



March, 27, 2023

Dear Chairman Buckley and House Public Education Committee Members:

On behalf of the Texas Association of Community Schools (TACS) and the Texas Association of School Administrators (TASA), we respectfully provide this testimony in opposition to HB 3803.

Our members fully appreciate the different paces in which students learn and gain mastery of content. We understand maturity levels and other factors taken into consideration by parents as they enroll their child in school and encourage a partnership during the process. However, we are concerned with the provision in the bill that would expand grade levels that a parent could request that their child repeat a grade in which the child was enrolled during the previous school year from grades 1–3 to grades 1–8.

Education professionals understand the importance of a student's reading level by grade three and the future learning progress based on that pivotal year. After COVID, it was important to allow parents to help drive grade placement since many students had been learning in a home or hybrid environment. The advantages to the current grade levels in statute that a parent can request retention are that they are foundational years and teachers are appropriately certified to provide instruction on one campus.

Retention in the later grades could result in negative consequences e.g., a student who is not the same age as others in the same grade level being bullied or experiencing behavior challenges and frustration. In addition, middle school courses are stand alone. If a parent wants their middle school child to repeat an entire grade level because of struggles in one subject area, that student would also have to repeat all the other courses required for that grade with content they have already mastered. Other unintended consequences with the bill's provisions include retaking 8th grade courses that count for GPA purposes in high school (e.g., which grade goes on the high school transcript?) and UIL eligibility.

We seek clarification on the provision that includes the phrase "already satisfied graduation requirements" e.g., if a student already has a credit for Algebra I could the parent request that their child retake the course as they have not yet earned the total number of credits required for graduation?

According to research, repeating a grade is NOT always effective in keeping a student from dropping out of school as those students experience negative academic, social, and emotional outcomes over time. Studies show it can be effective prior to 3rd grade; however, retention at later grades does not prove to be as effective. Most studies recommend targeted intensive tutoring, expanded learning time, and supporting strong relationships between adults and students and show that these interventions produce better outcomes.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide input on HB 3803.

Sincerely,

Dr. Crystal White, TACS

Dr. Casey McCreary, TASA

Retention Studies:

- Fruehwirth, J. C., Navarro, S., & Takahashi, Y. (2016). How the timing of grade retention affects outcomes: Identification and estimation of time-varying effects. *Journal of Labor Economics*, 34(4), 979-1021.
- Moser, S. E., West, S. G., & Hughes, J. N. (2012). Trajectories of math and reading achievement in low achieving children in elementary school: Effects of early and later retention in grade. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 104, 580-602.
- Wu, W., West, S. G., & Hughes, J. N. (2008b). Short-term effects of grade retention on the growth rate of Woodcock-Johnson III broad math and reading scores. *Journal of School Psychology*, 46, 85-105.
- Crothers, L. M., Schreiber, J. B., Schmitt, A. J., Bell, G. R., Blasik, J., Comstock, L. A., Greisler, M. J., Keener, D., King, J. A., Lipinski, J. (2010). A preliminary study of bully and victim behavior in old-for-grade students: Another potential hidden cost of grade retention or delayed school entry. *Journal of Applied School Psychology*, 26(4), 327-338.
- Hughes, J. N., Kwok, O., & Im, M. H. (2013). Effect of retention in first grade on parents' educational expectations and children's academic outcomes. *American Educational Research Journal*, 50(6), 1336-1359.
- Eide, E. R., & Goldhaber, D. D. (2005). Grade retention: What are the costs and benefits? *Journal of Education Finance*, 31(2), 195-214.
- <https://edtrust.org/resource/holding-students-back-an-inequitable-and-ineffective-response-to-unfinished-learning/>
- <https://www.edweek.org/leadership/what-does-research-say-about-grade-retention-a-few-key-studies-to-know/2022/11>