



# Read by Grade Three Guide February 2024

## Introduction to the Read by Grade 3 Guide

The Michigan Department of Education (MDE) has compiled resources and responses to frequently asked questions regarding the “Read by Grade Three” law. The purpose of this guide is to support district implementation of the legislation by providing current information.

- [Public Act 7 of 2023](#) (**effective February 13, 2024**): Revised legislative language removes the retention component of the law while preserving components that require the communication of student progress with families. Due to the M-STEP being administered after the RBG3 retention repeal date, current grade 3 students will not be identified for retention. Instead, grade 3 students who score 1271 or below on the English Language Arts (ELA) M-STEP will be identified as having a reading deficiency per [MCL 380.1280f](#).
- [Public Act 224 of 2023](#) (**effective July 1, 2024**): Section 1280f(2)(a) of this act specifies timelines for assessment in kindergarten within the first 90 days and grades 1 to 3 within the first 30 days of a school year.

As new information and resources become available, this guide will be updated. Please send any questions regarding this guide to [MDE-EarlyLiteracy@michigan.gov](mailto:MDE-EarlyLiteracy@michigan.gov).

## Assessment

### 1. How is deficiency defined?

Deficiency is defined in the law as “scoring below grade level or being determined to be at-risk of reading failure based on a screening assessment, diagnostic assessment, standardized summative assessment, or progress monitoring.”

### 2. What assessment will be used to flag for retention and what score will constitute more than one grade level behind at the end of third grade?

The retention component of the Read by Grade Three law has been repealed, effective February 13, 2024. For more information, refer to [Read by Grade Three \(RBG3\) Testing, Communication, and Implementation](#).

### 3. Where do I find information about MDE-approved assessments to include in an early literacy assessment system?

The Read by Grade Three law, as outlined in an [April 2019 MDE memo](#), requires that districts choose at least one [initial](#) and one [extensive](#) assessment from the MDE-approved lists for K-3 students. Districts are welcome to use additional assessments not on the lists to create a comprehensive and balanced assessment system.

**4. When do we need to begin administering assessments from the approved assessment system and to whom?**

Public Act 224 of 2023 (effective July 1, 2024): Section 1280f(2)(a) of this act specifies the following timelines for assessment: the first of these assessments for a school year in kindergarten must be conducted within the first 90 school days of the school year. The first of these assessments for a school year in grades 1 to 3 must be conducted within the first 30 school days of the school year.

**5. When outlining assessment accommodations on an Individual Education Plan (IEP), are initial and extensive assessments considered state or district assessments?**

The initial and extensive assessments are district assessments. A state assessment is a required summative assessment used for accountability purposes. Student needs should be outlined in a student’s IEP. The provisions in the IEP should address how those needs are being addressed. Accommodations selected for classroom, district, and state assessments should mirror those provided during instruction according to the needs of the student.

**6. Must students who take MI-Access participate in the district assessments required in the Read by Grade Three law?**

There is no exemption from the district assessments for the Read by Grade Three legislation. The IDEA at 34 CFR Section 300.320(a)(6)(ii) states, “If the IEP Team determines that the child must take an alternate assessment instead of a particular regular State or districtwide assessment of student achievement, a statement of why— (A) The child cannot participate in the regular assessment; and (B) The particular alternate assessment selected is appropriate for the child” is required. An IEP team does not have the authority to exempt any student from a statewide assessment. The IEP team can only determine that a student take an alternate assessment.

**7. What is the assessment expectation for students who are severely cognitively impaired?**

All students are required to be assessed in kindergarten through third grade to screen and diagnose reading difficulties, inform instruction and intervention needs, and assess progress towards a growth target under MCL 380.1280f. Students with significant cognitive impairments are instructed with alternate academic content standards. To comply with the Read by Grade Three law, districts should select an initial (screener/benchmark) reading assessment for students in grades 1-3 in the first 30 school days of the school year, or the first 90 school days of the school year for kindergarten. Districts should determine which alternate initial assessment tool they think is best for assessing the reading level of this population of students. This may involve using a commercial alternate reading screener or creating a local tool. Students for whom additional reading level information is needed beyond the initial alternate assessment tool must be given an extensive (diagnostic) reading level assessment. The extensive alternate reading level assessment may be a commercial alternate

reading tool, or districts may decide to develop their own alternate extensive reading level tool.

