



# Read by Grade Three Guide October 2019

## Introduction to the Read by Grade 3 Guide

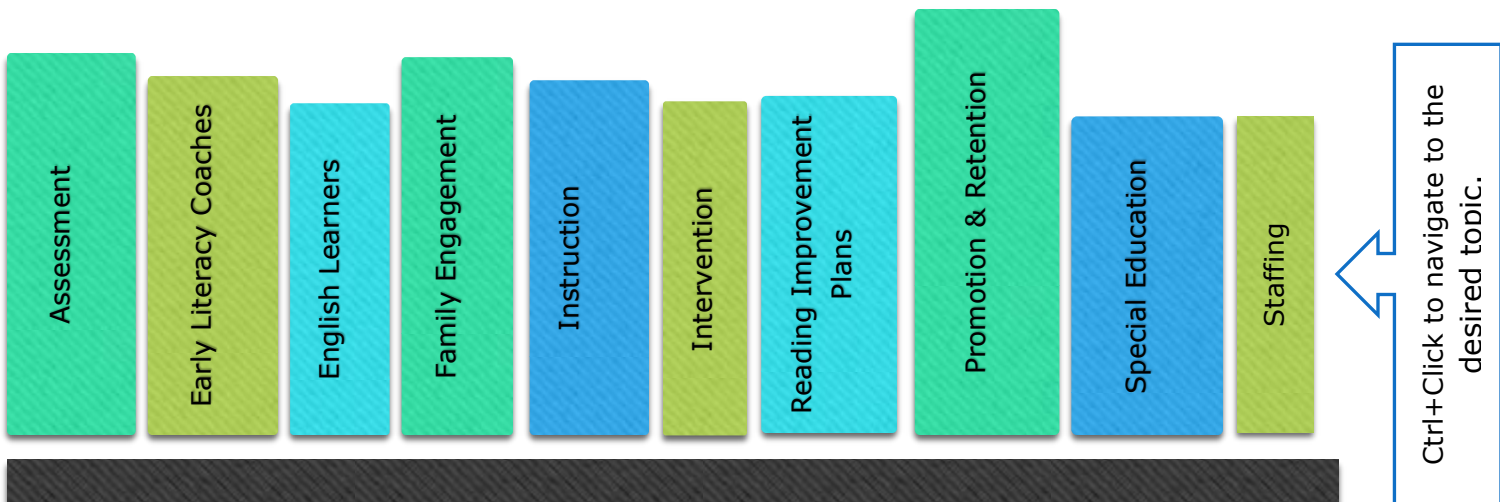
The Michigan Department of Education (MDE) has compiled resources and responses to frequently asked questions regarding [MCL 380.1280f](#), referred to as the “Read by Grade Three” law. The purpose of this guide is to support district implementation of the legislation by providing current information.

As new information and resources become available, this guide will be updated. Please send any questions regarding this guide to [MDE-EarlyLiteracy@michigan.gov](mailto:MDE-EarlyLiteracy@michigan.gov).

NOTE: *Italics indicate new content added as of October 2019.*

## How to Use the Guide

The books below are linked to the information in these sections of the guide. Click below to be directed to the topic.



## Assessment

### 1. How is deficiency defined?

Deficiency is defined in the law as “scoring below grade level or being determined to be at-risk of reading failure based on a screening assessment, diagnostic assessment, standardized summative assessment, or progress monitoring.”

**2. What assessment will be used to flag for retention and what score will constitute more than one grade level behind at the end of third grade?**

A unique Read by Grade Three score on the ELA M-STEP will be used to flag for retention. For detailed information please see the [Read by Grade Three Retention Guidelines memo](#).

**3. Where do I find information about MDE approved assessments to include in an early literacy assessment system?**

For information on Early Literacy Assessment Systems, please visit the [Read by Grade Three Assessments website](#). Please note there is an [initial assessment list](#) and an [extensive assessment list](#).

**4. When do we need to begin administering assessments from the approved assessment system and to whom?**

The initial component of the assessment system must be delivered within the first 30 school days of the academic year.

**5. When outlining assessment accommodations on an Individual Education Plan (IEP), are the initial and extensive assessments given considered state or district assessments?**

The initial and extensive assessments are district assessments. A state assessment is a required summative assessment used for accountability purposes. Student needs should be outlined in a student's IEP. The provisions in that IEP should address how those needs are being addressed. Accommodations selected for classroom, district and state assessments should mirror that which is provided during instruction, according to the needs of the student.

