Third Grade Reading Progression 2002-2003

Background

The Florida Legislature enacted requirements that prohibit social promotion with specific requirements regarding promotion from third grade that focus on the student's reading proficiency. 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.

Statutory Authority

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 Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT). The law (section 1008.25(6)(b)1-6, Florida Statutes) provides the following six exceptions to this retention for good cause:

1. limited English proficient (LEP) students with less than two years in an English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) program
2. students with disabilities whose individual educational plan (IEP) indicates participation in FCAT is not appropriate
3. students who demonstrate acceptable level of performance on an alternative standardized reading assessment approved by the State Board of Education
4. students who demonstrate proficiency in Sunshine State Standards in reading through student portfolios
5. students with disabilities who participate in FCAT, still demonstrate deficiency in reading after more than two years of intensive remediation, and were previously retained in kindergarten, first, second, or third grade
6. students who still demonstrate deficiency in reading after two or more years of intensive remediation and were previously retained in kindergarten, first, second, or third grade for a total of two years.

Paper Number: FY 2003-8

March 2003
Bureau of Instructional Support
and Community Services

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FLORIDA
DEPARTMENT
OF EDUCATION

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PAPERS are produced periodically by the Bureau of Instructional Support and Community Services to present discussion of current topics. The TA Papers may be used for inservice sessions, technical assistance visits, parent organization meetings, or interdisciplinary discussion groups. Topics are identified by state steering committees, district personnel, and individuals, or from program compliance monitoring.

Purpose

The purpose of this technical assistance paper (TAP) is to provide school districts with information essential to the implementation of these requirements and provide clarification regarding third grade student progression effective for the 2002-2003 school year.

Questions and Answers

Retention

1. Is a third grade student exempt from retention if he or she has not taken the FCAT as a result of absence or other reason?

No, a third grade student is not exempt from retention if he or she does not take the FCAT. If a student is absent due to illness during the administration of the FCAT, there are opportunities to make up the test. The Sunshine State Standards reading sessions of the FCAT are to be completed by the end of Day 2 of testing. (The original schedule required both 50-minute sessions to be completed on Day 2; however, due to the high-stakes nature of Grade 3 Reading, districts were provided the option of completing Session 1 on Day 1 and Session 2 on Day 2.) Make-up testing may begin on Day 2 of the 10-day testing window and may continue through Day 10. The Norm Referenced Test (NRT) Reading Session (50 minutes) is scheduled to be administered on Day 8; make-up testing for the NRT may occur on Days 9 and 10.

If the student has missed both the regular and the make-up administration of the FCAT, the district must determine by alternative assessment or portfolio assessment whether the student is reading at a level of proficiency that would ensure that the student is prepared for more advanced work of the next grade before the student can be promoted. This level of proficiency must be at least equivalent to Level 2 on the third grade reading FCAT. Parents should be assured that missing the FCAT due to illness will not automatically result in retention nor will it ensure promotion.

2. Is a student who transfers into the district in fourth grade subject to possible retention in third grade?

No, if a student transfers into the district in the fourth grade and evaluation of records from the transferring district validates placement in the fourth grade, the student would not be subject to the third grade retention requirements. Consistent with section 1003.02(1)(a), Florida Statutes, each school district is responsible for evaluating a transfer student's level of performance and placement in the appropriate grade. The school district must ensure that the student has the necessary skills, particularly in reading, to be successful in fourth grade and beyond.

3. When will the results of the FCAT be available?

The results of the Grade 3 FCAT will be available during the first week of May. Districts and schools can expect to receive printed lists of student scores similar to those received in 2002. Electronic versions of the student scores will be available to districts by May 16.

Good Cause Exemption: General

4. Is promotion through a good cause exemption considered a regular promotion? How is it "coded" on the student data base?

On the Student End of Year Status format, students must be reported for "Grade Promotion Status" that includes "A—promoted to a higher grade without meeting levels of performance for pupil progression based

on limited circumstances for exceptions or good cause," "P—academically promoted to a higher grade," and several other codes. All students coded "A" must also be coded in "Grade Promotion Status: Good Cause Exemption," and that code reflects the six exemptions. Therefore, all students promoted due to good cause exemptions will be reported using a different promotion code and can be tracked and categorized for reporting. This will enable the Department of Education to analyze district and school data for compliance with this legislation. However, students promoted under a good cause exemption for alternative assessment or student portfolio have demonstrated the levels of proficiency for promotion, and this should be considered a promotion for all other purposes.

5. **Two of the good cause exemptions to retention address students with previous retentions in grades K-2. Does a student whose previous retention(s) include third grade also qualify for a good cause exemption?**

   Yes.

