a sample or . . . population of people in order to describe the attitudes, opinions, behaviors or characteristics of the population" (Creswell, 2005, p. 354). Through its use, trends can be determined through statistical analyses and implications can be rendered for outcomes and related research. Of similar importance is assuring the validity of the measure, which can be accomplished by conducting interviews, pilot studies, focus groups and/or pilot tests (Creswell, 2005).

To select the appropriate method for gathering information, it is essential that the related literature be investigated to determine whether use of similar methodology is appropriate to the question(s) being investigated. For example, Rodney, Crafter, Rodney and Mupier (1999) investigated variables that contribute to retention among African-American adolescent males. The researchers administered the Children's Structured Assessment for the Genetics of

Alcoholism interview scale to 243 African American 13–17 year-old boys. The results revealed three variables that were positively correlated with grade retention: (a) number of school suspensions, (b) violent acts against others (i.e., conduct disorder), and (c) lack of home discipline.

Similarly, Wiley (2006) used survey research to explore the impact of grade retention on students' aspirations and educational outcomes. After reviewing educational outcomes as reported in the National Education Longitudinal Study (1988), a follow-up survey was administered to 2,218 African-American 13–16 year-old students to assess their self-perceptions. The results suggested that (a) there is a high risk of retention for students with poor-perception of themselves, (b) teachers are not currently knowledgeable of alternative practices to grade retention, and (c) there is a need to develop a public school curriculum that promotes student multiculturalism.

Finally, survey research methodology was implemented in a study conducted by Quarterman (2005). The purpose of the study was to investigate teachers' perceptions of grade retention in one school district in Georgia. Through teacher interview and administration of a Likert-scale survey, Quarterman observed that (a) 80% of teachers considered retention in grade an adequate intervention for students who did not meet the grade-level objectives because it would allow them to “catch up” with peers, (b) 63% of the teachers thought retention affects a child's self-esteem, but (c) 68% thought it was not particularly harmful to self-concept/self-image. Thus, survey research has been a successful technique for assessing various aspects in the education profession, including those issues surrounding grade retention.

Survey Item Generation

A review of the pertinent research and literature was conducted to identify and select appropriate counseling interventions for inclusion in the survey. Effort was made to include

items that received support in the literature pertaining to student success in school. Specifically sought were resources with thorough research reviews or meta-analyses regarding the subject.

The survey items included are presented in Table 2–1.

Zins, Weissberg, Wang, and Walberg (2004) reviewed ten years of recent research to examine the relationship between social/emotional learning (SEL) and academic success. SEL is defined as “the process through which children enhance their ability to integrate thinking, feeling and behaving to achieve important life tasks” (p. 6). They concluded that students who were able to develop competency in SEL were better able to identify and regulate their emotions, establish relationships that are healthy, engage in positive goal-setting to meet their individual social and personal needs, and make decisions that are ethical and responsible (Zins et al., 2004). As shown in Table 2.1, some of the counseling interventions selected for the survey were based on Zins et al. (2004) framework of key SEL competencies, which are categorized by self-awareness, social awareness, responsible decision-making, self-management, and relationship management.

Wang, Haertel, and Walberg (1994) analyzed 50 years of research and detailed influences that impacted student learning. They concluded that the top eight influences on learning included classroom management, metacognitive processes, cognitive processes, home environment/parent support, student/teacher social interaction, social/behavioral attributes, motivational affective attributes and peer group influences. Thus, it was appropriate to include counseling interventions related to these influences, as shown in Table 2.1, to assess the relative importance/frequency of use for counseling students retained in grade (e.g., parent/teacher consultation and feeling/thought/behavior identification/exploration). Specifically, Sharf (1996) asserted that cognitive-behavioral theory is based on the idea that thoughts, beliefs, and attitudes

determine emotion and behavior. Identifying and recognizing emotions was considered a self-awareness competency that influences positive social-emotional learning which, consequently, enhances school performance (Zins et al., 2004).

Similarly, Masten and Coatsworth (1998) completed a research review spanning 25 years and identified the factors that influence academic and social competence for children at risk. These authors concluded that there were several factors/systems that enhance and protect competence development in both favorable and unfavorable environments, including development or maintenance of parent/child attachment, cognitive processes, and self-regulation skills. In summary, children who thrive have brains that developed normally, adults who care for them, and ability to regulate their own emotions, attention and behavior. Therefore, it was important to include counseling interventions supporting these functions/systems in the survey, as shown in Table 2.1.

Through application of a meta-analysis, Hattie, Biggs, and Purdie (1996) reviewed 51 studies involving interventions designed to improve student learning (i.e., study skills interventions) and categorized the interventions according to structural complexity and transfer ability. The research they reviewed typically emphasized learning self-management, task-related skills, and affective management. The authors concluded that teaching mnemonic devices was “highly effective with virtually all students.” Therefore, as shown in Table 2.1, it was appropriate to include counseling interventions related to memory skills training.

Finally, counseling interventions related to teaching test-taking skills were included on the survey based on research conducted by Scruggs and Mastropieri (1992). These authors indicated that good test-taking skills promoted school success. Specifically, they found that teaching test-taking skills yielded a six-month gain of school achievement, typically an increase

of 10–15 percentile points on standardized tests. Therefore, it was appropriate to include items associated with such skills on the survey; Table 2.1.

Table 2–2. Supporting reference for survey items

Item	Reference	Explanation
ACADEMIC COUNSELING INTERVENTIONS		
Organizational skills	Zins, Weissberg, Wang & Walberg (2004)	Organizational skills were considered a competency necessary to foster academic success.
Memory skills	Hattie, Biggs & Purdie (1996)	Memory skills (mostly through teaching mnemonic devices) was determined to be highly effective with almost all students.
Test-taking skills	Scruggs & Mastropieri (1992)	Good test-taking skills promoted school success. Teaching test-taking skills yielded a six-month gain of school achievement, or an increase of 10–15 percentile points on standardized tests.
Metacognitive progress monitoring	Wang, Haertel & Walberg (1994)	Metacognitive processes (i.e., ability to plan, monitor and re-plan learning strategies) “had the most powerful effect on [student] learning” p. 75).
Goal setting	Zins et al. (2004)	Goal setting was considered a self-management competency necessary for individuals to achieve social-emotional learning that, in turn, leads to effective performance in school.
PERSONAL COUNSELING INTERVENTIONS		
Thought/Feeling//Behavior ID	Sharf (1996), Zins et al. (2004)	Cognitive-behavioral theory was based on the idea that thoughts, beliefs, and attitudes determine emotion and behavior (Sharf, 1996). Identifying and recognizing emotions was considered a self-awareness competency that influences positive social-emotional learning which, consequently enhances school performance (Zins, et al., 2004).

Table 2-2 Continued.

Emotion regulation	Masten & Coatsworth (1998)	Difficulty regulating negative emotions was reported to have a direct link to disruptive and aggressive behavior problems.
Reframing unpleasant beliefs	Masten et al. (1998)	Student success was determined largely by one's self-perceptions or beliefs about academic ability.
Stress/anxiety management	Scruggs et al. (1992)	High levels of anxiety inhibited a student's ability to think clearly and hindered their performance on a task. Through appropriate anxiety management training anxiety levels were reduced and attention to task was increased.
Positive self-appraisal	Masten et al. (1998)	Positive self-efficacy, self-esteem and self-confidence were categorized as individual characteristics of highly resilient children and adolescents.
SOCIAL COUNSELING INTERVENTIONS		
Arranging positive peer affiliations	Masten et al. (1998) Wang et al. (1994)	Peer affiliations had a strong influence on academic achievement. Appropriate peer-based interventions impacted academic achievement positively.
Interpersonal skills	Masten et al. (1998)	Prosocial behavior and compliance were key to "successful functioning in society" (p. 209). Programs that taught these skills encouraged competence in its participants.
Assertiveness training	Masten et al. (1998)	Assertiveness training is one skill-building approach that promoted competence (i.e., "patterns of effective adaptation in the environment" p. 206).
Social Awareness training	Zins et al. (2004)	Perspective taking, empathy, diversity appreciation and respect for others fostered academic success. Behavioral social skills such as this enabled students to effectively solve problems with others resulting increased motivation, communication skills, goal setting and ability to overcome obstacles.
Cooperation/teamwork skills	Zins et al. (2004)	Working cooperatively was considered a social-emotional learning competency that fosters academic success.