**6. Must students who take MI-Access participate in the district assessments required in the Read by Grade Three law?**

There is no exemption from the district assessments for the Read by Grade Three legislation. The IDEA at 34 CFR Section 300.320(a)(6)(ii) states, "If the IEP Team determines that the child must take an alternate assessment instead of a particular regular State or districtwide assessment of student achievement, a statement of why— (A) The child cannot participate in the regular assessment; and (B) The particular alternate assessment selected is appropriate for the child" is required. An IEP team does not have the authority to exempt any student from a statewide assessment. The IEP team can only determine that a student take an alternate assessment.

**7. What is the assessment expectation for students who are severely cognitively impaired?**

All students are required to be assessed in kindergarten through third grade to screen and diagnose reading difficulties, inform instruction and intervention needs, and assess progress towards a growth target under MCL 380.1280f. Students with significant cognitive impairments are instructed with alternate academic content standards. To comply with the Read by Grade Three law, districts should select an initial (screener/benchmark) reading assessment for all students in the first 30 days of school. Districts should determine which alternate initial assessment tool they think is best for assessing the reading level of this population of students. This may involve

using a commercial alternate reading screener or creating a local tool. Students for whom additional reading level information is needed beyond the initial alternate assessment tool, must be given an extensive (diagnostic) reading level assessment. The extensive alternate reading level assessment may be a commercial alternate reading tool, or districts may decide to develop their own alternate extensive reading level tool.

**8. How do the Essential Instructional Practices fit in with our assessment system?**

The [Essential Instructional Practices](#) are a set of practices to support what research suggests will have a positive impact on literacy development. The practices, in conjunction with the assessments, can be used to build an effective literacy program.

**9. Who will determine what constitutes "deficiency" on the various assessments?**

The guidelines for what constitutes a deficiency are determined at the local level. This determination should be based on the selected assessments utilized by the school district. The assessment results assist with predicting those students who are at-risk of falling one, or more, grade-levels behind on the third-grade Michigan ELA summative assessment (M-STEP).

**10. How do we ensure we continue to focus on the whole child while simultaneously using predictability of the assessments administered before the third-grade state assessment?**

In addition to addressing reading deficits, schools and public school academies (PSAs) will need to reflect on what they know about student learning and simultaneously address social emotional skills and mental well-being to ensure the growth needed. Schools and PSAs can utilize observational assessment, integration of literacy practices across content areas, and Essential Instructional Practices for Literacy, in addition to other methods, to help students succeed. For more information regarding Michigan’s Whole Child definition please view the [MDE Whole Child one pager](#).

**11. Are districts still required to deliver a benchmark assessment to students in grades K-2?**

Yes, districts must meet the requirements of the Read by Grade Three law (MCL 380.1280f) by selecting an initial assessment from the list of approved assessments. The Michigan Early Literacy Benchmark Assessment, as specified in the current state aid appropriations law [PA 265 of 2018, Section 104c(4)], qualifies as such an assessment. Districts must also meet the

**PORTFOLIOS**

PORTFOLIOS MUST SHOW STUDENT COMPETENCIES IN ELA, SCIENCE, AND SOCIAL STUDIES STANDARDS. THIS DEMONSTRATION OF LEARNING SHOULD INCLUDE: STUDENT WORK SAMPLES ALIGNED TO THE STANDARDS, EVIDENCE OF PROFICIENCY OF STANDARDS (BENCHMARK ASSESSMENT DATA), AND EVIDENCE OF STUDENT PERFORMANCE AND COMPETENCIES (OBSERVATIONAL AND FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT).

requirements of PA 265 of 2018, Section 104c(4) by continuing to administer a benchmark assessment in mathematics in grades K – 2 in the fall and spring, as the third-grade reading law (MCL 380.1280f) does not address mathematics.

**12. Will MDE provide portfolio guidelines?**

The MDE will provide support around Portfolio-Based assessments, but not specific to this legislation. Districts should create standards and practices that align with their assessment systems and instructional delivery.

