



### Third Grade Literacy-Based Promotion Policy

In 2002, Florida's third grade literacy-based promotion policy was signed into law by Governor Jeb Bush. Simply, Florida requires students to demonstrate their ability to read before entering 4th grade. Florida educators now retain students who cannot read and provide intensive instruction until they can read well enough to be successful in the fourth grade and beyond, where the rigors of reading in the content areas increase.

Under the policy, a third grade student scoring at the lowest level on the statewide reading assessment must be retained in the 3rd grade, unless the student is eligible for a good cause exemption. There are two performance-based good cause exemptions and four status-based good cause exemptions.

- **Performance-based** include demonstrating reading proficiency, through meeting expectations as established by the State Board of Education, on an alternative standardized reading test or through a test-based student portfolio.
- **Status-based:**
  - English language learners who have had less than two years of instruction in an English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) program
  - Students with disabilities whose Individual Educational Plan (IEP) shows that it is not appropriate for them to take the statewide reading assessment
  - Students with disabilities who take the statewide reading assessment and whose IEP or 504 Plan states that they have received intensive intervention in reading for more than two years but who still show a deficiency in reading and who were previously retained in kindergarten through grade 3
  - Students who have received intensive intervention in reading for two or more years but who still have a deficiency in reading and who have already been retained in kindergarten through grade 3 for a total of two years

**Prevention of Third Grade Retention:** The 2002 law also requires schools to notify any parent whose child is a struggling reader in grades K-3, including what kinds of interventions their child will receive to address their reading difficulties, and that their child may be retained in 3rd grade if the student continues to struggle in reading. The school must develop individual progress plans for any K-3 student with a reading deficiency, and provide intensive literacy instruction that is different from what the child has already received. This intensive instruction must be provided to all K-3 students at risk of retention as identified by the district or statewide assessment system.

**Students retained must be provided more intensive interventions** using effective instructional strategies to improve the student's specific reading deficiency. The district is required to:

- Provide summer reading camps
- Provide a minimum of 90 minutes of daily, uninterrupted, scientifically research-based reading instruction
- Provide students with a highly-effective teacher as determined by student performance data and performance evaluations
- Provide written notification to the parent that his/her child has not met promotion requirements, and the reasons the child is not eligible for a good cause exemption. The notification must also describe the proposed interventions that will be provided
- Provide parents the option of a mentor, supplemental tutoring, or a "Read at Home" plan including participation in parent workshops and regular parent-guided home reading, and
- Implement a policy for the midyear promotion for any student who can demonstrate mastery of third grade skills and beginning of the year fourth grade skills and ready to be promoted to 4th grade.

**Results:** Since the start of literacy-based promotion, reading scores for all Florida students, but especially for low-income and minority students have soared. Since 2001-2002, the number of Florida 3rd graders scoring at the lowest level has *declined by 41 percent*. The percentage of African-American and Hispanic students scoring at the lowest level has *declined by 37 percent and 46 percent* respectively.