



DALE COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION

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RE: Alabama Literacy Act and Retention Policy Explanation

Dear Parents/Guardians,

I hope this letter finds you and your family well and in good health. I am writing to provide you with important information regarding the *Alabama Literacy Act* and its impact on our district's retention policy.

As you may be aware, the *Alabama Literacy Act* is a crucial piece of legislation aimed at improving the literacy skills of our students. Its primary goal is to ensure that all students in our state are reading proficiently by the end of the third grade. To achieve this goal, the *Act* includes several provisions, one of which pertains to the retention of students who are not reading at grade level by the end of third grade.

Beginning this school year (2023-2024), the *Alabama Literacy Act* mandates that students who are not reading at the appropriate level by the end of third grade must be retained, unless they meet certain exemption criteria. This provision is designed to give struggling students the necessary support to catch up in their reading skills before advancing to higher grades, as reading proficiency is a skill that impacts success in all other subjects.

We understand that the retention provision of the *Alabama Literacy Act* can raise concerns and questions. Please know that we are committed to supporting every student's growth and success. We will work closely with you to provide transparent communication and to create personalized plans to help your child succeed in their reading journey. Each elementary school will be holding an informational meeting on the *Alabama Literacy Act* this fall at a time and date that will be announced soon.

If you have any questions or would like more information about the *Alabama Literacy Act* and how it applies to your school, please feel free to contact your local school principal or local school Reading Specialist. We are here to assist you and ensure that your child receives the best possible education.

Attached to this letter you will find answers to frequently asked questions and information on pathways to promotion.

Thank you for your continued support in your child's education and growth. Together, we can create a strong foundation for their future success.

Sincerely,

Benjamin E. Baker
Superintendent
Dale County Schools
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ALABAMA LITERACY ACT

Frequently Asked Questions

FOR K-3 FAMILIES

What is the **ALABAMA LITERACY ACT**?

The **Alabama Literacy Act** was passed in 2019 to help improve reading in Alabama public schools to ensure students are reading on grade level by the end of the 3rd grade. Reading is the gateway to lifelong achievement and the students of Alabama deserve a strong start on their path to success.

Why focus on literacy?

By 3rd grade, students must be proficient in foundational reading skills in order to comprehend texts. If they are unsuccessful, they will have difficulty understanding grade level reading material. Students also need strong reading skills in order to learn other school subjects such as science, social studies, writing, and even math.

How will families be informed about their child's progress?

Each student in kindergarten through 3rd grade will have his/her reading assessed at the beginning, middle, and end of the school year. These assessments will identify students who need intensive reading instruction and intervention. These assessments also provide useful information for the teacher to help tailor instruction to meet individual student needs. Families should receive these results in writing within a designated time frame.

What is The Alabama State Board of Education approved assessment that is required for promotion to the 4th grade?

The Board approved assessment is the reading portion of the 3rd grade Alabama Comprehensive Assessment Program (ACAP) English Language Arts assessment. The ACAP summative is a required test for all third-grade students to initiate a path to promotion. Students not demonstrating sufficient reading skills may be retained at the end of 3rd grade, if unable to show sufficient reading skills by one of the other paths to promotion. Your child's school will provide interventions to help your child.

How will schools help students who are retained in 3rd grade because the student does not meet the promotion requirement?

Students retained in 3rd grade will receive more intensive reading intervention services including:

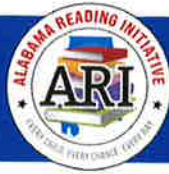
- Offer summer reading camps and Alabama Summer Achievement Program (ASAP) shall be made available to all K-3 students in public elementary schools that are among the lowest performing 5% in reading;
- Offer before or after school intervention tutoring throughout the year to support learning;
- Provide reading instruction that is grounded in the science of reading;
- Provide frequent monitoring to help ensure students are progressing and on track to meet grade-level reading standards;
[2021 Alabama Course of Study: English Language Arts](#);
- Provide families with a Read-at-Home Plan,

If your child is reading below grade level or is struggling with reading, his/her teacher will inform you of the reading deficits that have been identified.

The teacher will provide your child with additional reading instruction and support, and you will be given strategies to help your child at home.

If your child does not demonstrate sufficient reading skills at the end of 3rd grade, you will receive notification that he/she may not be promoted to 4th grade.





Pathway to Promotion

Grade Level Ready Performance Outcomes

Third graders will be promoted to fourth grade if they demonstrate sufficient reading skills through one of the following pathways:



Score above the lowest achievement level for the ACAP in the spring



Earn an acceptable score for the ACAP Supplemental Assessment



Master grade 3 Essential Reading Standards in the Student Reading Portfolio



Meet one of the Good Cause Exemptions

Good Cause Exemptions:

Good cause exemptions allow students who are reading below grade level to be promoted to the fourth grade but still receive interventions and other supports. The good cause exemptions include:

- (1) Students identified as English language learners who have had less than three years of instruction in English as a second language.
- (2) Students with disabilities who participate in the statewide English Language Arts reading assessment and who have an Individual Education Plan or a Section 504 plan that reflects that the student has received intensive reading intervention for more than two years and who still demonstrates a deficiency in reading or was previously retained in kindergarten, first grade, second grade, or third grade.
- (3) Students who have received intensive reading intervention for two or more years and who still demonstrate a deficiency in reading and who were previously retained in kindergarten, first grade, or second grade for a total of two years.

* No student shall be retained more than once in the third grade.

NOTE: Students with disabilities whose Individualized Education Plan indicates that participation in the statewide assessment program is not appropriate, consistent with state law, are automatically exempt from demonstrating sufficient reading skills outlined in this chapter in order to achieve promotion.

* If a student does not demonstrate sufficient reading skills through one of the three pathways or does not qualify for a good cause exemption, the student may not be promoted to fourth grade.

How can families and guardians help?

Click for resources



Scan for resources