**13. If the portfolio demonstrates proficiency in ALL subject areas, except for ELA, is that a reason for a Good Cause Exemption?**

The law states that the student must demonstrate BOTH proficiency on all subject areas assessed on the grade 3 state assessment other than English language arts AND demonstrate proficiency in Science and Social Studies as shown through the pupil portfolio and as determined by the teacher who provided the grade 3 instruction to the pupil in Science and Social Studies, as applicable.

**14. What is CEPI?**

CEPI is the acronym for the [Center for Educational Performance and Information](#). This is the agency responsible for collecting, securely managing, and reporting education data in Michigan.

**15. When will CEPI send letters notifying the parent their child has been flagged for retention?**

*If a third grade student is flagged for retention based on the spring 2020 ELA M-STEP assessment, CEPI will mail a notification to the parents of the student within 14 days of receiving the student assessment results.*

**16. What information will be in the letter that CEPI sends?**

*Section 5(d)(i-iv) of this legislation currently outlines what the letter should entail regarding student status. To protect student information, the letter will not include the name of the student nor their specific score. Specific details of this letter have yet to be formalized. For information purposes, MDE and CEPI will provide an example of the letter to districts.*

**17. Will all students receive a letter from CEPI?**

*Only students scoring below 1252 on the Grade 3 ELA M-STEP will receive a letter.*

**18. How will districts know that the letters have been mailed?**

*Notification that letters have been mailed will be sent from MDE to ISD and district superintendents, and building/PSA principals through the State Superintendent’s Thursday communication, as well as through GovDelivery to the MDE ELA list serve.*

**19. What happens if CEPI does not have the correct address for a student?**

*The MDE will provide districts with a list of students who should expect to receive a letter. Districts are encouraged to send their own communication to parents as well.*

**20. What is the required timing for school officials to meet with the parent once they receive the certified letter from CEPI?**

A parent may request a meeting within 30 days of receiving the letter and be notified of student placement at least 30 days prior to the start of the school year.

**21. Will CEPI send letters home to parents/guardians of students with IEPs or 504s?**

Beginning with the 2019-2020 school year, CEPI is required to send a letter, via certified mail, to parents whose child scored more than one grade level behind on the State Summative Assessment. This letter is sent to all identified students, regardless of disability status. The parent, teacher, or other school personnel will need to initiate the process for a good cause exemption.

FOR MORE INFORMATION REGARDING English Learners, PLEASE REVIEW THE [ENGLISH LEARNER GUIDANCE DOCUMENT](#).

**22. Will the M-STEP testing window change in spring 2020?**

*No, the M-STEP testing window will remain the same in spring 2020. For more information regarding the testing window, please visit*

[https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/OEAA\\_Assessment\\_Calendar\\_638432\\_7.pdf](https://www.michigan.gov/documents/mde/OEAA_Assessment_Calendar_638432_7.pdf).

## Early Literacy Coaches

**1. If a district does not have an early literacy coach, would they rely on the Intermediate School District (ISD) early literacy coach?**

The legislation states that districts are expected to utilize their ISD early literacy coach at a minimum.

## English Learners (EL)

**1. Does 3rd grade count as one of the three years when calculating time spent in an English Learner (EL) program for the good cause exemption?**

The three-year count commences on the first day of initial enrollment.

**2. What are the assessment expectations for English Learners and students in Dual, Bilingual and Transitional Programs?**

All students are required to be assessed in kindergarten through third grade to screen and diagnose reading difficulties, inform instruction and intervention needs, and assess progress towards a growth target under MCL 380.1280f. Students who are English Learners or students in dual, bilingual or transitional programs and who are instructed in a language other than English should be assessed in the language(s) of instruction. To comply with the third-grade reading law, districts should select an initial (screener/benchmark) reading assessment for all students in the first 30 days of school. Districts should determine which initial assessment tool they think is best for assessing the reading level of this population of students. This may involve using a commercial reading screener in a language other than English or creating a local tool.

## Family Engagement

THE MDE SUPPORTS FAMILIES AS PARTNERS IN THEIR CHILD'S LITERACY SUCCESS. THE FOLLOWING RESOURCES HAVE BEEN DEVELOPED AND COMPILED TO SHARE WITH FAMILIES. IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT RESOURCES BE PAIRED WITH CONVERSATIONS WITH FAMILIES ABOUT LITERACY DEVELOPMENT AND EXPECTATIONS TO FULLY SUPPORT THE STUDENT AT HOME AND SCHOOL.