**8. How do the Essential Instructional Practices fit in with our assessment system?**

The [Essential Instructional Practices](#) are a set of practices to support a positive impact on literacy development. The practices, in conjunction with a comprehensive, structured literacy plan, can be used to build an effective literacy program.

**9. Who will determine what constitutes "deficiency" on the various assessments?**

Grade 3 students who score 1271 or below on the English Language Arts (ELA) M-STEP will be identified as having a reading deficiency per [MCL 380.1280f](#). The guidelines for what constitutes a deficiency based on various screener/benchmark assessments are determined at the local level. This determination should be based on the selected assessments utilized by the school district. The assessment results assist with predicting those students who are at risk of falling behind on the third-grade Michigan ELA summative assessment (M-STEP).

**10. How do we ensure we continue to focus on the whole child while simultaneously using predictability of the assessments administered before the third-grade state assessment?**

In addition to addressing reading deficits, schools and public school academies (PSAs) will need to reflect on what they know about student learning and simultaneously address social-emotional and mental well-being to ensure students receive the support they deserve. Schools and PSAs can utilize observational assessment, integration of literacy practices across content areas, and a comprehensive, structured literacy plan, in addition to other methods, to help students succeed. For more information regarding Michigan's Whole Child definition, please visit the [MDE Whole Child Definition](#) page.

**11. Are districts still required to deliver a benchmark assessment to students in grades K-2?**

[Benchmark Assessments Fact Sheet and FAQ, 2022-23 \(michigan.gov\)](#) With the repeal of Michigan Compiled Law (MCL) 388.1698b (<http://legislature.mi.gov/doc.aspx?mcl-388-1698b>), effective October 1, 2023, there is no longer a requirement to administer benchmark assessments to receive state aid.

**12. What is CEPI?**

CEPI is the acronym for the [Center for Educational Performance and Information](#). This is the agency responsible for collecting, securely managing, and reporting education data in Michigan.

**13. When will CEPI send letters notifying the parent their child has been identified as having a reading deficiency?**

If a third-grade student is identified as having a reading deficiency based on the spring 2024 ELA M-STEP assessment, CEPI will mail a notification to the parents of the student.

**14. What information will be in the letter that CEPI sends?**

Section 6 of this legislation currently outlines the following:

After CEPI receives the grade 3 state assessment results from the department, using state assessment results, CEPI shall identify each pupil completing grade 3 that year who has a reading deficiency and shall notify the parent or legal guardian and the school district or public school academy of each of these pupils that the pupil has a reading deficiency; shall include an explanation in the notification concerning what constitutes a reading deficiency; and shall include, in the notification, information concerning interventions that are available to the pupil to address the pupil’s reading deficiency. A school district or public school academy may also make its own notification to a parent or guardian in addition to the notification by CEPI.

For more information regarding English Learners (EL), please visit the [MDE ENGLISH LEARNER \(EL\)](#) website.

**15. Will all students receive a letter from CEPI?**

Only students scoring 1271 or below on the Grade 3 ELA M-STEP will receive a letter.

**16. How will districts know that the letters have been mailed?**

Notification that letters have been mailed will be sent from MDE to ISD and district superintendents, and building/PSA principals through the State Superintendent’s Thursday communication, as well as through GovDelivery to the MDE ELA list serve.

**17. Will CEPI send letters home to parents/guardians of students with IEPs or 504s?**

This letter is sent to all identified students, regardless of disability status.

**18. If a district does not have an early literacy coach, would they rely on the Intermediate School District (ISD) early literacy coach?**

The legislation states that districts are expected to utilize their ISD early literacy coach at a minimum.

## 19. When is the M-Step Testing Window?

Please refer to the [M-STEP Summative Page](#) for specific dates.

## English Learners (EL)

### 1. Does 3rd grade count as one of the three years when calculating time spent in an English Learner (EL) program for the good cause exemption?

The three-year count commences on the first day of initial enrollment.

### 2. What are the assessment expectations for English Learners and students in Dual, Bilingual and Transitional Programs?

