

**HB**

**197**

<TARGET><BILL>HB 197</BILL><SUBJECT>HB  
197</SUBJECT><COMM>HEDC28</COMM></TARGET>

# ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

**Interim:**  
716 West 4th Avenue  
Anchorage, Alaska 99501  
Phone: (907) 269-0216  
Fax (907) 269-0218  
Rep.Gabrielle.LeDoux@akleg.gov



**Session:**  
Alaska State Capitol  
Juneau, Alaska 99801  
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**REPRESENTATIVE GABRIELLE LEDOUX**  
[WWW.GABRIELLELEDoux.COM](http://WWW.GABRIELLELEDoux.COM)

To: Rep. Lynn Gattis, House Education Committee

From: Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux

Subject: HB 197 Hearing Request

Date: April 3, 2013

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Please schedule a hearing for House Bill 197. This legislation establishes a reading literacy program in school districts and provides for student retention in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade.

A Sponsor Statement and a copy for the bill are included with this hearing request.

Lisa Vaught is the staffer assigned to this legislation and can be reached at 907-465-4998

  
Rep. Gabrielle LeDoux

28-LS0515\O  
Mischel  
2/21/14

**CS FOR HOUSE BILL NO. 197( )**  
**IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA**  
**TWENTY-EIGHTH LEGISLATURE - SECOND SESSION**

**BY**

**Offered:**  
**Referred:**

**Sponsor(s): REPRESENTATIVES LEDOUX, Thompson, Reinbold, Peggy Wilson**

**A BILL**  
**FOR AN ACT ENTITLED**

1 **"An Act requiring the establishment of a reading program in school districts for grades**  
2 **kindergarten through three; providing for student retention in grade three; and**  
3 **providing for a report on the reading program and on student retention."**

4 **BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA:**

5 **\* Section 1.** The uncodified law of the State of Alaska is amended by adding a new section  
6 to read:

7       SHORT TITLE. This Act may be known as the Learn to Read - Read to Learn Act.

8 **\* Sec. 2.** AS 14.03.120 is amended by adding a new subsection to read:

9               (h) To the extent allowable under state and federal privacy laws, each school  
10 district shall annually publish on the Internet and report to the board information from  
11 the previous school year regarding

12                       (1) overall student progress under each aspect of the program  
13 established under AS 14.30.760;

14                       (2) school board policies and procedures on student retention and

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promotion;

(3) the number and percentage of students retained in grades three through 10, by grade level;

(4) the total number and percentage of students promoted for good cause, by each category, under AS 14.30.760(d);

(5) revisions, if any, to school board policies on student retention and promotion from the previous school year.

\* **Sec. 3.** AS 14.30 is amended by adding new sections to read:

**Article 14. District Reading Program.**

**Sec. 14.30.760. District reading program.** (a) In addition to other state and local programs established to address significant reading deficiencies of students, each school district shall establish a reading program for students in grades kindergarten through three consistent with this section.

(b) A district reading program shall provide for

(1) assessments of students within the first 30 days of the school year, including valid and reliable screening and diagnostic assessments to identify significant reading deficiencies;

(2) participation in statewide assessments;

(3) elimination of social promotion of students to the next grade level based on age or other nonacademic factors; in this paragraph, "social promotion" means the practice of promoting a student to the next grade level despite the inability of the student to meet standards established for that grade level by the department;

(4) retention of students in grade three who fail to meet the minimum reading standards established by the department on mandatory statewide assessments, except for good cause as provided under (d) of this section; however, a district may not retain a student in grade three for more than one school year under the program;

(5) to the extent feasible, an optional transitional grade for a student retained in grade three under the program that combines intensive reading instruction as described in (c)(1) of this section with grade four core subjects;

(6) as early as possible, regular written notifications of a parent or guardian of a student in grades kindergarten through three who is identified as having

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a significant reading deficiency describing

- (A) the nature of the reading deficiency;
- (B) the current educational services provided to the student;
- (C) supplemental instructional services and remedial support of the reading deficiency proposed to be provided to the student;
- (D) the requirement to retain the student in grade three if the reading deficiency is not sufficiently remediated, except for good cause as provided in (d) of this section;
- (E) strategies for the parent or guardian to use to help the child succeed that include provision for
  - (i) supplemental tutoring using research-based reading strategies;
  - (ii) a home reading plan in the context of a parent or guardian contract that includes participation in parent training workshops and regular parent-guided reading at home;
  - (iii) an assigned mentor in reading;

(7) a monitoring plan established for each student who is identified as having a significant reading deficiency.

(c) For a student who is retained in grade three under the program established in this section, a school district shall provide

- (1) intensive interventions, during regular school hours, in reading literacy designed to ameliorate the student's specific reading deficiency, including
  - (A) instructional strategies that are research-based and employed daily for at least 90 minutes each day; the strategies must include
    - (i) small group instruction;
    - (ii) reduced pupil-teacher ratios;
    - (iii) frequent monitoring for progress;
    - (iv) tutoring and mentoring;
    - (v) opportunities in reading that incorporate grade four core subjects to the extent feasible;
    - (vi) intensive language and vocabulary instruction that

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may involve a speech and language therapist;

(B) participation by the student in a summer reading camp in the district;

(C) appropriate teaching methodologies necessary to assist the student in progressing to the next grade level in reading; the methodologies under this paragraph shall be selected by a highly effective teacher in the district, as determined by the superintendent based on teacher evaluations;

(D) extended school days, weeks, or years;

(2) review of the student's progress in completing a monitoring plan established for the student;

(3) assessment of the student's needs for additional services;

(4) instruction in developing a reading portfolio;

(5) an accelerated reading class for retained students with the lowest scores on standards-based assessments in reading; the accelerated reading class shall be designed to help each student achieve an improvement of at least two grade levels in reading;

(6) annual progress reports submitted to the department;

(7) a home reading plan that involves the student's parent or guardian.

(d) A school district may exempt a student from mandatory retention under (b)(4) of this section for good cause if the parent or guardian of the student requests the exemption, receives a recommendation from the student's teacher and principal, and provides documentation that demonstrates that the student

(1) has limited English proficiency after completing not more than two years of instruction in a limited English proficiency program;

(2) has a disability and an individual education plan under AS 14.30.278 that exempts the student from participation in statewide standards-based assessments and meets other requirements established by law;

(3) has an individualized education program under AS 14.30.278 that resulted in at least two years of intensive remediation in reading, was retained at least once in grades kindergarten through three, and is promoted using additional resources that include specialized diagnostic information, altered instructional days, and

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individualized reading strategies;

(4) has received intensive remediation in reading for at least two years that included an altered instructional day, specialized diagnostic testing, and research-based strategies to improve reading skills and was retained at least twice in grades kindergarten through three; or

(5) has successfully completed an alternative assessment in reading approved by the district.

(e) In this section, "significant reading deficiency" means that a student does not meet the minimum skill levels for reading competency in the areas of phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary development, and reading fluency, including verbal skills and reading comprehension, under standards established by the state board for the student's grade level.

**Sec. 14.30.761. Temporary waiver of district reading program requirement.** The department may provide a temporary waiver to a school district of a reading program required under AS 14.30.760 for a period not to exceed three years if the district demonstrates to the satisfaction of the department that the district is taking necessary steps toward establishing and implementing the reading program. The department may extend a temporary waiver granted under this section if the district can demonstrate that full implementation of a district reading program was delayed by an extreme circumstance over which the district had no control.

**Sec. 14.30.762. Audit of district reading program.** The department shall provide an audit of each district reading program to determine consistency with the standards established under AS 14.30.760. The department shall perform the audit seven years after full implementation of the program or 10 years after the first year of implementation of the program, whichever is sooner.

28-LS0515\NO  
Mischel  
3/28/13

2/21/14

**CS FOR HOUSE BILL NO. 197( )**

**IN THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF ALASKA**

**TWENTY-EIGHTH LEGISLATURE - ~~FIRST~~SECOND SESSION**

**BY REPRESENTATIVE LEDOUX**

**IntroducedOffered:  
Referred:**

**Sponsor(s): REPRESENTATIVES LEDOUX, Thompson, Reinbold, Peggy Wilson  
A BILL**

**FOR AN ACT ENTITLED**

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3 **providing for a report on the reading program and on student retention."**

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6 to read:

7 SHORT TITLE. This Act may be known as the Learn to Read - Read to Learn Act.

8 **\* Sec. 2.** AS 14.03.120 is amended by adding a new subsection to read:

9 (h) ~~By September 1 of each year, to~~To the extent allowable under state and  
10 federal privacy laws, ~~a~~each school district shall **annually** publish on the Internet and  
11 report to the board information from the previous school year regarding

12 (1) overall student progress under each aspect of the program  
13 established under AS 14.30.760;

14 (2) school board policies and procedures on student retention and

1 promotion;

2 (3) the number and percentage of students retained in grades three  
3 through 10, by grade level;

4 (4) the total number and percentage of students promoted for good  
5 cause, by each category, under AS 14.30.760(d);

6 (5) revisions, if any, to school board policies on student retention and  
7 promotion from the previous school year.

8 \* **Sec. 3.** AS 14.30 is amended by adding ~~a new section~~**sections** to read:

9 **Article 14. District Reading Program.**

10 **Sec. 14.30.760. District reading program.** (a) In addition to other state and  
11 local programs established to address ~~substantial~~**significant** reading deficiencies of  
12 students, each school district shall establish a reading program for students in grades  
13 kindergarten through three consistent with this section.

14 (b) A district reading program shall provide for

15 (1) assessments of students **within the first 30 days of the school**  
16 **year**, including valid and reliable **screening and** diagnostic assessments to identify  
17 ~~substantial~~**significant** reading deficiencies;

18 (2) participation in statewide assessments;

19 (3) elimination of social promotion of students to the next grade level  
20 based on age or other nonacademic factors; **in this paragraph, "social promotion"**  
21 **means the practice of promoting a student to the next grade level despite the**  
22 **inability of the student to meet standards established for that grade level by the**  
23 **department;**

24 (4) retention of students in grade three who fail to meet the minimum  
25 reading standards established by the department on mandatory statewide assessments,  
26 except for good cause as provided under (d) of this section; **however, a district may**  
27 **not retain a student in grade three for more than one school year under the**  
28 **program;**

29 (5) to the extent feasible, an optional transitional grade for a student  
30 retained in grade three under the program that combines intensive reading instruction  
31 as described in (c)(1) of this section with grade four core subjects;

1 (6) as early as possible, regular written notifications of a parent or  
2 guardian of a student in grades kindergarten through three who is identified as having  
3 a ~~substantial~~**significant** reading deficiency describing

4 (A) the nature of the reading deficiency;

5 (B) the current educational services provided to the student;

6 (C) supplemental instructional services and remedial support of  
7 the reading deficiency proposed to be provided to the student;

8 (D) the requirement to retain the student in grade three if the  
9 reading deficiency is not sufficiently remediated, except for good cause as  
10 provided in (d) of this section;

11 (E) strategies for the parent or guardian to use to help the child  
12 succeed that include provision for

13 (i) supplemental tutoring using research-based reading  
14 strategies;

15 (ii) a home reading plan in the context of a parent or  
16 guardian contract that includes participation in parent training  
17 workshops and regular parent-guided reading at home;

18 (iii) an assigned mentor in reading;

19 (7) a monitoring plan established for each student who is identified as  
20 having a ~~substantial~~**significant** reading deficiency.

21 (c) For a student who is retained in grade three under the program established  
22 in this section, a school district shall provide

23 (1) intensive interventions, during regular school hours, in reading  
24 literacy designed to ameliorate the student's specific reading deficiency, including

25 (A) instructional strategies that are research-based and  
26 employed daily for at least 90 minutes ~~at the same time~~ each day; the strategies  
27 must include

28 (i) small group instruction;

29 (ii) reduced pupil-teacher ratios;

30 (iii) frequent monitoring for progress;

31 (iv) tutoring and mentoring;

1 ~~(v) transitional classes for combined third and fourth~~  
2 ~~grade students;~~

3 ~~(vi)~~(v) opportunities in reading that incorporate grade  
4 four core subjects to the extent feasible;

5 ~~(vii)~~(vi) intensive language and vocabulary instruction  
6 that may involve a speech and language therapist;

7 (B) participation by the student in a summer reading camp in  
8 the district;

9 (C) appropriate teaching methodologies necessary to assist the  
10 student in progressing to the next grade level in reading; **the methodologies**  
11 **under this paragraph shall be selected by a highly effective teacher in the**  
12 **district, as determined by the superintendent based on teacher**  
13 **evaluations;**

14 (D) extended school days, weeks, or years;

15 (2) review of the student's progress in completing a monitoring plan  
16 established for the student;

17 (3) assessment of the student's needs for additional services;

18 (4) instruction in developing a reading portfolio;

19 (5) an accelerated reading class for retained students with the lowest  
20 scores on standards-based assessments in reading; the accelerated reading class shall  
21 be designed to help each student achieve an improvement of at least two grade levels  
22 in reading;

23 (6) annual progress reports submitted to the department;

24 (7) a home reading plan that involves the student's parent or guardian.

25 (d) A school district may exempt a student from mandatory retention under  
26 (b)(4) of this section for good cause if the **parent or guardian of the** student requests  
27 the exemption, receives a recommendation from the student's teacher and principal,  
28 and provides documentation that demonstrates that the student

29 (1) has limited English proficiency after completing not more than two  
30 years of instruction in a limited English proficiency program;

31 (2) has a disability and an individual education plan under

1 AS 14.30.278 that exempts the student from participation in statewide standards-based  
2 assessments and meets other requirements established by law;

3 (3) has an individualized education program under AS 14.30.278 that  
4 resulted in at least two years of intensive remediation in reading, was retained ~~in~~ at  
5 least ~~tw~~once in grades ~~in~~ kindergarten through ~~grade~~ three, and is promoted using  
6 additional resources that include specialized diagnostic information, altered  
7 instructional days, and individualized reading strategies; ~~or~~

8 (4) has received intensive remediation in reading for at least two years  
9 that included an altered instructional day, specialized diagnostic testing, and research-  
10 based strategies to improve reading skills and was retained **at least twice** in grades  
11 ~~one~~kindergarten through three; or

12 (5) has **successfully completed an alternative assessment in reading**  
13 **approved by the district.**

14 (e) In this section, "significant reading deficiency" means that a student  
15 does not meet the minimum skill levels for reading competency in the areas of  
16 phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary development, and ~~two~~reading fluency,  
17 including verbal skills and reading comprehension, under standards established  
18 by the state board for the student's grade level.