6. **How should a student who appears to be making adequate progress throughout his or her school career but unexpectedly scores a Level 1 on the third-grade reading FCAT be handled?**

   Some of the good cause exemptions are designed specifically to accommodate this situation. The student can be promoted for good cause if the student demonstrates that he or she has met the levels of performance for pupil progression through an alternative assessment or student portfolio. All the procedures for good cause must be followed.

Good Cause Exemption: Limited English Proficient Students (LEP)

7. **What role does the LEP Committee have regarding the retention of a third grade LEP student who has a substantial reading deficiency?**

   As required in State Board of Education Rule 6A-6.0902, FAC, an LEP Committee is to be convened to review a student's progress in overcoming persistent deficiencies in performance and, therefore, should be involved in planning appropriate remediation activities for LEP students. The LEP Committee can also facilitate the use of appropriate good cause exemptions, which include the alternative assessment and the use of a student portfolio, from third grade retention. However, the decision to retain an LEP student who has a substantial reading deficiency must be made consistent with the requirements of section 1008.25(6), Florida Statutes. Some of the current State Board of Education rules regarding the role of LEP Committees will need to be revised to reflect this new state law.

8. **Can a third grade LEP student who is proficient in his or her home language be retained if he or she scores Level 1 on the third grade FCAT?**

   Yes. The district school board may exempt an LEP student from mandatory retention as provided in section 1008.25(6)(b), Florida Statutes, if the student has had less than two years of instruction in an approved English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) program. Students with more than two years in an ESOL program are eligible for all other exemptions, including alternative assessment and student portfolio.

9. **What constitutes two years in an ESOL program for student progression purposes?**

   For this purpose, two years means no less than a total of two full school years as measured from the date the student is classified as LEP. (See LEP Date of Classification data element, FDOE Student Automated Reporting System.)

Good Cause Exemption: Students with Disabilities

10. What students with disabilities should participate in the FCAT?

The decision regarding a student with disabilities' participation in the FCAT is made by the individual educational plan (IEP) team based on whether the Sunshine State Standards are appropriate for the student. Rule 6A-1.0943, FAC, Statewide Assessment for Students with Disabilities, provides the following further guidance:

"(1)(a). . . . Students may be excluded from statewide or district assessment programs if the following criteria are met:

1. The student's demonstrated cognitive ability prevents the student from completing required coursework and achieving the Sunshine State Standards as incorporated by reference in Rule 6A-1.09401, FAC, even with appropriate and allowable course modifications, and
2. The student requires extensive direct instruction to accomplish the application and transfer of skills and competencies needed for domestic, community living, leisure, and vocational activities."

The majority of students with disabilities should participate in the FCAT as instruction in the Sunshine State Standards is appropriate, and these students must be provided access to the general curriculum.

11. Are students with disabilities who participate in the FCAT and have never been retained and for whom the Sunshine State Standards are appropriate held to the same retention requirements as other third grade students?

Yes, consistent with the intent of this law, these students need more time and the continued provision of effective special education services to be prepared for the more difficult work of the next grade and beyond. As with all third grade students, the law requires the identification of students with substantial reading deficiencies, the provision of appropriate intensive reading instruction, and written notification to parents.

12. For students who are visually impaired and are braille readers who score at Level 1 on the FCAT, what good cause exemptions should be considered?

Since the Sunshine State Standards for Special Diploma are not appropriate for these students, the other good cause exemptions should be considered, particularly the use of a student portfolio.

13. For some students with disabilities, it is difficult to determine which standards (Sunshine State Standards or Sunshine State Standards for Special Diploma) are appropriate by the third grade. Can these students participate in one or both portions of the FCAT?

Yes, all efforts should be made to ensure that students with disabilities have access, as appropriate, to the general curriculum and the standard statewide assessment program (FCAT). All third grade students with disabilities must be assessed in the areas of reading and math either through the FCAT, an ESE alternate assessment, or a combination thereof. Students' IEPs may reflect a combination of instruction in both standards and participation in the FCAT in order to provide these students with appropriate opportunities to be exposed to the general curriculum.

14. If the IEP of a third grade student with disabilities reflects instruction in both the Sunshine State Standards and the Sunshine State Standards for Special Diploma and the student participates in the reading portion of the FCAT, will this student meet one of the good cause exemptions from third grade retention?

