Third Grade Retention

Act 284 (Read to Succeed) requires that, beginning with the 2017-2018 school year, a student must be retained in the third grade if the student fails to demonstrate reading proficiency at the end of third grade as indicated by scoring at the lowest achievement level on the state summative reading assessment SC READY. A student may be exempt for good cause from the mandatory retention but shall continue to receive instructional support and services and reading intervention appropriate for their age and reading level. The Read to Succeed Team is aware of research around third grade retention and is currently researching models and solutions in other states and among stakeholders in South Carolina.

In the process of determining whether a student is promoted or retained, schools need to examine closely whether a student is exempt from retention. Districts, schools, teachers, parents, and families have a responsibility to communicate the strengths and needs of students while working as a team to ensure students continue to make progress towards becoming life-long, proficient readers.

Good cause exemptions from mandatory retention include students:

• with limited English proficiency and less than two years of instruction in English as a Second Language program;

• with disabilities whose Individual Education Plan (IEP) indicates the use of alternative assessments or alternative reading interventions;

• with disabilities whose IEP or Section 504 Plan reflects that the student has received intensive remediation in reading for more than two years but still does not substantially demonstrate reading proficiency;

• who demonstrate third grade reading proficiency on an alternative assessment approved by the board and which teachers may administer following the administration of the state assessment of reading;

• who have received two years of reading intervention and were previously retained;

• who through reading portfolio documentation demonstrate the mastery of the state standards in reading that is equal to at least one level above the lowest achievement level on the state reading assessment; and

• who successfully participate in a Read to Succeed Summer Reading Camp (SRC) at the conclusion of the third grade year and demonstrate through either a reading portfolio or through a norm-referenced, alternative assessment approved by the SCDE, that their mastery of the state standards in reading is equal to at least a level above the lowest level on the state reading assessment.

If a student meets one of the exemptions mentioned above, the student may be considered for promotion to fourth grade. The explanations and resources included in this document are intended to provide guidance, support, and examples to support districts and schools as they fully implement this section of Act 284.