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Technical Assistance Paper Third-Grade Student Progression

Summary: The purpose of this Technical Assistance Paper (TAP) is to provide school districts with updates and changes relative to third-grade student progression policies for the 2014-15 school year, including information on alternative assessments, promotion criteria and resources.

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GENERAL INFORMATION

A-1. For the 2014-15 school year, what statewide Florida Standards Assessments-English Language Arts (FSA-ELA) score would mandate the retention of a third-grade student?

Section 1008.25, Florida Statutes (F.S.), requires any third-grade student scoring Level 1 on the grade 3 statewide FSA-ELA to be retained. Some students may qualify for a good cause exemption and be promoted to fourth grade (see A-2.).

A-2. What promotion options are available to grade 3 students who have not achieved a Level 2 or above on the statewide FSA-ELA?

Students in grade 3 who score Level 1 on the statewide FSA-ELA may be exempted from the retention requirement and be promoted to fourth grade [section 1008.25(6), F.S.]. This is called a good cause exemption. Good cause exemptions are limited to the following:

- Limited English Proficient (LEP) 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) indicates that participation in the statewide assessment program is not appropriate, consistent with the requirements of State Board of Education rule;
- Students who demonstrate an acceptable level of performance on a state-approved alternative standardized reading or English Language Arts assessment approved by the State Board of Education;
- Students who demonstrate, through a student portfolio, that he or she is performing at least at Level 2 on the statewide standardized assessment;
- Students with disabilities who participate in the statewide standardized assessment and whose IEP or 504 Plan reflects that the student has received intensive remediation in reading and English Language Arts for more than two years, but still demonstrates a deficiency and was previously retained in kindergarten, grade 1, grade 2 or grade 3;
- Students who have received intensive reading intervention for two or more years but still demonstrate a deficiency in reading and who were previously retained in kindergarten, grade 1, grade 2 or grade 3 for a total of two years. A student may not be retained more than once in grade 3.
- Students who have received intensive remediation in reading and English Language Arts for two or more years, but who still have a deficiency in reading and have already been retained in kindergarten, grade 1, grade 2 or grade 3 for a total of two years.

A-3. Will students scoring Level 1 on the grade 3 statewide FSA-ELA be retained in other grades or only in third grade?

Third grade is the only grade at which there is state-mandated retention for public school students [section 1008.25(5)(b), F.S.]. School districts must establish a comprehensive program for student progression that includes specific levels of performance in reading, writing, science and mathematics for each grade level, including the levels of performance on statewide assessments, below which a student must receive remediation or be retained within an intensive program that is different from the previous year's program and takes into account the student's learning style. The promotion/retention policy for all grade levels must be specified in the district's Student Progression Plan.

A-4. Can a student be promoted to fourth grade without a grade 3 statewide FSA-ELA score?

Third-grade students must participate in the statewide standardized assessment program required by section 1008.22, F.S., and demonstrate proficiency in reading in order to be promoted to fourth grade. Students not achieving a Level 2 or higher on the statewide assessment may qualify for a good cause exemption (see A-2.).

A-5. What services should a student receive if they were promoted to fourth grade based on a good cause exemption, but are still reading below grade level?

A student promoted based on a good cause exemption and who is not reading on grade level should be provided intensive instruction which must include an altered instructional day. The altered instructional day must include specialized diagnostic information and specific reading strategies for each student. The district school board shall assist schools and teachers to implement reading strategies that research has shown to be successful in improving reading among low-performing readers. Section 1008.25(6)(b)4., F.S.

A-6. What are the guidelines/requirements that districts must implement to meet the needs of third-grade students identified with a reading deficiency who have not been previously retained in third grade?

Teacher-Student Ratio	Same as other students.
Reading Instructional Time	90-minute reading block in a smaller group size setting or one-on-one. Rule 6A-6.054, Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.)
Materials	Core/State Identified Reading program that is research based and has proven success teaching the components of reading. Rule 6A-6.053 F.A.C. Differentiated Materials Research-based materials that reinforce the initial instruction. Intervention Materials Research-based materials that teach areas of deficits as determined by an assessment measure. This instruction must take place in addition to the 90-minute reading block. Rule 6A-6.054 & 6A-6.053 F.A.C.
Screening	Options may include, but are not limited to, program-based materials, teacher observation or a screening/progress monitoring tool such as the Florida Assessments for Instruction in Reading-Florida Standards (FAIR-FS). Rule 6A-6.053 F.A.C.