Table 2-2 Continued.

Conflict resolution skills	Zins et al. (2004)	Academic success was fostered when students were able to work out solutions effectively with others. "Conflict management, negotiation and refusal" were considered key relationship management strategies in developing social-emotional learning competencies (p. 7).
Help seeking skills	Zins et al. (2004)	Students realized academic success when they were able to appropriately seek help from peers and adults.
BEHAVIORAL COUNSELING INTERVENTIONS		
Behavior modification	Masten et al. (1998)	"The connection between academic achievement and rule-governed behavior is strong" (p. 210).
Consultation with teacher(s)	Masten et al. (1998), Wang et al. (1994)	Helping foster a strong relationship between the teacher and his/her student had a strong influence on the child's success in later developmental tasks and enhanced students' self-esteem and feeling of membership in the class.
Parent/guardian involvement	Masten et al. (1998) Wang et al. (1994)	Parents' involvement and their beliefs about their child's success had a significant impact on the child's actual school success.
Attention regulation	Masten et al. (1998)	Attention regulation was linked to competence development in multiple areas.
Motivation management	Wang et al. (1994)	Motivation (i.e., effort and perseverance) was noted as being a key attribute for learners that are self-controlled and self-regulated.
Self-control strategies	Masten et al. (1998)	Considered a precursor to rule-governed behavior. Fostering self-control was associated with more compliance and more internalization of standards in children.

Summary of the Related Literature

It is important to consider the individual needs of each child affected by the decision to retain the child in grade (Goodlad, 1952). Therefore, if it is apparent that retention is the best option for the student, it also is clear that necessary interventions be implemented to support the academic, social/emotional and behavioral needs of the child. Unfortunately, the nature and

extent of counseling interventions related to the grade retention process is not readily evident in the professional school counseling literature, and therefore this study is being conducted to address to this shortcoming.

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this study was to identify elementary school counselors' attitudes about the importance and frequency of use of interventions to address the academic, personal/social and behavioral developments of students involved in the retention process. More specifically, relative levels of potential importance and frequency of use for the various practices presented were determined based on respondents' attitudes. The relevant variables, population, sampling procedures, research design/procedures, data analyses and methodological limitations for this study are presented in this chapter.

Relevant Variables

The foundation of this study was rooted in what school counselors identify as the most important and most frequently used school counseling interventions for students in the retention process. Four general categories (i.e., types) of elementary school counseling practice were investigated in this study: academic, personal, social, and behavioral. More specifically, academic development (AD) encompasses school counseling interventions intended to help students attain the skills, attitudes, and knowledge that support effective learning in school and across the lifespan; personal/social development (PSD) involves school counseling interventions intended to enable students to attain interpersonal skills, attitudes and knowledge that contribute to understanding and respect of self and others; and behavioral development (BD) encompasses school counseling interventions intended to help students understand how the interpersonal skills, attitudes, and knowledge are influenced by the environment (ASCA, 2005).

Moderator variables assessed included: (a) counselor gender, (b) counselor race/ethnicity, (c) counselor's type of school, (d) size of counselor's school, and (e) number of school counselors employed in the school. Gender was defined by respondent's self-report as male or

female. Race/ethnicity was defined by respondent's self-report as American Indian or Alaskan Native, Asian or Pacific Islander, Black, White, Hispanic or Multiracial. Type of school was the respondent's self-report of urban, suburban or rural, while size of school was respondent's self-report of the total number of students enrolled in the school at which the respondent is currently employed. Finally, number of school counselors employed by the school was respondent's self-report of the total number of school counselors employed at the school within which the counselor was employed.

The dependent variables in this study were the responding school counselors' intervention ratings of (a) importance and (b) relative frequency of use for/with students in the retention process. Importance ratings were self-reported on a scale of 1 (not at all important) to 5 (extremely important), whereas frequency ratings were self-reported on a scale of 1 (never) to 5 (almost always).

Population

The population for this study included current "professional" (i.e., currently credentialed and practicing) members of ASCA who were elementary school counselors at the time of the study. ASCA is a nonprofit organization founded in 1952 that currently has over 20,000 members. It provides professional development opportunities, research, publications, and advocacy services for ASCA members. ASCA also provides relevant information for administrators and parents to enhance understanding of the roles and responsibilities of school counselors. In regard to organizational philosophy, ASCA "supports school counselors' efforts to help students focus on academic, personal/social and career development so they achieve success in school and are prepared to lead fulfilling lives as responsible members of society" (ASCA, 2007, p.1).

ASCA membership is subdivided into five regions (Midwest, Southern, North Atlantic, and Western) and into five school setting levels (elementary, middle/junior. high, secondary, and post-secondary/supervisor). ASCA membership types include professional, retired, student, affiliate, and allied. Eligibility for professional membership includes (a) holding a masters degree or higher in counseling or closely-related field, (b) being credentialed as a school counselor in the United States, or (c) being employed as a counselor educator in a graduate program designed for school counselor preparation (ASCA, 2007). The population specific to this study included professional members of ASCA who were currently practicing elementary school counselors. (i.e., ACSA professional members, excluding school counselor educators)

Sampling Procedures

ASCA publishes an annual electronic membership directory accessible to its members per request. The *ASCA Membership Directory & Resource Guide* contains information provided voluntarily by its members, including member name, city, state, zip code, electronic mail (e-mail) address, work setting (elementary, middle, secondary, post-secondary, K-12 supervisor, college/university, counselor educator or other), and type of membership (professional, affiliate, student, or retired). For purposes of this study, invitations to participate were sent to those professional members having a listed e-mail address whose work setting was “elementary.” As of fall, 2007, 2,312 elementary school counselors listed in the *2007-2008 ASCA Membership Directory & Resource Guide* met the eligibility criteria for this study.

Resultant Sample

Fowler (1988, cited in Creswell, 2005) suggested confidence ranges for sampling variability in the *Sample Size Table* to guarantee a “rigorous” procedure. To ensure a 95% confidence interval that the sample mean will have a 50/50 population proportion split (i.e., variance) of “differentiating among the participants,” the sample size should be 336 (Creswell,

2005, p. 583, Czaja & Blair, 2005), based on the following desired sample number (dsn) calculation: $dsn = (1-n/N)(z^2 \times p \times q / d^2)$. Substituting, $dsn = (1-384/3,037)(1.96)^2 (.5)(.5) / (.05)^2 = (.874)(.9604 / .0025) = 336$.

A similar study having a similar research method and sampling frame (Bringman, 2004) resulted in a response rate that was approximately 18%, which is a lower response rate than what would be expected if conducted using other survey methods (i.e., face-to-face, mail, or telephone) (Dillman, 2007). Therefore, the population was “oversampled” to accommodate for the anticipated low response rate. That is, all 2,312 eligible ASCA members with listed e-mail addresses were invited to participate in the study. Further, attempt was made to follow Dillman’s (2007) recommended follow-up procedures (e.g., preliminary letter and reminders) and survey presentation strategies to enhance the response rate.

Survey Development

The survey for this study was Web-based (i.e., online). Most response options were presented in a “radio button” menu format to allow for only one response per item.

In the first section of the survey, participants were asked to rate possible school counseling intervention items presented relative to their importance. In the second section, participants were asked to rate the school counseling intervention items presented with respect to their frequency of utilization. The first and second sections were each subdivided into four counseling intervention domains: academic, personal, social, and behavioral.

In the third section, participants were asked to respond to two open-ended questions pertaining to possible discrepancies between their ratings of importance and frequency of utilization: (a) What factors in your school situation (if any) inhibit your use of the interventions you rated most important? (b) What factors in your school situation (if any) aid your utilization of the interventions you rated most important?