19 **Sec. 14.30.761. Temporary waiver of district reading program**  
20 **requirement. The department may provide a temporary waiver to a school**  
21 **district of a reading program required under AS 14.30.760 for a period not to**  
22 **exceed three years if the district demonstrates to the satisfaction of the**  
23 **department that the district is taking necessary steps toward establishing and**  
24 **implementing the reading program. The department may extend a temporary**  
25 **waiver granted under this section if the district can demonstrate that full**  
26 **implementation of a district reading program was delayed by an extreme**  
27 **circumstance over which the district had no control.**

28 **Sec. 14.30.762. Audit of district reading program. The department shall**  
29 **provide an audit of each district reading program to determine consistency with**  
30 **the standards established under AS 14.30.760. The department shall perform the**  
31 **audit seven years after full implementation of the program or 10 years after the**

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**first year of implementation of the program, whichever is sooner.**

# ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE

Interim:  
716 West 4th Avenue  
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Phone: (907) 269-0216  
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**REPRESENTATIVE GABRIELLE LEDOUX**  
[WWW.GABRIELLELEDoux.COM](http://WWW.GABRIELLELEDoux.COM)

## Sponsor Statement

### House Bill 197

**"An Act requiring the establishment of a reading program in school districts for grades kindergarten through three; providing for student retention in grade three; and providing for a report on the reading program and on student retention."**

#### Learn to Read - Read to Learn Act

Alaska school districts currently engage in the practice of social promotion. This means that children, regardless of academic abilities are passed from grade to grade simply to keep them with their peers. However, each year, many of them have failed to learn basic literacy skills in the developmentally critical grades. Rather than addressing these problems, a social promotion simply moves these students to the next grade level. This is especially destructive for children in the early grades. Learning to read does not get easier with age. As a result, illiterate 3<sup>rd</sup> graders move on to become illiterate 4<sup>th</sup> graders, and then 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> graders. Third grade is the year that students transition from "learning to read" to "reading to learn." Imagine a 5<sup>th</sup> grader, reading on a 2<sup>nd</sup> grade level, sitting in a science class. These students will not grasp the vocabulary and scientific concepts described in the textbooks because they cannot read – literally. Grade level material keeps increasing year after year, but these students cannot keep up because they cannot read. These students have been described as disruptive, restless and bored. They often do not finish school, let alone go on to college. We must take steps to change this outcome.

HB 197 clearly lays out that students in grade 3 who fail to meet the minimum reading requirements established by the department will be retained except for good cause. It establishes a reading literacy program for students in Kindergarten through grade 3. HB 197 requires regular assessments of students and eliminates social promotion. A student that is retained in third grade will have intensive interventions including; small group instruction, reduced pupil-teacher ratio, frequent monitoring, tutoring, transitional classes, incorporation of 4<sup>th</sup> grade core subjects, and intensive language and vocabulary instruction.

Alaska spends more per capita on education than almost any other state. Our 4<sup>th</sup> grade reading scores are amongst the lowest in the nation. We must take action to rectify this situation. We cannot continue with more of the status quo. HB 197 will ensure that Alaska's students have the literacy skills needed to be successful in life. I strongly believe that this will make a difference for our state and in the lives of young Alaskans. I request your support for House Bill 197.

# LEGAL SERVICES

DIVISION OF LEGAL AND RESEARCH SERVICES  
LEGISLATIVE AFFAIRS AGENCY  
STATE OF ALASKA

(907) 465-3867 or 465-2450  
FAX (907) 465-2029  
Mail Stop 3101


State Capitol  
Juneau, Alaska 99801-1182  
Deliveries to: 129 6th St., Rm. 329

## MEMORANDUM

April 8, 2013

**SUBJECT:** Sectional summary of HB 197 (Work Order No. 28-LS0515\N)

**TO:** Representative Gabrielle LeDoux  
Attn: Lisa Vaught

**FROM:** Jean M. Mischel  
Legislative Counsel 

You have requested a sectional summary of the above-described bill.

As a preliminary matter, note that a sectional summary of a bill should not be considered an authoritative interpretation of the bill and the bill itself is the best statement of its contents. If you would like an interpretation of the bill as it may apply to a particular set of circumstances, please advise.

**Section 1.** Provides a short title for the bill.

**Section 2.** Requires public school districts to publish on the Internet and report to the state board of education student progress under the reading program established under sec. 3 of the bill, school board policies on student retention, and other information related to student promotion and retention.

**Section 3.** Requires each school district to establish a reading program for students in grades kindergarten through three to address substantial reading deficiencies of students. Provides standards for the reading program that include the requirement to retain a student in grade three, with some specified exceptions, for a substantial reading deficiency, and notification of parents. Describes various minimum required learning strategies to address substantial reading deficiencies.

JMM:ljw  
13-262.ljw

Changes from HB 197 to CSHB 197

1. On page 1, line 9, delete "By September 1 of each year," and on line 10, amend the sentence to read "each school district shall annually publish on the Internet and report to the board information from the previous school year regarding"
2. Replace all instances of 'substantial reading deficiencies' with 'significant reading deficiencies.'
3. Page 2, Line 15 add " within the first 30 days of the school year"
4. Page 2, line 16, amend to read "including valid and reliable screening and diagnostic assessment"
5. Page 2, Line 20 adds definition of social promotion
6. Add provision on the CS page 2, line 25 stating that a student may not be held back for more than one year in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade.
7. Page 3, delete line 26 and 27.
8. Added to CS, page 4, line 5 "the methodologies under this paragraph shall be selected by a highly effective teacher in the district, as determined by the Superintendent based on teacher evaluations."
9. Page 4, line 20 of the CS changes the requestor of the exemption from the student to the parent or guardian of the student.
10. Page 4, Line 29 of the CS changes from retained in at least two grades to retained in at least one grade from kindergarten through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade.
11. Page 5, line 4 changed from being retained in grades one and two to being retained at least twice in grades k – 3.
12. Adds a new subsection defining "significant reading deficiencies"
13. Page 5, line 6 adds additional exemption for a student who has successfully completed an alternative assessment in reading approved by the district.
14. Add a new section, 14.30.761., at the end of page 5 to describe a grace period not to exceed three (3) years for each school district to design and implement their individual processes for compliance with this Act.
15. Add a new subsection, 14.30.762., to describe a full audit of the program to take place seven (7) years after full implementation of the program has begun or ten (10) years after the program's initial start.

# Fiscal Note

State of Alaska  
2013 Legislative Session

Bill Version: HB 197  
Fiscal Note Number: \_\_\_\_\_  
( ) Publish Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Identifier: HB197-EED-TLS-4-5-13  
Title: LITERACY PROGRAM  
Sponsor: LEDOUX  
Requester: House Education Committee

Department: Department of Education and Early Development  
Appropriation: Teaching and Learning Support  
Allocation: Student and School Achievement  
OMB Component Number: 2796

**Expenditures/Revenues**

Note: Amounts do not include inflation unless otherwise noted below. (Thousands of Dollars)

	FY2014	Included in	Out-Year Cost Estimates				
	Appropriation Requested	Governor's FY2014 Request	FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019
<b>OPERATING EXPENDITURES</b>	<b>FY 2014</b>	<b>FY 2014</b>					
Personal Services							
Travel							
Services							
Commodities							
Capital Outlay							
Grants & Benefits							
Miscellaneous							
<b>Total Operating</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>

**Fund Source (Operating Only)**

None							
<b>Total</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>

**Positions**

Full-time							
Part-time							
Temporary							

<b>Change in Revenues</b>							
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Estimated SUPPLEMENTAL (FY2013) cost: 0.0

Estimated CAPITAL (FY2014) cost: 0.0

**ASSOCIATED REGULATIONS**

Does the bill direct, or will the bill result in, regulation changes adopted by your agency? Yes  
If yes, by what date are the regulations to be adopted, amended or repealed? 07/01/14

**Why this fiscal note differs from previous version:**

Initial version
-----------------

Prepared By:	Paul R. Prussing, Deputy Director	Phone:	(907)465-8721
Division	Teaching & Learning Support	Date:	04/05/2013 05:17 PM
Approved By:	Mike Hanley	Date:	04/05/13
	Commissioner		

FISCAL NOTE ANALYSIS

STATE OF ALASKA  
2013 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

BILL NO. HB197

**Analysis**

Section 1 of this legislation amends the uncodified law of the State of Alaska is amended by adding a new section to include the bill's short title.

Section 2 amends AS 14.03.120 to require districts to report on student progress; student retention numbers and percentages; and board policies on grade retention.

Sec. 3. AS 14.30 is amended by adding a new section to Article 14. District Reading Program; adds Sec. 14.30.760 which specifies components that must be in a district K-3 reading program, the retention of student's that fail to meet minimum reading standards established by the department, and elimination of social promotion. For a student who is retained in grade three under the program established in this section, a school district shall provide intensive interventions, during regular school hours, in reading literacy designed to ameliorate the student's specific reading deficiency, including instructional strategies that are research-based and employed daily for at least 90 minutes at the same time each day.

While no anticipated additional cost to the department would be required, this legislation would require local governing boards to dedicate resources to implement the requirements, including at least one specialized literacy teacher at each elementary level school.

# Fiscal Note

State of Alaska  
2014 Legislative Session

Bill Version: HB 197  
Fiscal Note Number: \_\_\_\_\_  
( ) Publish Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Identifier: HB197CS(EDC)-EED-SSA-04-09-14  
Title: LITERACY PROGRAM  
Sponsor: LEDOUX  
Requester: House Finance Committee

Department: Department of Education and Early Development  
Appropriation: Teaching and Learning Support  
Allocation: Student and School Achievement  
OMB Component Number: 2796

**Expenditures/Revenues**

Note: Amounts do not include inflation unless otherwise noted below. (Thousands of Dollars)

	FY2015 Appropriation Requested	Included in Governor's FY2015 Request	Out-Year Cost Estimates					
			FY 2015	FY 2016	FY 2017	FY 2018	FY 2019	FY 2020
<b>OPERATING EXPENDITURES</b>								
Personal Services	107.0		110.2	113.5	116.9	120.4	124.0	
Travel								
Services	9.5		9.5	9.5	9.5	9.5	9.5	
Commodities								
Capital Outlay								
Grants & Benefits								
Miscellaneous								
<b>Total Operating</b>	<b>116.5</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>119.7</b>	<b>123.0</b>	<b>126.4</b>	<b>129.9</b>	<b>133.5</b>	

**Fund Source (Operating Only)**

1004 Gen Fund	116.5		119.7	123.0	126.4	129.9	133.5
<b>Total</b>	<b>116.5</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>119.7</b>	<b>123.0</b>	<b>126.4</b>	<b>129.9</b>	<b>133.5</b>

**Positions**

Full-time	1.0		1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0	1.0
Part-time							
Temporary							

<b>Change in Revenues</b>							
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**Estimated SUPPLEMENTAL (FY2014) cost:** 0.0 *(separate supplemental appropriation required)*  
*(discuss reasons and fund source(s) in analysis section)*

**Estimated CAPITAL (FY2015) cost:** 0.0 *(separate capital appropriation required)*  
*(discuss reasons and fund source(s) in analysis section)*

**ASSOCIATED REGULATIONS**

Does the bill direct, or will the bill result in, regulation changes adopted by your agency? Yes  
If yes, by what date are the regulations to be adopted, amended or repealed? 12/31/14

**Why this fiscal note differs from previous version:**

Updated to reflect additions of 14.30.761 and 14.30.762 in the CS.
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Prepared By: <u>Susan McCauley, Director</u>	Phone: <u>(907)465-2857</u>
Division: <u>Division of Teaching &amp; Learning Support</u>	Date: <u>04/09/2014 11:38 AM</u>
Approved By: <u>Mike Hanley</u>	Date: <u>04/09/14</u>
Agency: <u>Commissioner</u>	

FISCAL NOTE ANALYSIS

STATE OF ALASKA  
2014 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

BILL NO. CSHB197(EDC)

**Analysis**

Sections 1, 2 and 3, up to page 5, line 13, prescribe the responsibilities for school districts in establishing and implementing a district reading program. These requirements do not have fiscal implications for the department.

Section 3, page 5, line 13, adds a Sec. 14.30.761; Temporary waiver of district reading program requirement and Sec. 14.30.762; Audit of district reading program. These sections require the department to establish a waiver and audit/monitoring process. The waiver process permits the department to provide a temporary waiver to a school district for the reading program requirements for a period not to exceed three years if the district demonstrates that it is taking necessary steps toward establishing and implementing the requirements, or if meeting the requirements was delayed by an extreme circumstance. The audit process requires the department to audit each district to determine consistency of program development and implementation with the requirements prescribed by the proposed legislation. The audit is to take place seven years after full implementation of the district reading program or ten years after the first year of implementation or the district reading program.

In order to establish a waiver and auditing process, and to provide district technical assistance for the development and implementation of a district reading program, one full-time Education Specialist II position would be needed, with salaries and benefits, \$107.0.

Included in the projection is department chargebacks at \$9.5 per employee.

April 3, 2014

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to support HB197 – the Learn to Read, Read to Learn bill. As a teacher with the Anchorage School District for 22 years I know the importance of literacy for a student's success in all academic settings and in life. I also over my 22 years know that ASD has made literacy a focus and implemented policies for identifying students who were not reading at grade level followed by intervention plans for supporting students to learn to read. But ASD does also allow social promotion which many times allows students that do not have the reading skills to be successful in the next grade to advance anyway (hoping for the best - that interventions, time, maturity, *something* will make it work )

Research shows us that there is a definite correlation between the ability to read by 3<sup>rd</sup> grade and reducing high school drop out rates and improving student achievement on reading tests.

I support HB197 as it addresses a problem head on. It is very disconcerting that our schools are amongst the highest funded in the Nation and our kids are just as bright as anywhere else and our educators and parents are just as dedicated and yet we are at the bottom for achievement (4<sup>th</sup> grade NAEP scores 2011 )

Literacy is a responsibility for students, parents, schools and government. We need to make a commitment to take a stand for the importance of literacy and to raise the accountability for that responsibility.

HB197 provides a policy that guides the following factors:  
**Identification** of students who are not reading at grade level,  
**Communication** - Parental Communication on literacy acquisition/strategies for intervention and support activities.  
**Training** for all "Stakeholders" parents, teachers, students – provide intervention training and involvement for research based best practice  
**Intervention** practices (recommended and/or required that involves teacher, student, family and school district to create a plan for the student),

**Retention** - the accountability piece –This is one part of the bill that will provide incentive for greater parental involvement. And the bill is modeled after other (ie. Florida) successful reading programs which provides for “good cause exemptions” so that only students that will benefit from the policy will be included.) Please note: retention is not the goal, student academic success and literacy is the goal.

I have cut and pasted paragraphs that are compelling that were part of the files to support the bill.

Retention itself is not the goal here, it's strong instruction and intervention coupled with the test-based promotion that makes it a successful combination. In addition to Florida data

**PROMOTING ILLITERACY: THE HARMFUL IMPACTS OF PREVAILING POLICY**

Each year, millions of children, including a disproportionately high number of low-income and minority children, fail to learn basic literacy skills in the developmentally critical grades. Rather than addressing these problems head on, standard practice involves simply socially promoting students to the next grade. Our collective failure to reform this shameful practice preserves a system of schooling that routinely gives the least to the students who start with the greatest needs. For students, the impact lasts a lifetime.

The prevailing practice of social promotion proves especially destructive for children in the early grades. Learning to read does not get easier with age. As a result, illiterate 3<sup>rd</sup> graders move on to become illiterate 4<sup>th</sup> graders, and then 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> graders.

