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Advocates of social promotion point to the fact that retention "...is a practice that little or no justification in terms of what we know about its effects." One review of the research on retention concluded that it "would be difficult to find another educational practice on which the evidence is so unequivocally negative." In that same article, it states that children who are promoted with their peers do equally well or better than those who were retained. Some of the negative effects of retention borne out by research are :

- (1) it does little to encourage learning
- (2) increases the drop-out rate
- (3) injures self-esteem.

Another criticism of retention based on failure of standard test taking is that testing of this sort is a "one-shot" event. It does not take into account acceptable or good performance as seen by the teacher over time. It is claimed that the teacher knows best the students' capabilities.

The debate about retention and social promotion is a painful issue. Generally speaking, it is emotionally painful for a student to be held back. There is bruising of their self image and self-esteem. There is pain also in promoting a student who is not ready, because the student is well aware that he or she is not performing academically on par with peers. Whether a student is unable to perform or by choice is not performing, there is a hit on their entire social existence. Pain will be inflicted on all those involved with the student who is retained. Parents, teachers, counselors, and younger students must cope with older students in their classrooms. Often the second grade teacher does not visualize the students they retain moving into middle or high school. They are older and more mature, yet forced to remain with younger more immature students. History has proven time and time again, these students would rather give up than be subjected to these kinds of situations. Now that our drop-out rates have declined, this move will definitely have an adverse affect on those numbers in the coming years.

As in any heated debate or controversy, sometimes the common goals held by both sides get lost in the heat of discussion. Unquestionably one of the common goals is to provide people, methods, processes and environments that foster the academic advancement of students so that they can enter the world enabled to take care of themselves and be contributing members of society. What is at issue is how do we achieve this goal? We need to advocate for practices which promote early intervention to prevent the necessity of having to make a hard choice at the end of an academic year. Some of the interventions which have been successful throughout the country need to be examined. The old saying "prevention is the best medicine" still applies today. There are many, many ways in which the community can assist teachers and schools with the task ahead. The task is not impossible, but it does require a sensitive and caring community ready to roll up their sleeves and get down to the real work of educating all of our children. We need to focus on the fact all children deserve the opportunity to succeed. When we limit opportunity, we limit their ability to be successful. In this educational process, access to opportunity is the main reason for the gaps that exist today. It allows for the education of some

and the "missed-education" of others. Somewhere in their lives retained or socially promoted students have missed their opportunity to excel. We need to examine more closely where that opportunity came in their education journey and it is there that the real work must begin. In any quality assurance plan, one must find out where the problem began. Once the problem is pin-pointed, it is only then that a solution can be attained. Until that occurs, the problem will continue to persist until someone comes up with something that might work or might not work. Is this what we want for our children in this great city? If not, when are we going to find out why so many children (particularly African American children) in this city need to be faced with the retention question. Throughout this city and across this nation our schools have mission statements that say ... all children can learn ... so why are we concerned with this foolish issue. If all children can learn ... go ahead and prove it! Give educators what they need to get the job done. Listen to the experts (teachers), not the congressional assembly. Most of them have never taught one class!

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Sabrina Barfield of American Red Cross, Northwest North Carolina Chapter outlined community responsibility. "American Red Cross provides mass shelter, mass feeding and bulk distribution of food following a disaster," she said. "The Red Cross staff makes arrangements for volunteers or staff to handle food service operations in buildings selected for shelter. For example, in our area, all of the schools and some of the churches have been selected. Then staff that handles the food or school personnel and members of a church group and volunteers assist with the designated shelter(s). In addition, American Red Cross assists with food, clothing, shelter, medicine and household items following a disaster."

Sabrina Barfield stated that "the church participation can be a significant accomplishment and goal for the community. It can be

used as a facility for preparation of good. Designated disaster workers drive to the facility, load food up and are given a route to take food to feed the people." For any church who is interested in becoming a possible site as a designated facility, please contact Sabrina Barfield at (336)724-0541.

Is the community Disaster Prepared Conscious?

Honestly, have we placed our attention on being prepared when information is available to assist us in our personal life to eliminate distress? And, are we familiar with services that render assistance when we are confronted with disaster?

In closing, information shared has been only to enlighten and inform. Also, I thank all volunteers who give their hearts in making a difference when it counts!

LLOYD Presbyterian Church "127 Years of Service"



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