All students are required to be assessed in kindergarten through third grade to screen and diagnose reading difficulties, inform instruction and intervention needs, and assess progress towards a growth target under [MCL 380.1280f](#). Students who are English Learners or students in dual, bilingual or transitional programs and who are instructed in a language other than English should be assessed in the language(s) of instruction. To comply with the Read by Grade Three law, districts should select an initial (screener/benchmark) reading assessment for students in grades 1-3 in the first 30 school days of the school year, or the first 90 school days of the school year for Kindergarten. Districts should determine which initial assessment tool they think is best for assessing the reading level of this population of students. This may involve using a commercial reading screener in a language other than English or creating a local tool.

## Family Engagement

The MDE supports families as partners in their child's literacy success. The following resources have been developed and compiled to share with families. It is recommended that resources be paired with conversations with families about literacy development and expectations to fully support the student at home and school.

### 1. Is the Read-at-Home plan required for grades K-4?

For grades K-4, the legislation requires a Read-at-Home plan and support for families to be provided to address the reading deficiency.

### 2. Will there be standard supports for Read-at-Home plans and training workshops for parents or caregivers?

Districts and PSAs have the authority to determine the format and content of Read-at-Home plans. Per legislation, they must provide parents, legal guardians, or other providers of care for the pupil with a read-at-home plan, including parent, guardian, or care provider training workshops and regular home reading.

## Instruction

### 1. **How can we best prepare students for success on the 3rd grade summative assessment (M-STEP)?**

The M-STEP is Michigan’s English Language Arts (ELA) state summative assessment. As such, it is matched with the rigor and content of the Michigan state academic standards. All Michigan educators are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the Michigan state academic standards as well as the M-STEP assessment to understand what students will be expected to know and do at each grade level. Information on this assessment can be found at the MDE [M-STEP Summative Page](https://www.michigan.gov/mde/services/student-assessment/m-step).  
<https://www.michigan.gov/mde/services/student-assessment/m-step>

### 2. **What is a reading program?**

A reading program is a locally determined system of assessment, instruction, curriculum and resources. This system is used to provide evidenced-based literacy instruction for all students.

### 3. **How do I know if my district’s reading program meets the requirements in the law?**

The law requires that the assessment, instruction, curriculum, and resources of a program be evidence-based; which means based in research and with proven efficacy.

### 4. **What is evidence-based instruction as defined in the Read by Grade Three law (MCL.380.1280f)?**

In this legislation, “evidence-based” means based in research and with proven efficacy.

## Intervention

### 1. **To deliver a summer reading program, can we partner/collaborate with county library summer programs?**

Yes, the MDE strongly supports the use of appropriate partners in providing supports to students.

### 2. **What state or federal funds can be used to support summer reading programs?**

Title I Funds- For a Schoolwide Program all students may participate in Title I interventions such as summers reading programs. For Targeted Assistance Programs only specific, identified students can participate in summer reading programs if funded by Title I. In addition, Section 35a(5) Additional Instructional Time grant funds can be used to support summer reading programs.

### 3. **Do the existing Title I supports in districts and schools already, in effect, meet the added instructional time and interventions for students demonstrated deficiencies in reading?**

It is not recommended to continue implementing initiatives that are not improving student achievement.

## Reading Improvement Plans

### 1. **What is an Individual Reading Improvement Plan (IRIP)?**

The IRIP describes the reading intervention services a pupil needs to remedy the reading deficiency.

### 2. **When do I start creating IRIPs for students with reading deficiencies?**

The district should create IRIPs for students in grades K-3 within 30 calendar days of the student showing a deficit.

### 3. **What if within the 30 calendar days a student goes from deficient to proficient? Does there still need to be an official IRIP?**

Need for an IRIP should be based on the full assessment system, including classroom assessments and formative practices and be provided to students as needed to support learning and literacy proficiency.

### 4. **Are students in a “young fives” and developmental kindergarten program required to have an IRIP?**

Yes, if they show a deficiency.

### 5. **Will a standard format or template to facilitate the development of IRIPs be developed?**

Local education agencies will need to create a process based on their specific context and needs to support student learning needs. The identified process is then used to create each IRIP with the pupil’s teacher, school, principal, and parent or legal guardian and other pertinent school personnel. The IRIP describes the reading intervention services the pupil will receive. This intensive intervention plan should be used until the pupil no longer has a reading deficiency and be modified as needed based on identified student needs.

### 6. **Do parents of the students also need to be notified of the deficiency and be provided tools to support as required by the Read by Grade Three law?**

Yes, the school and parents should work together to address the identified deficiency.

