

Candace

From: Special Ed Advocate [newsletter@wrightslaw.ccsend.com] on behalf of Special Ed Advocate [newsletter@wrightslaw.com]
Sent: Tuesday, February 24, 2009 6:08 AM
To: candace@cflparents.org
Subject: "Waiting to Fail" Instead of Teaching a Child to Read

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"Waiting to Fail" Instead of Teaching a Child to Read

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In This Issue:

[Preventing the Downward Spiral in Reading](#)

[Another Year in the Same Grade is NOT a "Gift"](#)

[Get an Evaluation by an Expert](#)

[Teaching Your Child to Read](#)

[Wrightslaw Way Blog](#)

Dear Candace,

Your child has difficulties early, with red flags especially in language areas - reading, spelling, writing.

Often the school's solution to this problem is to retain the child while they continue to do the same thing with him, waiting for a different outcome.

"Waiting to Fail" Has Been Discredited For Decades

Retaining kids in hopes that "maturity" will cause them to learn to read, write and spell is not the answer.

[In this issue](#) of the [Special Ed Advocate](#), Pam Wright addresses a mother's concern when the school wants to retain her son. Pam answers this mother's questions about retention by focusing on the real issue, teaching a child to read.

The Bottom Line: Don't allow the school to retain your son. This will damage him. Insist that the school use a research based reading program that is implemented by a highly skilled, [trained](#)





[No Offense: But It Is Alarming That So Many Children Are NOT Learning to Read](#)

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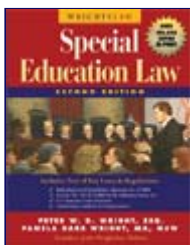
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[reading teacher.](#)

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Preventing the Downward Spiral in Reading

First, read this article: [Preventing Early Reading Failure.](#)

The only way you can prevent the downward spiral described in this article is to:

- educate yourself
- try to educate the educators (although you should expect resistance from some)
- get a comprehensive psycho-educational evaluation on your son by an evaluator who has expertise in [dyslexia.](#)



Please read articles about learning to read and teaching children to read on these pages:

[Reading at Wrightslaw](#)

[Doing Your Homework](#)

Retention is not an Appropriate Intervention

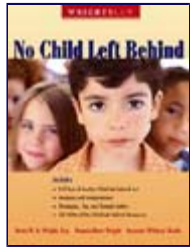
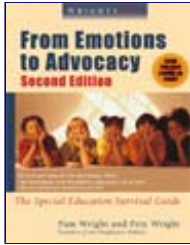
Despite clear evidence that **retention does not work** - and that it **damages children** - some school districts continue to use this outmoded policy.

You need to educate yourself before you can advocate for your child.

[back to the top](#)

Another Year in the Same Grade is NOT a "Gift"

Go to the [Retention and Social Promotion](#) page. Download and read these articles:





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[Position Statement on Student Grade Retention and Social Promotion](#) from the National Association of School Psychologists (NASP).

[Grade Retention: Achievement and Mental Health Outcomes](#) by Gabrielle E. Anderson, Angela D. Whipple, and Shane R. Jimserson, published by the National Association for School Psychologists.

"Often it is thought that the 'gift' of another year in the same grade will give the child reinforcing instruction as well as provide another year for the development of grade level educational skills. However, educational research fails to support grade retention as an effective intervention. In fact, grade retention has been associated with a host of negative outcomes on a variety of levels."



- Research: Retention is Ineffective, Maybe Harmful
- Impact of Retention on Student Mental Health
- Why Retention is a Failed Intervention
- Alternative Actions

Make copies of these articles for the members of your child's team. They support your position that retention is **not an appropriate intervention**, and often damages vulnerable children.

Pam says, *"I am shocked that schools are still proposing to retain children when they haven't evaluated the child to determine why the child is struggling in reading, writing and spelling - the classic signs of a language learning disability."*

Read the complete article ["Waiting to Fail" Instead of Teaching a Child to Read.](#)

[back to the top](#)

Get an Evaluation by an Expert

You don't want to insist that the school test him - the outcome of a school evaluation is predictable. Some staff don't want to evaluate him because they can see the writing on the wall. Others still believe in the discredited "Wait to Fail" theory.

A [comprehensive evaluation](#) is the only way to



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proceed.

A thorough evaluation by an expert in the private sector will give you a roadmap to use for years. The evaluation **will describe your child's strengths and weaknesses, specifically what needs to be done to address his problems, and what will happen if the school continues to drag their feet.**

What will happen if the school doesn't take appropriate action?

You child will continue to struggle and will fall further behind. In a year or two, the school will finally evaluate him - he'll probably be in third or fourth grade. After this belated evaluation, they will propose a special ed program that will not remediate his problems, will not teach him to read, and will not help him catch up with his peers. He is likely to be emotionally damaged by the process.

[back to the top](#)

Teaching Your Child to Read

Assume you get this private sector evaluation and the evaluator concludes that your son does have a language learning disability and needs a specific program of remediation. Your problems are not over, and may have just begun.



Do not assume that special educators know how to teach children to read. Most special education programs do not teach aspiring teachers how to teach reading. A special educator may have graduated with an "overview" of reading but no real training in any [research based reading program](#).

Speech language pathologists and reading specialists write to us, saying how sad they are when a student goes into special ed because they knew that child will **NEVER LEARN TO READ**. After all these years, I am still astounded by these emails.

I checked the curriculums at several schools that teach special educators. I found very little emphasis on teaching children to read, although this problem is shared by most students in special ed.

You also need to be strong, determined and persistent. Your child cannot advocate for himself - he needs you to take on this job.

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Bottom Line: Don't allow the school to retain your son. This will damage him. Insist that the school use a research based reading program that is implemented by a highly skilled, trained reading teacher.

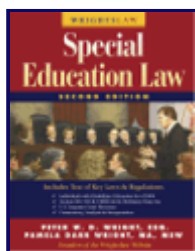
[No Child Left Behind: Emphasis on Reading](#)

[back to the top](#)

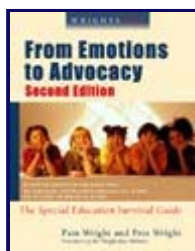
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"Thanks for the trustworthy information and support you provide through the Wrightslaw web site and newsletter. You helped our family act when we needed to - we are thriving now."

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