

PURE FACT SHEET

How the CPS Promotion Policy has Hurt Students

Since 1996, CPS has retained, or held back, more than 100,000 3rd, 6th, and 8th grade students whose standardized test scores were below a certain cut-off point. After PURE filed a discrimination complaint against the policy in 1999, CPS began to include classroom grades and attendance in the promotion decision. But instead of using these other criteria as multiple measures, which testing experts recommend, the policy uses them as *multiple barriers*. Here are some reasons why this policy hurts students.

- 40 years of educational research has found that retention is risky and leads to higher dropout rates.¹

The most current research finds that students retained in the first grade do worse than expected both academically and emotionally. In later years, retained students may improve at first if they are given special remediation and intervention assistance, but even that improvement disappears after three years. Retention at any grade increases the student's risk of dropping out.

- Research in Chicago found that retained students were 25% more likely to drop out by age 17.²

A multi-year study of CPS's student promotion policy found that retention increased the chances of a student dropping out by age 17 by 25%, and the chances of the student dropping out by age 19 by 29%.

The study concluded that “students with very low achievement were even less likely to graduate than before the policy was implemented....Racial gaps in school completion also grew after implementation of the (promotion) gate as dropout rates improved among all but African-American students....In addition, the very high dropout rates among students already old-for-grade who failed the eighth grade test suggest that the combined effects of the gates at third, sixth, and eighth grade may be more adverse than that of the single gate at the eighth grade.”

- African-American and Hispanic students are more likely to be retained and also to drop out.

According to a Chicago Public Schools report, “Promotion and Retention Rate by Race and Year for Students Enrolled in Summer School 2002-2008,”³ African-American students were retained at a rate five times that of white students, and Latino student were retained at a rate 2.2 times higher.

According to State of Illinois school report cards,⁴ African-American students were 1.3 times more likely to drop out than white students, and Hispanic students were 1.35 times more likely to drop out.

1. <http://erc.northcarolina.edu/docs/publications/socialpromo.pdf>
2. <http://ccsr.uchicago.edu/publications/p69.pdf>
3. <http://pureparents.org/data/files/retentionreport09.pdf>
4. <http://webprod.isbe.net/ereportcard/publicsite/getsearchcriteria.aspx>