



Fisher Building • 3011 West Grand Blvd. • Detroit, MI 48202  
O (313) 240-4377

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March 10, 2021

DPSCD Parents of Third Graders,

In 2016, the State of Michigan passed Public Act 451 (link to MCL 380. 1280f), now referred to as the "Read by Grade Three Law." The law requires that all students who do not achieve a specific score on the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade state reading assessment be retained.

**I want to assure you that regardless of the outcome of any state legislation the District firmly believes that student retention is a decision that should be made between the school leader, teacher and family.** Furthermore, retaining students during a national pandemic based on a single test score is unacceptable. As a result, should the retention portion of the law remain in effect we are planning to ensure families understand their right to request an exemption and to implement an easy to follow process to do so. In addition, the District will automatically grant exemptions as students qualify. We will promote students to 4<sup>th</sup> grade by using the following good cause exemptions:

- Student has an IEP
- Student has a 504 plan
- Student is an English Learner with less than three years of instruction in an ESL program
- Student was previously retained and has received intensive reading intervention for two or more years (iRIP)
- A student enrolled for less than two years and was not provided with an appropriate iRIP in previous school
- Student has already repeated third grade
- Student demonstrates a grade 3 reading level through performance on an alternate assessment (i-Ready)
- A parent or teacher request a good cause exemption within 30 days of retention notification and the superintendent grants the request

The parent or teacher of any student retained under the law can request their third-grade student be promoted. We understand that there is a lot of fear from families and the community related to required retention. This letter is to reassure families that the District is prepared to promote students regardless of legislative action through exemptions. As a result, we do not anticipate an increase in the percent of students retained this year.

Should the legislature fail to act and eliminate required retention under the law for this year, immediately following the release of student M-STEP scores, the District will notify parents of students that will receive retention letters from the State. The written notice will include a survey for the parent/guardian to request a good cause exemption. Schools will be prepared to support families with completing the survey onsite. This strategy will allow families to request an exemption from the comfort of their own home or in a supportive environment, such as your child's school.

The District is committed to helping every child read on grade level and minimizing the impact of required retention under the law. Should the retention portion of the law be temporarily removed by the legislature, the District will update families with this information. If you have any questions or concerns about the "Read by Third Grade Law," please contact your school's principal.

Sincerely,



Nikolai P. Vitti

Superintendent

**Students Rise. We all Rise**

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