Progress Monitoring	Students identified with a reading deficiency must be progress monitored. Schools must progress monitor students with a reading deficiency a minimum of three times per year. This includes a baseline, mid-year and an end-of-year assessment. Rule 6A-6.054 F.A.C. FAIR-FS and ongoing progress monitoring (OPM) components of FAIR-FS are tools that can be used for these students.
Diagnostic	A student who does not meet specific levels of performance on the required assessment as determined by the district school board or who scores below Level 3 on the statewide standardized assessment as applicable under section 1008.22, F.S., must be provided with additional diagnostic assessments to determine the nature of the student's difficulty, the area of academic need and strategies for appropriate intervention and instruction. Section 1008.25(4)(a), F.S.
Progress Monitoring Plan (PMP)	A PMP must be developed and implemented for any student who is not meeting the school district or state requirements for proficiency in reading. Section 1008.25(4)(b), F.S.
Data Reporting	In anticipation of a change to State Board Rule 6A-6.053 eliminating the requirement for school districts to report progress monitoring assessment scores, districts are no longer required to submit progress monitoring data to the Automated Student Database System. Progress monitoring is still required either at the district level or through the Progress Monitoring and Reporting Network (PMRN).

A-7. What are the guidelines/requirements for meeting the needs of third-grade students who have been retained once in third grade?

Teacher-Student Ratio	Reduced student-teacher ratio. Section 1008.25(7)(b)1.c., F.S.
Teacher Quality	Provide students with a highly effective teacher as determined by the teacher's performance evaluation under section 1012.34, F.S. Section 1008.25(7)(b)4., F.S.
Reading Instructional Time	Minimum of 90 minutes of daily uninterrupted reading instruction which includes small group instruction. Section 1008.25(7)(b)1., F.S. Intervention in addition to 90-minute reading block. Rule 6A-6.054 F.A.C.

Materials	<p>Core/State Identified Reading program that is research based and has proven success teaching the components of reading. Rule 6A-6.053 F.A.C.</p> <p>Differentiated Materials Research-based materials that reinforce the initial instruction.</p> <p>Intervention Materials Research-based materials that teach areas of deficits as determined by an assessment measure. This instruction must take place in addition to the 90-minute reading block. Rule 6A-6.054 and Rule 6A-6.053 F.A.C.</p> <p>Differentiated Instruction Should be treated as immediate intensive intervention with prescribed materials for the students' deficits.</p> <p>Immediate Intensive Intervention (iii) Materials should continue to be used during iii after the 90-minute reading block. Rule 6A-6.054 and Rule 6A-6.053 F.A.C.</p>
Screening	<p>Options may include, but are not limited to, program-based materials, teacher observation or screening/progress monitoring tool such as the FAIR-FS. Rule 6A-6.053 F.A.C.</p>
Progress Monitoring	<p>Progress monitoring should be more frequent for these students than for non-retained students and should be ongoing. This can be as simple as a Comprehensive Core Reading Program (CCRP) or Supplemental Reading Program (SRP) weekly test, timed readings or teacher observations. Schools must progress monitor students with a reading deficiency a minimum of three times per year. This includes a baseline, mid-year and an end-of-year assessment. Rule 6A-6.054 F.A.C. FAIR-FS and OPM components of FAIR-FS can be used for these students.</p>
Diagnostic	<p>A student who does not meet specific levels of performance on the required assessment as determined by the district school board or who scores below Level 3 on the statewide standardized assessment as applicable under section 1008.22, F.S., must be provided with additional diagnostic assessments to determine the nature of the student's difficulty, the area of academic need and strategies for appropriate intervention and instruction. Section 1008.25(4)(a), F.S</p>

