



# North Carolina Read to Achieve

## Introduction

This information is designed to help all parents and guardians of North Carolina public school students in kindergarten through third grade understand the General Assembly's North Carolina Read to Achieve law. The goal of this legislation is for all students to become proficient readers by the end of third grade. Read to Achieve outlines reading requirements for elementary students and describes what schools will be doing to assist children in reaching the proficiency goal.

## Background

Reading is at the core of all instruction in kindergarten through third grade. In the early grades, students learn foundational reading skills that build deeper comprehension skills as they progress through the grades. Students must have strong reading skills to be able to succeed in all other subject areas.

In every North Carolina kindergarten through third grade class, a student's reading progress is measured regularly using the mclass Reading 3D assessment system. This system allows teachers to understand the reading levels and skill development of all students and identifies struggling students as well as students who need reading enrichment. By state law, if your child is reading below grade level or struggling with reading, the school must inform you of exactly what type of reading difficulty your child is having and what instructions or interventions are being used to help advance his/her skills. All parents and guardians should receive a Home Connect letter three times a year that shows your child's progress on the benchmarking assessments along with activities that you can use at home to help him/her.

## Personal Education Plan

If the assessment indicates that your child is below proficiency, then a Personal Education Plan (PEP) must be developed. The PEP must include focused interventions and goals to help your child develop stronger reading skills. You should receive a copy of the PEP and should also be included when the plan is being reviewed. Teachers will monitor your child's progress frequently using the mclass Reading 3D system along with other classroom measures. Your child should receive intensive reading instruction during regular school hours in addition to his/her regular classroom reading instruction.



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## Goal

“The goal of the state is to ensure that every student read at or above grade level by the end of third grade and continue to progress in reading proficiency so that he or she can read, comprehend, integrate, and apply complex texts needed for secondary education and career success.” By the end of third grade, students are expected to be independent readers, which means that they can read and understand words, sentences, and paragraphs and answer comprehension questions about their reading.

## End-of-Grade Tests (EOG)

The North Carolina End-of-Grade (EOG) tests measure students’ progress on the standards in the North Carolina “Standard Course of Study”. Students in grades 3-8 take the EOGs each spring. Third grade students are tested in reading and math. Their scores fall into one of four proficiency levels ranging from Level 1 (the lowest) to Level 4 (the highest).

The third grade EOG reading test is a multiple-choice test. Students are asked to read selections and answer questions about the selections.

## The North Carolina Read to Achieve Law

The Read to Achieve law requires third graders who score at Level 1 or 2 in **reading** on the third grade EOG be retained and not promoted to the fourth grade. However, students can receive a good cause exemption by showing proficiency on a Read to Achieve test (given after the EOG) or through a completed reading portfolio. If your child scores a Level 1 or 2 on the EOG and does not qualify for a good cause exemption, then the school will notify you in writing that your child must achieve proficiency before being promoted to the fourth grade.

In addition, some students with an IEP who are being taught on alternate academic achievement standards, some limited English proficient students, and students who have been retained more than once before third grade also can receive a good cause exemption.

## Summer Reading Camp

Students who do not show proficiency after third grade and who do not qualify for a good cause exemption, will attend summer reading camp. This camp will be provided by the local school district and will be of no cost to you. The summer reading camps will be at least six weeks in length and students can show proficiency after the camps by passing the Read to Achieve test or producing a completed reading portfolio. Those students showing proficiency will be promoted to the fourth grade.

Note: A parent/guardian can decide that the student will not attend summer reading camp. In this case the student will be placed in a third grade class the following year.

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## Retention

If a student is still not proficient after the summer reading camp, the student moves to the next year with a “retained” label on his or her record. A child who is identified as retained under this law will be afforded many extra intensive interventions and opportunities to develop skills and gain proficiency. Retention gives the child the extra time that is needed to catch up in reading and build stronger skills for other content areas. Reading deficiencies must be addressed before students move into more difficult work and assignments in fourth grade and beyond. Students who are not competent in reading skills can become frustrated with more complex texts and tasks in the higher grades. It is necessary to make sure that all students are reading with proficiency before this occurs.

## Successful Reading Development for Retained Students

Retained students will be placed in one of two classes the next school year: a three/four transitional class or an accelerated class. Schools can determine which classes they will be able to provide for students. These classes will be fourth grade classes that use fourth grade standards and curriculum.

Both of these classes will include:

- Research-based effective teaching strategies
- A highly qualified teacher
- At least 90 minutes of uninterrupted reading instruction each day to include:
  - one-on-one and small group instruction
  - frequent progress monitoring
  - intensive intervention strategies
  - a heterogeneous mix of students
- Intensive remediation for students with the “retained” label

Students in the transitional classes will receive these interventions within the regular class setting and students in the accelerated classes will receive the interventions in a pull-out class for the entire 90 minutes of instruction.

Parents of retained students can expect:

- Monthly written reports on their child’s reading progress
- A reading contract between the parent and the school that involves parent-guided home reading strategies

## Mid-year Promotion

Students with the retained label in one of the two designated classes will be given a chance to show proficiency of third-grade standards by passing the Read to Achieve test or by completing a reading portfolio. This mid-year promotion will be determined by November 1. If a student shows proficiency, he or she will have the retained label removed. If a student does not show proficiency at mid-year, he or she will begin work on a portfolio based on fourth-grade standards to hopefully be completed by the end of the fourth grade to have the retention label removed from his or her records. If the student does not complete a fourth-grade portfolio by the end of the year, the retained label remains on his or her record. All students will remain in the same classes for the entire year and will continue to receive the 90-minute block of uninterrupted reading instruction and take the fourth-grade EOG in the spring.

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## **Why the Law Is Being Implemented**

This law focuses on early identification and early intervention for students who are struggling with reading skill development and comprehension. In order to reduce the need for high remedial classes in middle and high schools, to increase the graduation rate, and to have all students college and career ready at graduation, the state needs to be proactive in its approach to offer multiple and intensive opportunities for struggling readers at an early age.

## **More Information**

For more information on how this program will be implemented in your child's school and district, please contact your school.