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MEMORANDUM

TO: District School Superintendents

FROM: Betty Coxe

DATE: March 24, 2003

SUBJECT: **TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PAPER RELATED TO THIRD GRADE STUDENT PROGRESSION**

Section 1008.25, Florida Statutes (Public schools student progression; remedial instruction; reporting requirements), prohibits social promotion and requires districts to set standards that students must meet to be promoted to a higher grade. The law focuses accountability on reading proficiency at the end of third grade demonstrated by scoring at Level 2 or higher on the FCAT. The law provides six exceptions to this mandatory retention for good cause, that include demonstrating an equivalent level of proficiency through a portfolio of student work or on an alternative assessment as approved by the State Board of Education.

The intent of this legislation is to ensure that any student who still has a *substantial* reading deficiency at the end of third grade is provided more time and additional intensive remedial instruction to acquire the fundamentals of the most basic skill of reading. In fourth grade and beyond, the instructional focus shifts from *learning to read* to *reading to learn*. After third grade, text becomes substantially and progressively denser, syntax more complicated, vocabulary more sophisticated, comprehension more demanding, and the need for fluency more vital. Students need a sound foundation in reading for this more difficult work. A substantial reading deficiency, regardless of the reason that is causing it--even a learning disability, limited English proficiency, or a disadvantaged background--needs to be addressed and corrected before the student can be expected to successfully move on to the more difficult work of the higher grades.

The State Board of Education adopted policies regarding the alternative assessment and the student portfolio for third grade promotion at the January 21st meeting. Our staff continues to develop and identify resources to assist schools and districts in implementing the statutory requirements regarding student progression. Information will be disseminated soon regarding regional meetings to be held in April to provide additional assistance regarding third grade student progression.

If you have questions or need additional information regarding student progression, please contact Mike Tremor or Mary Jo Butler. If you need information regarding strategies for teaching reading, please contact Ruth Gumm-Shearon.

BC:mjbo

Enclosure

cc: Assistant Superintendents for Instruction
Elementary Supervisors
Elementary School Principals
Exceptional Student Education Program Directors
English for Speakers of Other Languages Directors
Student Services Directors
Dropout Prevention Coordinators