

## Plant the Seed, Grow a Reader: Avoid “Holding Back” Later.



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Dr. Stanley's "Plant the Seed. Grow a Reader!" and the Reading Calendar are monthly features of the Department of Childhood Education, University of North Florida, 4567 Saint Johns Bluff Road, South, Jacksonville, FL 32224 [nstanley@unf.edu](mailto:nstanley@unf.edu), 904-620-1849.

**By, Nile Stanley, Ph.D.  
Chair, Childhood Education**

Sweet April showers  
Do spring May flowers.  
Thomas Tusser (1524?–1580)  
*A Hundred Good Points of Husbandry (1557)*

As the end of the school year approaches, some parents are confronted with making the decision whether to promote or retain a child. Being far behind academically and having reading problems are the most frequent reasons for retention. Does holding a child back help? Recent research findings are mixed. Some studies show that at the end of the repeated grade, retained students score somewhat lower on achievement tests than similar children who were promoted to the next grade. On the other hand, blanket social promotion policies have frequently produced illiterate high school graduates. It is clear, though, that retention alone does not increase achievement. Remediation in basic skills is needed, not just another year repeating lessons in the same grade with possibly the same teacher. The alternative of moving the child to the next grade can be considered if special services and extra learning time can be provided.

Parents can provide ways to help the child who progress slowly:

- Ask next year's teacher to explain the expectations for the upcoming grade. Get an early start by reviewing skills (i.e. multiplication tables, spelling, sight words, etc.) over the summer.
- Build background of experience by taking your child on trips to local museums, historical sites, parks, and stores. All experiences have the potential to become literacy events.
- Set aside 15 minutes or more each day just for family reading and writing. Create a mini learning center complete with library books, magazines, audio tapes, coloring books, educational games, paper, and pencils. Visit the library weekly.

**You Can Plant Seeds of Greatness and Grow a Reader! If you just, try, try, and try again!**