



MANHATTAN INSTITUTE FOR POLICY RESEARCH

Press Release

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*New Report Finds*

## Being Held Back Does Not Have the Negative Impact on Students That is Currently Feared

### ***New report shows impact of retention and remediation policies in Florida***

**New York, NY:** Being held back is not as bad as you may think. New research on Florida's successful test-based promotion policy reveals that low-performing students who were held back in the third grade and given academic remediation did better in the long run than those who were promoted. The longstanding practice of "social promotion"—moving low-performing students to the next grade level for socialization reasons—is common nationwide.

On Thursday, April 12, 2012, the Manhattan Institute's Center for State and Local Leadership will release a new report, ***The Benefits of Florida's Test-Based Promotion System***, by MI senior fellow Marcus A. Winters. Winters's research demonstrates that a test-based promotion policy, structured similar to one used by Florida, improves student performance relative to social promotion. Third graders retained within Florida's system substantially outperform their socially promoted peers in both reading and math. The sustained effect of this retention and remediation policy lasts through the seventh grade, which is as far as the data can currently be tracked.

These results contrast with popular attitudes and previous research on social promotion purporting to show that grade retention has strong negative consequences for later academic outcomes. Most of the studies cited by opponents of test-based promotion policies do not use methods that ensure that the treatment and control groups in a study are identical in every way. This is an important process to take into account before making such causal interpretations of research findings.

Retention and remediation policies have been in effect for several years in Florida, New York City, and Chicago; they were recently adopted by state legislatures in Oklahoma, Arizona, and Indiana; as many as 13 other states, including Colorado, Iowa, Mississippi, New Mexico, North Carolina, Tennessee, and Wisconsin, are considering similar legislation.

**To speak with the author or obtain a copy of the report please contact Raymond Niemiec at 646-839-3335 or by email at [rniemiec@manhattan-institute.org](mailto:rniemiec@manhattan-institute.org)**

**Marcus A. Winters** is a senior fellow at the Manhattan Institute and an assistant professor at the University of Colorado in Colorado Springs. He conducts research and writes extensively on education policy, including topics such as school choice, high school graduation rates, accountability, and special education. His research has been published in the journals *Education Finance and Policy*, *Economics of Education Review*, *Teachers College Record*, and *Education Next*. His op-ed articles have appeared in numerous newspapers, including *The Wall Street Journal*, *Washington Post*, and *USA Today*, and he is often quoted on education issues. Winters received his B.A. in political science from Ohio University in 2002, a Ph.D. in economics from the University of Arkansas in 2008.

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