In the fourth section, respondents were requested to provide demographic information including (a) gender, (b) race/ethnicity, (c) size of school, (d) type of school, and (e) number of school counselors employed in the school. In order to enhance the validity of the researcher-developed survey instrument, a pilot study consisting of seven school counselors reviewed the survey to determine the appropriateness of the academic, personal/social and behavioral interventions included on the survey. The pilot study members were also asked to review the format of the survey draft to determine ease of use and potential ordering effects. A thorough review of related literature informed the decision-making process of survey-item selection and the pilot study. Feedback from the pilot study resulted in minor rewording of a few survey item stems to clarify that ratings were to be assigned regarding the development of the student's skills and not the skills of the school counselor. It also was necessary to reiterate the expectations for completing each section of the survey so that respondents understood that they were to rate intervention importance in the first section and frequency of use in the second section.

Research Procedures

A pre-notice letter (Appendix A) was sent via e-mail to 2,312 ASCA members whose membership classified as "professional" and who were listed as working in an "elementary" setting. The letter emphasized the purpose of the study, the need for the research, and the procedure for participation. Following the pre-notice letter a letter of invitation (Appendix B) to participate was sent via e-mail. The letter included a direct link to enable the respondent to access the Web-based survey. The opening (first) page of the survey website included an informed consent form requiring the participant to click on "I Agree" prior to proceeding to the survey. The informed consent form (Appendix C) reiterated the purpose and procedures, and explained participants' rights relative to the study. In order enhance response rate, a follow-up e-mail (Appendix D) was sent approximately three days and again six days (Appendix E)

following initial distribution of the invitation to participate (Dillman, 2007). Finally, a letter was sent thanking the invitees and the participants for their time (Appendix F).

Measurement Procedures

In sections one and two, survey respondents were requested to rate possible school counseling interventions in regard to perceived importance and frequency of utilization using a Likert-type scale. The survey items were organized by domain, each containing 4 to 6 items. In the third section, participants were requested to respond to open-ended questions that pertained to possible discrepancies between their importance and frequency ratings.

Participants selected their responses to the survey items by clicking the left-mouse button on a radio button from a menu. Responses to the open-ended questions were entered via keyboard.

Upon completion, respondents were instructed to click the “Submit” button. Once submitted, responses and data were stored in a database accessible only by the researcher. Contact information was provided for those participants interested in receiving a summary of the results of the study.

Data Analyses

Using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), item mean scores and standard deviations were calculated from responses to item importance and frequency of utilization ratings. An item reliability analysis was conducted to yield an alpha level for the survey items. Pearson product-moment correlations between importance and utilization ratings were computed for each counseling intervention (i.e., item). Finally, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted to determine if significant differences among the importance and frequency item means existed for each of the independent variables. An alpha level of $p = .05$ was used as criterion for statistical significance in all analyses.

Methodological Limitations

When making valid inferences from study data it is important that the researcher attempts to reduce error (Creswell, 2005). There are apparent limitations associated with survey methodology. Potential limitations include coverage, sampling and nonresponse error, technological incompatibilities and social desirability bias. Isaac and Michael (1995) suggested that survey methodological limitations might also include question misunderstanding and errors in item completion.

To reduce coverage and sampling error, a large sample of individuals from the ASCA membership roster who meet predetermined “expertise” criteria based on their history of involvement in the school counseling profession was selected to participate in the study. Further, although some nonresponse error was anticipated, every attempt was made to use rigorous procedures to encourage a large return rate for the survey (e.g., oversampling and follow-up reminders). Finally, an attempt was made to present clear and concise questions and response options based on the existing professional literature.

There are limitations relative to the proposed survey being Web-based. For example, it may be difficult to access current/active e-mail addresses for all members of the population sampled, and not all of the participants may have access to or feel comfortable with a computer, which may result in limited representativeness of the sample. However, invitations to participate only were sent to ASCA members who provided e-mail addresses; therefore, it was assumed that they were comfortable using computer-based technologies.

There are often more incomplete submissions or skipped items in Web-based surveys (Schmidt, 1997). To reduce errors in item completion and to assure that items were understood, care was taken to make the items and questions short, simple, unambiguous, informed (i.e.,

tapping into appropriate respondent knowledge), and easily understood (de Vaus, 1986, cited in Nelson, 1996).

CHAPTER 4 RESULTS

Presented in this chapter are the findings of a web-based survey to assess elementary school counselors' attitudes about interventions related to counseling children retained in grade. First, respondent demographics are presented, including data for gender, race/ethnicity, school setting, number of students served, and number of school counselors employed by school. Next, respondents' importance and frequency ratings of counseling interventions are analyzed, compared, and reported. Finally, the results of data analyses for significant differences among respondent subgroups are provided.

Respondent Demographics

The demographic characteristics of respondents who participated in the study are presented in Table 4–1. Forty (10.4%) of the respondents were male and 344 (89.6%) were female. The majority (N=330) of the respondents who participated in the study identified themselves as White (86.6%), 23 as Black (6%), 18 as Hispanic (4.7%), six as Multiracial (1.6%), three as Asian/Pacific Islander (.8%) and one as American Indian/Alaskan Native (.3%).

The school setting of the respondents was heterogeneous, and comprehensive in that 26.4% were employed in schools described as urban (N=102), 42.2% as suburban (N=163) and 31.3% as rural (N=121). Most respondents served a student body greater than 200 children. Specifically, 10 (2.6%) respondents reported they were responsible for a student body that ranged from zero to 200 children, 89 (23.1%) for a student body ranging from 201-400 children, 115 (29.8%) for a student body ranging from 401-600 children, and 172 (44.6%) for a student body of over 600 children.

Two-hundred and eighty two (73.6%) of the respondents reported being the sole counselor employed by the school, whereas 82 (21.4%) respondents indicated that the school in

which they worked employed two school counselors (including themselves), 9 (2.3%) reported that the school employed three school counselors, six (1.6%) indicated the school employed four school counselors, and four (1.0%) reported the school employed five or more school counselors.

Table 4–1. Respondents’ demographic characteristics

Factor	Frequency	Percent
Gender		
Male	40	10.4
Female	344	89.6
Race/Ethnicity		
American Indian or Alaskan Native	1	.3
Asian or Pacific Islander	3	.8
Black	23	6.0
White	330	86.6
Hispanic	18	4.7
Multiracial	6	1.6
School Setting		
Urban	102	26.4
Suburban	163	42.2
Rural	121	31.3
Number of Students Served		
0–200	10	2.6
201–400	89	23.1
401–600	115	29.8
600+	172	44.6
Number of Counselors Employed by School		
1	282	73.6
2	82	21.4
3	9	2.3
4	6	1.6
5+	4	1.0

Response Profile

In part one of the survey, 393 respondents rated the importance of 46 counseling interventions potentially related to the success in school of students retained in grade.

Respondents’ ratings of *importance* are presented in Table 4–2. The counseling interventions

with the highest item mean scores (i.e., greatest importance) for the importance ratings included *parent/guardian involvement* (4.49), *teacher consultation* (4.28), *student feeling/thought behavior identification/exploration* (4.25), *student positive self-appraisal* (4.18) and *student stress/anxiety management* (4.18). The items yielding the lowest importance item mean scores included *student memory skills* (3.08), *student metacognitive progress monitoring* (3.37), *student assertiveness skills* (3.37), *behavior modification plan development* (3.48) and *student test-taking skills* (3.65). The items yielding the smallest importance rating standard deviations (i.e., having the least diversity of responses) were *parent/guardian involvement* (.70), *teacher consultation* (.74) and *student feeling/thought/behavior identification/exploration* (.75). Conversely, those with the largest standard deviations were *student memory skills* (.97), *behavior modification plan development* (.97) and *student social awareness* (.96).

