



K-3 Reading

Policy Summary

ExcelinEd Policy Toolkit - 2019

The goal of a Comprehensive K-3 Reading Policy is to ensure all students read on grade level by the end of third grade. The policy ensures early identification of struggling readers and establishes intensive reading intervention for K-3 students who need more reading help to become successful readers. The policy ends social promotion, requiring third grade students to demonstrate sufficient reading skills for promotion to fourth grade. Retention can provide struggling readers the additional time they need to catch up with their peers and be successful in fourth grade and beyond.

WHY IS A K-3 READING POLICY NECESSARY?

In 2011, the Annie E. Casey Foundation released a report titled, *Double Jeopardy: How Third-Grade Reading Skills and Poverty Influence High School Graduation*. The study analyzed the reading scores and graduation rates of nearly 4,000 students over 10 years. The study found that:

- Children who are not reading proficiently in third grade are four times more likely to drop out of high school.
- Poor black and Hispanic students who are not proficient readers are eight times more likely than proficient readers to drop out of high school.

It's not only an education problem; it's an economic and social problem too.

- According to the National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL), 7 out of every 10 prison inmates can't read above a fourth-grade level.
- High school dropouts are not eligible for 90 percent of the jobs in the economy. And, dropouts make up nearly half of all heads-of-households on welfare.

It is imperative to address the illiteracy problem in our schools early; our students' futures depend on it.

“The third-grade reading guarantee is going to be the very heart of education. If you aren't reading proficiently by the end of third grade, you are going to struggle throughout the rest of your school years.” ~ Senator Peggy Lehner, Ohio

WHERE IS THE EVIDENCE?

Eight states with comprehensive K-3 reading policies have made greater improvements than states without such policy on NAEP Fourth Grade Reading.



Florida being 4th in the nation for overall fourth grade reading performance and Mississippi being 2nd in the nation for learning gains.



RESEARCH

Key Findings from Guido Schwerdt, Martin West & Marcus Winters, [The Effects of Test-based Retention on Student Outcomes Over Time: Regression Discontinuity Evidence from Florida, 2017](#)

- Retention in third grade reduced retention probabilities in future years.
- After six years, the achievement gains from retention remain substantial when compared to peers in the same grade.
- Retention in third grade increased students' high school GPAs and led them to take fewer remedial courses.

Key Findings from Marcus A. Winters, [The Costs and Benefits of Test-Based Promotion, 2018](#)

- The threat of retention led to statistically significant and substantial increases in student math and reading performance within the third grade, prior to the retention decision.
- On average, treatment under the policy led to significant and substantial gains in eighth grade math and reading test scores and increased the probability that students earn a regular diploma.
- The cost of test-based promotion for both taxpayers and treated students is substantially less than suggested in prior research.

WHAT IS A COMPREHENSIVE K-3 READING POLICY?

A successful policy includes early identification, parent involvement, teacher training, intensive reading intervention, retention as a last resort and more intensive intervention in the event of retention.

Fundamental principles include:

1. **Statewide teacher training on the science of reading and job-embedded training through reading coaches** to ensure all teachers have the knowledge and skill to teach reading to all students, including students with severe reading difficulties such as dyslexia.
2. **Ensuring Teacher Preparation Programs are preparing teacher candidates** to exit the program with the knowledge of scientifically-based reading instruction and the skill to deliver such instruction to teach all students to read.
3. **Reprioritize existing local, state and federal funds** to support policy implementation. Then, if needed, provide new funding to effectively implement the policy.
4. **Early literacy screening** is administered in grades K-3 within the first 30 days of school to identify students with potential reading difficulties.
5. **Parent notification** for any student identified with a reading difficulty in K-3.
6. **Individual reading plans** are developed with the parent, prescribing evidence-based reading interventions aimed at removing the reading deficit.
7. **Student progress is monitored** more frequently for students identified as having reading difficulties.
8. **Home reading strategies or programs** are provided to parents to support their child at home.
9. **Interventions during the school day and before/after school.**
10. **Summer Reading Camps for all K-3 students** struggling in reading and potentially facing retention.



11. **Retention for students severely below grade level** and unable to demonstrate sufficient reading skills for promotion to fourth grade.
12. **Multiple opportunities** are provided to third grade students to demonstrate reading skills required for promotion to fourth grade, so one test on one day isn't the determining factor.
13. **Good cause exemptions** to retention are provided that recognize the special needs of some students with disabilities, English language learners, and students who were previously retained.
14. **More intensive interventions with a highly effective teacher** in the event of retention.

Comprehensive K-3 Reading Policy	Some Fundamental Principles with Intervention for Promotion	Some Fundamental Principles	Minimal Fundamental Principles with Intervention for Promotion	Minimal Fundamental Principles
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