“Education Reform – Why not Alaska ?  
There are plentiful examples of proven school reforms that are sweeping the nation and are producing dramatic improvements.” Bob Griffin

**Our students deserve no less. Please support HB197.**

**Thank you,**  
**Lynnette Sullivan**  
ASD K-12 EdTech Coach, K-6 teacher

## Letter in support of HB 197 Learn to Read; Read to Learn

As a longtime advocate for improving public education, HB 197 is the number one priority for legislation that I'm supporting in Juneau this year. Early childhood literacy is at crisis proportions in Alaska. In the 2013 NAEP test scores for low-income kids we dropped to 51st (behind low-income kids in DC) in 4th grade reading. Our upper and middle income kids are not doing much better. In 2013 they dropped to 49th in NAEP testing when we were 44th just 10 years ago.

I have attended dozens of K-12 education conferences all over the US and I have not come across a more effective method of improving student outcomes than legislation setting the standards for minimum 3rd grade literacy.

Large quantities of research indicate that when kids do not attain basic literacy by age 9 or 10 they are unlikely to catch-up later. Social promotion of illiterate students at the critical transition of using reading skills to learn is not doing any favors to those children.

Nearly identical legislation is already in effect in a dozen states and it has been producing fantastic results. Florida, was the first to try this legislation back in 2002. In the 2003 NAEP testing Florida was 28th in low-income 4th grade reading. By 2013 they were 1st.

According to 2013 NAEP test scores, low income Hispanic 4th graders in Florida read at a higher comprehension level than the average Alaskan 4th grader.

It's interesting to note that according to the latest NEA publication, *Rankings and Estimates*, Alaska was 1st in per capita K-12 funding in 2010 and Florida was 48th.

.  
Our kids are bright;  
Our teachers are dedicated;  
Our parents are loving;  
There's no reason we can't do better.

Bob Griffin

Anchorage School District  
Budget Advisory Commission  
Chairman

## A Problem Still in Search of a Solution

Roadmap for a Comprehensive State Policy  
on Improving Early Reading Proficiency

By *Kathy Christie*  
*Stephanie Rose*

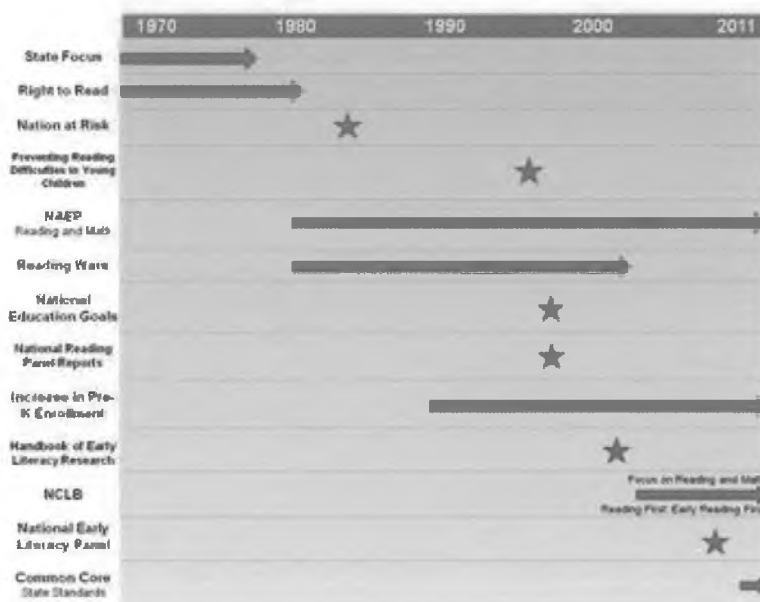
May 2012

Reading is just one step along the path of true literacy mastery. Children are continually building a body of knowledge and vocabulary from the day they are born. Once they begin to learn to read, it is this accumulation of experience, knowledge and vocabulary — that allows the words they are beginning to read to have meaning. They are beginning their road to literacy, and that road is far more than learning a set of skills. The big goal, of course, is for all students to meet the expectations for their grade level by the end of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. That’s why, when we talk about early literacy, we’re talking about P-3.

While a number of states have developed strategic plans around the improvement of reading, reframing such recommendations into policy language can be challenging. This paper builds on our historical review of the many state and national reading initiatives that have yet to have their intended impact, as

evidenced by the following graphic. Consider, for example, the enormous state-level energy put into the numerous initiatives over the past 42 years against the average performance of 9-year olds on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).

### Seminal Moments in U.S. Literacy



This graphic should serve as a reminder that it is “tough work” to translate research and policy into increased student outcomes. Since the 1970s to the most recent administration of the test in 2011 — the average reading score for 9-year olds increased by only 12 points — from 208 to 220.

So what should a roadmap for successful state policy look like? The power of state leadership comes from its authority to systematically:

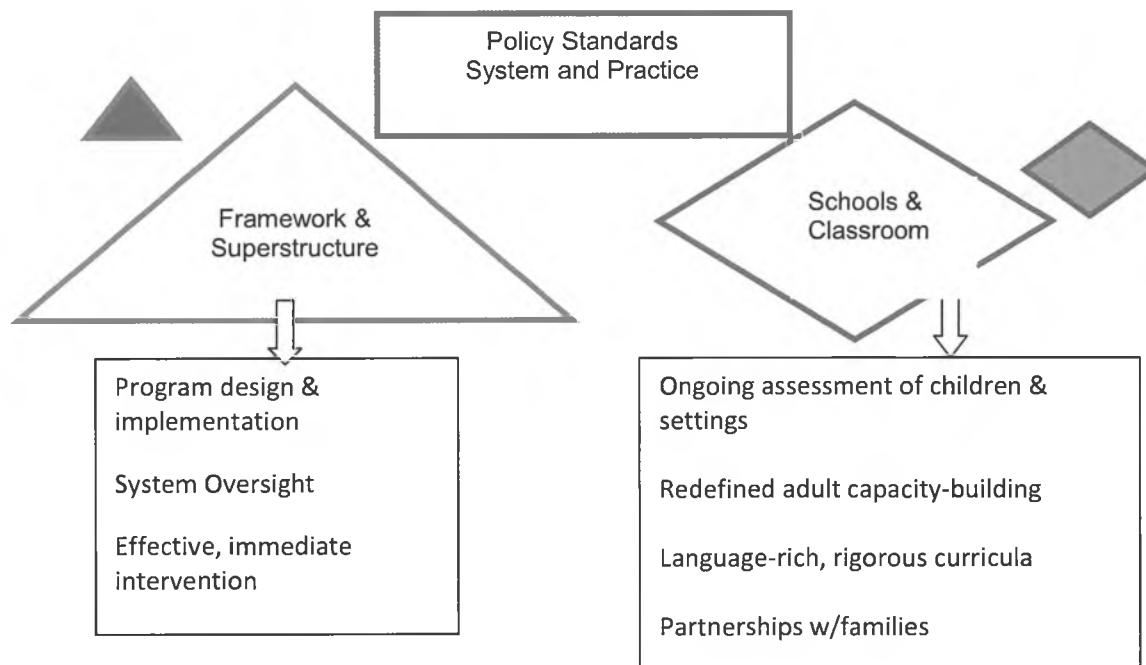
- *Strengthen P-3 linkages*
- *Engage state leaders, teacher preparation institutions, educators, students and families in continuous improvement*
- *Ensure transparency*
- *Improve school and classroom practice*
- *Provide system oversight*
- *Drive “fixes,” not just consequences.*

State policy should create a convergence between two often disconnected spheres: System and practice. The purpose of this paper is to help create that convergence.

In this paper we outline policy standards for (1) a framework and superstructure that supports a system approach to literacy improvement and (2) a framework for influencing culture and practice at the school and classroom level.

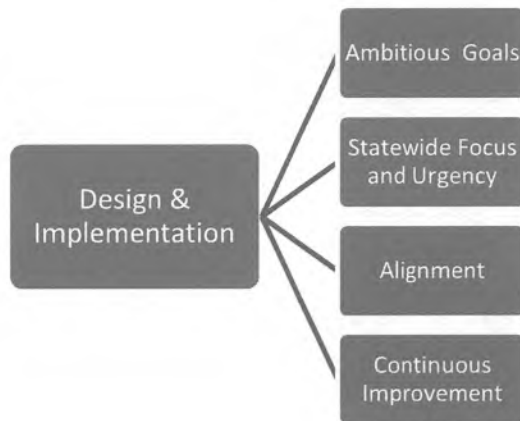
Falling within the framework and superstructure:  
**Program design & Implementation**  
**System oversight**  
**Effective, immediate intervention.**

Falling within the framework for influencing practice at the school and classroom level:  
**Ongoing assessment of children & settings**  
**Redefined adult capacity-building**  
**Language-rich, rigorous curricula**  
**Partnerships with families.**





## Supporting a System Approach for Literacy Improvement: Policy standards for program design & implementation



### Effective policy on program design & implementation:

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- § Ensures that grade-level expectations are benchmarked to world-class standards
- § Aligns standards, curricula, teaching practices and assessments
- § Creates and sustains a sense of urgency — such as implementation of a statewide campaign to improve reading proficiency
- § Links and aligns Pre-k with K-3.
- § Strengthens weak or indifferent attendance policies—during the regular school day and at extended (additional) learning times
- § Promotes continuous improvement
  - Sets annual targets for improvement (state and local)
  - Requires ongoing data collection and analysis
  - Supports communication and data sharing
  - Allocates funds to be used for ongoing impact analyses
  - Implements a system-wide “reviews of the reviewers” through high-level analysis of district and principal roles in employment, assignment and retention of high performing reading educators
  - Influences high-level practices such as reassignment of teachers whose evaluations document a track record (2-3 years) of flat or downward trends in student reading performance
  - Puts public spotlight (media and state) on successful interventions
  - Rewards programs that continuously refine services and get results.

## What it looks like in policy

**Ambitious goals:** Some states, including the **Connecticut** legislature, require that reading instruction be in alignment with the Common Core State Standards (CCSS) that the state board sets. In **Louisiana**, the literacy division of the department has been tasked with meeting five critical goals:

- Students enter kindergarten ready to learn.
- Students are literate by the third grade.
- Students will enter fourth grade on time.
- Students perform at or above grade level in English Language Arts by eighth grade.
- Achieve all Critical Goals, regardless of race or class.

**Statewide focus & urgency:** In **Colorado** local education providers must report to the state education department the number of early-grade students with significant reading deficiencies, based on the state board's definition. **Florida** law created the Florida Center for Reading Research (FCRR) at the Florida State University, with two geographically-based outreach centers to provide technical assistance in evidence-based literacy instruction, assessments, programs, and professional development. The Center is also expected to conduct applied research that will have an immediate impact on policy and practices, conduct basic research on other facets of reading, and to collaborate with the Just Read! Florida Office and districts in the development of frameworks. In addition, the Center is to disseminate information statewide.

To provide focus and a sense of urgency, 13 states and DC prohibit social promotion of students not proficient in reading. If taking or considering this approach, it is critical to ensure that intensive interventions and the other components addressed in this paper are in place.

**Continuous improvement** (set annual targets): Beginning in 2014 **Connecticut** will provide incentives for schools that increase the number of students who meet or exceed the statewide goal level in reading by 10% or more. **Florida** requires each board to annually publish data in the local newspaper and to report in writing to the state department. Data include: the local boards's policies and procedures on student retention and promotion; by grade, by grade (3-10), the number and percentage of students performing at the two lowest levels on state reading assessments; by grade, the number and percentage of all students retained in grades 3-10; total number of students promoted for good cause, by each category of good cause; and any revisions to local board policy on student retention and promotion from the prior year.

*"On or before July 1, 2014, the Commissioner of Education shall establish, within available appropriations, an incentive program for schools that (1) increase by ten per cent the number of students who meet or exceed the state-wide goal level in reading on the state-wide examination ... and (2) demonstrated the methodology and instruction used by the school to improve student reading skills and scores on such state-wide examination. Such incentive program may, at the commissioner's discretion, include public recognition, financial awards, and enhanced autonomy or operational flexibility. The Department of Education may accept private donations for the purpose of this section."*

—Connecticut  
Sec. 94, S.B. 458 (2012)

*"The Department of Education, in collaboration with the Governor's Early Care and Education Cabinet, shall develop a system for the sharing of information between preschool and school readiness programs and kindergarten regarding children's oral language and preliteracy proficiency."*

—Connecticut  
Sec. 96, S.B. 458 (2012)

*"The Department of Education shall prominently post on the website maintained by the Department best practice examples of reading intervention and remedial reading strategies used in school districts and charter schools in this state."*

— Arizona S.B. 1258 (2012)

**Alignment, Pre-K with K-3:** Connecticut requires the development of a system to share information regarding children's oral language and preliteracy proficiency. The legislature also requires a state plan that aligns reading standards, instruction and assessments for K-3rd students.

## Potential Roadblocks

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- Insufficient funding strategy
- Narrow focus on compliance instead of outcomes
- Maintenance of the status quo, with two of every three children not reading proficiently (the pattern to date).

The [Connecticut] state plan must include:

1. The alignment of reading standards, instruction, and assessments for K-3<sup>rd</sup> students
2. Teachers use of student progress data to adjust and differentiate instruction
3. The collection of information about each student's reading background, level, and progress for teachers to use to assist in a student's transition to the next grade level
4. An intervention for each student who is not making adequate reading progress to help the student read at the appropriate grade level
5. Enhanced reading instruction for students reading at or above their grade level
6. Reading instruction coordination between parents, students, teachers, and administrators at home and school
7. School district reading plans
8. Parental involvement by providing parents and guardians with opportunities to help teachers and school administrators to (a) create an optimal learning environment and (b) receive updates on their student's reading progress
9. Teacher training and reading performance tests to be aligned with teacher preparation courses and professional development activities
10. Incentives for schools that demonstrate significant student reading improvement
11. Research-based literacy training for early childhood care and education providers and instructors working with children birth to age five
12. Reading instruction alignment with the common core state standards that the state board sets.