Table 4–2. Respondents’ ratings of importance ordered by response item means

Item number	Abbreviated intervention description	N	Item mean	Std. deviation
2	Memory skills	393	3.08	.97
4	Metacognitive progress monitoring	392	3.37	.93
13	Assertiveness skills	387	3.37	.86
18	Behavior modification plan	388	3.48	.97
3	Test-taking skills	393	3.65	.94
1	Organizational skills	394	3.67	.90
21	Attention regulation skills	388	3.73	.86
14	Social awareness	387	3.77	.96
16	Cooperation/teamwork skills	386	3.81	.88
11	Positive peer affiliations	393	3.83	.87
5	Goal-setting	392	3.88	.90
23	Self-control strategies	388	3.92	.86
12	Interpersonal skills	392	3.94	.85
17	Help-seeking skills	389	3.99	.84

Table 4-2. Continued

15	Conflict resolution skills	388	4.01	.94
8	Reframing unpleasant beliefs	395	4.03	.90
22	Motivation	386	4.03	.85
7	Emotion regulation	387	4.17	.87
9	Stress/Anxiety management	392	4.18	.77
10	Self-appraisal	393	4.18	.81
6	Feeling/Thought/Behavior Identification/Exploration	393	4.25	.75
19	Teacher consultation	386	4.28	.74
20	Parent/Guardian involvement	388	4.49	.70

In part two of the survey, 393 respondents rated the frequency of use of 46 counseling interventions related to success in school of students retained in grade. Respondents' *frequency of use* ratings are presented in Table 4–3. The counseling interventions with the highest item means (i.e., most frequent use) for intervention use frequency included teacher consultation (4.18), feeling/thought/behavior identification/exploration (4.09), parent/guardian involvement (3.96), student emotion regulation (3.86) and student conflict resolution skills (3.80). The frequency items yielding the lowest item mean scores included student memory skills (2.32), student metacognitive progress monitoring (2.63), student assertiveness skills (2.97), student test-taking skills (3.02) and student organizational skills (3.03). Conversely, the items yielding smallest standard deviations (i.e., least diversity among respondents) were student memory skills (.88), teacher consultation (.90) and student assertiveness skills (.92). Those with the largest standard deviations included reframing unpleasant beliefs (1.05), student test-taking skills (1.02), behavior modification plan development (1.00) and student help-seeking skills (1.00).

Table 4–3. Respondents’ ratings of utilization ordered by response item means

Item number	Abbreviated intervention description	N	Item mean	Std. deviation
25	Memory skills	387	2.32	.88
27	Metacognitive progress monitoring	384	2.63	.98
36	Assertiveness skills	382	2.97	.92
26	Test-taking skills	383	3.02	1.02
24	Organizational skills	386	3.03	.93
41	Behavior modification plan	385	3.11	1.00
44	Attention regulation skills	384	3.20	.97
40	Help-seeking skills	382	3.41	1.00
28	Goal-setting	385	3.44	.99
34	Positive peer affiliations	386	3.44	.98
45	Motivation	385	3.51	.99
31	Reframing unpleasant beliefs	386	3.53	1.05
39	Cooperation/teamwork skills	380	3.57	.99
37	Social awareness	384	3.59	1.01
46	Self-control strategies	382	3.65	.99
35	Interpersonal skills	382	3.70	.96
32	Stress/Anxiety management	384	3.76	.94
33	Self-appraisal	386	3.76	.97
38	Conflict resolution skills	383	3.80	.99
30	Emotion regulation	382	3.86	.96
43	Parent/Guardian involvement	383	3.96	.96
29	Feeling/Thought/Behavior Identification/Exploration	385	4.09	.93
42	Teacher consultation	384	4.18	.90

A reliability analysis was conducted to determine a standardized item coefficient alpha for both the importance and frequency of use scales. The resultant coefficient alphas are presented in Table 4–4. These coefficient alphas suggest very high internal consistency among the items in the respective subsets of items on the survey.

Table 4–4. Coefficient alpha reliabilities

Scale	Standardized item alpha	N	P-value
Importance scale	.9220	362	.001
Frequency scale	.9348	345	.001

Pearson product-moment correlations between the corresponding importance and frequency ratings were computed for each item (i.e., counseling intervention); they are shown in Table 4–5. An overall Pearson correlation between importance and frequency ratings was .549, which was statistically significant at the $p = .01$ level. The counseling interventions that yielded the highest inter-scale item correlations included student assertiveness skills (.573), student motivation (.565), behavior modification plan development (.556), student organizational skills (.539) and student memory skills (.533). Counseling interventions yielding the lowest inter-scale item correlations included feeling/thought/behavior identification/exploration (.415), student cooperation/teamwork skills (.427), parent/guardian involvement (.453), student emotion regulation skills (.472) and student help-seeking skills (.472).

Table 4–5. Correlations between importance and frequency ratings by intervention ordered from lowest to highest correlation

Abbreviated intervention description	N	Item correlation
Feeling/Thought/Behavior identification/exploration	383	.415 (**)
Cooperation/teamwork skills	377	.427 (**)
Parent/Guardian involvement	378	.453 (**)
Emotion regulation	374	.472 (**)
Help-seeking skills	381	.472 (**)
Teacher consultation	377	.472 (**)
Stress/Anxiety management	381	.478 (**)
Conflict resolution skills	379	.501 (**)
Attention regulation skills	379	.502 (**)
Social awareness	378	.510 (**)
Interpersonal skills	380	.513 (**)
Self-appraisal	385	.515 (**)

Table 4-5. Continued

Self-control strategies	377	.520 (**)
Test-taking skills	381	.522 (**)
Reframing unpleasant beliefs	386	.523 (**)
Positive peer affiliations	385	.523 (**)
Goal-setting	382	.524 (**)
Metacognitive progress monitoring	382	.530 (**)
Memory skills	385	.533 (**)
Organizational skills	385	.539 (**)
Behavior modification plan	380	.556 (**)
Motivation	378	.565 (**)
Assertiveness skills	376	.573 (**)

**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Post Hoc Analyses

The relationships among respondent demographic characteristics and respondent ratings were examined through *post hoc* analyses. Specifically, analyses were conducted to determine if there were significant differences among respondents' ratings of importance and frequency of use for interventions related to counseling students retained in grade based on selected respondent characteristics.

A multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted to determine if significant differences among the importance and frequency item means existed for each of the independent variables. The variable of school level was not included because it was used only to determine eligibility for the study (two cases were removed from the sample because they were ineligible respondents). Tables 4–7 and 4–8 present the MANOVA results for gender, race/ethnicity, school setting, number of students served and number of school counselors employed by school for the importance and frequency item subsets respectively.

Table 4–6. Multivariate analysis of variance for comparison of item mean ratings of importance based on gender, race/ethnicity, school setting, number of students served or number of counselors employed by school.

Source	df	SS	F	Significance
Gender	1	301.991	2.037	.155
Race/Ethnicity	5	246.773	.330	.895
School setting	2	172.620	.575	.564
Number of students	3	823.505	1.861	.136
Number of counselors	4	536.427	.895	.467

p<.05

Table 4–7. Multivariate analysis of variance for comparison of item mean ratings of utilization based on gender, race/ethnicity, school setting, number of students served or number of counselors employed by school

Source	df	SS	F	Significance
Gender	1	323.836	1.569	.211
Race/Ethnicity	5	432.129	.408	.843
School setting	2	250.361	.631	.533
Number of students	3	656.406	1.106	.347
Number of counselors	4	806.050	1.013	.401

p<.05

As shown in Tables 4–7 and 4–8, there were no statistically significant main effect differences for any of the demographic variables.

CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION

Investigated in this study were the attitudes of elementary school counselors about the importance and frequency of use of interventions related to counseling children retained in grade. This chapter presents the limitations of the study, responses to the research questions, implications, and recommendations for future research.

A review of the literature revealed that although there is research that offers recommendations for enhancing student success in school in general, specific literature for counseling students retained in grade is extremely rare. Therefore, this study used a web-based survey to determine the levels of importance and frequency of use of interventions elementary school counselors use to counsel students retained in grade.