Yes, assuming that the IEP describes the students' functioning levels and instruction appropriately as it will be required as evidence for the use of the good cause exemption #2. For these students, participation in the

reading portion of the FCAT may be appropriate at this time, but it is likely that, ". . . . The student's demonstrated cognitive ability prevents the student from completing required coursework and achieving the Sunshine State Standards as incorporated by reference in Rule 6A-1.09401, FAC, even with appropriate and allowable course modifications and the student requires extensive direct instruction to accomplish the application and transfer of skills and competencies needed for domestic, community living, leisure, and vocational activities." The term cognitive ability refers to the student's general level of intellectual functioning.

15. In good cause exemption #5, the law says that a student with a disability who has had remediation for more than two years and has been retained is eligible for a good cause exemption. Does the student have to have been identified as a student with a disability for two years, or would a student qualify for a good cause exemption if he or she was identified as a student with a disability in third grade and has met all other requirements?

It is not required that the student be identified as a student with a disability for two years to qualify for this good cause exemption. However, the student must have received remediation for a reading deficiency for more than two years and have been previously retained in kindergarten, grade 1, grade 2, or grade 3.

Good Cause Exemption: Alternative Assessment

16. What is the alternative standardized reading assessment that can be used for a good cause exemption to third grade retention?

On January 21, 2003, the State Board of Education approved the grade 3 reading NRT portion of the FCAT or the SAT-9 as the alternative assessment for the good cause exemption for retention. As stated in the Board's policy, the acceptable levels of performance on the alternative assessments for grade 3 for the 2002-2003 school year are:

- To promote a student using the grade 3 reading NRT portion of the FCAT as an alternative assessment good cause exemption, the grade 3 student scoring at Level 1 Reading FCAT must score at or above the 51st percentile on the grade 3 reading NRT portion of the FCAT.

OR

- To promote a student using the SAT-9 as an alternative assessment good cause exemption, the third grade student scoring at Level 1 Reading FCAT must score at or above the 51st percentile on a parallel form of the SAT-9. The SAT-9 may only be administered one time. The earliest the alternative assessment may be administered is following the receipt of the third grade student reading FCAT scores or during the last two weeks of school, whichever occurs first, for student promotion purposes.

17. Can the SAT-9, used as an alternative assessment for good cause exemption to third grade retention, be administered at a time later than the last two weeks of school but before the beginning of the next school year in order to accommodate students who are provided intensive reading remediation during the summer?

Yes, but it can only be administered to the student one time to meet this good cause exemption.

18. Some districts use the SAT-9 for their own assessment purposes, often administering it in the fall for screening purposes and sometimes again in the spring. Will this constitute the one time only administration of the SAT-9 for purposes of good cause exemption from third grade retention?

No, districts administering the SAT-9 for purposes of screening in the fall and spring to all students may also administer the SAT-9 for purposes of good cause exemption from third grade retention one additional time. This additional administration must be done after FCAT scores are received or no sooner than the last two weeks of school to students who have been identified as having a reading deficiency and who have failed to score at Level 2 or above on the third grade reading FCAT.

Good Cause Exemption: Portfolios

19. What needs to be included in a portfolio to indicate that a student is working on Level 2 or above?

The State Board of Education also approved on January 21, 2003, minimum criteria for student portfolios that can be used for this good cause exemption from retention. To be accepted as meeting the portfolio option for demonstrating mastery of the required reading skills, the student portfolio must

- contain items selected by the student's teacher
- be an accurate picture of the student's ability and only include student work that has been independently produced in the classroom
- include evidence that the benchmarks assessed by the grade 3 reading FCAT have been met (This includes multiple choice items and passages that are approximately 60% literary text and 40% information text and that are between 100-700 words with an average of 350 words. Such evidence could include chapter or unit tests from the district's/school's adopted core reading curriculum that are aligned with the Sunshine State Standards or teacher-prepared assessments that are aligned with the Sunshine State Standards.) (See attachment 1.)
- be an organized collection of evidence of the student's mastery of the Sunshine State Standard Benchmarks for Language Arts that are assessed by the grade 3 reading FCAT (For each benchmark, there must be at least five examples of mastery as demonstrated by a grade of "C" or above.)
- be signed by the teacher and the principal as an accurate assessment of the required reading skills.

Remediation before the Beginning of the Next School Year

20. Can a third grade student who qualifies for retention be remediated before the end of the school year or after summer school and be promoted?