Connecticut S.B. 458 (2012)



## Additional full-text policy excerpts for program design & implementation

*“Beginning with the 2011-2012 school year, each school district shall establish a Reading Enhancement and Acceleration Development (READ) Initiative. The focus of the READ Initiative shall be to prevent the retention of third-grade students by offering intensive accelerated reading instruction to third-grade students who failed to meet standards for promotion to fourth grade and to kindergarten through third-grade students who are exhibiting a reading deficiency.*

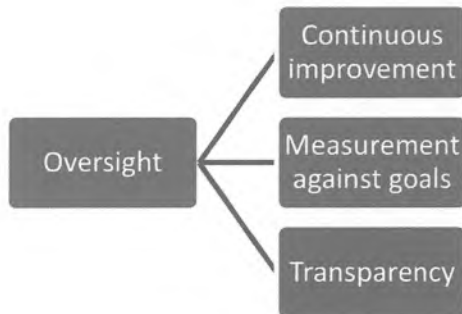
*“The READ Initiative shall: ... Provide a state-approved reading curriculum... provide scientifically based and reliable assessment ... provide initial and ongoing analysis of the reading progress of each student.”*

*—Oklahoma [§70-1210.508C](#)*

*Creates the Florida Center for Reading Research (FCRR) at the Florida State University. The center shall include two outreach centers, one at a central Florida community college and one at a south Florida state university. The center and the outreach centers, under the center’s leadership, will: (1) Provide Technical assistance and support to all school districts and schools in this state in the implementation of evidence-based literacy instruction, assessments, programs, and professional development. (2) Conduct applied research that will have an immediate impact on policy and practices related to literacy instruction and assessment with an emphasis on struggling readers and reading in the content area strategies and methods for secondary teacher. (3) Conduct basic research on reading, reading growth, reading assessment, and reading instruction which will contribute to scientific knowledge about reading. (4) Collaborate with the Just Read! Florida Office and school districts in the development of frameworks for comprehensive reading intervention courses for possible use in middle schools and secondary schools. (5) Collaborate with the Just Read! Florida Office and school districts in the development of frameworks for professional development activities. (6) Disseminate information about research-based practices related to literacy instruction, assessment from screening, progress monitoring, and outcome assessments through the Florida Progress Monitoring and Reporting Network.*

*—Florida Sec. 1004.99*

## Supporting a System Approach for Literacy Improvement : Standards for oversight



### Effective policy for oversight:

- § Designates an independent entity or entities to loosely monitor (with a goal of continuous improvement) how well schools are implementing early identification, providing immediate tiered support, and communicating with parents
- § Requires annual report to the public on literacy outcomes, specifically tied to how well annual targets were met based on state goals
- § Drives “fixes” rather than just consequences.

### What it looks like in policy

**Continuous improvement:** For students who have been retained and assigned to intensive acceleration classes, **Florida** requires weekly progress monitoring measures to ensure progress is being made and reports to the Department of Education and the state board. Florida also requires the department to monitor and track implementation of each district plan, including conducting site visits and collecting specific data on expenditures and reading improvement results. While asking for continuous improvement at the school and district level is good, it is needed at the state level as well.

**Measurement against state goals:** The state of **Arizona** requires review of reading programs if more than 20% of students at the school or district level do not meet standards.

**Transparency:** In **Minnesota**, the state's Reading Corps program was expanded to include comprehensive, scientifically based reading instruction to children age three to grade three but also

“Each district school board must annually publish in the local newspaper, and report in writing to the State Board of Education by September 1 of each year, the following information on the prior school year:

1. The provisions of this section relating to public school student progression and the district school board's policies and procedures on student retention and promotion.
2. By grade, the number and percentage of all students in grades 3 through 10 performing at Levels 1 and 2 on the reading portion of the FCAT.
3. By grade, the number and percentage of all students retained in grades 3 through 10.
4. Information on the total number of students who were promoted for good cause, by each category of good cause as specified in paragraph (6)(b).
5. Any revisions to the district school board's policy on student retention and promotion from the prior year.
6. ... The Department of Education shall establish a uniform format for school districts to report the information [above]. The format shall be developed with input from district school boards and shall be provided not later than 90 days prior to the annual due date. The department shall annually compile the information... along with state-level summary information, and report such information to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives.”

— Florida 1008.25

requires a biennial report that records and evaluates program data to determine the efficacy of the program. **Florida** requires each local entity to annually publish data on student performance in reading, the number and percentage of students retained in grade and of those who did not meet grade level standards but were promoted for good cause.

### Potential Roadblocks

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- Independent entity not perceived as independent or perceived as compliance-oriented
- Lack of means to draw public attention to annual reports on progress
- Fails to foster motivation and/or engage educators and students in continuous improvement

“Establish at each school, where applicable, an Intensive Acceleration Class for retained grade 3 students who subsequently score at Level 1 on the reading portion of the FCAT. The focus of the Intensive Acceleration Class shall be to increase a child’s reading level at least two grade levels in 1 school year. The Intensive Acceleration Class shall... Include weekly progress monitoring measures to ensure progress is being made... Report to the Department of Education, in the manner described by the department, the progress of students in the class at the end of the first semester... **Report to the State Board of Education, as requested, on the specific intensive reading interventions and supports implemented at the school district level.** [emphasis added] The Commissioner of Education shall annually prescribe the required components of requested reports.”

—Florida

§1008.25

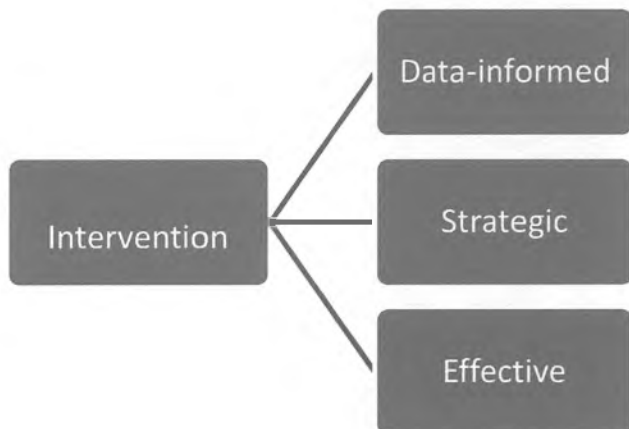
“If more than twenty per cent of students in grade three at either the individual school level or at the school district level do not meet the standards, the governing board or governing body shall conduct a review of its reading program that includes curriculum and professional development in light of current, scientifically based reading research.”

— Arizona §15-704



## Supporting a System Approach for Literacy Improvement Standards for effective, immediate intervention

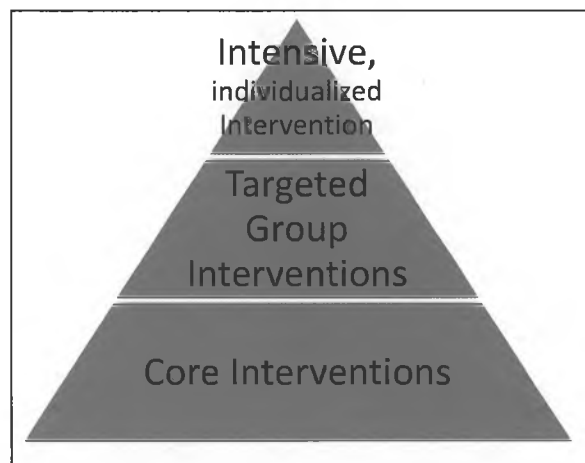
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### Effective state policy on effective, immediate intervention supports:

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- § Robust use of data to inform instruction
- § Tiers of support that include development of alternative learning plans and alternative interventions
- § Minimum number of minutes per day of additional, intensive reading instruction (not redistributing class time)
- § Mandatory attendance in extended day instruction, Saturday schools and in summer school, if applicable
- § Strategies that maximize structured use of trained mentors, tutors, including public/private partnerships
- § Development and maintenance of online, open access resources
- § Public celebration of exemplary school-level or classroom-level results.
- § Intentional assignment of highest quality reading teachers to students at risk of not meeting grade level expectations (w/teachers identified via prior reading results)
- § Intervention strategies are evidence-based.



- § If student retention is used as a means of intervention, the instructional experience is not a repeat of what the student just experienced.
- § Vetted, language-rich, rigorous and engaging grade-level curricular materials for educators or parents to access and use
- § Exemplary instruction and/or lessons tied to world-class benchmarks — including comprehension and vocabulary-building strategies for all subject areas

## What it looks like in policy

**Data-informed:** In 2012 **Florida** added a policy provision that requires that allocated funds be used to specifically support teachers in making instructional decisions based on student data, and improve teacher delivery of effective reading instruction, intervention, and reading in the content areas based on student need. (See also details of state policy under ongoing assessment of children and settings.) **New York** requires monitoring of student’s abilities and skills, and where substandard progress, instruction tailored to individual needs with increasingly intensive levels of intervention and instruction. One piece of Florida’s law is a Comprehensive Student Progression Plan that includes a number of requirements, including specific criteria for mid-year promotion of a retained student. Several states make a retention decision for students who received additional services but did not meet grade-level standards based on factors that include whether a student completed summer school or after school instructional programs.

**Strategic:** A number of states specify afterschool and summer interventions and make attendance mandatory. In **Kentucky**, state law requires district-wide use of a K-3 response-to-intervention system that includes a tiered continuum of interventions with varying levels of intensity and duration and that connects general, compensatory and special education programs to provide interventions implemented with fidelity to scientifically based research. **Montana** also supports use of a response-to-intervention model. **Florida** targets an additional hour per day of intensive reading instruction to students in the 100 lowest-performing elementary schools (H.B. 5101, 2012). Also see details of **Colorado**’s READ plan (see sidebar). The **Rhode Island** state department provides guidance that requires students’ personal literacy plans (PLPs) and that each plan address a cycle of student support to:

- Diagnose, Analyze, and Validate Need (s)
- Design Intervention Plan
- Implement Intervention
- Review Progress Monitoring Data
- Revise/Modify Support
- Implement Revised/Modified Intervention

*“A summer academy reading program shall be a program that incorporates the content of a scientifically research-based professional development program administered by the Oklahoma Commission for Teacher Preparation or a scientifically based reading program administered by the State Board of Education and is taught by teachers who have successfully completed professional development in the reading program or who are certified as reading specialists.” — Oklahoma §70-1210.508C*

*“Beginning with the 2011-2012 school year, each school district shall establish a Reading Enhancement and Acceleration Development (READ) Initiative. The focus of the READ Initiative shall be to prevent the retention of third-grade students by offering intensive accelerated reading instruction to third-grade students who failed to meet standards for promotion to fourth grade and to kindergarten through third-grade students who are exhibiting a reading deficiency.*

*...  
The READ Initiative shall: ...  
Provide a state-approved reading curriculum... provide scientifically based and reliable assessment ... provide initial and ongoing analysis of the reading progress of each student.”  
—Oklahoma §70-1210.508C*



- Use Assessments to Determine Discontinuation or Need for New Intervention

**Effective:** In **Arizona**, state policy requires the department to post best practice examples of reading intervention and remedial reading strategies used in schools and districts.

**Colorado** requires student plans to include programs from an “advised” list and that address the areas of phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary development, and reading fluency, including oral skills and reading comprehension.

**West Virginia** requires a team to review the needs of students who continue to struggle despite interventions.

**Florida** stipulates that the required additional hour of reading instruction include: research-based reading instruction that has been proven to accelerate progress of students exhibiting a reading deficiency; differentiated instruction based on student assessment data to meet students’ specific reading needs; explicit and systematic reading development in phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension, with more extensive opportunities for guided practice, error correction, and feedback and the integration of social studies, science, and mathematics-text reading, text discussion and writing in response to reading (Florida H.B. 5101, 2012). In addition, Florida requires that struggling students be assigned to a different teacher for reading.

*“State board policy requires every school to establish a student assistance team that reviews student academic needs that have persisted despite being addressed by instruction and intervention and requires every school to implement, in an equitable manner, programs during and after the instructional day at the appropriate instructional levels that contribute to the success of students ...*

*The state board shall provide for... encouraging and assisting county boards in establishing and operating critical skills instructional support programs during and after the instructional day and during the summer for students in grades three and eight who, in the judgment of the student assistance team or the student’s classroom teacher, are not mastering the content and skills in reading, language arts and mathematics adequately for success at the next grade level and who are recommended by the student assistance team or the student’s classroom teacher for additional academic help through the programs.”*

—West Virginia – [§18-2E-10](#)

*“Provide written notification to the parent of any student who is retained that his or her child has not met the proficiency level required for promotion and the reasons the child is not eligible for a good cause exemption. **The notification must include a description of proposed interventions and supports that will be provided to the child to remediate the identified areas of reading deficiency.**” [emphasis added]*

Florida – 1008.25



## Potential Roadblocks

- Instruction and interventions not built or linked to world class standards such as the Common Core State Standards
- Parent resistance if they have no voice in retention-related decisions for their kids
- Kids retained in grade because of factors outside of their control such as a lack of quality instruction
- Interventions that pull children away from the regular classroom rather than adding instructional time
- Insufficient funding strategy
- Lack of a private sector-like “project management” capacity for ensuring that data systems work the way they need to, that changes are made where necessary, that efforts are coordinated, etc. and that children and families are served well.

### Resources from the research...

*Best evidence on approaches to assisting struggling readers:*  
<http://www.bestevidence.org/reading/strua/keyfind.htm>

*What Works Clearinghouse Improving Reading Comprehension in Grades K-3:* <http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/practiceguide.aspx?sid=14>

*What Works Clearinghouse reviews of interventions:*  
<http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/topic.aspx?sid=8#accessibletabscontent0-1>

*Center on Instruction (Federally funded center):*  
*Index:* <http://centeroninstruction.org/index.cfm>

*Literacy:* <http://centeroninstruction.org/topic.cfm?k=L>  
*Response to Intervention:* <http://centeroninstruction.org/topic.cfm?k=R>

*“Each READ plan shall include, at a minimum: (a) The student’s specific, diagnosed reading skill deficiencies that need to be remediated in order for the student to attain competency; (b) the goals and benchmarks for the student’s growth in attaining reading competency; (c) the type of additional instructional services and interventions the student will receive in reading; (d) the scientifically based or evidence-based reading instructional programming the teacher will use to provide to the student daily reading approaches, strategies, interventions, and instruction, which programs at a minimum shall address the areas of phonemic awareness, phonics, vocabulary development, reading fluency, including oral skills and reading comprehension. The local education provider may choose to select the programs from among those included on the advisory list prepared by the department...; (e) the manner in which the local education provider will monitor and evaluate the student’s progress; (f) the strategies the student’s parent is encouraged to use in assisting the student to achieve reading competency that are designed to supplement the programming described in paragraph (d)...; and (g) any additional services the teacher deems available and appropriate to accelerate the student’s reading skill development.”*  
—Colorado H.B. 12-1238 (2012)

## Key Takeaways: Framework & Superstructure

### Effective policy on program design & implementation

**Ensures**

grade-level expectations are benchmarked to world-class standards

**Links & Aligns**

Coherent standards, curricula, teaching practices and assessments with pK-3

**Creates and sustains**

sense of urgency — such as statewide campaign

**Strengthens**

weak or indifferent attendance policies—during the regular school day and at extended (additional) learning times

**Promotes**

continuous improvement

annual targets – state & local  
ongoing data collection and analysis  
communication and data sharing  
ongoing impact analyses  
Review of the system of adult review  
(high-level analysis of high performing educator employment, assignment and retention)  
High-level practices  
(i.e., reassignment of teachers whose evaluations document a track record of flat or downward trends in student reading performance)  
Replication of successful interventions  
Rewards for programs that continuously refine services and get results

### Effective policy for oversight

**Designates**

Independent, loose monitoring of the system

**Requires**

annual reports to the public on literacy outcomes, specifically tied to how well annual targets were met based on state goals

### Effective state policy on effective, immediate intervention supports

**Use of data**

to inform instruction

***Tiers of support***

alternative learning plans,  
alternative interventions

Minimum number of minutes  
per day of additional, intensive  
reading instruction (not  
redistributing class time)

Mandatory attendance in  
interventions  
Strategies to maximize  
assistance

***Resource development &  
maintenance***

online, open access  
repositories

***Public celebration***

exemplary school-level or  
classroom-level results

***Evidence-based assignment,  
curriculum***

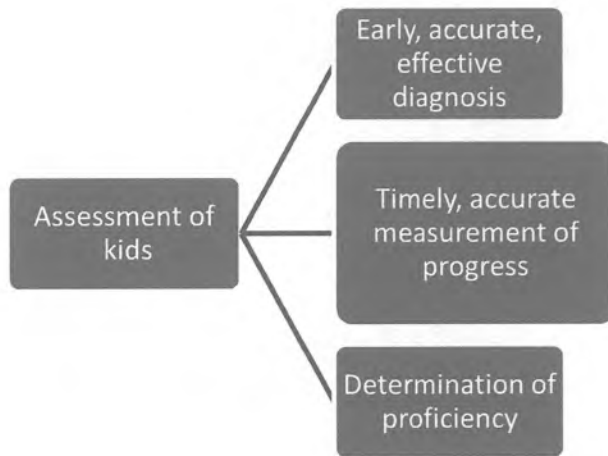
Struggling students get highest  
quality reading teachers

Intervention strategies are  
evidence-based  
Vetted, language-rich, rigorous  
and engaging grade-level  
curricular materials for  
educators or parents to access  
and use

Exemplary instruction and/or  
lessons tied to world-class  
benchmarks — including  
comprehension and  
vocabulary-building strategies  
for all subject areas



## Supporting a System Approach for Literacy Improvement: Standards for ongoing assessments of children and settings



### Effective state policy on assessment of kids supports:

- § Screening, formative and summative assessment tools
- § Evidence-based, diagnostic or screening assessments with accurate, rapid results
- § Assessments selected from a pool of vetted, evidence-based tools
- § Inclusion of teacher recommendation as a means of casting a wider net of identification
- § Timely notice to parents and processes for parent support
- § Connection to a robust data system that maximizes use of early warning indicators and that provides easily accessible reports that support teacher/leader use of data and that minimizes bureaucratic requirements for teachers
- § Inclusion of early education & care settings, as well as PK-3 classrooms.

