

# The Third Grade Reading Guarantee FAQ Document

January 23, 2013

Recent legislation strengthened the Third Grade Reading Guarantee to give greater emphasis to reading instruction and intervention in the early grades. Through this initiative, school districts and community schools will diagnose reading deficiencies in students in kindergarten through grade three, create individualized reading improvement and monitoring plans and provide intensive reading interventions. The new law also includes additional requirements for school districts and community schools. This document contains the most common questions concerning these changes.

For more resources on this new law, visit ODE's website at [www.education.ohio.gov](http://www.education.ohio.gov) and search "Third Grade Reading Guarantee." If you have additional questions or concerns, please email: [thirdgrade guarantee@education.ohio.gov](mailto:thirdgrade guarantee@education.ohio.gov).

## 1. What are the requirements for teacher credentials under the Third Grade Reading Guarantee for the 2013-2014 school year?

For the 2013-2014 school year, each third grade student on a reading improvement and monitoring plan and students retained by the Third Grade Reading Guarantee repeating the third grade must be assigned to a teacher actively engaged in the reading instruction of students for the previous three years and who has at least one of the following (ORC 3313.608(H)(1)):

1. A **reading endorsement** on their teacher's license and a passing score on the corresponding assessment for that endorsement;
  - A reading endorsement is for K-12 and would appear on a teacher's certificate or license as #059902. A notation of 'Reading P-3' does not count as a reading endorsement.
2. A **master's degree** with a major in reading;
  - A master's degree must have the word "reading" in either the degree name or on the transcript as the major area of study.
3. A rating of "**above value-added**" for the last two school years; or
  - ODE will release further guidance on how a teacher would be designated as "above value added" in late spring 2013.

4. A **credential from a program** on the ODE approved list of scientifically research-based reading instruction programs.
  - ODE will release the list of approved scientifically research-based reading instruction programs in late spring 2013.

The credential option is only for the 2013-2014 school year. Beginning in the 2014-2015 school year, teachers may fulfill the requirement by passing a reading instruction test approved by the State Board of Education. By the 2014-2015 school year, the teacher credential requirements will apply to the teachers of students affected by the Third Grade Reading Guarantee in kindergarten through grade three.

## 2. Which grade levels are affected by the teacher credentials?

For the 2013-2014 school year, only teachers with a *third grade* student who was retained or is on a reading improvement and monitoring plan must have the special qualifications outlined in law.

For the 2014-2015 school year, teachers with a student in *kindergarten through grade three* who was retained or is on a reading improvement and monitoring plan must have the special qualifications outlined in law.

## 3. What is meant by the Assigned Teacher?

The classroom teacher is the primary teacher responsible for the student's education and spends the most time with that student. **Typically, this will be the teacher assigning the student's grade for reading.** Instructional aides or intervention specialists may supplement a student's reading interventions, under the supervision of the student's credentialed classroom teacher. Those other staff members are not required to have the special credentials. However, ODE highly recommends they have extensive training or experience in remediating struggling readers.

## 4. What qualifies as three years of reading instruction?

To qualify, a teacher must have been actively engaged in the reading instruction of students for the previous three full school years. A teacher may have several years of reading instruction experience. However, those years do not count unless it includes the previous three years. Student teaching does not count towards the three year requirement. Specialized reading professionals, such as reading intervention specialists, may include their time actively engaged in the reading instruction of students outside the role of teacher. These professionals must have dedicated the majority of their time to reading instruction. A teacher does not have to have exclusively taught reading over the past three years to

qualify (such as a self-contained classroom teacher). However, the teacher must have experience in reading instruction.

**5. What if my district does not have enough qualified teachers to meet the new teacher credential requirement?**

If a district does not have a sufficient number of qualified teachers to fulfill the requirements for the 2013-2014 school year, the district shall develop and submit a plan indicating the criteria that will be used to determine those teachers in the district who will teach students on a reading improvement and monitoring plan or students retained by the Third Grade Reading Guarantee.

This plan must outline the criteria that the district will use to decide who teaches the students on a reading improvement and monitoring plan or retained students. The district must also detail how they intend to provide the new required staffing levels for students on a reading improvement and monitoring plan or retained students in the 2014-2015 school year and beyond.

ODE will release guidance on what is expected in the teacher staffing plans in spring 2013. The plan must be submitted by June 30, 2013 and will be approved or rejected by ODE by August 15, 2013.

Districts may include in the plan the option to contract with another school districts, ESCs, community schools, or another provider that has been approved by ODE to provide intervention services. If the submitted plan is rejected by ODE, then the district must use a private provider than has been approved by ODE to provide intervention services.

ODE will release a list of approved outside service providers in spring 2013. The list of approved private providers will be a subset of the approved list used by parents seeking an outside service provider for their child retained by the Third Grade Reading Guarantee.

**6. Does everyone working with not on-track students have to have the required teaching credentials?**

The Third Grade Reading Guarantee requires all students in kindergarten through grade three who are deemed not on-track be assigned to a teacher with required teaching credentials (outlined in Question 1). Also, students who have been retained by the Third Grade Guarantee must also be assigned to a teacher with the required credentials. This is not a requirement for all reading teachers, just for those teachers assigned to teach K-3 students who are not on-track or retained third grade students.

This teacher is the primary teacher responsible for the student's education. Some schools use a mixture of staff to teach students, including intervention specialists and various instructional aides. There are no specific credential requirements in the Third Grade Reading Guarantee law for these positions. However, ODE highly recommends that anyone providing reading instruction have extensive training or experience in helping students learn to read.