Yes, the student would qualify for a good cause exemption if, after such remediation, the student passes an alternative assessment approved by the State Board of Education or has a portfolio demonstrating a level of proficiency comparable to Level 2 on the FCAT and the procedures for good cause promotion are followed. To complement the implementation of the new third grade progression requirements, the Legislature also required, in section 1008.25(3)(a), Florida Statutes, that "[d]istrict school boards shall allocate remedial and supplemental instruction resources to students in the following priority: (a) Students who are deficient in reading by the end of grade 3; (b) Students who fail to meet performance levels required for promotion consistent with the district school board's plan for student progression . . . ." This means that the funds appropriated to districts through the Supplemental Academic Instruction (SAI) Categorical fund must be expended on appropriate services that include intensive intervention reading programs offered during the summer.

21. If a student is retained under the provisions of section 1008.25(5), Florida Statutes, or district policies but demonstrates at some point during the retained year that he or she is capable of doing the work of the next grade, may that student be advanced to the next grade during the year?

Yes, if the district is able to document that the student meets the levels of proficiency for student progression at some point during the retained year using approved alternative assessments or portfolio, the student may be promoted to the next grade, even though the student has not had another opportunity to demonstrate that proficiency on the state assessment. Some districts are considering using a three/four grade combination or a

pre-fourth grade classification for some students who have been retained to ease transition in such cases where a midyear promotion might be expected.

Alternative Placement

22. What constitutes an "intensive program different from the previous year's program" for students who are retained?

The design of the intensive program is determined by the school district but must ensure that the student not simply repeat the same experiences as he or she had in the previous year when academic expectations were not met. Such programs must be designed to help students achieve proficiency by the end of the academic year and should at least

- be designed based on the individual student needs in the areas of reading, math, and science as demonstrated by the student's performance on the FCAT and in the classroom
- be designed to address the individual student's learning style
- provide immediate intensive intervention (iii) that includes appropriate targeted instruction in the five areas of reading (phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, comprehension, and vocabulary) provided by appropriately trained staff
- provide more uninterrupted instructional time on task in the area of reading (more than 90 minutes per day is recommended)
- provide for frequent monitoring of the student's progress toward meeting the goals identified in the student's academic improvement plan (AIP).

23. What is meant by "alternative appropriate placement for a student who has been retained two or more years"?

The school district must also determine alternative placement, which must not be confused with placements for disciplinary infractions. The alternative placement must provide instruction appropriate for the student to help remedy deficiencies, experience success, and even catch up with his or her peer group. Such placements are often part of the district's dropout prevention program.

24. Will the Department of Education monitor a district's compliance with the requirements for third grade promotion?

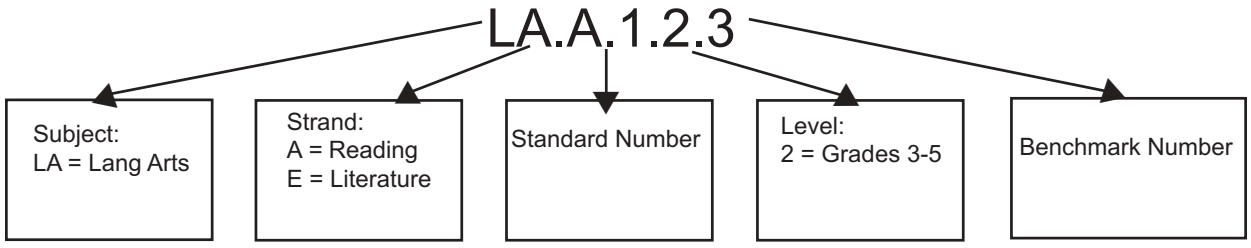
Yes. In order to ensure compliance, the State Board of Education has statutory authority to request and receive information and data from districts and to enforce the statutory requirements for third grade promotion. On February 18, 2003, the State Board of Education approved the Department's plan for monitoring school district compliance. (See attachment 2.) The focused monitoring system will ensure compliance with statutory requirements and identify promising practices leading to improved student outcomes.

Attachment 1

Florida Department of Education

Grade 3 Reading Sunshine State Standards Assessed by FCAT

Sunshine State Standard Benchmarks – Grade 3 Reading	
LA.A.1.2.3	Uses simple strategies to determine meaning and increase vocabulary for reading, including the use of prefixes, suffixes, root words, multiple meanings, antonyms, synonyms, and word relationships.
LA.A.2.2.1	Reads text and determines the main idea or essential message, identifies relevant supporting details and facts, and arranges events in chronological order.
LA.A.2.2.2	Identifies the author's purpose in a simple text. (Includes LA.A.2.2.3 Recognizes when a text is primarily intended to persuade.)
LA.A.2.2.7	Recognizes the use of comparison and contrast in a text.
LA.A.2.2.8	Selects and uses a variety of appropriate reference materials, including multiple representations of information such as maps, charts, and photos, to gather information for research projects. (Includes LA.A.2.2.5 Reads and organizes information for a variety of purposes, including making a report, conducting interviews, taking a test, and performing an authentic task.)
LA.E.1.2.2	Understands the development of plot and how conflicts are resolved in a story.
LA.E.1.2.3	Knows the similarities and differences among the characters, settings, and events presented in various texts.
LA.E.2.2.1	Recognizes cause-and-effect relationships in literary texts. [Applies to fiction, nonfiction, poetry, and drama.]