### What the research says...

*Data from assessments of children should not be reported without data on the programs that serve them.*

*Reporting on program quality should highlight attributes of classroom quality, instructional practices, and teacher-child interactions that are most highly correlated with enhancing children's progress in learning and development*

*Reporting on child assessments should highlight children's progress over time (or the "value-added" contributions of programs) as well as their end-of-program status.*

*Source: "[Taking Stock: Assessing and Improving Early Childhood Learning and Program Quality](#)"*

## What it looks like in policy

**Early, accurate, effective diagnosis:** In Iowa, the state legislature established a Cross-Agency Assessment Instrument Planning Group to study and select one standard, multidomain assessment for implementation by all districts for purposes of kindergarten assessments. Idaho requires skills to be assessed K-3, two times annually, with a statewide test. The state allows students in the lowest 25% of performance to be tested more frequently.

**Timely, accurate measurement of progress.** Oklahoma requires that the screening instrument be accompanied by a data management system and that it be capable of providing profiles of achievement at the student, class, grade and school levels.

**Determination of proficiency.** All states administer a statewide test to determine whether students are meeting level reading standards in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. Fourteen states and DC require students to be retained if they are not proficient for their grade level by the end of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade.

## Potential Roadblocks

On one hand: Resistance to a single assessment, if choices limited to one or selected by one entity.

On the other hand: If a central pool of vetted assessments is not available, local choices might not be optimal.

*"All public school students in kindergarten and grades one (1), two (2) and three (3) shall have their reading skills assessed. For purposes of this assessment, the state board approved and research-based "Idaho Comprehensive Literacy Plan" shall be the reference document. The kindergarten assessment shall include reading readiness and phonological awareness. Grades one (1), two (2) and three (3) shall test for fluency and accuracy of the student's reading. The assessment shall be by a single statewide test specified by the state board of education, and the state department of education shall ensure that testing shall take place not less than two (2) times per year in the relevant grades. Additional assessments may be administered for students in the lowest twenty-five percent (25%) of reading progress."*

*Idaho – 33-1614*

*Oklahoma H.B. 2511 (2012) requires that the screening instrument be "accompanied by a data management system that provides profiles for students, class, grade level and school building. The profiles shall identify each student's instructional point of need and reading achievement level."*

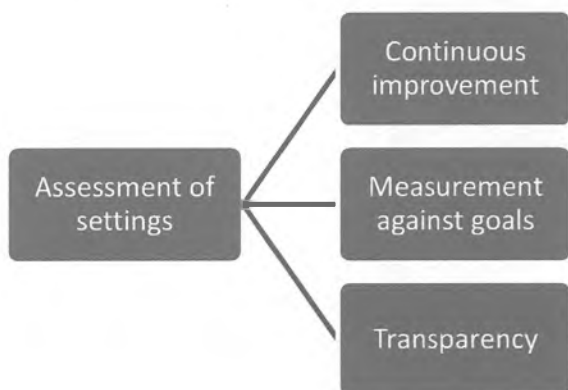
*Iowa S.F. 2284 (2012)*

*"Sec. 35. CROSS-AGENCY ASSESSMENT INSTRUMENT PLANNING GROUP. The department of education and the early childhood Iowa state board shall collaborate to form a cross-agency planning group. Members of the planning group shall include teachers and school leaders, and representatives from the departments of public health, human services, and education, the Iowa early childhood state and area boards, the state board of regents, applicable nonprofit groups, and experts in early childhood assessment and educational assessment. The planning group shall study and select one standard, multidomain assessment instrument for implementation by all school districts...1. The instrument shall align with agreed upon state and national curriculum standards. The planning group shall study all costs associated with implementing a universal assessment instrument..."*

## What the research says...

*"When assessment systems result in high-stress experiences for our children or purposeless additions to professionals' plates, we can all be concerned. However, by neglecting to regularly evaluate our young children's language and early reading skills, we have done more harm than good. We need to put our efforts into selecting multiple measures and interpreting their results in appropriate ways to promote student success. It is how assessments are used - and with whom and how the results are interpreted and used - that can be positive or negative, accurate or inaccurate. When used in accurate and ethical ways, assessments can be the critical difference between a child receiving the help he needs or struggling in reading."*  
*Turning the Page: Refocusing Massachusetts for Reading Success*  
*(2010)*

## Supporting a System Approach for Literacy Improvement: Standards for assessment of P-3 settings



### Effective policy on assessment of P-3 settings:

- § Includes frequent observation, of duration, with feedback (Pianta, 2012) [http://ccf.tc.columbia.edu/pdf/Task\\_Force\\_Report.pdf](http://ccf.tc.columbia.edu/pdf/Task_Force_Report.pdf)
- § Provides for regular review of classroom, school and district results against state goals
- § Intentionally targets use of P-3 review tools in lowest-achieving classrooms (tools such as CLASS, QRIS, Assessment of Practices in Early Elementary Classrooms (APEEC)).

### What it looks like in policy

Includes frequent observation, of duration, with feedback. Connecticut uses an Early Childhood Quality Rating and Improvement System.

**Regular, targeted review.** Florida policy (H.B. 5101, 2012) directs the department to monitor implementation of each district plan, including conducting site visits and collecting specified data, and to report its findings annually to the legislature. In addition, any Intensive Acceleration Class for retained grade 3 student who subsequently scores at the lowest level must be monitored weekly and progress reports made to the state board. **Arizona** sets a performance threshold beneath which the governing body must conduct a review of its reading program that includes curriculum and professional development in light of current, scientifically based reading research.

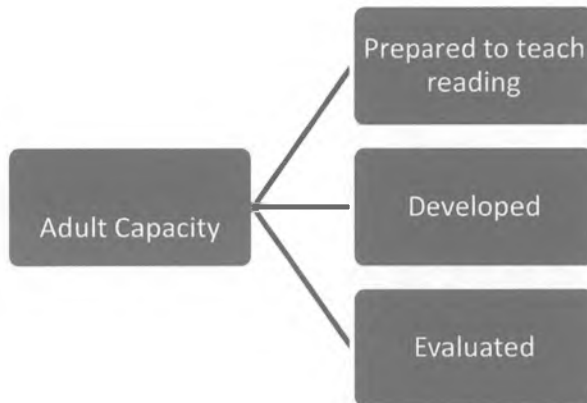
**Connecticut** —Early Childhood Quality Rating and Improvement System  
The program must:  
Count towards professional development requirements established under the bill  
Be based on student reading assessment data  
Provide differentiated and intensified training in teacher reading instruction  
Be used to identify mentor teachers who will train teachers in reading instruction  
Outline how model classrooms for reading instruction will be established in schools  
Inform principals on how to evaluate classrooms and teacher performance in scientifically-based reading research and instruction  
Be job-embedded and local whenever possible.

The bill also requires the Commissioner to annually review the professional development and to assess whether the professional development meets state goals for student academic achievement through (1) state board-adopted common core state standards, (2) research-based interventions, and (3) federal special education law. The Commissioner is required to submit his review to the Education Committee. Bill analysis for Connecticut S.B. 458 (2012)

“If more than twenty per cent of students in grade three at either the individual school level or at the school district level do not meet the standards, the governing board or governing body shall conduct a review of its reading program that includes curriculum and professional development in light of current, scientifically based reading research.”  
— Arizona §15-704

This section describes four essential areas of adult capacity-building: 1) Teacher preparation and certification; 2) Principal & superintendent preparation; 3) Professional development; 4) Teacher and principal evaluation.

**Supporting a System Approach for Literacy Improvement:  
Standards for redefined adult capacity-building models**



**1. Teacher preparation and certification policy supports:**

- § Program approval that is based on evidence that relevant programs effectively address reading instruction
- § Program approval that is based on evidence of robust development of oral language and vocabulary for teacher candidates
- § Internationally-benchmarked entrance/exit requirements
- § Rigorous, stand-alone assessment of teacher candidate knowledge of reading instruction assessed at program exit or prior to licensure, and in certain circumstances—periodically post-licensure—with level of proficiency benchmarked to world-class standards
- § Early intervention for teacher candidates who are at risk of not meeting expectations in area of reading instruction
- § Practice or residency programs with sufficient time and connection to highly-effective and qualified master teachers to deepen knowledge of instruction and intervention
- § Meaningful alignment with certification or licensure (both preparation and certification built on world-class level of knowledge/skill expectations).

*“(b) The department may not grant an initial practitioner license to an individual unless the individual has demonstrated proficiency in the following areas on a written examination or through other procedures prescribed by the department:*

- (1) Basic reading, writing, and mathematics.*
- (2) Pedagogy.*
- (3) Knowledge of the areas in which the individual is required to have a license to teach.*
- (4) If the individual is seeking to be licensed as an elementary school teacher, comprehensive scientifically based reading instruction skills, including:*
  - (A) phonemic awareness;*
  - (B) phonics instruction;*
  - (C) fluency;*
  - (D) vocabulary; and*
  - (E) comprehension.”*

Indiana IC 20-28-5-12

*“The department may not issue an initial teaching license that authorizes the holder to teach in grades kindergarten to 5 or in special education, an initial license as a reading teacher, or an initial license as a reading specialist, unless the applicant has passed an examination identical to the Foundations of Reading test administered in 2012 as part of the Massachusetts Tests for Educator Licensure. The department shall set the passing cut score on the examination at a level no lower than the level recommended by the developer of the test, based on this state’s standards.”*

*—Wisconsin – S.B. 461 (2012)*

*The Just Read, Florida! program requires the development and monitoring of reading competencies that must be demonstrated for teacher licensure, reading endorsement and reading certification.*

## What it looks like in policy

**Adults are prepared.** A 2012 bill (S.B. 458) in Connecticut requires the education commissioner to annually review the professional development required under the bill for teachers holding professional certificates with early childhood nursery through third grade or elementary school endorsements and holding jobs requiring such endorsements. **Connecticut** also requires a practice-based preliteracy course for early childhood teacher candidates. Additionally, the state requires teacher preparation programs to require, as part of their curricula, that students have four semesters of classroom clinical, field, or student teaching experience.

**Florida** requires that approval of postsecondary teacher preparation programs be based on proof that programs cover the required competencies. **Wisconsin** requires the department to use the test selected and used by Massachusetts in 2012 and to set the passing cut score on the examination at a level no lower than the level recommended by the developer of the test.

## 2. Professional development policy supports:

§ Maximization of opportunities presented by movement to the Common Core State Standards

§ Provision of a sequential pathway that includes training in strategies and skills for implementing the knowledge acquired through preparation and professional development. In other words, instead of giving educators a fighter jet, train them to fly.

§ State-supported summer reading academies for reading teachers (face-to-face or online) and workshops for principals

§ Proficiency standards for literacy interventionists

## What it looks like in policy

**Professional development:** In **South Carolina**, the Reading Achievement Systemic Initiative Panel (2011) made several recommendations to expand the knowledge base of principals and instructional leaders, including: provide mandatory state-wide series of workshops; provide on-site visits to audit literacy practices and offer suggestions for moving classrooms toward High Progress Literacy Classrooms; provide virtual support via website, seminars, workshops, and webinars.

**Connecticut** policy appears to meet the majority of the goals for ensuring adult capacity (see sidebar). The **Kentucky** Department of

## § 7—PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN READING

By July 1, 2013 the bill requires the education commissioner to establish a professional development program in reading instruction for teachers.

The program must:

- 1) count towards professional development requirements established under the bill (§ 38)
- 2) be based on student reading assessment data
- 3) provide differentiated and intensified training in teacher reading instruction
- 4) be used to identify mentor teachers who will train teachers in reading instruction
- 5) outline how model classrooms will be established in schools for reading instruction; and
- 6) inform principals on how to evaluate classrooms and teacher performance in scientifically-based reading research and instruction, and
- 7) be job-embedded and local whenever possible.

Beginning July 1, 2014 and each following school year, all certified employees (i.e., teachers and administrators) working in grades K-3 are required to take a practice version of a state-board approved reading instruction exam. Each local and regional board of education is required to annually report the results to the Department of Education.

This bill also requires all certified employees who hold a certificate with an early childhood nursery through grade three or an elementary endorsement and are employed in a position requiring such an endorsement in kindergarten to grade three, inclusive, to do the same.  
—Connecticut S.B. 458 (2012)

Education offers online resources for educators in an easily-accessible, engaging format.

### 3. Principal & superintendent preparation policy supports:

- § High-level practices in preparation and licensure that include evaluation and coaching of adults
- § Preparation that includes high-level standards such as: the foundations of quality early childhood programs, principles and practices engaging families and communities; appropriate learning environments for young children using data for early identification and intervention setting high expectations for children, and communicating with and supporting teachers.
- § Development of the type of 21<sup>st</sup> Century skills and strategies that leaders need in order to help teachers skillfully implement what it is they have learned in their preparation or professional development programs.

### What it looks like in policy

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**Leader preparation:** In Connecticut, state law requires that professional development inform principals on how to evaluate classrooms and teacher performance in scientifically-based reading research and instruction.

### 4. Teacher & principal evaluation policy supports:

- § Evaluation using multiple measures, including student achievement
- § Assignment to teach reading (particularly to students below grade-level standards) based on a track record of positive student achievement data
- § Funding for professional development that is contingent on commitment to quantitative evaluation of such professional development (i.e., knowledge of teaching reading assessed)
- § System of review that looks loosely at data on reading improvement and whether adult capacity is sufficient (i.e., state review of district evaluation data such as the number of teachers non-renewed for performance, number in lowest two categories of performance and similar review of school-level data performed at the district level).