- [Facts for Families: What is the Read by Grade Three Law?](#)
- [Essentials for Families Poster](#)
- [Read by Grade Three Bookmarks](#)
- [Read by Grade Three Full Video](#)



- [Read by Grade Three Short Video](#)



- [Read by Grade Three Parent Tip Video](#)



### 1. Is the Read-at-Home plan required for grades K-3 or just grade 3?

In grades K-3, tools need to be provided to parents to address the deficiency or delay at home. The legislation does not specifically address a Read-at-Home plan until grade 3. While the Read-at-Home plan is only required at grade 3, districts are encouraged to provide this plan for all students in K-3 as well as for students who are passed on to grade 4 who exhibit a reading deficiency.

### 2. Will there be standard supports for Read-at-Home plans and professional development for parents or caregivers?

Districts and PSAs have the authority to determine the format and content of Read-at-Home plans and professional development for families.

## Instruction

THE RECOMMENDED PRACTICES SHOULD OCCUR THROUGHOUT THE DAY, INCLUDING BEING INTEGRATED INTO OPPORTUNITIES FOR SCIENCE AND SOCIAL STUDIES LEARNING, NOT EXCLUSIVELY IN AN ISOLATED BLOCK IDENTIFIED AS “ENGLISH LANGUAGE ARTS” OR “LITERACY.” AT THE SAME TIME, LITERACY INSTRUCTION SHOULD NOT TAKE THE PLACE OF SCIENCE AND SOCIAL STUDIES INQUIRY NOR ADDRESSING THE MICHIGAN GRADE LEVEL CONTENT EXPECTATIONS FOR SOCIAL STUDIES NOR ADDRESSING THE MICHIGAN K – 12 SCIENCE STANDARDS. IN THE LONG TERM, THAT APPROACH IS COUNTERPRODUCTIVE; LATER ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT IS PREDICTED NOT ONLY BY LITERACY KNOWLEDGE AND SKILLS, BUT BY MATHEMATICS LEARNING, KNOWLEDGE OF THE NATURAL AND SOCIAL WORLD, AND CERTAIN ASPECTS OF PHYSICAL, SOCIAL, AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT. FINALLY, IT IS IMPORTANT TO READ THIS DOCUMENT IN RELATION TO THE STATE OF MICHIGAN’S SPECIFIC [STANDARDS FOR LITERACY DEVELOPMENT IN KINDERGARTEN THROUGH THIRD GRADE](#).

Michigan Association of Intermediate School Administrators General Education Leadership Network Early Literacy Task Force (2016). [Essential instructional practices in early literacy: K to 3](#). Lansing, MI: Authors

### 1. **How can we best prepare students for success on the 3rd grade summative assessment (M-STEP)?**

The M-STEP is Michigan’s English Language Arts (ELA) state summative assessment. As such, it is matched with the rigor and content of the Michigan state academic standards. Initially used three years ago, the M-STEP assesses in formats that may be new to some educators. All Michigan educators are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the Michigan state academic standards as well as the M-STEP assessment to understand what students will be expected to know and do at each grade level. Information on the this assessment can be found at the [M-STEP Resource Page](#).

### 2. **What is a reading program?**

A reading program is a locally determined system of assessment, instruction, curriculum and resources. This system is used to provide evidenced-based instruction on literacy for all students.

### 3. **How do I know if my district’s reading program meets the requirements in the law?**

The law requires that the assessment, instruction, curriculum, and resources of a program be evidence-based; which means based in research and with proven efficacy.

### 4. **What is evidence-based instruction as defined in the Read by Grade Three law (MCL.380.1280f)?**

In this legislation, “evidence-based” means based in research and with proven efficacy. Additional guidance on this definition will be provided in the future and will be linked to the ESSA definition for continuity.

5. **Is my district allowed to create a Young Fives or Developmental Kindergarten class with the intent of the program being planned retention in order to meet the requirements in the law of previously retained?**

The MDE is not in support of creating "young fives" or "developmental kindergarten," or extra-year placement programs at any grade level with the intent of affording students "previously retained" status as described in the Read by Grade Three law (MCL 380.1280f). Districts shall always appropriately place each student based on the strengths and needs of the Whole Child.