### 7. **What are the options if parents opt out of signing an IRIP?**

The law does not provide an opt-out process. Districts and PSAs are encouraged to maintain communication with parents and guardians about their student’s reading progress and plan. Districts and PSAs are required to document efforts by the student’s school to engage the parent or legal guardian and whether those efforts were successful. They are also required to document any dissenting opinions expressed by school personnel or a parent or guardian concerning the individual reading improvement plan.

## Intensive Support

**1. Which score will be used to initially flag students who are identified as having a reading deficiency?**

CEPI will send a letter to parents of students scoring 1271 or below on the 2024 ELA M-STEP.

**2. Will students be retained?**

The retention component of this law has been repealed effective February 13, 2024.

**3. If a student is identified as having a reading deficiency, what needs to be done for the student in 4th grade?**

The pupil remains eligible for reading intervention services designed to enable the pupil to achieve proficiency in reading.

**4. If there is language regarding student caseload or student placement within classrooms that conflicts with the placement requirement for students with highly effective teachers, what recommendations are there? (i.e., if there are 1 highly effective and 3 effective teachers at a grade level)**

Students who have been identified as having a reading deficiency can be assigned to 1 or more of the following:

- An effective teacher of reading as determined by the teacher evaluation system under section 1249.
- The highest evaluated grade 3 teacher in the school as determined by the teacher evaluation system under section 1249.
- A reading specialist.

If a district or PSA cannot furnish the number of teachers needed to satisfy the criteria required in the law, the district or PSA develops a staffing plan for providing services. The plan must be posted on the district or PSA website.

**5. What is the process for opting out of the reading deficiency identification portion of the Read by Grade Three law?**

There is not an opt-out option in the Read by Grade Three Law.

## Special Education

**1. Are students with Individual Education Plans (IEPs) exempt from the IRIP?**

No, students with IEPs are not exempt from the IRIP.

**2. Can the student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) be considered a student's Individual Reading Intervention Plan (IRIP)?**

An IEP is the district's offer of a Free Appropriate Public Education which includes special education programs and services to address the unique needs of the student that result from the student's disability. The IEP should not reference an IRIP,



however, for students with significant cognitive impairments, the IRIP may reference appropriate reading supports, communication and language goals, etc., specified in student’s IEP. An IRIP does not meet the IDEA requirements for students with an IEP.

**3. Is it reasonable and appropriate for the IRIP to be delivered by the special education teacher as part of special education service time?**

Yes, but the IEP should address the reading goals that the special education teacher will be working on. The IRIP is not a legal document for IDEA requirements. The IRIP may reference an IEP, if appropriate.

**4. Will the MI-Access ELA assessment be appropriate for the determination of need for an Individual Reading Improvement Plan?**

MI-Access ELA assessment is a state level summative assessment and should never be used as a screener or individualized achievement test.

**5. How does the reading law interplay with ESSA/Title I requirements?**

There is not a direct correlation between the Michigan law and the ESSA/Title I requirements, but they are not in opposition to each other either. ESSA does not directly address early literacy-it is much broader. Title I services are based on a comprehensive needs assessment, so if there is a need for reading/literacy interventions, Title I funds could support that work.

## Staffing

**1. What is a Staffing Plan?**

The Michigan Read by Grade Three legislation ([MCL 380.1280f](#)) requires districts to complete a staffing plan if they are unable to meet staffing requirements as outlined in the law. Although this requirement is only for schools who cannot meet the staffing requirements as outlined in the law, a local district may choose to provide annual updates to support transparency.

**2. If there are more students demonstrating deficiencies than there are resources to intervene, does a school/district prioritize to serve those with greatest needs first?**

The Read by Grade Three legislation states that any student who exhibits a reading deficiency at any time must be provided with an Individual Reading Improvement Plan within 30 days. This language clarifies that all students demonstrating deficiencies must be served.

**3. The guidance below provides a framework for a staffing plan.**

### Student Assignment

- Explain how students are prioritized for assignment to teachers.
- Explain how teacher skill is being measured in reading and being matched to student need.

## Teacher Credentials and Training

- Describe the credentials for teachers who are providing classroom instruction and those providing Interventions.
- Share the professional learning plan for teachers; highlight efforts to improve literacy instruction.

## Meeting the Legislation

- Explain district staffing and student assignment practices.
- Explain ongoing district processes to meet legislative requirements along with needs of all students.