Based on a review of research pertaining to student success skills, specific large- and small-group school counseling interventions have been determined to be effective in enhancing student achievement among elementary-aged children (e.g., Brigman & Webb, 2004, Hattie, Biggs & Purdie, 1996, and Masten & Coatsworth, 1998). The usual providers of those interventions, i.e., elementary school counselors, were determined to be the most appropriate population for the survey distributed in this study. Therefore, 2,312 credentialed and employed elementary school counselors were selected from the [national] *2007–2008 ASCA Membership Directory & Resource Guide* and invited to participate by accessing a web-based survey at which they could share their attitudes regarding interventions considered to enhance school success. Four hundred and one (17%) elementary school counselors actually participated in the study. Access to the survey was given over a two-week period in February, 2008 via e-mail to those who agreed to participate.

Generalizability Limitations

The resultant sample for this study may not be fully representative of all elementary school counselors. The members of the elementary school counselor population were selected from the ASCA membership, and it is possible that the attitudes of school counselors who were then members of ASCA differed from those who chose not to be members at that time. Further, some individuals who joined ASCA did not provide an e-mail address or chose not to be listed in its membership directory. Further, the results cannot be generalized to ASCA members who did not have access to and/or feel comfortable with the use of computers. Therefore, although this study presents the attitudes elementary school counselors hold regarding counseling students retained in grade, the results cannot be generalized to all elementary school counselors. However, overall, the sample was sufficiently large and diverse so as to represent a significant proportion of professional elementary school counselors.

The (anticipated) low response rate also limits the generalizability of the findings to some extent. Although rigorous research procedures were utilized to attract respondents from diverse settings (i.e., urban, suburban, and rural geographic regions), the overall response rate was only 17%. The potential population was intentionally oversampled to attempt to compensate for the anticipated low response. Therefore, although the sample was certainly of sufficient size for the purposes of this research, the results cannot be generalized to those individuals who received the invitation to participate but chose not to respond.

Post Hoc Analyses

Following the end of the data collection period, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted to determine if significant differences existed among the importance and frequency item means for each of the demographic variables (i.e., gender, race/ethnicity, school setting, number of students served, and number of school counselors employed by the

school). No statistically significant differences were found among the respective demographic category means for any of the importance or frequency item ratings. Therefore, it is appropriate to make summary comments for the entire sample without need to specify exceptions for elementary school counselors having particular characteristics or circumstances.

Research Questions

Survey methodology was utilized to explore elementary school counselors' attitudes about counseling students in grade. Through the use of survey methodology, trends can be determined through statistical analyses and implications can be rendered for outcomes and related research (Creswell, 2005).

The first research question addressed the level of agreement among elementary school counselors in their ratings of the *importance* of various school counseling interventions presumed to be beneficial to students retained in grade. Table 4–2 displays the respondents' ratings of importance for each of the possible interventions. Revealed from the data analyses was that all the item means were high relative to the top of the rating scale. Specifically, all of the intervention item means for importance were at or above 3.07 indicating that, on average, all of the respondents considered the school success interventions as *at least* "important" for counseling children retained in grade, which in turn suggests that all the interventions selected for the survey were considered to be pertinent for students retained in grade. The highest rated intervention for importance was *encouraging parent/guardian involvement*, a finding consistent with that of Masten and Coatsworth (1998) who reviewed research that investigated resilience and the effectiveness of parent/guardian involvement for enhancing student success in school. Their review suggested that parents' involvement and their beliefs about their child's success had a significant impact on the child's actual school success. *Teacher consultation* was the second highest rated intervention, which is consistent with the findings of Masten et al. (1998), as well

as Wang et al. (1994), all of whom indicated that helping foster a strong relationship between the teacher and his/her student can have a positive influence on the child's success. *Feeling/thought behavior identification/exploration* was the third highest rated intervention for importance. This finding is supported by cognitive-behavioral theory that holds that thoughts, beliefs, and attitudes determine subsequent emotion and behavior. Therefore, if a student's thoughts, beliefs and attitudes become more positive, then the student's emotion and behavior also will be influenced positively. Similarly, Zins et al. (2004) reviewed ten years of research and found that identifying and recognizing emotions was considered a self-awareness competency that influenced social-emotional learning positively and was consequently reflected in enhanced school performance. It also can be seen that interventions rated highly were diverse across the intervention categories of academic, personal, social and behavioral, which suggests that in general, elementary school counselors consider academic, personal, social and behavioral interventions all to be important components for enhancing success in counseling students retained in grade.

The counseling interventions having the least diversity of ratings (i.e., most agreement) for ratings of importance were *parent/guardian involvement* (s.d. = .70), *student feeling/thought/behavior identification/exploration* (s.d. =.75), and *teacher consultation* (s.d. =.74). Conversely, those counseling interventions with the greatest diversity of responses (i.e., least agreement) were *student social awareness* (s.d. =.96), *student memory skills* (s.d. = .97), and *behavior modification plan development* (s.d. =.97).

The second research question addressed the level of agreement among elementary school counselors in regard to their *frequency of use* of counseling interventions intended to benefit students involved in the retention process. Table 4–3 presents respondents' frequency ratings. The highest rated intervention for frequency was *teacher consultation*, the second highest

feeling/thought/behavior identification/exploration, and the third most frequently used intervention was *encouraging parent/guardian involvement*. Interestingly, *parent/guardian involvement*, *teacher consultation* and *feeling/thought/behavior identification/exploration* were rated among the top three rated items for both importance and frequency of use. However, respondent frequency ratings were lower overall than their corresponding ratings of importance for the same items. Rationale for this finding can be explained by information related to research question number three, which addressed the extent to which school characteristics affected the respondents' degree of utilization of the respective potential interventions. When asked which school factors inhibited the use of interventions rated as most important, a majority of respondents indicated lack of time and parent and teacher/administrator support as major factors impeding the use of interventions rated important. Interestingly, effective time management, parent and teacher/administrator support were indicated as factors that enhanced the school counselors' ability to utilize those interventions considered most important.

The intervention frequency of use item means were all below their corresponding importance means, which *might* suggest that there are various impediments to implementing the interventions considered most important. The largest discrepancies between importance and frequency ratings existed for *student social awareness*, *student help-seeking skills* and *student motivation*. Specifically, the *student social awareness* intervention was higher on the frequency list ordered by item means than on the importance list similarly ordered by item mean. Conversely, *student help-seeking skills* and *student motivation* interventions were higher on the item-mean-ordered importance list than on the item-mean-ordered frequency list. The individual needs of the students and the school setting and specific school counselor situation may influence the frequency of implementation of interventions related to counseling students retained in grade.

For example, one respondent explained that addressing the individual needs of students is impeded by an inability to remove students from classroom instruction and a lack of teacher support. Another suggested that there is limited school counselor time and/or resources to meet with students individually. Specifically, non-counseling related duties prevented the successful implementation of interventions considered. Specific needs of the student and/or student body also can influence the frequency of implementation of interventions rated as important. For example, a school that is comprised mostly of students falling on the autism spectrum might use positive behavior supports frequently, but might not rate the intervention high on importance as it pertains to counseling students retained in grade.

The interventions having the least diversity of responses (i.e., most agreement) for frequency of use were *student memory skills* (s.d. = .88), *teacher consultation* (s.d. = .90) and *student assertiveness skills* (s.d. = .92). Conversely, those interventions having the most diversity of responses (i.e., least agreement) included *reframing unpleasant beliefs* (s.d. = 1.05), *student test-taking skills* (s.d. = 1.02), *behavior modification plan development* (s.d. = 1.00) and *student help-seeking skills* (s.d. = 1.00). Although the most frequently used intervention was *teacher consultation*, the intervention rated as most important was *parent/guardian involvement* (4.49). Again, rationale for this finding is perhaps best explained by school counselors' reported difficulty inviting connection between parents/guardians and the school.

As shown in Table 4.5, the counseling interventions having the highest correlation between importance and frequency of use ratings included *student assertiveness skills* ($r = .573$), *student motivation* ($r = .565$), *behavior modification plan development* ($r = .556$), *student organizational skills* ($r = .539$) and *student memory skills* ($r = .533$). This suggests relatively strong relationships between the respondents' attitudes about these interventions and their reported frequency of use.