## **Intervention**

1. **If a student is retained in 3rd grade, does the reading instruction and intervention need to incorporate opportunities to master grade 4 state standards in other core academic areas?**

If applicable and appropriate for the needs of the student.

2. **To deliver a summer camp or program, can we partner/collaborate with county library summer programs?**

Yes, the MDE strongly supports the use of appropriate partners in providing supports to students.

3. **What state or federal funds can be used to support summer reading camps?**

Title I Funds- For a Schoolwide Program all students may participate in Title I interventions such as summers reading camps. For Targeted Assistance Programs only specific, identified students can participate in summer reading camps if funded by Title I. Section 35a(5) Additional Instructional Time grant funds can be used to support summer reading camps.

## **Reading Improvement Plans**

1. **What is an Individual Reading Improvement Plan (IRIP)?**

The IRIP describes the reading intervention services a pupil needs to remedy the reading deficiency.

2. **When do I start creating IRIPs for students with reading deficiencies?**

The district should create IRIPs for students in grades K-3 within 30 calendar days of the student showing a deficit.

3. **What if within the 30 calendar days a student goes from deficient to proficient? Does there still need to be an official IRIP?**

Need for an IRIP should be based on the full assessment system, including classroom assessments and formative practices and be provided to students as needed to support learning and literacy proficiency.

4. **Are students in a "young fives" and developmental kindergarten program required to have an IRIP?**

Yes, if they show a deficiency.



**5. Will a standard format or template to facilitate the development of IRIPs be developed?**

Local education agencies will need to create a process based on their specific context and needs to support student learning needs. The identified process is then used to create each IRIP with the pupil’s teacher, school, principal, and parent or legal guardian and other pertinent school personnel. The IRIP describes the reading intervention services the pupil will receive. This intensive intervention plan should be used until the pupil no longer has a reading deficiency and be modified as needed based on identified student needs.

The MDE recommends that local education agencies revise the plan as necessary according to demonstrated student needs. Teams may also want to explicitly address special education and English learners through a specific section of this plan.

**6. Do parents of the students also need to be notified of the deficiency and be provided tools to support as required by the Read by Grade Three law?**

Yes, the school and parents should work together to address the identified deficiency.

**7. What are the options if parents dissent/opt out of signing/agreeing to an IRIP?**

The law does not provide an opt-out process. Districts and PSAs are encouraged to maintain communication with parents and guardians about their student’s reading progress and plan. Districts and PSAs are required to document efforts by the student’s school to engage the parent or legal guardian and whether those efforts were successful. They are also required to document any dissenting opinions expressed by school personnel or a parent or guardian concerning the individual reading improvement plan.

**Promotion and Retention**

**1. Which score will be used to initially flag students for retention?**

A unique Read by Grade Three score on the ELA M-STEP will be used to flag for retention. For detailed information please see the [Read by Grade Three Retention Guidelines memo](#).

**2. When will students be retained?**

Based on the spring 2020 ELA M-STEP, 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students flagged for retention, may be retained in the 2020-2021 school year.

**3. If an end of Grade 3 assessment indicates retention, but services over the summer provide sufficient acceleration as demonstrated at end of summer or beginning of the next school year, can a student be moved at that time?**

Districts and PSAs are encouraged to develop placement policies to provide evidence of competency in grade 3 ELA standards through a pupil portfolio with multiple work

samples. Students must demonstrate a grade 3 reading level before being promoted to fourth grade.