Progress Monitoring Plan (PMP)	A PMP must be developed and implemented for any student who is not meeting the school district or state requirements for proficiency in reading. Section 1008.25(4)(b), F.S.
Data Reporting	In anticipation of a change to State Board Rule 6A-6.053 eliminating the requirement for school districts to report progress monitoring assessment scores, districts are no longer required to submit progress monitoring data to the Automated Student Database System. Progress monitoring is still required either at the district level or through the PMRN.
Summer Reading Camps	Districts will provide access to Summer Reading Camps for students scoring Level 1 on the FSA-ELA. Districts may extend summer reading camp services to other students. Section 1008.25(7)(b)1., F.S. School districts will provide written notification to the parent of any student who has not met the proficiency level required for promotion and therefore is retained. Section 1008.25(7)(b)2., F.S.
Strategies prescribed by school district which may include, but are not limited to:	
Tutoring and Mentoring	A trained volunteer or mentor may be assigned to each student and/or someone may be assigned to tutor each student on deficit areas. Section 1008.25(7)(b)1.e., F.S.
Transition Classes	The school district has the option of placing students who have been retained in grade 3 and have received intensive instructional services but are still not ready for promotion, as determined by the school district, in a transitional instructional setting. Section 1008.25(7)(b)1.f., F.S.
Extended School Day	Provide an after-school program with research-based materials and certified teachers to tutor and remediate students. Saturday school with research-based materials and certified teachers to tutor and remediate students. Extended year with research-based materials and certified teachers to tutor and remediate students. Section 1008.25(7)(b)1.g., F.S.

STUDENT PORTFOLIOS FOR THIRD-GRADE STUDENTS

B-1. Why would a teacher use a student portfolio?

Section 1008.25(6)(b)4., F.S., states that a student who scores a Level 1 on the grade 3 statewide FSA-ELA may be promoted to fourth grade if the student demonstrates through a student portfolio that the student is performing at least at Level 2 on the statewide standardized assessment.

B-2. When should the teacher and students begin the third-grade student portfolio?

A parent of a student in grade 3 who is identified anytime during the school year as being at risk of retention may request that the school immediately begin collecting evidence for the portfolio.

B-3. Are there guidelines provided by the state for the third-grade student portfolio?

Yes. As provided in the updated Rule 6A-1.094221, F.A.C., 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 standards assessed by the grade 3 statewide English Language Arts assessment have been met. Evidence is to include multiple choice items and passages that are approximately 60 percent literary text and 40 percent 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 Language Arts Florida Standards or teacher-prepared assessments;
- Be an organized collection of evidence of the student's mastery of the Language Arts Florida Standards that are assessed by the grade 3 statewide English Language Arts assessment. For each standard, there must be at least three examples of mastery as demonstrated by a grade of 70 percent or above on each example; and
- Be signed by the teacher and the principal as an accurate assessment of the required reading skills.

Additionally, note that the Just Read, Florida! Office has begun creating an updated Third-Grade State Portfolio.

B-4. Do the same portfolio guidelines apply to ESE students?

Yes. The state portfolio guidelines apply to all students, including ESE students.

B-5. Is the student portfolio the only tool used for good cause exemption and/or promoting a third-grade student to fourth grade in the middle of the year?

No. The student portfolio and an alternative assessment are the two state-approved options for good cause exemption and mid-year promotion. The student must be offered both options. However, the student must only demonstrate proficiency on one of the options in order to receive a good cause exemption or be promoted midyear.

B-6. If a teacher is monitoring the progress of a student, is a portfolio needed?

Yes. A portfolio provides ongoing information on how a student is performing on tested benchmarks. There are specific requirements of necessary elements that must be included in a portfolio used for promotion (please refer to question B-3 of this document for the requirements). If a teacher chooses to follow the rigor of the state portfolio requirements, a portfolio may be used for progress monitoring as well as promotion.

B-7. Can parts of the FAIR-FS be used as part of the portfolio for good cause exemption or mid-year promotion?

No. The FAIR-FS tasks are adaptive in nature and are designed to provide teachers screening, diagnostic and progress monitoring information for the purpose of informing instruction to meet student needs through differentiating instruction. The FAIR-FS tasks do not meet the state portfolio requirements as described in question B-3 of this document.

B-8. Can grade 3 English Language Arts items from the Florida’s Item Bank and Test Platform be used as part of a student’s third-grade portfolio for good cause exemption or mid-year promotion?

Yes. Items used in a student portfolio must meet the specifications stated in question B-3 Rule 6A-1.094221, F.A.C.

ASSESSMENT

C-1. What alternative assessment may be administered at the end of the year OR at the end of Summer Reading Camp to determine if a student qualifies for good cause exemption and promotion to fourth grade?