Counseling interventions having the lowest correlation between importance and utilization ratings included student *emotion regulation skills* ($r = .472$), *student help-seeking skills* ($r = .472$), *parent/guardian involvement* ($r = .453$), *student cooperation/teamwork skills* ($r = .427$), and *feeling/thought/behavior identification/exploration* ($r = .415$). Thus, although these are important interventions for elementary school counselors, their use frequency is only inconsistently associated with the importance attributed to them.

Implications and Recommendations

Although there have been extensive research reviews, including meta analyses, that have investigated the effectiveness of counseling interventions pertaining to student success skills (e.g., Hattie, Biggs & Purdie, 1996, Scruggs & Mastropieri, 1992, and Zins, Weissberg, Wang & Walberg, 2004), there has been little research about counseling students retained in grade. Therefore, knowledge of professionals' attitudes about the relative importance of interventions pertaining to counseling students retained in grade is a first step toward defining implications for theory, training and practice of school counselors, and development of educational policies pertaining to interventions prescribed for students experiencing learning difficulties. By surveying professional, credentialed elementary school counselors who have been trained and have developed skills to work with students retained in grade, understanding of the attitudes they hold can be used to inform current practices when combined with data on intervention effectiveness.

Investigating attitudes about counseling students retained in grade is important because this population may be at-risk for future, presumably more serious, academic and personal difficulties. For example, it has been shown that being retained in grade correlates positively with likelihood of dropping out of school (Roderick, 1994). The *Youth in Transition Study* reported that, "one grade retention increases the risk of dropping out [of school] by 40 to 50

percent and being two grades behind increases the risk by 90 percent” (p. 733). The implications for student dropout are significant because many dropouts are at increased risk for incarceration and/or dependence on social services and unemployment or low paying jobs (Christenson, Sinclair, Thurlow, & Evelo, 1995). Manifestations of these risks are costly to both the individual students and to society at large. Therefore, the findings from this study lead to initial implications for theoretical interpretation and application of personal, social/emotional, and behavioral interventions specific to counseling students retained in grade. When applying specific theories to case analysis, school counseling professionals working with students retained in grade can use the results of this study and use the ordered lists as one tool to inform practice to address, on a developmental level, the needs of students performing poorly in school.

The list of intervention importance ratings has particular significance for elementary school counselor practice. Because the credentialed, professional school counselors rated no one counseling intervention below “important,” it is appropriate for elementary school counselors to consider the interventions selected for the survey when counseling students retained in grade when evaluated in combination with data on impact because the literature pertaining to school success skills supports the findings of this study.

The results of this study, when considered in combination with available data on intervention impact, also are a first step toward developing implications for school counselor preparation. For example, all the interventions presented were rated relatively highly in regard to importance, and therefore might be included in school counselor (and perhaps teaching and/or educational leadership) academic program curricula. Thus, the list of intervention importance/utilization ratings for counseling students retained in grade highly endorsed by elementary school counselors could serve as a paradigm for preparation for school counselors,

especially in view of concurrent data on intervention impact. Accordingly, school counselor educators should review course content and offer curricula in a manner that prioritizes the interventions presented based on the ordered importance list that resulted from this study along with a review of current literature that examines the effectiveness of interventions pertaining to this population. For example, because the school success literature supports the interventions rated highly, counselor educators could provide instruction regarding parent/guardian involvement, teacher consultation and feeling/thought/behavior identification/exploration before presenting curricula that encourages memory skills instruction, metacognitive-progress monitoring, and assertiveness skills training when discussing the needs of children retained in grade. Counselor educators also can review the ordered frequency list in combination with the ordered importance list and data pertaining to effectiveness of school success interventions to determine which counseling interventions are being utilized most frequently by elementary school counselors with students retained in grade and which interventions are appropriate for future elementary school counselors to emphasize in working with this population.

Finally, knowledge of professionals' attitudes about counseling students retained in grade has implications for policy development and implementation. For example, this study determined that elementary school counselors rated *parent/guardian involvement* as the most important intervention for working with students in the grade retention process. Therefore, policymakers could support highly endorsed practices that are supported in the school success literature, including those intended to foster greater parent involvement. Because many of the findings of this study are supported by the school success literature, practices that enhance student success academically, socially, emotionally, and behaviorally again are key to preventing the need for retaining children in school. For example, Wang et al., 1994 determined that home

environment/parental support was one of the most influential contextual factors on student success in school. By providing the resources school counselors need to invite parent/guardian involvement students' academic performance and student attendance should improve as well as facilitate a reduction in delinquency, pregnancy and dropping out.

Knowledge about elementary school counselors' attitudes about counseling students involved in retention processes also is an initial step toward developing implications for research. This study gathered information in regard to interventions that elementary school counselors valued and used for counseling students retained in grade. The study had a sufficient sample size (n=401), but it should be replicated to determine if the results are consistent across samples. Other future studies might involve an expert panel, perhaps of school counselor educators, to determine (e.g., using Delphi methodology) a professional consensus rank order for those interventions deemed most important and/or used most frequently.

Additional future research also is needed to evaluate the success of the interventions when applied to specific populations (e.g., students at different grade levels). Future research also is needed to address familial and societal issues contributing to the situations in which students retained in grade find themselves, therefore influencing preventative and/or reactive interventions school counselors use to encourage a positive learning environment for all students.

Summary

This study investigated school counselors' attitudes about the importance of interventions for counseling students retained in grade and the degree to which they used those interventions. Ideally, through recognition and use of the information from this study, school counselors will have improved ability to address the needs of children who are struggling in school.

APPENDIX A
PRE-NOTICE LETTER

Dear ASCA Member:

My name is Tracy Leibach and I am a doctoral candidate in the Department of Counselor Education at the University of Florida. In a day or so you will be receiving an e-mail from me asking for your participation in a research survey about counseling children retained in grade. The purpose of the study is to determine what elementary school counselors consider to be important interventions for counseling children who have been retained in grade and to what degree they use them. I am writing in advance because many people like to know ahead of time that they will be contacted. I'd like to ask that you consider participating in this survey because it is an important project that may have benefits for all school counselors in the near future.

Thank you for your consideration, and I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Tracy Leibach, Ed.S., NCC
Doctoral Candidate
University of Florida
Department of Counselor Education
tskinner@ufl.edu
(352) 336-8505

APPENDIX B
COVER LETTER

Dear ASCA Member:

My name is Tracy Leibach and I am a doctoral candidate in the Department of Counselor Education at the University of Florida. For my dissertation I am conducting research to determine what elementary school counselors consider to be important interventions for counseling children who have been retained in grade and to what degree they use them.

I am writing to invite you to participate in a Web-based survey that will investigate the beliefs that elementary school counselors hold regarding this topic. Your name was selected from the *2007–2008 American School Counselor Association (ASCA) Membership Directory and Resource Guide*, and your expertise is essential to the success of this study. Your participation will contribute to knowledge that will benefit school counselors and the school counseling profession. If you are not currently a professional member of ASCA or are not working as an elementary school counselor, please disregard this message.

Should you agree to participate in the study you will be asked to complete a Web-based survey that should take approximately 10 minutes to complete. Your responses are completely confidential and will only be reported as part of group summaries. Upon request, I will provide a summary of the results of this study after its completion.

Your willingness to participate in this study is very important to me. If you agree to participate, please click on <http://www.CounselingTechnology.net/do.php?survey=s103829> or paste the URL into your web browser.

The Institutional Review Board of University of Florida, Gainesville, FL, has approved this research project. If you have any questions or concerns please contact me or my doctoral studies committee supervisor (Dr. Larry C. Loesch). Thank you for your consideration, and I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Tracy Leibach, Ed.S., NCC
Doctoral Candidate
University of Florida
Department of Counselor Education
tskinner@ufl.edu
(352) 336–8505

Larry C. Loesch, Ph.D., NCC
Dissertation Committee Chair
University of Florida
Department of Counselor Education
P.O. Box 117046
Gainesville, FL 32611–7046

352-392-0731, ext 225
LLoesch@coe.ufl.edu

APPENDIX C
INFORMED CONSENT

Title: Counseling Children Retained in Grade

Dear ASCA Member:

The purpose of this study is to identify elementary school counselors' attitudes about addressing the academic, personal/social and behavioral developments of students involved in the retention process.