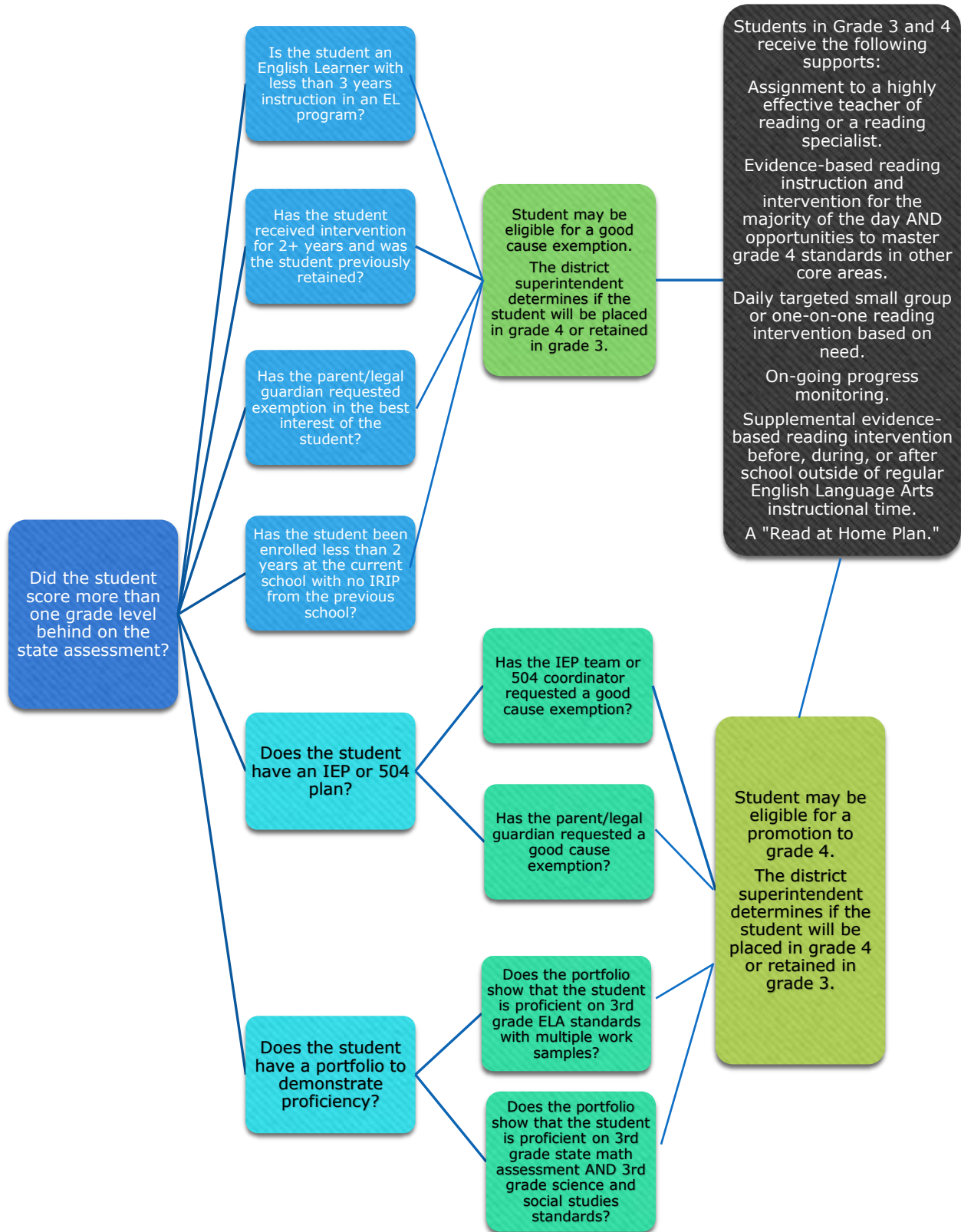
**4. Can a teacher other than the student's assigned homeroom teacher advocate for a Good Cause Exemption?**

A parent or guardian, any third-grade teacher, the Section 504 coordinator, or any member of the student's Individualized Education Plan (IEP) team can request a Good Cause Exemption. The district superintendent will make a determination in writing of the requested exemption.

**5. Can schools submit an exemption for their entire special needs population?**

No. Having an Individual Education Plan can be cause for an exemption, but each individual circumstance needs to be considered.

# Is a Student Eligible for a Good Cause Exemption and/or Promotion to Grade 4?



**6. If a student is promoted based on a Good Cause Exemption, what needs to be done for the student in 4th grade?**

The pupil remains eligible for reading intervention services designed to enable the pupil to achieve proficiency in reading and would be similar to those provided for a student who was retained in grade 3.

**7. If there is language regarding student caseload or student placement within classrooms that conflicts with the placement requirement for students with highly effective teachers, what recommendations are there? (i.e., if there are 1 highly effective and 3 effective teachers at a grade level)**

Students who have been retained can be assigned to 1 or more of the following:

- A highly effective teacher
- The highest evaluated grade three teacher
- A teacher with a reading specialist endorsement

If a district or PSA cannot furnish the number of teachers needed to satisfy the criteria required in the law, the district or PSA develops a staffing plan for providing services. The plan must be posted on the district or PSA website.