Source: FCAT Test Item and Performance Task Specifications (www.firn.edu/doe/sas/fcat/fcatis01.htm)

Attachment 2

Florida Department of Education

Third Grade Reading/Promotion – Plan for Monitoring Districts' Compliance

Design of Monitoring System

To monitor for compliance with the third grade promotion requirements, along with targeted technical assistance, the Department of Education will implement a tiered monitoring system that uses district-, school-, and student-level data as the "triggers" for appropriate action. The focus of this system will be two-fold: compliance with the statutory requirements and the identification of promising practices that lead to improved student outcomes through the use of research-based effective instructional strategies. Based upon the results of the data reviewed, appropriate actions will be initiated by the Department. A stakeholder group that includes district representatives, principals, teachers and parents will be created to assist the Department in these efforts.

Tier 1 Monitoring

Timelines: February - April 2003

All school districts will be required to complete a web-based self-assessment report that identifies the district's specific actions taken to comply with the third grade promotion requirements including:

- identification of local assessments or process for teacher observations used with students in kindergarten, grade 1, grade 2, or grade 3 to identify students with a substantial reading deficiency—section 1008.25(5)(a), Florida Statutes
- description of the process used to develop the student's academic improvement plan (AIP) with the required components and the methods used for monitoring the student's progress in meeting the desired levels of performance—section 1008.25(4)(b), Florida Statutes
- description of the intensive reading instruction provided to students immediately following the identification of a reading deficiency—section 1008.25(5)(a), Florida Statutes
- method for reassessment of the student's reading proficiency after the provision of the intensive reading instruction—section 1008.25(5)(a), Florida Statutes
- method and timeline for written notification to parents, with required components, of their child's substantial reading deficiency and the services to be provided—section 1008.25(5)(c), Florida Statutes
- description and timelines for the provision of information and training to principals, teachers, and parents regarding the third grade promotion requirements, including the use of good cause exemptions.

Tier 1 Monitoring – Cont.

Timelines: February - April 2003

Department of Education staff will begin the provision of targeted technical assistance, as appropriate.

Results of these self-assessments will be shared with districts during regional technical assistance meetings.

Timelines: May – August 2003

The results of the grade 3 reading portion of the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT), using the disaggregated reporting groups in No Child Left Behind, and the self-assessment data will be analyzed.

Targeted technical assistance, based on the student data and the districts' selfassessment, will continue to be provided.

Tier 2 Monitoring

Timelines: September – December 2003

All school districts will report, as required, to the State Board of Education by September 1st specific information and data regarding their compliance with the student progression law—section 1008.25(7)(b), Florida Statutes.

Third grade student promotion/retention data will be analyzed to determine the district's level of compliance with a focus on the six good cause exemptions. Department of Education staff will initiate appropriate activities for targeted districts, based on their data. These activities will include on-site visits to districts and schools, interviews with appropriate district and school staff, and the review of student records.

Student portfolios used as a good cause exemption from mandatory third grade retention will be reviewed using the following criteria (approved by the State Board of Education on January 21, 2003).

1. The contents of the student portfolio was selected by the student's teacher.
   Yes No

2. The work was independently produced by the student in the classroom.
   Yes No

Tier 2 Monitoring – Cont.

Timelines: September – December 2003

3. The student portfolio includes evidence that the benchmarks assessed by the grade 3 reading FCAT have been met. (This includes multiple choice items and passages that are approximately 60% literary text and 40% information text, and that are between 100-700 words with an average of 350 words. Such evidence could include chapter or unit tests from the district's/school's adopted core reading curriculum that are aligned with the Sunshine State Standards or teacher-prepared assessments that are aligned with the Sunshine State Standards.)
   Yes No

4. The student portfolio reflects an organized collection of evidence of the student's mastery of the Sunshine State Standard Benchmarks for language arts that are assessed by the grade 3 reading FCAT. For each benchmark, there must be at least five examples of mastery as demonstrated by a grade of "C" or above.
   Yes No

5. The student portfolio is signed by the teacher and the principal as an accurate assessment of the required reading skills.
   Yes No

Districts will be required to implement corrective actions, as appropriate.