The survey should take approximately 10 minutes to complete. You will not be asked to provide any personally identifying information. Your identity and responses will remain anonymous, and only the aggregate data will be used in reporting the results of this study. There are no anticipated risks for participation in this survey. Further, there are no direct benefits and no compensation to you for participating in the study. However, your participation will contribute to knowledge that will benefit school counselors and the school counseling profession. You may withdraw your consent to participate at any time.

If you have questions regarding the study, I can be contacted by telephone at (352) 336-8505 or e-mail at tskinner@ufl.edu. You may also contact my supervisor, Dr. Larry C. Loesch, a professor in the Department of Counselor Education at the University of Florida, 1215 Norman Hall, P.O. Box 117046, Gainesville, FL 32611-7046, by telephone at (352) 392-0731 ext. 225 or e-mail at lloesch@coe.ufl.edu.

If you have questions or concerns about your research participant rights in this study, you may contact the UFIRB Office, Box 112250, University of Florida, Gainesville, FL 32611-2250; telephone (352) 392-0433.

I appreciate your participation very much.

Sincerely,

Tracy Leibach, Ed.S., NCC
Principle Investigator

Please print a copy of this informed consent for your records. Click on the "Agree" button below to indicate your informed consent and to proceed to the survey.

APPENDIX D
FIRST FOLLOW-UP LETTER

Dear ASCA Member:

Recently you should have received an e-mail requesting your participation in a Web-based survey about counseling students retained in grade. If you have already completed the survey, please disregard this message—and thank you for your participation!

If you have yet to complete the survey, I would greatly appreciate it if you would do so. Your participation will contribute to knowledge that will benefit school counselors and the school counseling profession. Please click on <http://www.CounselingTechnology.net/do.php?survey=s103829> or paste the URL into your browser to review the informed consent and complete the survey. The survey should only take about 10 minutes to complete.

Thank you very much for your assistance with this important project.

Sincerely,

Tracy Leibach, Ed.S., NCC
Doctoral Candidate
University of Florida
Department of Counselor Education
tskinner@ufl.edu
(352) 336-8505

APPENDIX E
SECOND FOLLOW-UP LETTER

Dear ASCA Member:

Last week an invitation requesting your participation in a survey about counseling students retained in grade was e-mailed to you. If you have already completed the survey, please accept my sincere thanks for your participation. If not, please do so today. I am especially grateful for your help because it is only by asking people like you to share your attitudes that we can understand how to best serve students who experience grade retention.

Please click on <http://www.CounselingTechnology.net/do.php?survey=s103829> or paste the URL into your browser to review the informed consent and complete the survey.

Sincerely,

Tracy Leibach, Ed.S., NCC
Doctoral Candidate
University of Florida
Department of Counselor Education
tskinner@ufl.edu
(352) 336-8505

APPENDIX F
THANK YOU LETTER

Dear Colleagues,

I just wanted to thank you for taking the time to read my e-mails over the last couple of weeks about counseling students retained in grade. It is only by asking people like you to share your beliefs that we can understand how to best serve the students we counsel.

If you would still like to complete the survey, but did not have the opportunity to do so you can click on <http://www.counselingtechnology.net/do.php?survey=s103829> to complete it now.

Thank you again for your time and all you do to help children and their families.

Sincerely,

Tracy Leibach, Ed.S., NCC
Doctoral Candidate
University of Florida
Department of Counselor Education

tskinner@ufl.edu

(352) 336-8505

APPENDIX G
IRB SUBMISSION

UFIRB 02 – Social & Behavioral Research Protocol Submission	
Title of Protocol: Counseling Elementary Students Retained in Grade	
Principal Investigator: Tracy Leibach	UFID #: 35103560
Degree / Title: Ph.D. / School Guidance and Counseling Department: Counselor Education	Mailing Address: 8403 SW 46 th Road Gainesville, FL 32608 Email Address & Telephone Number: (352) 336–8505 tskinner@ufl.edu
Supervisor: Dr. Larry C. Loesch	UFID#:
Degree / Title: Ph.D. / Professor Department: Counselor Education	Mailing Address: University of Florida Department of Counselor Education P.O. Box 117046 Gainesville, FL 32611–7046 Email Address & Telephone Number: (352) 392–0731, ext 225 lloesch@coe.ufl.edu
Date of Proposed Research: From January, 2008 to April 2008	
Source of Funding (<i>A copy of the grant proposal must be submitted with this protocol if funding is involved</i>): N/A	
Scientific Purpose of the Study: The purpose of this study is to determine, through the use of a Web-based survey, elementary school counselors' attitudes about how to address the academic, personal/social and behavioral needs of students retained in grade.	
Describe the Research Methodology in Non-Technical Language: (<i>Explain what will be done with or to the research participant.</i>) Beginning January 2008, 2,513 elementary school counselors will be invited to participate in a web-based survey assessing their beliefs about interventions related to counseling elementary students retained in grade. The participants will be selected through use of the <i>ASCA Membership Directory & Resource Guide</i> , which publishes voluntary information provided by the members. The participants will be asked to rate counseling interventions (or items) on a Likert-type scale according to their importance and degree of utilization. Participants will also respond to three (3) open-ended questions regarding	

<p>counseling elementary students in grade and will complete a demographic questionnaire. From the data I hope to learn what elementary school counselors deem important and useful in counseling children retained in grade.</p>	
<p>Describe Potential Benefits and Anticipated Risks: <i>(If risk of physical, psychological or economic harm may be involved, describe the steps taken to protect participant.)</i></p> <p>There are no potential health risks to the participants in this study and the psychological risks are minimal. There are no direct benefits for participating in this study; however, the findings may be useful in learning how to best serve elementary students retained in grade.</p>	
<p>Describe How Participant(s) Will Be Recruited, the Number and AGE of the Participants, and Proposed Compensation:</p> <p>Participant's will be recruited through use of the <i>ASCA Membership Directory & Resource Guide</i> which is available to its members on an annual basis. All of the participants will be over the age of 18 and will be asked to review a letter of informed consent (attached). There is no compensation for participation.</p>	
<p>Describe the Informed Consent Process. Include a Copy of the Informed Consent Document:</p> <p>See attached letter.</p>	
<p>Principal Investigator(s) Signature:</p>	<p>Supervisor Signature:</p>
<p>Department Chair/Center Director Signature:</p>	<p>Date:</p>

APPENDIX H SURVEY

I have read the informed consent information for this study and agree to participate in accord with that information.

*****NOTE: The same items appear in two parts of this survey. Each part requests a different type of rating.*****

PART I:

DIRECTIONS: Please read the following statements. For items 1 through 23, please rate the *IMPORTANCE* of using each of the interventions to counsel elementary school **STUDENTS RETAINED IN GRADE**. Please indicate your response by clicking the radio button next to your response choice for each item.