**8. What is the process for exempting students from this legislation?**

No student is exempt from the law. Districts and PSAs are encouraged to develop processes and procedures in accordance with the law.

**9. What is the process for opting out of the retention portion of the Read by Grade Three law?**

There is not an opt-out option in the Read by Grade Three Law. There is, however, a procedure for promotion for grade three students who may initially be flagged for retention. Please see the Promotion and Retention section of the [Read by Grade Three Guide](#).

It is important that districts clearly communicate their policy and procedure for promotion and retention to all stakeholders. Regardless of promotion or retention practices, districts should communicate how students will be supported within a Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS). For example, all students should receive high-quality, research supported, literacy instruction that is differentiated for the needs of the student. Some students may need to receive additional targeted research supported instruction with embedded formative assessment. This high-quality instruction should be coupled with coaching and job-embedded professional learning.

## **Special Education**

**1. Are students with Individual Education Plans (IEPs) exempt from the IRIP?**

No, students with IEPs are not exempt from the IRIP.

**2. Can the student’s Individualized Education Program (IEP) be considered a student’s Individual Reading Intervention Plan (IRIP)?**

An IEP is the district’s offer of a Free Appropriate Public Education which includes special education programs and services to address the unique needs of the student that result from the student’s disability. The IEP should not reference an IRIP, however, **for students with significant cognitive impairments, the IRIP may reference appropriate reading supports, communication and language goals, etc., specified in student’s IEP.**

An IRIP does not meet the IDEA requirements for students with an IEP.

An IRIP must address interventions that are available to all students with a reading deficiency who may or may not have an IEP. The IRIP cannot substitute services of an IEP, but provides additional support to improve reading proficiency.

**3. Is it reasonable and appropriate for the IRIP to be delivered by the special education teacher as part of special education service time?**

Yes, but the IEP should address the reading goals that the special education teacher will be working on. The IRIP is not a legal document for IDEA requirements. The IRIP may reference an IEP, if appropriate.

**4. Will the MI-Access ELA assessment be appropriate for the determination of need for an Individual Reading Improvement Plan?**

MI-Access ELA assessment is a state level summative assessment and should never be used as a screener or individualized achievement test.

## Staffing

The Michigan Read By Grade Three legislation ([MCL 380.1280f](#)) requires districts to complete a staffing plan if they are unable to meet staffing requirements as outlined in the law. **Although this requirement is only for schools who cannot meet the staffing requirements as outlined in the law**, a local district may choose to provide annual updates to support transparency. The visual below provides guidance on what should be included in a staffing plan.

### Student Assignment

- Explain how students are prioritized for assignment to teachers
- Explain how teacher skill is being measured in reading and being matched to student need

