

THE REINVENTION OF MICHIGAN CONTINUES.

2015 STATE OF THE STATE ADDRESS

GOVERNOR RICK SNYDER

ISSUE BRIEFING: THIRD-GRADE READING

THE GOAL

- ▶ Our goal is to enact legislation to improve third-grade reading this year, help ensure our students achieve long-term success, and are able to meet the challenges of a global economy.

WHY FOCUS ON THIRD-GRADE READING

- ▶ We all know that the ability to read is crucial for success in life, and that starts at the earliest of ages. In middle and high school, all academic subjects require a student to be a proficient reader. A student who cannot read will not be able to succeed in any subject.

Neuroscience tells us that the vast majority of language learning occurs in the first decade of a child's life. And other research shows that children who do not read proficiently at the end of third grade are four times more likely to leave school early than proficient readers. Whether or not a student can read at third grade is an event eight years in the making.

HOW WE CAN IMPROVE

- ▶ The fact is, starting in kindergarten is too late. Students who are in quality preschool have better academic outcomes. In addition, having high-quality, reading-focused instruction matters. We need high-quality teachers who specialize in reading intervention. Students struggling to read should have more instructional time to bring them up to speed. This might mean giving schools the flexibility to choose interventions they believe would work best, such as year-round schools, weekend classes, or targeted focus on reading.

We need to give schools the tools to help identify and intervene with children as early as possible. The earlier we catch struggling students, the better their outcomes will be.

We can't forget, though, that parents have the most impact on their child's reading ability. However, many parents don't know how to help. Educating parents on simple things they can do, such as talking to their children, can have an impact.

PROPOSED ACTION

- ▶ Third-grade reading has been identified as a concern for Michigan students, so it's time for us to invest in a comprehensive third-grade reading initiative to ensure our students achieve long-term success and are able to meet the challenges of a global economy.

Governor Snyder is calling for student support and intervention, when necessary, from prenatal to third grade. He is asking for support from the legislature to partner to enact legislation to improve third-grade reading this year.

As part of that legislation, he is calling for the establishment of a commission outside of state government which includes business and philanthropic communities, and will develop recommendations on specific actions to improve third-grade reading scores.