## Repeating a school year is sometimes suggested as an intervention strategy for students who are not performing as well as their peers at school with the belief that a further twelve months at the same year level will give the student an opportunity to catch up or mature. However, research evidence encourages caution when considering repeating a student and suggests that repeating a year should not be a stand-alone intervention.

## **Decision making for repeating a year level**

**Guidelines for repeating a year level**

The decision to approve or not approve whether a student repeats a year level is made by the school principal. However, it is important that a collaborative approach is taken to making these decisions by sensitively discussing with parents (and the student if they are of appropriate age) other educational options/strategies and supports that the school could offer instead of repeating. For example, the adjustments that could be made to the student’s educational program and parent engagement. In addition, the principal should explain to parents the implications to the student’s allocation of state education if repeating a year level is approved.

When making the decision to approve a student repeating a year level, principals should consider the student’s best interests, including factors such as the student’s age, academic performance, aptitude, ability and development, maturity, social and emotional wellbeing, attitude, peer group support and dependence.

If parents are not satisfied with the decision that has been made by the principal, they can raise their concerns using the Department of Education’s [Customer complaints management](https://ppr.mpe.qed.qld.gov.au/pp/customer-complaints-management-procedure) process.

## **What the research says**

Repeating a year level refers to students remaining in the same school year level they studied in the previous year. It is mostly requested by concerned parents or teaching staff at the school, with the perception that repeating a year level will provide an opportunity for students to improve their academic achievements.

Whilst it may create an opportunity for students to catch up academically, research shows repeating a year level may not necessarily lead to positive outcomes for students. The following are some conclusions drawn from research:

* Most students who repeat do not catch up academically. Initial improvements in academic performance and confidence often disappear in the medium to long term and repeating a year may, in some cases, have a negative effect on academic results and motivation.
* For some students, the experience of repeating contributes to poor mental health outcomes, as they may feel a sense of shame, stigma and loss of self-esteem. It could also lead to poor long term social outcomes, as students need to develop new social relationships.
* Repeating could also contribute to a negative attitude to school and learning, and decrease the likelihood that a student will participate in post-secondary education.
* Repeating does not tend to decrease behavioural problems or improve social integration in the long term and children who repeat may, in some cases, show higher rates of behavioural problems compared with non-repeating students.
* Decisions to repeat a year often bias certain groups of students. Boys and students from low socio-economic backgrounds are more likely to repeat a year compared to other students with similar academic performance and personality characteristics.
* It may be more effective to adopt alternative strategies to repeating a year, such as targeted interventions to support areas of academic and/or social difficulties, tailored classroom instruction and support, and parental engagement. Such strategies should be put in place regardless of whether the student repeats a year. Parental engagement can lead to greater success for children in school and may include helping their child to have routine, structure and time management for out of school activities including homework.

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