ACADEMIC COUNSELING INTERVENTIONS

1. Counseling to enhance student ORGANIZATIONAL SKILLS

- Not at all important
- Fairly unimportant
- Important
- Very important
- Extremely important

2. Counseling to enhance student MEMORY SKILLS

- Not at all important
- Fairly unimportant
- Important
- Very important
- Extremely important

3. Counseling to enhance student TEST-TAKING SKILLS

- Not at all important
- Fairly unimportant
- Important
- Very important
- Extremely important

4. Counseling to enhance student PLANNING, MONITORING AND REPLANNING OF LEARNING STRATEGIES (i.e., metacognitive progress monitoring)

- Not at all important
- Fairly unimportant
- Important
- Very important
- Extremely important

5. Counseling to enhance student GOAL-SETTING

- Not at all important
- Fairly unimportant
- Important
- Very important
- Extremely important

PERSONAL COUNSELING INTERVENTIONS

6. Counseling to identify and explore student FEELINGS/THOUGHTS/BEHAVIORS

- Not at all important
- Fairly unimportant
- Important
- Very important
- Extremely important

7. Counseling to help student REGULATE EMOTIONS

- Not at all important
- Fairly unimportant
- Important
- Very important
- Extremely important

8. Counseling to help student REFRAME UNPLEASANT BELIEFS

- Not at all important
- Fairly unimportant
- Important
- Very important
- Extremely important

9. Counseling to help student manage STRESS/ANXIETY

- Not at all important
- Fairly unimportant
- Important
- Very important
- Extremely important

10. Counseling to enhance student SELF-APPRAISAL (e.g., self-efficacy, self-esteem and self-confidence)

- Not at all important
- Fairly unimportant
- Important
- Very important
- Extremely important

SOCIAL COUNSELING INTERVENTIONS

11. Arranging POSITIVE PEER AFFILIATIONS for/with student

- Not at all important
- Fairly unimportant
- Important
- Very important
- Extremely important

12. Counseling to enhance student INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

- Not at all important
- Fairly unimportant
- Important
- Very important
- Extremely important

13. Counseling to enhance student ASSERTIVENESS

- Not at all important
- Fairly unimportant
- Important
- Very important
- Extremely important

14. Counseling to enhance student SOCIAL AWARENESS (e.g., perspective taking, empathy, diversity appreciation and respect for others)

- Not at all important
- Fairly unimportant
- Important
- Very important
- Extremely important

15. Counseling to enhance student CONFLICT RESOLUTION SKILLS

- Not at all important
- Fairly unimportant
- Important
- Very important
- Extremely important

16. Counseling to enhance student COOPERATION/TEAMWORK SKILLS

- Not at all important
- Fairly unimportant
- Important
- Very important
- Extremely important

17. Counseling to enhance student HELP-SEEKING SKILLS

- Not at all important
- Fairly unimportant
- Important
- Very important
- Extremely important

BEHAVIORAL COUNSELING INTERVENTIONS

18. Developing BEHAVIOR MODIFICATION PLAN for/with student

- Not at all important
- Fairly unimportant
- Important
- Very important
- Extremely important

19. Counselor consultation with teacher(s)

- Not at all important
- Fairly unimportant
- Important
- Very important
- Extremely important

20. Encouraging parent/guardian involvement

- Not at all important
- Fairly unimportant
- Important
- Very important
- Extremely important

21. Counseling to enhance student ATTENTION REGULATION SKILLS

- Not at all important
- Fairly unimportant
- Important
- Very important
- Extremely important

22. Counseling to enhance student MOTIVATION

- Not at all important
- Fairly unimportant
- Important
- Very important
- Extremely important

23. Counseling to enhance student SELF-CONTROL STRATEGIES

- Not at all important
- Fairly unimportant
- Important
- Very important
- Extremely important

PART II:

DIRECTIONS: Please read the following statements. For items 24 through 46, please rate the *FREQUENCY* with which you *USE* each of the interventions to counsel elementary school **STUDENTS RETAINED IN GRADE**. Please indicate your response by clicking the radio button next to your response choice for each item.

ACADEMIC COUNSELING INTERVENTIONS

24. Counseling to enhance student ORGANIZATIONAL SKILLS

- Never
- Rarely
- Frequently
- Very frequently
- Almost always

25. Counseling to enhance student MEMORY SKILLS

- Never
- Rarely
- Frequently
- Very frequently
- Almost always

26. Counseling to enhance student TEST-TAKING SKILLS

- Never
- Rarely
- Frequently
- Very frequently
- Almost always

27. Counseling to enhance student PLANNING, MONITORING AND REPLANNING OF LEARNING STRATEGIES (i.e., metacognitive progress monitoring)

- Never
- Rarely
- Frequently
- Very frequently
- Almost always

28. Counseling to enhance student GOAL-SETTING

- Never
- Rarely
- Frequently
- Very frequently
- Almost always

PERSONAL COUNSELING INTERVENTIONS

29. Counseling to identify and explore student FEELINGS/THOUGHTS/BEHAVIORS

- Never
- Rarely
- Frequently
- Very frequently
- Almost always

30. Counseling to help student REGULATE EMOTIONS

- Never
- Rarely
- Frequently
- Very frequently
- Almost always

31. Counseling to help student REFRAKE UNPLEASANT BELIEFS

- Never
- Rarely
- Frequently
- Very frequently
- Almost always

32. Counseling to help student manage STRESS/ANXIETY

- Never
- Rarely
- Frequently
- Very frequently
- Almost always

33. Counseling to enhance student SELF-APPRAISAL (e.g., self-efficacy, self-esteem and self-confidence)

- Never
- Rarely
- Frequently
- Very frequently
- Almost always

SOCIAL COUNSELING INTERVENTIONS

34. Arranging POSITIVE PEER AFFILIATIONS for/with student

- Never
- Rarely
- Frequently
- Very frequently
- Almost always

35. Counseling to enhance student INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

- Never
- Rarely
- Frequently
- Very frequently
- Almost always

36. Counseling to enhance student ASSERTIVENESS

- Never
- Rarely
- Frequently
- Very frequently
- Almost always

37. Counseling to enhance student SOCIAL AWARENESS (e.g., perspective taking, empathy, diversity appreciation and respect for others)

- Never
- Rarely
- Frequently
- Very frequently
- Almost always

38. Counseling to enhance student CONFLICT RESOLUTION SKILLS

- Never
- Rarely
- Frequently
- Very frequently
- Almost always

39. Counseling to enhance student COOPERATION/TEAMWORK SKILLS

- Never
- Rarely
- Frequently
- Very frequently
- Almost always

40. Counseling to enhance student HELP-SEEKING SKILLS

- Never
- Rarely
- Frequently
- Very frequently
- Almost always

BEHAVIORAL COUNSELING INTERVENTIONS

41. Developing BEHAVIOR MODIFICATION PLAN for/with student

- Never
- Rarely
- Frequently
- Very frequently
- Almost always

42. Counselor consultation with teacher(s)

- Never
- Rarely
- Frequently
- Very frequently
- Almost always

43. Encouraging parent/guardian involvement

- Never
- Rarely
- Frequently
- Very frequently
- Almost always

44. Counseling to enhance student ATTENTION REGULATION SKILLS

- Never
- Rarely
- Frequently
- Very frequently
- Almost always

45. Counseling to enhance student MOTIVATION

- Never
- Rarely
- Frequently
- Very frequently
- Almost always

46. Counseling to enhance student SELF-CONTROL STRATEGIES

- Never
- Rarely
- Frequently
- Very frequently
- Almost always

What factors in your school (if any) *inhibit* your use of the interventions you rated most important? _____

What factors in your school (if any) *aid* your use of the interventions you rated most important? _____

Comments (if any): _____

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION:

I am a school counselor in an *elementary* school

- Yes
- No

What is your gender?

- Male
- Female

With which race/ethnicity do you identify?

- American Indian or Alaskan Native
- Asian or Pacific Islander
- Black
- White
- Hispanic
- Multiracial
- Other _____

In what type of locale is your school/primary work setting located?

- Urban
- Suburban
- Rural

How many students are currently enrolled in your school?

- 0–200
- 201–400
- 401–600
- 601+

How many school counselors are currently *employed* at your school (including you)?

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4
- 5+

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Born in 1975, Tracy Leibach grew up in New Jersey and moved to Naples, Florida at the age of nine, graduating from Naples High School in 1993. She graduated from the University of Florida cum laude in 1997 with a B.S. in psychology and a minor in education. In 1999, Tracy graduated with her M.Ed./Ed.S. in school counseling with eligibility for licensure in mental health counseling.

Upon graduation in December 1997, Tracy relocated to Texas and entered a career in human resources for a company headquartered in Dallas, TX. In May 2001, she returned to Gainesville, Florida and became employed by the Alachua County School District as an elementary school counselor where she worked with students grades K-5. Tracy's distinguished career has afforded her many opportunities including a presidency of the local counseling association, supervision of school counseling practicum and internship students, and the ability to chair several school-based committees.

In 2004, Tracy was admitted into the doctoral program in the Department of Counselor Education at the University of Florida, where she studied under nationally recognized counselor educator, Larry C. Loesch and completed her studies in 2008.