#### What the research says...

*“Despite the availability of training, school leaders across the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries have often reported that they felt they had not been adequately trained to assume their posts. Although most candidates for school-leadership positions have a teaching background, they are not necessarily competent in pedagogical innovation...”*

*Source: Preparing Teachers and Developing School Leaders for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century: Lessons from Around the World (2012) edited by Andreas Schleicher*

#### What it looks like in policy

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**Multiple measures used for evaluation:** In Wisconsin, state law requires 50% of the total evaluation be based on measures of student performance. For a principal, evaluation is based on the extent to which the principal’s practice meets the 2008

Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium Educational Leadership Policy Standards. **Arizona** law

expects that if more than 20% of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students at either the school or district level do not meet standards, the school board has to review its reading program (curriculum and professional development) in light of current, scientifically based reading research.

**Assignment to successful teachers.** In Florida, state law specifies that reading coaches are intended to support teachers in making instructional decisions based on student data and improve teacher delivery of effective reading instruction, intervention, and reading in the content areas. It also insists that students who are struggling readers are not assigned the same teacher. Also, a 2012 policy (H.B. 5101) requires that for the 2012-13 and 2013-14 school years, each district with one or more of the 100 lowest-performing elementary schools have to provide intensive reading instruction during an additional hour of instruction beyond the normal school day each day of the school year. This hour of instruction may only be provided by teachers or reading specialists who are effective in teaching reading.

### Potential Roadblocks

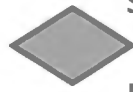
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- Acquisition of knowledge without the skills to implement
- Poorly delivered professional development
- A reading coach selection process that fails to ensure coaches are master teachers of reading and communicate well with adults as well as with children
- Lack of 21<sup>st</sup> Century skill set related to accountability, implementation, professional development, leadership.

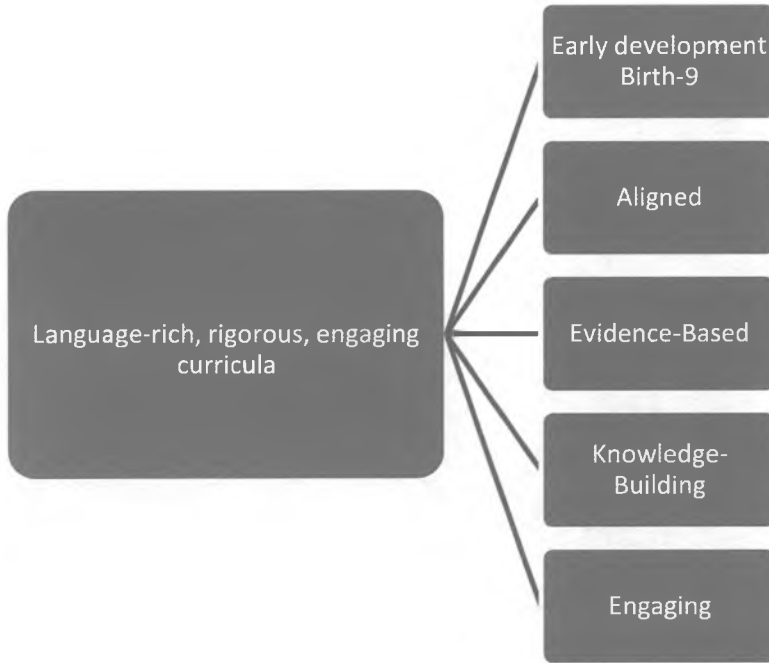
*Wisconsin S.B. 461 (2012)*

"The department shall develop an educator effectiveness evaluation system according to the following framework:

1. Fifty percent of the total evaluation score assigned to a teacher or principal shall be based upon measures of student performance, including performance on state assessments, district-wide assessments, student learning objectives, school-wide reading at the elementary and middle-school levels, and graduation rates at the high school level.
2. Fifty percent of the total evaluation score assigned to a teacher or principal shall be based upon one of the following:
  - For a teacher, the extent to which the teacher's practice meets the core teaching standards adopted by the 2011 Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium.
  - For a principal, the extent to which the principal's practice meets the 2008 Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium Educational Leadership Policy Standards."



**Supporting a System Approach for Literacy Improvement: Standards for language-rich, rigorous & engaging curricula**



**State policy on curricula supports:**

- § Birth-age 9 focus on rich, engaging, rigorous, coherent curricula
- § Both written and oral literacy
- § Grade- and age-level expectations benchmarked to world-class standards
- § Evidence-based curriculum chosen from pool of state-identified options or alternatively, local option but a process for curriculum review in low-performing schools
- § State role in publicizing and incentivizing use of programs identified by the What Works Clearinghouse, Best Evidence Encyclopedia or similar evidence-based resources as having positive effects or potentially positive effects  
(<http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/FindWhatWorks.aspx?o=6&n=Reading/Writing&r=1>)

**“Regulations for Educator Licensure and Preparation Program Approval**

...(5) Early Childhood: Teacher of Students With and Without Disabilities (Levels: PreK-2)

(a) The following topics will be addressed on the Foundations of Reading test:

- 1) Reading theory, research, and practice.
  - a) Knowledge of the significant theories, approaches, practices, and programs for developing reading skills and reading comprehension.
  - b) Phonemic awareness and phonics: principles, knowledge, and instructional practices.
  - c) Diagnosis and assessment of reading skills using standardized, criterion-referenced, and informal assessment instruments.
- 2) Development of a listening, speaking and reading vocabulary.
- 3) Theories on the relationships between beginning writing and reading.
- 4) Theories of first and second language acquisition and development. ...

(7) Elementary (Levels: 1-6)

(a) The following topics will be addressed on the Foundations of Reading test:

- 1) Reading theory, research, and practice.
  - a) Knowledge of the significant theories, practices, and programs for developing reading skills and reading comprehension.
  - b) Phonemic awareness and phonics: principles, knowledge, and instructional practices.
  - c) Diagnosis and assessment of reading skills using standardized, criterion-referenced, and informal assessment instruments.
- 2) Development of a listening, speaking, and reading vocabulary.
  - a) Theories on the relationships between beginning writing and reading.
  - b) Theories of first and second language acquisition and development.”

*Massachusetts 603 CMR 7.00*

- § Inclusion in all early education & care settings, as well as PK-3 classrooms
- § Use of complimentary drivers such as the Common Core State Standards initiative to maximize professional development in teaching reading at an internationally-benchmarked standard.

### What it looks like in policy

**Early development Birth-9:** The Arizona Literacy Plan addresses elements such as kindergarten transition, early oral language development and emphasizes text comprehension.

**Evidence-based:** Oklahoma’s READ initiative is required by law to provide a state-approved reading curriculum. **Indiana** prohibits granting of a licensure to an elementary teacher candidate who has not demonstrated proficiency in comprehensive **scientifically based** reading instruction skills, including:

- (A) phonemic awareness;
- (B) phonics instruction;
- (C) fluency;
- (D) vocabulary; and
- (E) comprehension.”

**Vocabulary development supports knowledge-building:** In **Massachusetts**, state regulations specify aspects that the Foundations of Reading test for teachers is required to include, including, among others: development of listening, speaking and reading vocabulary, theories of language acquisition and knowledge of significant theories, practices, and programs for developing reading skills and reading comprehension.

*“The READ Initiative shall: ... Provide a state-approved reading curriculum... provide scientifically based and reliable assessment ... provide initial and ongoing analysis of the reading progress of each student.”*

—Oklahoma §70-1210.508C

*“Not later than July 1, 2013, the Department of Education, in consultation with the Board of Regents for Higher Education, shall design and approve a preliteracy course to be included in a bachelor’s degree program with a concentration in early childhood education... from an institution of higher education accredited by the Board of Governors of Higher Education. Such course shall be practice-based and specific to the developmentally appropriate instruction of preliteracy and language skills for teachers of early childhood education.”*

— Connecticut S.B. 458 (2012)

### *E.D. Hirsch, recipient of the 2012 James Bryant Conant Award, ECS*

*“A large vocabulary is, on average, the best single predictor of job competence and life changes. And a large vocabulary can only be gained by acquiring broad general knowledge, not by studying words. Nor can a large vocabulary be gained by practicing reading strategies and thinking skills—those dominant topics in our elementary schools...*

*Broad substantive knowledge, not formal technique, is the key to achievement and equity.”*

—acceptance speech, 2012 ECS National Forum on Education Policy

### *Resources from the research...*

From the Best Evidence Encyclopedia:

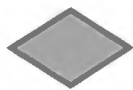
<http://www.bestevidence.org/reading/elementary/reading.htm>

From the What Works Clearinghouse:

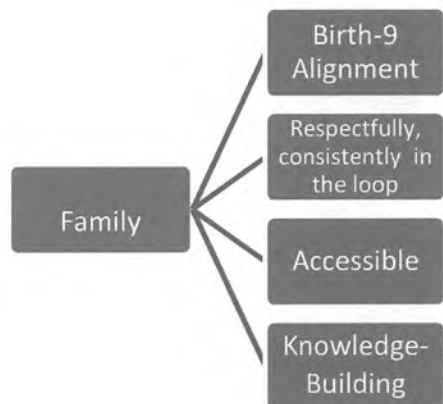
<http://ies.ed.gov/ncee/wwc/topic.aspx?sid=8>

**Publisher's Criteria for the Common Core State Standards  
in English Language Arts and Literacy, Grades K-2**

Other: <http://curry.virginia.edu/resource-library/castl-research-brief-long-term-effects-of-print-referencing>



## Supporting a System Approach for Literacy Improvement: Standards for partnerships with families focused on language & learning



### Effective policy on partnerships focused on language & learning supports:

§ Development and promotion of strategies and resources for families that will strengthen their capacity to support literacy (i.e., efforts to more fully inform parents – particularly low-income parents—of the value of talking with their children, naming items in picture/story books with their children, etc.)

§ Connections between families and the diverse supports they might need

§ Programs to facilitate smooth transitions to school by helping families understand school processes and making children and parents feel comfortable and welcome

§ Construction and dissemination of new technology such as mobile “apps” for parents and early care givers

§ Ongoing parental notification of reading difficulties

§ Parental inclusion in high stakes decisions and in development of individual learning plans.

### What it looks like in policy

**Birth-9 alignment, beginning with parents.** Idaho provides a [brochure](#) for parents that makes suggestions for how they can support their child’s reading and vocabulary development. While this action is not policy related, it cites the state law on the Idaho Reading Indicator as the basis for the publication. The **Arizona** Literacy Plan addresses elements such as kindergarten transition, early oral language development and

“The parent of any student who exhibits a substantial deficiency in reading must be notified in writing of the following:

1. That his or her child has been identified as having a substantial deficiency in reading.
2. A description of the current services that are provided to the child.
3. A description of the proposed supplemental instructional services and supports that will be provided to the child that are designed to remediate the identified area of reading deficiency.
4. That if the child’s reading deficiency is not remediated by the end of grade 3, the child must be retained unless he or she is exempt from mandatory retention for good cause.
5. Strategies for parents to use in helping their child succeed in reading proficiency.
6. That the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) is not the sole determiner of promotion and that additional evaluations, portfolio reviews, and assessments are available to the child to assist parents and the school district in knowing when a child is reading at or above grade level and ready for grade promotion.
7. The district’s specific criteria and policies for midyear promotion. Midyear promotion means promotion of a retained student at any time during the year of retention once the student has demonstrated ability to read at grade level.”

— Florida 1008.25

emphasizes text comprehension. Florida law also requires “Strategies for parents to use in helping their child succeed in reading proficiency.”

**Respectfully, consistently in the loop.** See the Florida language (Sec. 1008.25) provided in the sidebar.

**Knowledge-building:** Florida requires that parents be provided with strategies to use in helping their child succeed.

### *Resources from the research ...*

What Works Clearinghouse.

Top Tier Evidence Initiative at the Coalition for Evidence Based Policy

Best Evidence Encyclopedia from Johns Hopkins School of Education

ECS Research Studies Database – Reading Section  
Generally: [www.ecs.org/rs](http://www.ecs.org/rs)



Major Takeaways

# Schools & Classrooms

## Conclusion

Sound state early literacy policy requires a framework that supports a system approach, and one that successfully translates into effective implementation at the school and classroom level. The goal of a state policy is to strengthen P-3 linkages, provide transparency, and improve school and classroom practice. It needs to engage state leaders, teacher preparation institutions, educators, students and families in continuous improvement— concentrating first on drivers that foster motivation of teachers and students.

*Roger Sampson,  
president, ECS*

*"If you expect people to improve or change practice, you must provide a sequential pathway with support along the way."*

*Excerpted from "Five Things I've Learned." Pearson Foundation.*

The state track record (and as the states go, so goes the nation) is not good. This roadmap of standards for policy should evolve with input from every domain it touches (e.g., state leader, state agency, practitioners, and parents).

Progress will require a review of assumptions, ongoing investigations to identify

unintended consequences and a commitment to continuous improvement if we are to counteract unforeseen difficulties with implementation.

## Acknowledgements

The categories included in this report echo those suggested by ***Turning the Page: Refocusing Massachusetts for Reading Success***, a report commissioned by Strategies for Children, Inc. and authored by Dr. Nonie Lesaux, Ph.D., of the Harvard Graduate School of Education. Thanks go to Kelly Kulsrud, Director of Reading Proficiency and Carolyn Lyons, CEO, Strategies for Children, Inc., Boston, MA for their review. And finally, appreciation for review and suggestions by ECS staff Karen Schimke, Emily Workman, Matthew Smith and ECS' advisor on leadership, Gary Whiteley.

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## Resources

*Hernandez, D.J. (2011) Double Jeopardy: How Third Grade Reading Skills and Poverty Influence High School Graduation. Baltimore, MD: The Annie E. Casey Foundation*

## Other ECS Resources

Stephanie's new SN:

The Progress of Education Reform: [Pre-K-12 Literacy ECS](#), December 2011

[Third Grade Literacy Policies: Identification, Intervention, Retention](#) (ECS, March 2012)

[The Road to High-Quality Early Education](#) (ECS, December 2011)

ECS Research Studies Database [www.ecs.org/rs](http://www.ecs.org/rs)

[ECS Policy Tracking, Reading/Literacy](#)

<http://www.ecs.org/ecs/ecsc.at.nsf/WebTopicView?OpenView&count=1&RestrictToCategory=Reading/Literacy>

[The Progress of Education Reform: Early Care and Education](#) ECS, 2008

[Transition and Alignment: Two Keys to Assuring Student Success](#) (ECS, 2010)

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***Equipping Education Leaders, Advancing Ideas***

*Reform is never finished and success is never final. A perpetual cycle of reform will lead to sustained improvement for the long-term.*

-Former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush

## **FLORIDA LEADS THE WAY ON K-12 EDUCATION REFORMS**

Alaska and Florida make for studies in contrast in terms of geographic proximity, population and weather, among other factors. The states are profoundly different. Both states face tremendous and varying education challenges of varying types. Florida has most of the educational challenges one can imagine including both inner-city and rural schools and large numbers of low-income and foreign born students.

