

Dear Parent/Guardian,

The intent of the third grade progression statute is to ensure that students have the necessary reading skills in order to be successful in grade 4 and beyond, where the rigors of reading in the content areas increase. According to Section 1008.25(5), Florida Statutes, in order to be promoted to fourth grade, a student must score a Level 2 or above on the FCAT 2.0 in Reading. This year we have new achievement levels for FCAT 2.0. Based on an analysis of reading performance for third grade students in 2010-11, there may be an increase from 16 percent of students (32,430) scoring Level 1 on FCAT Reading in 2011 to approximately 18 percent of students (36,483) scoring Level 1 on reading as measured by FCAT 2.0 in 2012. Although there may be an increase in the number of students scoring at Level 1 on FCAT Reading, the following plan describes several ways for students who do not meet this standard initially to be promoted to fourth grade.

If a student does not demonstrate proficiency on FCAT they are required to attend Summer Reading Camp to ensure they receive additional instruction to catch up with their peers. There is also statutory language that prohibits FCAT from being the sole determiner of promotion and that additional evaluations, portfolio reviews, and assessments are available to the child to assist parents and the school district in knowing when a child is reading at or above grade level and ready for grade promotion. Some third graders who score Level 1 on FCAT in Reading can be exempted from the retention requirement and be promoted to fourth grade. This is called a “good cause exemption.” Good cause exemptions are only given to the following students:

- **Students who show an acceptable level of performance on an alternative standardized reading test**
- **Students who demonstrate mastery of the Next Generation Sunshine State Standards (NGSSS) through a teacher-developed portfolio**
- Limited English Proficient students 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 FCAT
- Students with disabilities who take the FCAT and whose IEP or 504 Plan states that they have received intensive remediation 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, or
- Students who have received intensive remediation 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

The two good cause exemptions most frequently apply are noted in **bold** print and are described in more detail below:

Alternative Reading Assessment: An alternative assessment is the other opportunity given to students to demonstrate mastery of the (NGSSS). Under Section 1008.25(6), Florida Statutes, (Eliminating Social Promotion), students who score a Level 1 on grade 3

FCAT Reading may be promoted to fourth grade if the student demonstrates through an alternative assessment that they are reading on grade level as evidenced by mastery of the NGSSS. (45% or above on SAT 10, 50% or above on the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS), or 50% or above on the Terranova) These assessments have been State Board approved as alternative standardized reading assessments which may be used for good cause exemption.

Student Portfolio - Under Section 1008.25(6), Florida Statutes, (Eliminating Social Promotion) students who score a Level 1 on the grade 3 FCAT Reading may be promoted to fourth grade if the student demonstrates through a student portfolio that they are reading on grade level as evidenced by mastery of the NGSSS. The portfolio is an alternative means for students to demonstrate proficiency of third grade skills.

To be accepted as meeting the portfolio option for demonstrating mastery of the required reading skills, the student portfolio must

- Be 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 that are between 100-700 words with an average of 500 words; Such evidence could include chapter or unit tests from the district's/school's adopted core reading curriculum that are aligned with the NGSSS or teacher-prepared assessments that are aligned with the NGSSS;**
- **Be an organized collection of evidence of the student's mastery of the NGSSS Benchmarks for Language Arts that are assessed by the grade 3 Reading FCAT. For each benchmark, there must be at least three examples of mastery as demonstrated by a grade of "70%" or above; and**
- Be signed by the teacher and the principal as an accurate assessment of the required reading skills.

We have included a Read to Learn brochure, which provides information for parents regarding third grade progression as well as good cause exemptions, along with a Third Grade Progression Technical Assistance Paper (TAP) that is distributed to districts for guidance with implementation of the law.