



K-3 Reading

Policy Summary

ExcelinEd Policy Toolkit - 2017

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?

Since the start of the policy, reading scores for students have soared. According to the 2015 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), Florida students outperformed the national average in every subgroup for fourth grade reading:

- Florida fourth grade readers outperform the national average by more than half a grade level;
- Florida's African American fourth grade readers outperform their peers by more than half a grade level;
- Florida's Hispanic fourth grade readers outperform their peers by one and a half grade levels;
- Florida's low-income fourth grade readers outperform their peers by a grade level; and
- Florida's students with disabilities in fourth grade perform better than their peers by almost two full grade levels.

And for retained third grade students:

- Research by Marcus Winters, Martin West & Guido Schwerdt showed that retained students in Florida made significant progress compared to students who just met the cut score for promotion, and retained students continued to outperform those who were promoted through 8th grade in reading *and* math, when compared to peers in the same grade.



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. **Early literacy screening** is administered in grades K-3 within the first 30 days of school to identify students with potential reading difficulties.
2. **Parent notification** for any student identified with a reading difficulty in K-3.
3. **Individual reading plans** are developed with the parent, prescribing research-based reading interventions aimed at removing the reading deficit.
4. **Student progress is monitored** more frequently for students identified as having reading difficulties.
5. **Home reading strategies or programs** are provided to parents to support their child at home.
6. **Interventions during summer or before/after school** are provided to students struggling in reading or potentially facing retention.
7. **Job-embedded training to current teachers and pre-service teachers** to ensure all teachers have the knowledge and skills to teach reading to all students, including students with severe reading difficulties.
8. **Reprioritize existing local, state and federal funds** to support policy implementation. Then, if needed, provide new funding to effectively implement the policy.
9. **Retention for students severely below grade level** and unable to demonstrate sufficient reading skills for promotion to fourth grade.
10. **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.
11. **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.
12. **More intensive interventions with a highly effective teacher** in the event of retention.