Unlike Alaska, Florida has a “majority minority” student population and a majority of low-income students. Alaskans of course faces many unique educational challenges of their own. These challenges include but are not limited to a large number of small and remote communities and a considerable achievement gap between white and Inuit students.

Despite the obvious and considerable differences, both states face a broadly similar challenge of finding ways to maximize the effectiveness of their K-12 systems in order to rise to the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Please note from the outset that the purpose of this work is decidedly *not* to claim that Florida has achieved K-12 Nirvana or that all Alaska schools are terribly underachieving. Neither of these things is true.

This work instead intends to detail the reforms that substantially improved learning in Florida, taking the state off the bottom of national comparisons--precisely where Alaska finds itself today. Readers should view these reforms as a baseline for action in Alaska and seek to improve K-12 outcomes.

What Florida has done, Alaska could, in time, exceed.

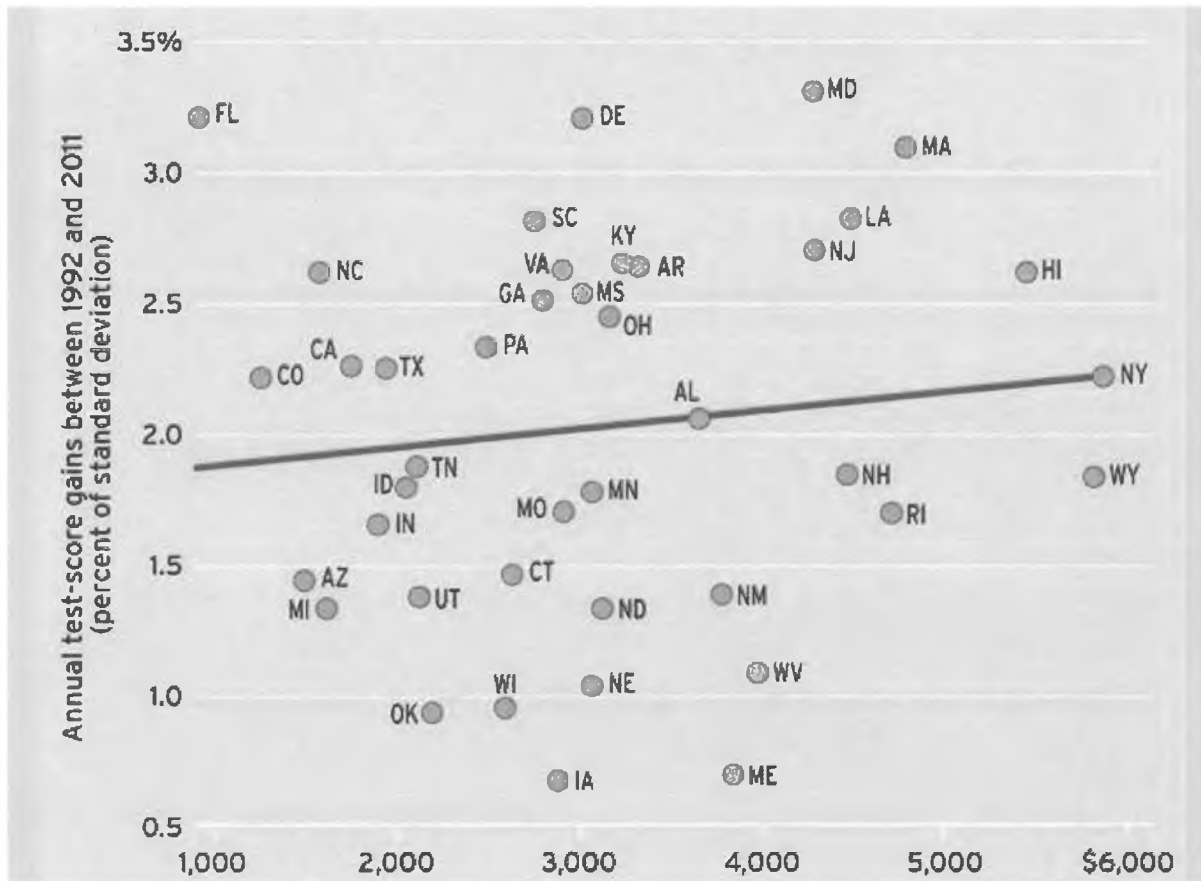
## **THE FLORIDA REFORM AGENDA**

Beginning in 1999, the Florida state legislature began adopting far-reaching education reforms. These reforms included grading schools with easily comprehensible labels—letter grades A, B, C, D, and F—and expanding school choice through charter schools and private choice programs. Florida also became the nation’s leader in virtual education—offering classes online through the Florida Virtual School. In addition, the state’s lawmakers curtailed the social promotion of illiterate elementary students, reformed reading instruction, and created multiple paths for alternative teacher certification.

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) tests random samples of students in the states. Florida has participated in the main NAEP 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade reading and math exams since the early 1990s, whereas Alaska began its participation in 2003. Stanford economist Eric Hanushek published a paper in 2012 which utilized NAEP data in order to illustrate the relative

academic progress of states participating in NAEP since the early 1990s in relation to their trend in spending. While Alaska's relatively late beginning to NAEP participation kept them out of the comparison, the chart proves illuminating.

**FIGURE 1: AVERAGE ANNUAL NAEP ACADEMIC GAINS BY INFLATION ADJUSTED SPENDING PER PUPIL INCREASE (SOURCE: HANUSHEK, WOESSMAN AND PETERSON, 2012)**



Hanushek and his coauthors used the above chart to note the lack of a relationship between spending increases and academic improvement. Readers could argue for some time about which state shows the worst performance in this chart. Educators and taxpayers in New York and Wyoming both show an almost a \$6,000 per student increase in spending while banking average and below average academic gains, respectively. Iowa and Maine, while increasing spending somewhat less had the most dismal academic improvement.

One can scarcely debate, however, which state shows the best performance: Florida had the smallest increase in funding per pupil but the second to largest academic gain. Delaware and Maryland also produced academic gains similar to Florida, but did with per-pupil spending increases three to five times larger than those in Florida. Florida managed first class gains with a much smaller increase in funding. Note also that Florida faces considerably greater socio-economic challenges than Maryland or Delaware.

Florida has experienced a number of positive academic trends since the late 1990s. Between 1998 and 2010, for instance, the percentage of Florida students graduating from high school increased from 67% to 87%. In large part enabled by this increase in high-school graduation rates, the percentage of Florida students pursuing higher education increased from 50% in 1997-98 to 68% in 2008-09. During this same period, the number of Black and Hispanic students passing one or more Advanced Placement exams more than tripled.

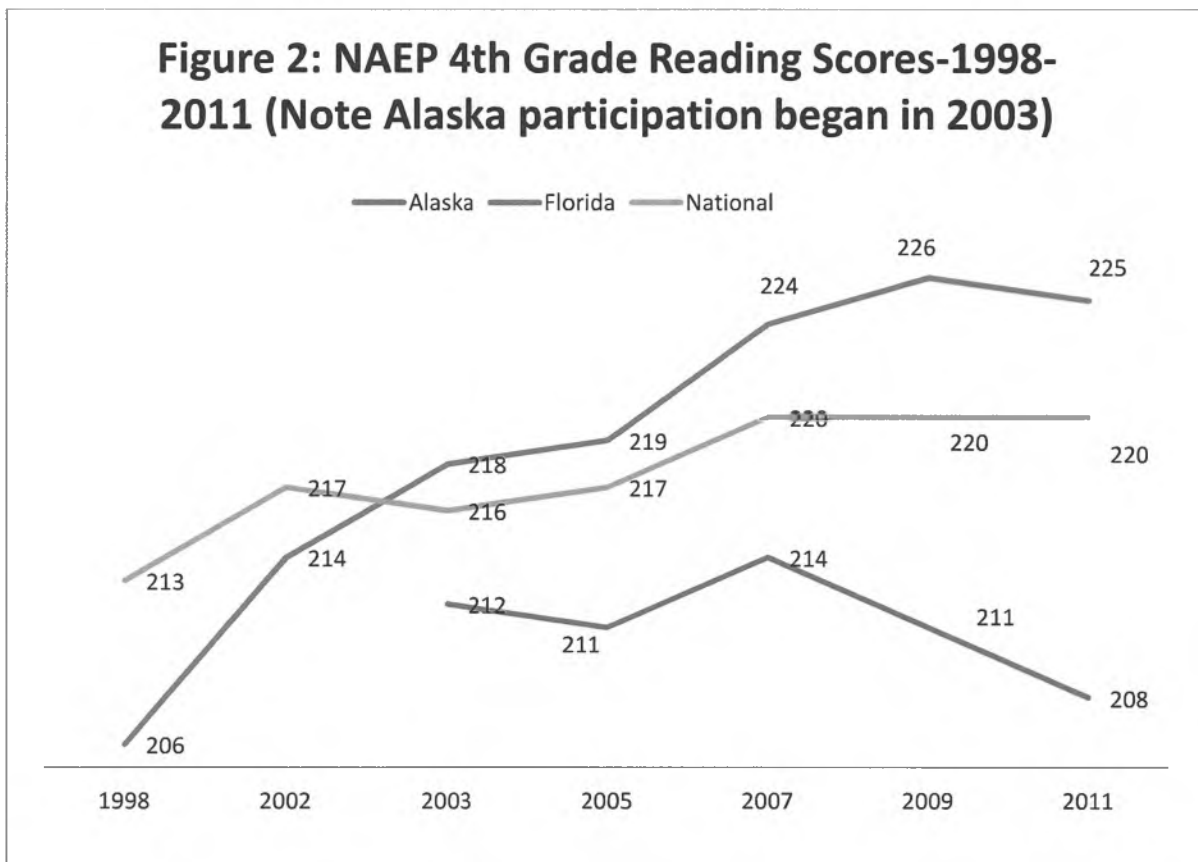
A key strategy in improving high school outcomes in Florida, however, involved teaching the most basic skills at the elementary level. Students who fail to master basic literacy skills at the developmentally critical age often struggle to keep up as grade level material advances with each ascending grade. Florida's K-12 reformers therefore focused on improving early childhood reading.

Of all the NAEP exams, education officials pay the closest attention to the fourth-grade reading exam. Literacy acquisition involves developmentally crucial periods—reading is broadly similar to learning a foreign language in that it is easier to do when you are young. Educators summarize this phenomenon with an expression: In grades K-3, you are *learning to read*. After third grade, you are *reading to learn*. If you cannot read, you cannot learn.

Alaska did not begin participation in NAEP until 2003, which prevented their inclusion in the Hanushek study but will not stop us from making comparisons of more recent trends presently. NAEP presents data both as average scores and also as levels of achievement. Figure 2 presents the scale scores from NAEP's fourth-grade reading exams for Alaska, Florida and the United States as a whole.

Florida's reforms began the year after the 1998 NAEP; prior to this time the state's reading scores had been low and flat. For the charts presented in this report, bear in mind that a 10-point gain equals approximately a grade level's worth of learning such that, all else being equal, we would expect a group of 5<sup>th</sup> graders taking the 4<sup>th</sup> grade NAEP Reading test to do about 10 points better than a similar group of 4<sup>th</sup> graders.

**Figure 2: NAEP 4th Grade Reading Scores-1998-2011 (Note Alaska participation began in 2003)**

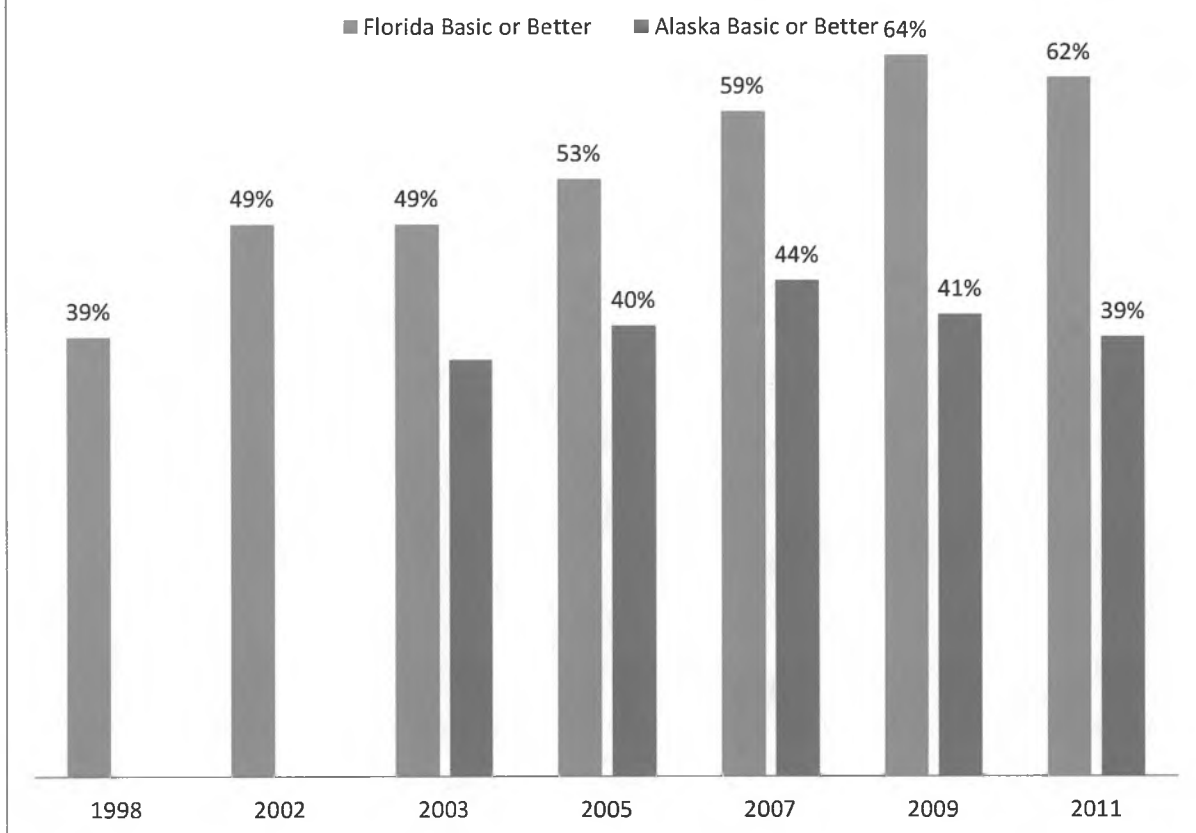


Florida students have gained 19 points on the NAEP 4<sup>th</sup> grade reading test since 1998, the year before the Florida reform efforts. Note that Florida's 1998 score was lower even than any of Alaska's scores since joining NAEP in 2003. In 2011, however, the average Florida student scored 17 points higher than the average Alaska student—almost two grade levels higher on a 4<sup>th</sup> grade test. Alaska's 2011 students were about at the same reading level as Florida's 1998 students, but their average level of achievement roughly equals what we might expect from a slightly above average Florida 2<sup>nd</sup> grader in 2011.

