

If my child is retained — what then?

The school will continue remediation based on your child's academic progress plan.

It is very important to realize that retention is absolutely a last resort, but it can be a very effective one. Florida, one of 15 U.S. states to have a third-grade reading law, saw a significant drop in illiteracy after it ended social promotion. Retention allows children to get the intensive help they need.

**Read to your child.
A lifelong love of
reading begins early.**

What is the SDE doing to help?

The Oklahoma State Department of Education (SDE) is assisting school districts as they work to ensure all students are able to meet third-grade reading requirements. These efforts include:

Classroom Support

58 literacy coaches are available to classroom teachers in all Oklahoma school districts to assist with reading instructional strategies.

Regional Workshops

Literacy coaches have held 35 regional workshops statewide, attended by large groups of teachers learning reading strategies.

"Love. Read. Learn!" Parent Meetings

Workshops have been presented at school site parent nights by the literacy coaches. More than 15,000 backpacks containing reading resources have been distributed to participants.

Engaging Lowest-Performing Sites Across the State

Literacy coaches and SDE "SWAT Team" members, who offer data analysis and individualized problem-solving, are visiting each low-performing school site in the state to discuss the importance of great reading instruction and remediation in Pre-K through third grade.

Statewide Reading Grants

These grant funds provide professional development and products to Oklahoma school districts targeting priority schools and utilizing the following reading instruction materials:

- Voyager Passport
- PAYNE Education
- Literacy First

Updated Early Childhood Materials for Educators and Parents

- Early Childhood academic standards revision. State standards serve as expectations of what a child should know and be able to do at the end of a year of learning so students will be prepared for the next level of learning. Curriculum and classroom instruction methods are chosen by the local school administrators and teachers.
- Early Childhood website revision (<http://ok.gov/sde/early-childhood-and-family-education>)

For more information, visit
ok.gov/sde/reading-sufficiency-act
or email rsa@sde.ok.gov



www.ok.gov/sde  

This publication, printed by the State Department of Education Printing Services, is issued by the Oklahoma State Department of Education as authorized by 70 O.S. § 3-104. Six hundred copies have been prepared using 21st Community Learning Centers federal funds at a cost of 9 cents per copy. Copies have been deposited with the Publications Clearinghouse of the Oklahoma Department of Libraries. December 2013.

**What
parents need
to know about
Third-Grade
reading
retention**

**read *to*
succeed**



www.ok.gov/sde  

What parents need to know about third-grade reading retention

A major policy change taking effect in the 2013-2014 school year involves the promotion of third-grade students based on reading scores. The Reading Sufficiency Act (RSA) states that **a third-grade student cannot be promoted to the fourth grade if he or she scores Unsatisfactory on the reading portion of the Oklahoma Core Curriculum Test (OCCT).**

Any change this significant is bound to raise a number of questions — and possible concerns — for parents. Is my child at risk of being retained? Are there exemptions to the law? What can I do to help my child read at grade level?

We have answers.

Why was the law created?

Studies consistently show that children who cannot read end up struggling in all other subjects. One such survey found that students who can't read by the end of third grade are **four times more likely** to drop out of high school.

RSA significantly reduces the possible need for remediation in middle and high school and lowers the risk of a student dropping out of school because he or she is unable to read.

How do I know if my child is at risk of being held back?

Many schools assess pre-kindergarten students in literacy. RSA **requires** benchmark assessments in kindergarten through third grade and **mandates that schools identify children who need intensive intervention in reading and notify their parents in writing.**

Moreover, the school must develop for that student an individualized program of reading instruction that includes:

- the child's specific reading difficulty
- the intensive teaching practices to be implemented
- how often progress will be monitored
- ensures enough time is given to the student to achieve grade-level reading

The school is strongly encouraged to utilize ongoing communications to parents pertinent to their child's progress. If you have a concern about your child's reading ability, please contact your child's teacher.

Is my child's reading ability to be assessed by a single test on a single day?

No, there are other options. A portfolio of a student's work demonstrating grade-level reading can be submitted by a teacher, ensuring that the retention decision does not come down to a single day of testing. The student also will have the opportunity to take an alternative standardized assessment test at a later date, as long as he or she first takes the OCCT. Children also may successfully complete a summer reading academy prior to utilizing the portfolio or alternative test exemptions.

What are the exemptions to the law?

RSA provides six "good cause" exemptions for some students who score Unsatisfactory on the reading test:

- 1 English Language Learners who have had less than two years of instruction in English and are identified as Limited-English Proficient (LEP)/English Language Learner (ELL) on a screening tool approved by the Oklahoma State Department of Education Office of Bilingual/Migrant Education and have a Language Instruction Educational Plan (LIEP) in place prior to the administration of the third-grade criterion referenced test; **and** the student must have had less than two years of instruction in an English Language Learner (ELL) program.
- 2 Students with disabilities whose Individualized Education Program (IEP) indicates they are to be assessed with the Oklahoma Alternate Assessment Program (OAAP).
- 3 Students who demonstrate an acceptable level of performance (minimum of 45th percentile) on an alternative standardized reading test approved by the State Board of Education (SAT 10, Iowa Test of Basic Skills, Terranova).

4 Students who demonstrate through a teacher-developed portfolio that they can read on grade level. The student portfolio shall include evidence demonstrating the student's mastery of the Oklahoma state standards in reading equal to grade-level performance on the reading portion of the Oklahoma Core Curriculum Test (OCCT).

5 Students with disabilities who take the OCCT and have an IEP that states they have received intense remediation in reading for more than two years but still demonstrate a deficiency in reading and were previously retained one year or were in a transitional grade during kindergarten, first-, second- or third-grade.

6 Students who have received intensive remediation in reading for two or more years but still demonstrate a deficiency in reading and who already have been retained in kindergarten, first-grade, second-grade or third-grade for a total of two years. Transitional grades count.

What should I do if I believe my child is eligible for an exemption?

Talk to your child's teacher if you believe he or she may be eligible for a good-cause exemption.

For an exemption to be approved:

- The student's teacher must submit documentation to the school principal.
- The principal must review the documentation and decide whether the student should be promoted to the next grade level. If the principal determines the student should be promoted, he or she must make that recommendation to the school district superintendent.
- The district superintendent must accept or reject that principal's recommendation.

What is a "passing" grade for the reading test?

Only children scoring Unsatisfactory (about a first-grade level or below) on the reading portion of the third-grade OCCT are at risk of being retained. Children who score Limited Knowledge (typically a second-grade reading level), Proficient or Advanced do not have to be retained.