

Retaining Students in Grade:

Consequences for Florida

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Executive Summary

Retaining students in grade and using proficiency standards to determine students' progress through grades was intended to make schools accountable and increase academic achievement. Research evidence demonstrates that grade retention does not, in fact, improve achievement. Further, a student who has been retained stands a much greater chance of dropping out of school instead of persisting to graduation. Retaining students in grade is both expensive and ineffective, and there are effective alternatives to it. Abandoning this policy in favor of more productive and proven policies will save money and enhance the education and life chances of Florida's students.

Recommendations

This brief recommends that:

1. Florida legislators repeal the relevant section of Statute 1008 so that pupils' progression from grade to grade is disconnected from their FCAT scores.
2. Education policymakers abandon the policy of retaining students in grade because it fails the test of best evidence and cost-effectiveness.

The foregoing is a summary of a policy brief in the report *Reform Florida* (Education Policy Research Unit, April 2004). The complete policy brief is available on the Education Policy Studies Laboratory (EPSL) website at:

<http://www.asu.edu/educ/epsl/EPRU/documents/EPSTL-0401-114-EPRU.doc>

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