

# HELPING FAMILIES NAVIGATE THE STATE-MANDATED THIRD GRADE RETENTION LAW

*During her State of the State address, the Governor will be announcing an initiative that will elevate public-private partnerships with philanthropic organizations to support families that will be most impacted by the third-grade reading retention mandate signed by the previous administration.*

## THE PROBLEM

In 2016, the legislature passed a law which requires schools to identify students in early elementary grades who are struggling with literacy and to provide them additional help. However, the law also mandates that, starting this year, students must repeat the third grade if they are more than one grade level behind based on one high-stakes test, the M-STEP.

While the link between student outcomes and third grade reading proficiency is well-supported in the research, there is inconclusive evidence that holding students back actually improves literacy outcomes. Retention punishes kids without addressing the root cause of the problem.

While there are some exemptions built into the retention mandate, the process for getting one for a child will be complicated for families. Parents and guardians will need help to understand the retention mandate and advocate for what is in the best interest of their child.

## THE GOVERNOR'S PLAN:

**A plan to partner with philanthropy through the Council of Michigan Foundations and the Office of Foundation Liaison, working with member foundations and their nonprofit partners to support families navigating the third-grade retention mandate.**

- The State of Michigan and foundations across the state are already investing significant dollars into addressing early literacy, particularly by funding wrap-around services both in-school and during out-of-school time. These investments are vitally important and must continue in order to increase reading proficiency rates.
- Today we are announcing a more focused commitment to help families understand the retention mandate. Foundations and the Governor's Office will work together to invest in strategies that will support families to make decisions based on what is in the best interest of the child.

## QUICK FACTS

Students currently in the third grade will be the first cohort to be impacted by the Read by Grade 3 Law. According to data released by the State Board of Education, nearly 5,000 students could repeat the third grade. That means up to 5 percent of all eight year-olds may be held back but that rate is much higher for some subgroups.

- All students (4.4%)
- African American/Black students (10.7%)
- American Indian students (5.1%)
- Hispanic or Latino (4.7%)
- Economically Disadvantaged students (6.5%)
- Urban Districts (8.1%)

### FOUNDATIONS COMMITTED TO BE A PART OF THIS INITIATIVE:

**BATTLE CREEK COMMUNITY FOUNDATION  
COMMUNITY FOUNDATION OF GREATER FLINT  
MAX & MARJORIE FISHER FOUNDATION  
THE SKILLMAN FOUNDATION  
W.K. KELLOGG FOUNDATION**