



## Tips for Parents: Flunking

**If a teacher says that your child needs to repeat a grade, be sure you know the facts.**

**Flunking doesn't help students learn.** When students of the same ability are compared, those who are flunked show lower academic achievement than those who are allowed to advance with their classmates. Flunking seems to have exactly the opposite effect from its desire goal.

**Being flunked makes students feel bad.** Students who are held back feel ashamed because they think of themselves as failures. They experience teasing from classmates and often have a harder time making social adjustments. These attitudes do not help students learn better.

**Students who have been flunked are more likely to drop out of school.** Being flunked increases a student's chances of dropping out by about 30 percent when compared to similar students who move ahead with their classmates. Being flunked twice virtually guarantees that a student will drop out of school.

**The older the student, the worse the effects of flunking.** Teachers and administrators often say that they have seen students improve after they have been held back. Unfortunately, improvement usually occurs only in the early grades. After grade three, flunking does not seem to help. In addition, any improvement a child makes by repeating an early grade tends to disappear as the child enters later grades.

**If you need to speak to school officials, here's what you can say:**

**"I don't think flunking will help my child do better in school."** You can use any of the reasons why flunking doesn't work to convince the teacher or principal.

**"The National Association of Elementary School Principals opposes flunking."** After reviewing research, the group decided that flunking deprives students of appropriate social relationships, places children at risk of dropping out of school, and damages self-esteem and confidence.

**"Flunking won't provide the special assistance by child needs."** Schools usually do not supplement the policy of flunking with additional instructional programs. Without the right kind of attention, your child may merely repeat the same mistakes.

**"My child should not be judged solely on the basis of a standardized test."** Teachers and principals may cite scores from standardized tests as a reason for having a child repeat a grade. But because students have different patterns of achievement, these tests are not always a reliable measure of potential.

**“I don’t think a transition class will help prepare my child for first grade.”** A teacher may suggest that your child attend a transition class between kindergarten and first grade. Research shows, however, that children who attend these classes are no better prepared than they were before the class.

**Be active at the school level.**

**Add your voice to the decision-making group.** Many schools have committees that review the cases of students who may be held back. If your school has such a committee, ask to be included in meetings where your child is discussed so that you can have a say in your child’s academic future. If there is no review committee, suggest that such a group might help administrators, teachers, and parents to provide better educational experiences for students.

**Speak out for alternative approaches.** There are ways other than flunking to assist students with low achievement. If techniques such as master teaching, adaptive education, team teaching, cooperative learning, and peer tutoring are currently in place at your child’s school, ask that your child be given access to these methods. If not, speak out for such programs.

**Make sure the school knows your child needs help.** Screening programs can help teachers identify students who need help before they are forced to stay back a grade. Early intervention can prevent flunking. Programs that may already be available at your school include Head Start, Chapter 1, after-school tutoring, summer school, and remedial classes.

For more information:

**Web articles:**

National Association of School Psychologists  
Position Statement on Student Grade Retention and Social Promotion  
[http://www.nasponline.org/information/pospaper\\_graderetent.html](http://www.nasponline.org/information/pospaper_graderetent.html)

Retención y promoción de grado: Información para los padres  
[http://www.nasponline.org/resources/translations/retention\\_spanish.aspx](http://www.nasponline.org/resources/translations/retention_spanish.aspx)

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