



2020 BUDGET PRIORITY: PROVIDE RESOURCES NEEDED TO ENSURE ALL CHILDREN CAN READ BY THIRD GRADE

LEAGUE RECOMMENDATION:

Improve third-grade reading by:

- Focusing new resources on districts with the greatest disparities for children of color and those in low-income neighborhoods.
- Tripling the number of well-trained literacy coaches in Michigan’s public elementary schools.
- Adopting new procedures for ensuring that parents are aware of the Reading by Third Grade law and their options for children who aren’t reading proficiently.
- Improving access to the high-quality early education and care services needed to support early literacy (see separate League priorities for Early On, child care and the Great Start Readiness Program).

BACKGROUND:

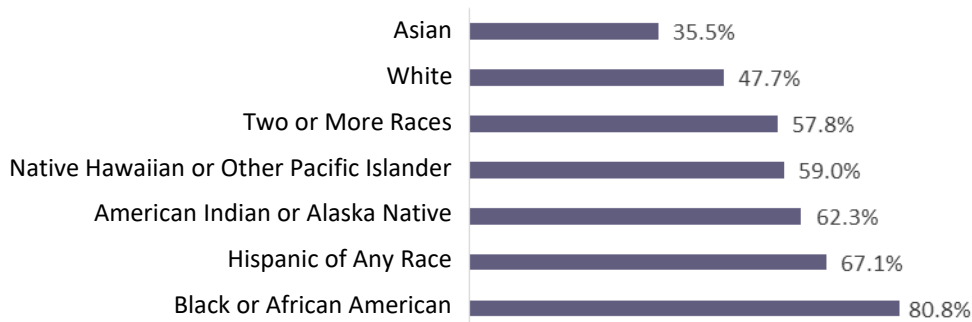
In October 2016, Michigan adopted a Reading by Third Grade law that retains children in third grade if they are more than one year behind in reading proficiency. The new law, which takes effect in the 2019-20 school year, has exemptions that allow some students who are reading below grade level to avoid repeating third grade. Even with exemptions, the law has the potential to affect tens of thousands of Michigan students and significantly increase school spending.

On the most recent M-STEP test (2017-18), less than 45% of students statewide were proficient readers by the end of third grade, and the percentage of students at risk of retention is much higher for children of color and children in low-income schools.

Michigan currently spends less than \$30 million statewide each year on literacy programs in public schools including additional instructional time for students needing support and literacy coaches. In addition, one of the broad goals for At-Risk School Aid funds provided to districts is to improve third-grade reading proficiency.

CHILDREN OF COLOR MORE LIKELY TO ATTEND HIGH-POVERTY SCHOOLS, RESULTING IN INEQUITIES IN THIRD-GRADE READING

Percent of Third-Graders Not Proficient in English Language Arts (M-STEP 2017-18)



Source: MI School Data

WHY DOES IT MATTER?

Inequities in third-grade reading based on race, ethnicity and income must be the state's top priority as the diversity of the student population grows. More than 8 of every 10 Black/African American students are not reading proficiently by third grade, along with two-thirds of Hispanic/Latinx children.

Research shows that retention alone does not improve student achievement and can have negative long-term consequences such as poor attendance or dropping out of school. Social promotion alone is also not an equitable alternative. To improve reading skills, Michigan must provide the supports needed from birth through grade three, including evidence-based literacy interventions.

The foundation for reading is set before children enter kindergarten, and Michigan's budget and policies must recognize that the prenatal, infant and toddler years are crucial to brain development and literacy. Investments in home visiting, early intervention (Early On), high-quality child care, and pre-K for 3- and 4-year-olds are critical. In addition, Michigan must eliminate the divide between early education and care and public school interventions. Children need an aligned P-8 educational system beginning at birth and continuing through the early elementary years.