

## A Sample Retention Letter

Below is an example of how you can use story-telling in letters that document events and describe your concerns. The parents sent this letter after the school proposed to retain their child.

This letter describes the parents' **concerns** about the proposal to retain their child. The tone of the letter is polite and businesslike. The letter does not blame school personnel or criticize. Instead, the parents describe their **concerns** about their child's lack of progress, their **concerns** about the school's proposal to retain her, and propose a solution to the child's problems.

IDEA emphasizes the need to **consider the parent's concerns when developing the IEP**:

### Development of the IEP

In developing each child's IEP, the IEP Team ... shall consider ... the strengths of the child ... the concerns of the parents for enhancing the education of their child ... the results of the initial evaluation or most recent evaluation of the child; and ... the academic, developmental, and functional needs of the child." (20 U.S.C. 1414(d)(3)(A); [Wrightslaw: Special Education Law, 2nd Edition](#), page 103)

As you read this letter, pay attention to your emotional response. Do you see the parents' perspective? Do you agree with their proposed solution?

A story-telling letter is a way to make your case to people who have power to make decisions and open the door for better services for your child.

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**Steve & Suzy Parent**

2325 Any Street

Penzi, MA 12345

987-654-3210

December 17, 2010

Mr. Jack Tingsly  
Principal  
JP ELeментарy School  
1212 Maple Lane  
Penzi, MA 12345

RE: Emma Parent – Grade Retention Notification

Dear Mr. Tingsly:

I am writing in response to your letter dated November 25, 2010. In your letter you state: *“I am certain that you have discussed concerns regarding Emma’s progress to date”*; *“we are carefully considering the most appropriate grade placement for Emma”*; and *“My final decision regarding placement will not be made until June, when a complete review will be finalized”*.

At the end of your letter there is a portion that I am to detach and return to you which states: *“I have read this letter and agree to offer my child, as well as the JP Elementary School, my complete cooperation.”*

I appreciate your letter advising me about Emma’s lack of progress in the general curriculum. I am in receipt of Emma’s Term 2 report card which indicates that Emma needs improvement in all areas of the curriculum – most of which are 2-, indicating marginal improvement despite the interventions of her IEP. I asked Emma’s teacher if she was being graded on the general curriculum or her IEP goals, and she informed me that she was grading Emma on her IEP. This demonstrates that Emma is not making satisfactory progress (2-) towards her IEP goals and clearly Emma is not meeting the minimum standards of the curriculum benchmarks set forth by the Massachusetts Education Reform Act of 1993 you reference in your letter.

This is especially concerning to me as Emma’s mother given her average intellectual ability; in fact her Verbal Comprehension Index is in the 79th percentile.

I realize, as stated in your letter, Emma’s potential grade retention is due to concerns due to her inability to meet the curriculum frameworks. Ms. Reid, Emma’s teacher, informed me of her recommendation to retain Emma at our last team meeting.

Given the over forty years of research on Dyslexia, my child’s intellectual ability, information provided by our family to the District coupled with all of the evaluations, the only rationale that my child is not progressing appropriately is not due to lack of research, available interventions and/or my child’s potential to learn. It speaks rather to the resources available in the District and/or school and the District’s ability to provide my child with a Free and Appropriate Public Education.

It appears that Emma’s IEP is not designed for educational benefit and/or the services and supports that are being provided to Emma are not sufficient to remediate her deficits while simultaneously allowing Emma to meet the curriculum frameworks. In essence, what you have outlined in your letter clearly indicates that Emma has been denied a Free Appropriate Public Education.

I am unaware of any research that states children with reading disabilities benefit from grade repetition. In fact, according to the Massachusetts School Psychologists Association, there are many consequences with regards to grade repetition which states *...“retained children have more problematic social and emotional function, more conduct problems, lower self-images and negative images about school”*.

In addition, the section that I am to sign and return caused me some concern. It implies that by not signing I am not willing to offer my child and/or the school my cooperation. I assume that by signing and “agreeing” I am willing to accept any decision you make. I cannot do this as I will be abdicating my rights as a parent and as the parent of a minor child, I will be abdicating Emma’s rights and entitlements provided under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, The Rehabilitation Act of Section 504, and American with Disabilities Act as well as her Civil Rights.

The decision of placement is a “team” decision, not the decision of one person. It is my understanding that one person cannot make a unilateral decision outside of the team process. Although you have not been a member of Emma’s team before, I would welcome you to attend any and all meetings and become a member of Emma’s team, if you so desire.

Although I am opposed to retaining Emma in first grade, I welcome the opportunity to meet with the special education team to learn how the District proposes to provide Emma more intensive services to remediate her reading deficits and/or the possibility of an alternative educational setting which would enable Emma to progress and master the general educational curriculum while receiving intensive instruction to close the gap between her and her nondisabled peers. The ABC School located in Palmer, MA (Chapter 766 approved) is one such option with an excellent reputation.

It is my understanding the academic program at ABC is designed to support children with reading difficulties, Grades 1-8. Teaching methods are direct, multi-sensory, and individualized for specific learning styles. Remedial in nature, the program provides grade-appropriate content in each academic area. Remediation is taught using the Orton-Gillingham approach, and all ABC teachers are trained in this area, thus providing valuable continuity for children curriculum-wide.

If you would like, on behalf of the District, I would be happy to apply to the ABC School to help speed up the process so as not to delay Emma from receiving the appropriate services she requires. What is clear, Emma is significantly behind her peers and all the research I have reviewed places a high emphasis on early intensive intervention.

In closing, it is apparent that a meeting should be held without delay as to how the staff at the JP ELementary School can meet my child's needs. I am not willing to wait until June, thus having Emma fall further and further behind.

I look forward to hearing from you as to how we can make Emma's educational experience a beneficial one and await your direction with regards to applying to the ABC School. Also, thank you very much for advising me of Emma's failure to make progress in meeting the State standards; I am confident that either with additional specialized instruction and/or an alternative placement, Emma will finally be able to meet those standards.

Sincerely,

Suzy Parent,

cc:Emma Parent – Special Education File

**Letter Written by:**

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[Using Story Telling Letters to Persuade](#)

[12 Rules for Writing Great Letters](#)

[The "Letter to the Stranger"](#)

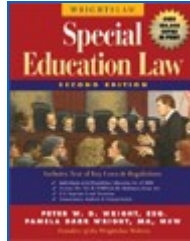
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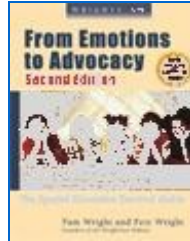


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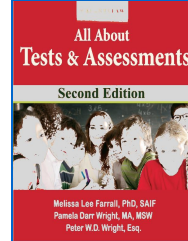
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