**7. What changed in House Bill 555 regarding the 90 minutes of reading?**

The law previously required "90 minutes of reading daily" for retained students. Recent legislation (House Bill 555) changed this requirement to "90 minutes of reading instruction." In this context, reading instruction should include the interventions outlined in the student's reading improvement and monitoring plan. This can include a wide variety of instruction and interventions. The 90 minutes of reading instruction may take place during the regular school day and during regular classroom activities. It does not have to be in a single block of time.

**8. Does the Third Grade Guarantee apply to special education and limited English proficient (LEP) students?**

All students, including LEP and students with disabilities must take a diagnostic test and have a reading improvement and monitoring plan if the test results show the student as not on-track. All other requirements of the Third Grade Reading Guarantee apply as well, including retention. In 2013-14, the following students may qualify for retention exemptions, allowing them to be promoted even if they do not reach the required score on the Ohio Achievement Assessment:

- *Limited English proficient students* who have been enrolled in U.S. schools for less than two full school years and have had less than two years of instruction in an English as a Second Language program;
- *Special education students* whose IEPs specifically exempt them from retention under the third grade guarantee.

These exemptions only excuse select students from being retained under the Third Grade Reading Guarantee. The exemption does not necessarily apply to all LEP students or all students with an IEP.

**9. What interventions are required students in grades K-2 versus grade 3?**

All components of the Third Grade Reading Guarantee, including diagnostic testing, letters to parents, and reading improvement and monitoring plans, interventions are required for any student in grades K-3 that is found to be not on-track after the reading diagnostic testing done before September 30. However, only third grade students face retention based on Ohio Achievement

Assessment reading scores. Information on the grade levels affected by teacher credential requirements is outlined in Question 2.

If a student is retained in the third grade, then there are two new intervention requirements. Retained students must have at least 90 minutes of reading instruction a day. Retained students must also have the opportunity to receive intervention services from outside providers.

**10. Will there be a template for districts to use for the reading improvement and monitoring plan? How should parents be involved in this process?**

Reading improvement and monitoring plans allow the teachers and parents to work together to understand the reading deficiency and to outline reading interventions. Districts shall develop a reading improvement and monitoring plan for students identified with a reading deficiency within 60 days after receiving that student's diagnostic results. Districts should develop reading improvement and monitoring plans that address all requirements in legislation, including:

- Identification of the student's specific reading deficiency;
- A description of proposed supplemental instruction services that will target the student's identified reading deficiencies;
- Opportunities for the student's parents or guardians to be involved in the instructional services;
- A process to monitor the implementation of the student's instructional services;
- A reading curriculum during regular school hours that assists students to read at grade level, provides for reliable assessments, and provides ongoing analysis of each student's reading progress; and
- A statement that unless the student attains the appropriate level of reading competency by the end of grade three, the student will be retained.

Beyond the legislative requirements, ODE recommends that reading improvement and monitoring plans include a process for modifying the plan. It also should address how interventions should change for a student if he or she can read at grade level midyear.

A template for the reading improvement and monitoring plan will be available for the 2013-2014 school year. While a school may elect to use a plan template, please remember that each plan is meant to be tailored to the individual student's reading deficiencies and include the interventions selected by that student's parents and teacher.

Districts will be required to report the number of students scoring not on-track (and thus, on a reading improvement and monitoring plan) and the type of interventions used. ODE will release the process for all reporting by spring 2013. Districts must ensure that every student on a reading improvement and

monitoring plan has a teacher with the appropriate credentials outlined by law (outlined in Question 1).

### **11. Can I use any Title I funding for the Third Grade Reading Guarantee?**

Districts may use their Title I funds to support and supplement reading instruction programs selected or created by the district for children who are at risk of not meeting state achievement standards. No Title I funding may be spent on specific state mandates. Districts may not use Title I funding for outside providers selected by parents for extra reading instruction after their child is retained by the Third Grade Reading Guarantee.

### **12. When can a student be considered on-track during the year and can they be changed to not on-track during the year for any reason?**

If a student is assessed to be not on-track at the beginning of the school year (for the September 30 deadline), that student will officially be not on-track and on a reading improvement and monitoring plan until the student either scores on-track on the following year's reading diagnostic assessment or scores **proficient (scoring 400 or higher)** on the Grade 3 Reading Ohio Achievement Assessment.

If the student scores on-track on another reading diagnostic during the same school year, it does not terminate the reading improvement and monitoring plan. Within the reading improvement and monitoring plan, parents and teachers should address what happens to a student if he or she can read at grade level during the year. The reading interventions may need to change at that point. The plan should always help a student improve their reading ability and ensure the student does not fall behind.

### **13. What do districts have to report to ODE and by when?**

Beginning in the 2012-2013 school year, districts and community schools should have procedures to track and report the following data to ODE on the implementation of the Third Grade Reading Guarantee during the EMIS year-end collection:

- Which students are on-track and not on-track; and
- What types of intervention services are given to each student.

ODE may require additional information in subsequent school years. All of this information will be submitted during the EMIS year-end collection.

**14. What happens if a parent refuses interventions or retention required by the Third Grade Reading Guarantee?**

The law does not provide a parent the right to refuse the requirements of the Third Grade Reading Guarantee. This includes student retention, diagnostic assessments, reading improvement and monitoring plans, and intervention services. However, services outside regular school hours should accommodate the schedule of the student's parents or guardian.

**15. Who pays for outside service providers?**

Districts and community schools must screen and approve at least one outside service provider for students who are retained by the Third Grade Reading Guarantee. They should outline clear criteria for their screening process and make it publically available.