



February 10, 2020

DPSCD Parents of Third Graders,

In 2016, the State of Michigan passed Public Act 451 (link to MCL 380.1280f), now referred to as the “Read by Grade Three Law.” The law requires that all students who are not reading on a third-grade level by the end of the school year as measured by the state reading assessment be retained. This letter is to inform you about the good cause exemptions that will allow the District to promote students that might be retained under the law.

While the District is implementing a strategic plan designed to ensure our students are reading on grade level by the end of grade three, we recognize there are students that will be in danger of not being promoted to fourth grade based on their state assessment score. **We firmly believe that student retention is a decision that should be made between the school leader, teacher and family.** As a result, we are planning to ensure families understand their right to request an exemption and to implement an easy to follow process to do so. In addition, the District will automatically grant exemptions as students qualify. The law outlines that good cause exemptions can be granted for the following reasons:

- a. Student has an IEP
- b. Student has a 504 plan
- c. Student is an English Learner with less than three years of instruction in an ESL program
- d. Student was previously retained and has received intensive reading intervention for two or more years (iRIP)
- e. A student enrolled for less than two years and was not provided with an appropriate iRIP in previous school
- f. Student has already repeated third grade
- g. Student demonstrates a grade 3 reading level through performance on an alternate assessment (i-Ready)
- h. Student has demonstrated proficiency in math on the state assessment and your child has demonstrated proficiency in science, social studies and ELA as shown through a pupil portfolio of student work.
- i. A parent or teacher request a good cause exemption within 30 days of retention notification and the superintendent grants the request

The parent or teacher of any student retained under the law can request the child be promoted. DPSCD is committed to promoting any student that the teacher and parent do not feel retention is in their best interest. We understand that there is a lot of fear from families and the community that the District will have a significant increase in students being retained because of this law. Based on the allowable good cause exemptions, we do not anticipate an increase in the percentage of students retained this year when compared to last year.

Immediately following the release of student M-STEP scores, the District will notify parents of students that might be retained under the law. The written notice will include a survey for the parent to request a good cause exemption. Schools will be prepared to support families with completing the survey onsite and the District will have multiple pop-up centers in schools throughout the city for families to come and request an exemption. This strategy will allow families to request an exemption from the comfort of their own home or in a supportive environment, such as your child’s school.

DPSCD is committed to helping every child read on grade level and minimizing the impact of required retention under the law. If you have any questions or concerns about the “Read by Third Grade Law,” please contact your school’s principal.

Sincerely,

Nikolai P. Vitti, Ed.D.
Superintendent

Students Rise. We all Rise