Rule 6A-1.094221(1)(a), F.A.C., authorizes the use of the following nationally norm-referenced test in the determination of a good cause exemption for promotion to fourth grade:

- Stanford Achievement Test, Tenth Edition (SAT10)

The rule also provides that a district may request to use a different standardized reading assessment following the procedures outlined in SBE 6A-1.094221: Alternative Standardized Reading Assessment and Use of Student Portfolio for Good Cause Promotion. At this time, three other standardized alternative assessments have been approved by the Florida Department of Education (FDOE) as a result of a district review request and would, therefore, also be approved for district use.

- Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS) Complete Battery, Form A or C, Level 9, Reading Comprehension
- Iowa Tests of Basic Skills (ITBS) Core Battery, Form A or C, Level 9, Reading Comprehension
- Terranova, Third Edition Complete Battery, Level 13, Reading

The acceptable levels of performance on the alternative assessments for grade 3 for the 2014-2015 school year are as follows:

- To promote a student using the SAT10 as an alternative assessment for good cause exemption, the grade 3 students who scored a Level 1 on the FSA-ELA must score at or above the 45th percentile.
- For districts choosing to use the ITBS or Terranova, the cut score is at or above the 50th percentile.

Districts are strongly encouraged to administer the alternative assessment at the end of summer camp. The earliest the alternative assessment may be administered for student promotion purposes is following administration of the grade 3 FSA-ELA. An approved standardized reading assessment may be administered two times if there are at least 30 days between administrations and different test forms are administered.

C-2. Which students are required to be progress monitored?

Any student who does not meet specific levels of performance as determined by the district or who scored below Level 3 on the FCAT 2.0 Reading in 2013-14 or for the future the Grade 3 FSA-ELA is to be progress monitored. Rule 6A-6.054, F.A.C. and Section 1008.25(4)(b), F.S.

C-3. Is FAIR-FS a required form of progress monitoring?

FAIR-FS is not a required form of progress monitoring, however, all students scoring Level 1 or Level 2 must be progress monitored. Districts will identify the tool to be used for progress monitoring. Rule 6A-6.054, F.A.C.

C-4. What are some ways to informally monitor student progress in order to guide instruction?

Options for informal progress monitoring may include, but are not limited to, teacher observation, CCRP weekly assessments, Supplemental Intervention Reading Program (SIRP) assessments, Comprehensive Intervention Reading Programs (CIRP) assessments and the FAIR-FS.

C-5. When may an alternative assessment be administered?

Districts will develop an alternative assessment schedule consisting of, but not limited to, an end of school year administration and/or an end of Summer Reading Camp administration.

C-6. Can a district accept SAT10 scores from another state for the purpose of retention or promotion?

Yes. The student must demonstrate mastery by scoring at least at the 45th percentile on the SAT10. District established policies for placement and promotion should also be considered.

C-7. Can a district accept SAT10 scores from an assessment or tutoring center for the purpose of retention or promotion?

Districts should establish a policy on the acceptance of assessment scores received from private assessment or tutoring centers.

SUMMER READING CAMPS FOR THIRD-GRADE STUDENTS

D-1. During Summer Reading Camps, can teachers use reading program assessments that provide intensive reading, but are not on grade level for a student's portfolio?

No. If the program is not on grade level, the assessments cannot be used to document mastery of third-grade benchmarks (please refer to question B-3 of this document for the portfolio requirements).

D-2. Are Summer Reading Camps available for students in grades other than third grade?

Summer Reading Camps must be offered to third-grade students scoring Level 1 on the statewide FSA-ELA assessment as specified in section 1008.25(7)(b)1., F.S. If a district chooses to open the camp to other grade levels, the district may do so at its own discretion.

MID-YEAR PROMOTION FOR THIRD GRADE

E-1. Will students preparing for mid-year promotion be given fourth-grade instruction while in the third grade, in a transitional classroom (3rd/4th grade combination class)?

Yes. All students should be supported in making continuous academic progress. This means teaching and learning for mastery and moving forward through the curriculum and the standards as appropriate for each individual student.

E-2. What are the guidelines/requirements for mid-year promotion?

To promote a student midyear using a locally-selected standardized assessment, there must be evidence that the student scored at or above grade level in reading comprehension, as demonstrated by standard scores or percentiles.

