



STATE OF MICHIGAN
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
LANSING

GRETCHEN WHITMER
GOVERNOR

SHEILA A. ALLES
INTERIM STATE SUPERINTENDENT

MEMORANDUM

DATE: May 16, 2019

TO: Local and Intermediate School District Superintendents
Public School Academy Directors

FROM: Venessa A. Keesler, Ph.D., Deputy Superintendent 
Division of Educator, Student, and School Supports

SUBJECT: Read by Grade Three Retention Guidelines

In 2016, the Michigan legislature passed what is now referred to as the "Read by Grade 3" (RBG3) legislation. **This law requires that students who are more than one year behind grade-level in reading are subject to retention and additional support to improve their reading level. This component of the law takes effect for the 2020-2021 school year, using assessment data from the spring 2020 assessments.** This communication is provided as a courtesy heads up for schools and districts in advance of the actual implementation of this component of the law.

Identifying a RBG3 Cut Score

Grade 3 English language arts (ELA) performance is measured by the M-STEP assessment. The cut scores associated with the performance levels are Not Proficient, Partially Proficient, Proficient, and Advanced. These performance levels, which are required for our state summative assessments, do not correlate to a grade-level equivalency score. In other words, a performance level of "not proficient" on the ELA test does not necessarily tell us if the student is a grade level behind in terms of their reading. To comply with the RBG3 law, a unique and separate cut score for the 3rd grade ELA test was established specifically to measure reading as outlined in the law.

To establish this reading cut score, the Michigan Department of Education (MDE) worked with educators and technical experts to conduct a standard setting process with the 3rd Grade ELA M-STEP to support the requirements of RBG3. The four-phase standard setting comprised an initial standard setting, editing the performance level descriptors (PLDs), a replication of the standard setting, and a review workshop.

Participants' recommendations at the standard settings were consistent, and the recommended cut score was validated by the review committee.

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The standard setting was implemented in four phases:

- 1) On July 13, 2018—a committee of eleven Michigan educators used the Michigan Content Standards and test items from the M-STEP to enumerate the knowledge, skills, and abilities expected of students who met the RBG3 requirements and they recommended a cut score for RBG3. This is known as a “Bookmark Standard Setting Procedure” and is one valid and reliable method for setting standards on assessments.
- 2) On November 30, 2018—a team of two Michigan educators and MDE literacy leads convened to review and refine the performance level descriptors. Performance level descriptors are statements or definitions that explain what is expected at that particular performance level. They verified the PLDs aligned with the expectations associated with the RBG3 requirement.
- 3) On December 3, 2018—a committee of nine Michigan educators, including reading coaches and interventionists, convened to replicate the Bookmark Procedure. These educators recommended cut scores similar to those recommended by the July 2018 committee.
- 4) On December 4, 2018—a committee of seven Michigan educators and stakeholders convened to review the recommendations from the two standard settings. As part of a policy-focused workshop, the participants endorsed the findings of the standard setting committees and made a unified cut score recommendation to the MDE.

RBG3 Category	Cut Score	Response
1	1252 or lower	Subject to the retention policy and will be given the resources and supports below*
2	1253-1271	Additional reading supports are recommended, <i>not required</i> (not subject to retention policy)
3	1272 or higher	Meets the Grade 3 reading requirement (not subject to retention policy and additional needs or supports can be determined at the local level)

Please note: It is not possible to determine “how many” questions a student has to get wrong to be flagged, due to the way the assessments are scored. The scale score is the information that can be used.

When a student is flagged for possible retention (RBG3 Category 1), the law requires that they:

- Are assigned to highly effective teacher or highest rated grade 3 teacher or a reading specialist
- Are provided evidence-based reading programs with proven achievement results
- Receive daily targeted small group or 1-to-1 reading intervention
- Receive ongoing progress monitoring
- Receive supplemental reading instruction

Please note: the law also includes a number of good cause exemptions under which a student would not be retained. The district works with the parents and other decision makers as appropriate to determine this. The retention flag is only one component of the final retention decision.

Projected Impact

Based on the spring 2018 data, this recommendation means approximately 5% of students would be subject to the retention policy (scoring 1252 or lower), 17.5% of students would be provided additional support (scoring 1253 – 1271), and 77.5% of students would meet the grade 3 reading requirement (scoring 1272 or higher). This is a statewide score. This law will be implemented at the local level. At this time the MDE has only run this analysis at a statewide aggregate level.

Next Steps

- The MDE will monitor these numbers using these new cut scores over the summer based on the 2019 assessment data. Any updates will be provided as part of our statewide release at the beginning of the school year.
- The MDE hopes to use this information to collaborate with benchmark vendors who wish to create an equivalent cut score on their own assessment which could be used as an “alternate assessment” as part of the RBG3 law.
- The MDE has available resources for districts, schools and parents regarding the RBG3 law and will be adding to those resources, with a particular focus on communication tools for parents.

Resources

- The [Read by Grade Three Guide](#) is now available. This guide was created in collaboration with a Read by Grade Three committee and will be updated on a quarterly basis.
- The MDE website for Read by Grade Three-Parent Awareness Toolkit:
https://www.michigan.gov/mde/0,4615,7-140-28753_74161-490688--,00.html

For questions regarding the RBG3 reading cut score, please contact the Office of Educational Assessment and Accountability at mde-oeaa@michigan.gov.

For questions regarding the RBG3 law, please contact Early Literacy at mde-earlyliteracy@michigan.gov.

cc: Michigan Education Alliance