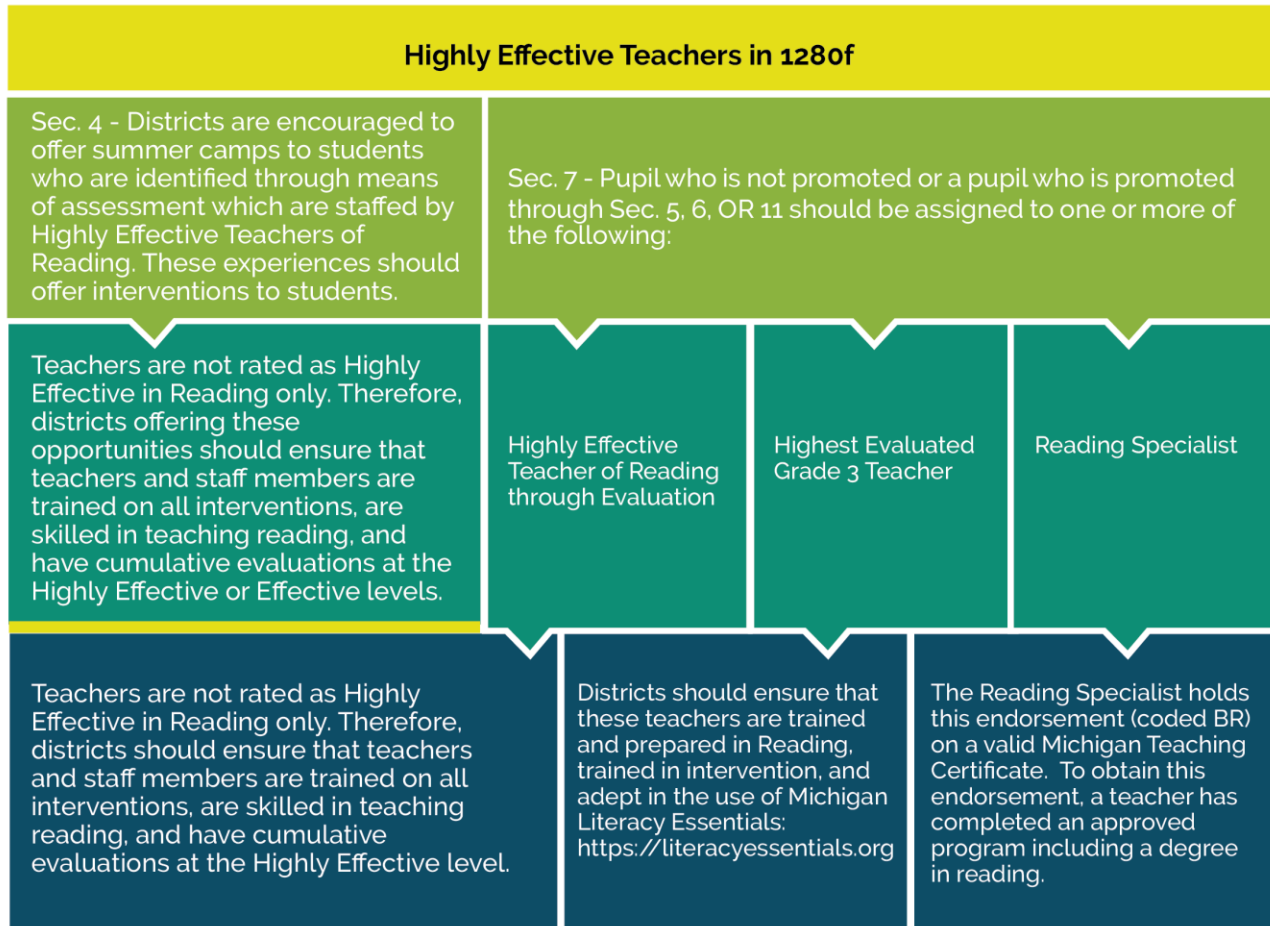
### Teacher Credentials and Training

- Describe the credentials for teachers who are providing classroom instruction and those providing Interventions
- Share the professional learning plan for teachers; highlight efforts to improve literacy instruction

### Meeting the Legislation

- Explain district staffing and student assignment practices
- Explain ongoing district processes to meet legislative requirements along with needs of all students

The Michigan Read By Grade Three legislation (MCL 380.1280f) informs districts on the assignment of students to effectively prepared teachers in two difference subsections. The following flowchart may assist districts with understanding how this could impact their practice and staffing. For additional assistance, please contact the Office of Educator Excellence at 517-241-5000.



**Other**

**1. How does the new reading law interplay with ESSA/Title I requirements?**

There is not a direct correlation between the Michigan law and the ESSA/Title I requirements, but they are not in opposition to each other either. ESSA does not directly address early literacy - it is much broader. Title I services are based on a comprehensive needs assessment, so if there is a need for reading/literacy interventions, Title I funds could support that work.

**2. Do the existing Title I supports in districts and schools already, in effect, meet the added instructional time and interventions for students demonstrated deficiencies in reading?**

Currently, Title I funds may be used to support instructional time, if this need is documented in the comprehensive needs assessment. Not all districts may have data that would lead to providing added instructional time or interventions for students demonstrating reading efficiencies. If Title I funds are currently being used for these interventions and the student performance is not showing improvement, then the current initiatives supported by these funds should be reevaluated. It is not recommended to continue implementing initiatives that are not improving student achievement.

**3. If there are more students demonstrating deficiencies than there are resources to intervene, does a school/district prioritize to serve those with greatest needs first?**

The Read by Grade Three legislation states that any student who exhibits a reading deficiency at any time must be provided with an Individual Reading Improvement Plan within 30 days. This language clarifies that all students demonstrating deficiencies must be served.