To promote a student midyear using a student portfolio, there must be evidence of the student's mastery of third-grade LAFS. The student portfolio must meet the following requirements:

- Be selected by the student's teacher;
- Be an accurate picture of the student's ability and include only student work that has been independently produced in the classroom;
- Include evidence of mastery of the benchmarks assessed by the grade 3 statewide standardized assessment;
- Include evidence that the benchmarks assessed by the grade 3 statewide standardized assessment have been met. This includes multiple choice items and passages that are approximately 60 percent literary text and 40 percent 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 third-grade reading standards or teacher-prepared assessments that are aligned with the third-grade reading standards; and
- Be signed by the teacher and the principal as an accurate assessment of the required reading skills.

Additional district requirements for any mid-year promotion criteria may be specified in the district's Student Progression Plan.

- E-3. Can a third-grade student, potentially eligible for mid-year promotion, be placed in a fourth-grade classroom and then promoted after demonstrating proficiency on the portfolio or an alternative assessment?**

Yes. Districts need to meet the individual needs of students. This can be achieved through implementing creative multi-age grouping or a transitional-classroom setting.

- E-4. Why would a decision be made about a student's placement during the first semester of the academic year?**

Students should be promoted midyear or as soon as possible so they receive essential fourth-grade instruction. For example, if a student has attended a Summer Reading Camp and demonstrated mastery of all benchmarks but one, the student could show proficiency in the deficit benchmark and then be promoted to fourth grade. Any student meeting specified state requirements may be promoted midyear.

- E-5. How many samples of proficiency are required for each benchmark in order for a student to be promoted midyear?**

In any given school year, a student must have three examples of each benchmark successfully completed on the third-grade level, with a score of 70 percent or above on each example, in order to be promoted midyear. Rule 6A-1.094222, F.A.C.

EXCEPTIONAL STUDENT EDUCATION (ESE)

- F-1. Do the reading remediation requirements apply to a student who has an IEP with the primary exceptionality of speech impairment? For instance, is the district required to provide intensive remediation for more than two years in order for the student to qualify for the good cause exemption?**

Yes. The relevant good cause exemption in statute [section 1008.25(6)(b)2., F.S.] states that students with disabilities who take the statewide FSA-ELA assessment and who have an IEP or Section 504 plan that reflects that the student has received the intensive remediation in reading or English Language Arts for more than two years, but still demonstrates a deficiency and was previously retained in kindergarten, grade 1, grade 2 or grade 3 are eligible for a good cause exemption. This applies to all students who meet these criteria; including students whose IEP reflects speech impairment as the primary exceptionality.

- F-2. May a student with a disability who scored Level 1 on the FCAT 2.0 Reading or the statewide FSA-ELA and has never been retained be promoted using a portfolio that contains products reflecting below grade-level achievement?**

No. In order for a student to be promoted using the student portfolio, the student must show proficiency at grade level by demonstrating mastery of the LAFS. The expectations for students with disabilities who participate in the statewide FSA-ELA are the same as non-disabled students who participate in the statewide FSA-ELA. Portfolios reflecting below grade-level mastery are inappropriate to meet this requirement.

F-3. Are students with disabilities given any alternate means in which to achieve the goals needed in order to be promoted midyear?

All students who participated in the FCAT 2.0 Reading or the FSA-ELA, including students with disabilities, are to follow the same guidelines disseminated by the FDOE. This requirement reflects high expectations and equality for students with disabilities in accordance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

OPTIONS FOR PARENTS OF STRUGGLING READERS

G-1. Is information about third-grade progression available to parents?

Yes. A brochure for parents of Florida's third-grade students titled Read to Learn is available at <http://www.justreadflorida.com>. It is designed to help parents understand what Florida law says about reading requirements for third-grade students and promotion to fourth grade. It also describes what the school is required to do to help students who are reading below grade level.

G-2. How can families and communities get more involved in reading programs?

The Just Read, Florida! Office provides parents with information about actively reading with their children during the summer months. Research shows that children who do not continue reading through the summer can lose a month or more of progress made during the school year. You can protect your child against summer reading loss by

- Reading to your child daily;
- Reading a lot of different materials;
- Discussing what you've read together;
- Asking your child questions about what was read; and
- Encouraging your child to write or draw in response to what they have read.

Additional parent resources and websites

- What Every Parent of An Elementary Child Needs to Know (Elementary Summer Reading Loss Brochure)
<http://www.justreadflorida.com/pdf/SummerReadingLossBrochureElem.pdf>
- Just Read, Families! <http://www.justreadfamilies.org/>
- Helping Parents Promote Literacy Skills <http://www.justreadflorida.com/promote.asp>