The scale of the differences between Alaska and Florida can also be compared by achievement levels. NAEP uses four different achievement levels: Below Basic, Basic, Proficient and Advanced. NAEP defines "Basic" achievement as "partial mastery" of grade level material, with "Below Basic" essentially signifying functional illiteracy.

Figure 3 compares the fourth-grade reading achievement of all students in Alaska to those of Florida's students whose family incomes make them eligible for the federal Free and Reduced-Price Lunch program. Officials use this program as a poverty metric within the public school system. In 2010, a family of four could earn no more than \$40,793 per year to qualify for a *reduced price* lunch. However, of those who qualified nationwide for Free and Reduced Price-Lunch, 80 percent of children were from families who qualified for *free lunch*, which has a maximum family income of \$28,665 for a family of four.

**Figure 3: Free and Reduced Lunch Eligible Students in Florida and Alaska Scoring "Basic or Better" on the NAEP 4th Grade Reading Exam (Note: AK NAEP participation began in 2003)**



Florida also made considerable progress in closing racial achievement gaps. The late Daniel Patrick Moynihan served as an aide to Presidents Kennedy, Johnson and Nixon before serving as the United States Ambassador to India and then the United Nations. Moynihan then served as a United States Senator from New York while authoring books throughout his career. Moynihan used to joke about racial achievement gaps by saying that performance on NAEP tended to be perfectly correlated with proximity to the Canadian border. If a state wished to improve their performance, Moynihan jested, they should simply pick up and move closer to Canada.

If Senator Moynihan were still with us today, we can expect that he would be quite pleased to see the figure below. Florida's traditionally lowest performing student groups have led the way in academic gains. In 2011, Florida's Hispanic students outscored statewide averages for *all students* of Alaska and 20 other states. Florida's free and reduced lunch eligible students also outscored the statewide average for all Alaska students. Florida's African American students also outscored the statewide average for Alaska students in 2011- although it finished in a statistical dead heat.<sup>i</sup>

## FIGURE 4: NAEP READING SCORES FOR FLORIDA HISPANIC STUDENTS

### Comparing States to Florida's Hispanic Students

Hispanic Students in Florida now outscore or tie the statewide reading average of all students in 21 states and the District of Columbia.



One can hold little doubt that the scholarly Senator would be quite pleased to see low-income, Black and Hispanic students holding their own and exceeding statewide averages. Moreover mere proximity to Canada does not seem to be serving as a substitute for strong, student-focused reforms in Alaska.

### FLORIDA'S COMPREHENSIVE K-12 REFORMS

Florida did not achieve these results with any single reform, but rather with a multifaceted strategy. Reform highlights include:

- Florida grades all district and charter schools based upon overall academic performance and student learning gains. Schools earn letter grades of A, B, C, D, or F, which parents easily can interpret.
- Florida has the largest virtual-school program in the nation, with more than 80,000 students taking one or more courses online.

- Florida has an active charter school program, with 445 charter schools serving more than 179,000 students.
- The Step Up for Students Tax Credit program assists 23,000 low-income students in attending the school of their parents' choice—both private (tuition assistance) and public (transportation assistance for district school transferees).
- The McKay Scholarships for Students with Disabilities Program stands as the nation's largest school voucher program, sending more than 20,000 students with special needs to the public or private school of their parents' choice.
- Florida curtailed student social promotion from the third grade—if a child cannot read, the child will repeat the grade until he or she is capable of demonstrating basic skills, which can result in a mid-year promotion.
- Florida created genuine alternative teacher certification paths in which adult professionals can demonstrate content knowledge in order to obtain a teaching license. Half of Florida's new teachers now come through alternative routes.

Note that Florida policymakers and educators implemented many of these reforms simultaneously, making it difficult to isolate the precise impact of any individual reform. Scholars have, however, provided studies showing positive benefits to public school scores specifically associated with isolated reforms including alternative certification, parental choice and social promotion curtailment.<sup>ii</sup> Below we will provide some additional discussion on individual elements of the Florida reform formula.

## **CURTAILING SOCIAL PROMOTION**

Florida's K-3 reading policy is more than just retention of third graders who cannot pass the state's third grade reading exam. Florida schools test student proficiency against state standards on the FCAT exam, but educators now use developmentally appropriate tests of literacy skills in the earliest grades. The policy, as spelled out in statute, is one of solid instruction, and immediate intervention when a child begins to struggle. The goal is to have as few children as possible reach the end of third grade unable to handle the demands of fourth grade. But for those students who aren't ready, they must be retained, with an entirely different course of instruction during that second year in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade.

In 2001, Florida schools retained 4.78 percent of 3<sup>rd</sup> graders. After the enactment of the policy described below, 8.89% of Florida 3<sup>rd</sup> graders repeated in the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade in the 2002-03 school year. This percentage of retained students proceeded to fall through the decade as 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading scores improved, reaching 4.9 percent in 2008-09.

Empirical evidence suggests that ending social promotion has had a positive impact on students' performance. Dr. Jay Greene and Dr. Marcus Winters of the University of Arkansas evaluated the results of the social promotion policy after two years. They reported that "retained Florida students made significant reading gains relative to the control group of socially promoted students"<sup>iii</sup> with the academic benefit increasing after the second year. "That is, students lacking in basic skills who are socially promoted appear to fall farther behind over time, whereas retained students appear to be able to catch up on the skills they are lacking."<sup>iv</sup>

Beyond the likely benefit of increased remediation, the threat of being retained also creates a strong incentive for children to improve their studies so they can proceed to the next grade with their peers.

Better still, schools increased parental involvement for struggling readers by developing Home Reading Plans, and began earlier testing and intervention strategies. Since the year before the retention policy came into effect, the percentage of Florida students scoring low enough to qualify for retention has fallen by 40 percent. More Florida children, in short, are learning how to read during the developmentally critical period. The students at the bottom proved the biggest winners from Florida's no-nonsense reforms.

### **SCHOOL CHOICE: ACCOUNTABILITY TO PARENTS**

Florida's school choice programs allow low-income and special-needs children to receive assistance to attend private schools of their parents' choosing. Charter schools, meanwhile, are open to all students; however, students who are unhappy with their experience in public schools are more likely to transfer into charters. Likewise, students struggling in traditional schools are the most likely to transfer under Florida's private choice programs.

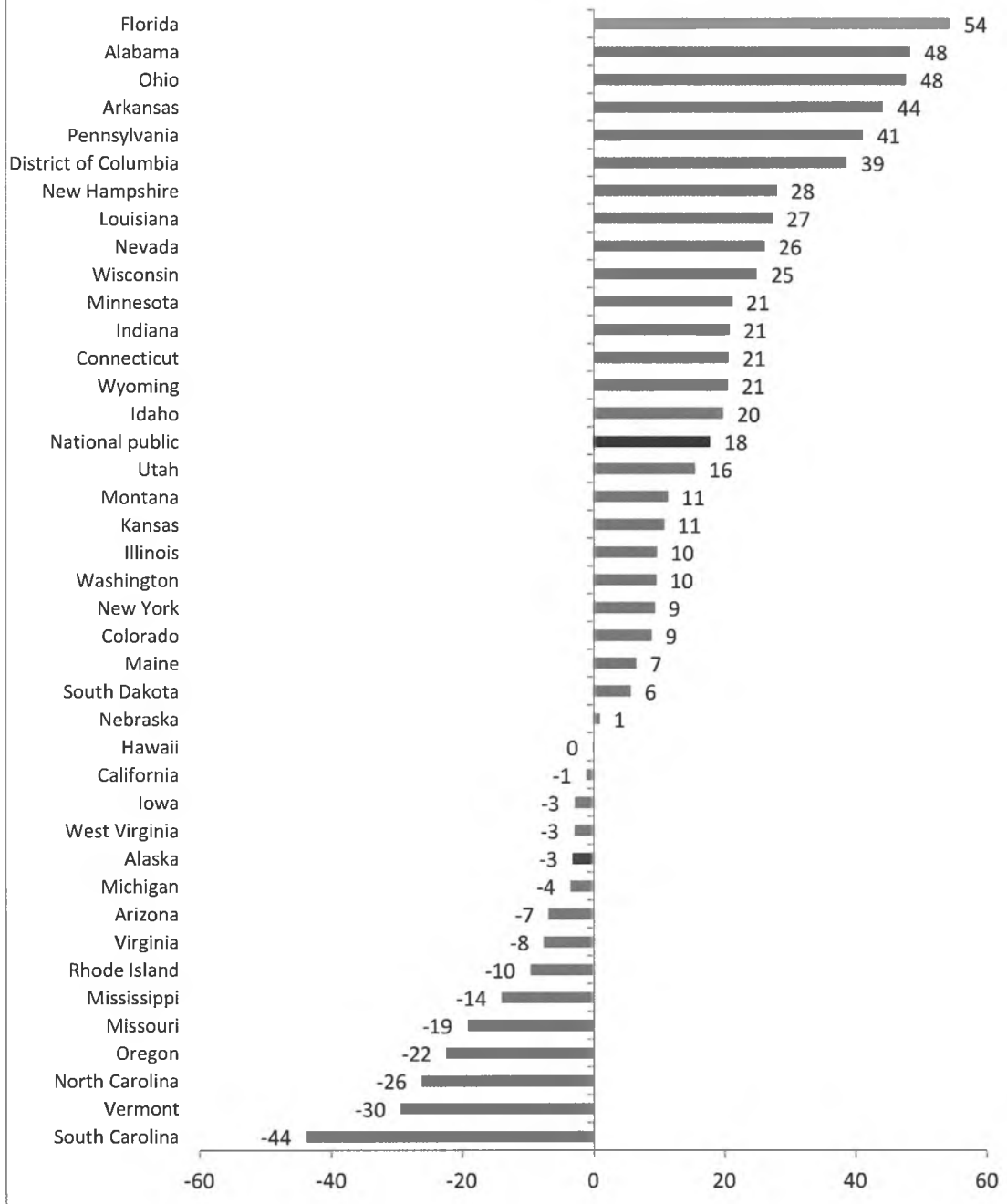
A Manhattan Institute study, published in 2003, evaluated Florida's A+ Plan and the effect it had on the state's public education system—specifically, the effects from competition caused by school choice.

The A+ Plan provided Opportunity Scholarships to students in chronically failing public schools, that is, public schools that earned two F grades in any four-year period. The study found that public schools facing “competition or the prospect of competition made exceptional gains on both the FCAT and the Stanford-9 test compared to all other Florida public schools and the other subgroups....”<sup>v</sup>

In 2007, the Urban Institute published a similar analysis of the A+ Plan and its impact on Florida's public schools. The authors found that after school grading began, student achievement improved in schools graded F at an accelerated rate.<sup>vi</sup> Importantly, the authors discovered that reforms undertaken by the low-performing public schools contributed to the improvement: “[W]hen faced with increased accountability pressure, schools appear to focus on low-performing students, lengthen the amount of time devoted to instruction, adopt different ways of organizing the day and learning environment of the students and teachers, increase resources available to teachers, and decrease principal control.”<sup>vii</sup>

A 2008 study, also by Dr. Jay Greene and Dr. Marcus Winters of the University of Arkansas found that competition caused by another school choice program spurred positive academic gains in Florida's public schools.<sup>viii</sup> The researchers evaluated the competitive effect of the McKay Scholarships for Students with Disabilities Program on public schools. They report that “public school students with relatively mild disabilities made statistically significant test score improvements in both math and reading as more nearby private schools began participating in the McKay program.”<sup>ix</sup>

**Figure 5: Combined Math and Reading NAEP Gains for Children with Disabilities, 2003-2011**



The formula for calculating the gains in Figure 5 simply was to subtract the 2003 scores from the 2011 scores for children with disabilities on each of the four NAEP exams. Florida leads the way with a net gain of 54 combined points. Averaged across four exams, this means that the average

Florida child performed more than a grade level higher per exam in 2011 than children with disabilities had performed in 2003.

Florida tripled the national average, while the combined NAEP scores for children with disabilities in Alaska declined. Multiple testing experiments evaluating the impact of private school voucher programs in other communities have shown that students exercising choice improve academically, and none have found any evidence of academic harm.<sup>x</sup> Moreover, additional evaluations have found that increasing competition through school choice options (both private school choice and charter schools) leads to improvement in traditional public schools.<sup>xi</sup>

Florida has provided school choice to all children with disabilities for over a decade. If there is any evidence that this has harmed the performance of the special needs students remaining in the public school system, let's say that it is *quite difficult* to find. Like all other students, Florida's children with disabilities have benefitted from a variety of policy interventions in addition to parental choice. Florida stands out, however, in having had the most robust choice program for children with disabilities for the longest period of time.

Only a small percentage of eligible students use the McKay Scholarship directly (around 5 percent of the total) but 100 percent of Florida students with disabilities have access to the program if their parents feel they really need it. School choice empowers parents to make the best possible decisions for their children.

Alaskans meanwhile should conduct a serious inquiry into why the Alaska schools demonstrate a lack of progress among children with disabilities. Many states have shown strong academic gains among their children with disabilities and Alaskans should expect nothing less.

#### **WHY HAVE FLORIDA'S DISADVANTAGED STUDENTS ADVANCED SO STRONGLY?**

Florida's reformers pushed forward a multifaceted strategy, which has benefited a wide range of students in that state. Notice, however, that *disadvantaged students* have gained the most from these reforms. Why?

Let us take the reforms one at a time. Florida's private school choice programs allow children with disabilities and low-income children to receive assistance to attend private schools of their parents' choosing. Charter schools, public schools of choice, are open to all students; however, students unhappy with their experience in public schools are more likely to transfer. Who are the big winners from public and private school choice? Those most poorly served by traditional district schools.

The same goes for Florida's third-grade retention policy. This earned promotion policy may seem cruel to some at first blush; however, it is much more cruel to send a child on to 4<sup>th</sup> grade incapable of doing grade level work.

In 2006, approximately 29,000 third-grade students failed the reading portion of Florida's Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT).<sup>xii</sup> It is important to note, however, that Florida's retention policy contained a number of exemptions. An analysis by Manhattan Institute scholars

compared the academic progress of retained students to two groups of similar students (those who barely scored high enough to avoid retention and those who scored low enough for retention but received an exemption<sup>xiii</sup>).

The Manhattan team reported that after two years “retained Florida students made significant reading gains relative to the control group of socially promoted students.”<sup>xiv</sup> The researchers found that the academic benefit increased after the second year: “That is, students lacking in basic skills who are socially promoted appear to fall farther behind over time, whereas retained students appear to be able to catch up on the skills they are lacking.”<sup>xv</sup>

The retained students learned how to read, whereas the promoted students continued to fall behind grade level, which is the normal academic trajectory for children failing to learn basic literacy skills. Once again, the students at the bottom proved the biggest winners from Florida’s aggressive reforms.

Consider also alternative teacher certification. Allowing more people with degrees to demonstrate content knowledge and join the teaching profession expands the possible pool from which to recruit high-quality teachers. Inner-city children suffer the most from the shortage of high-quality teachers, as the system favors suburban systems in recruiting and retaining highly effective teachers. Thus, inner-city children gain the most from reducing the shortage.

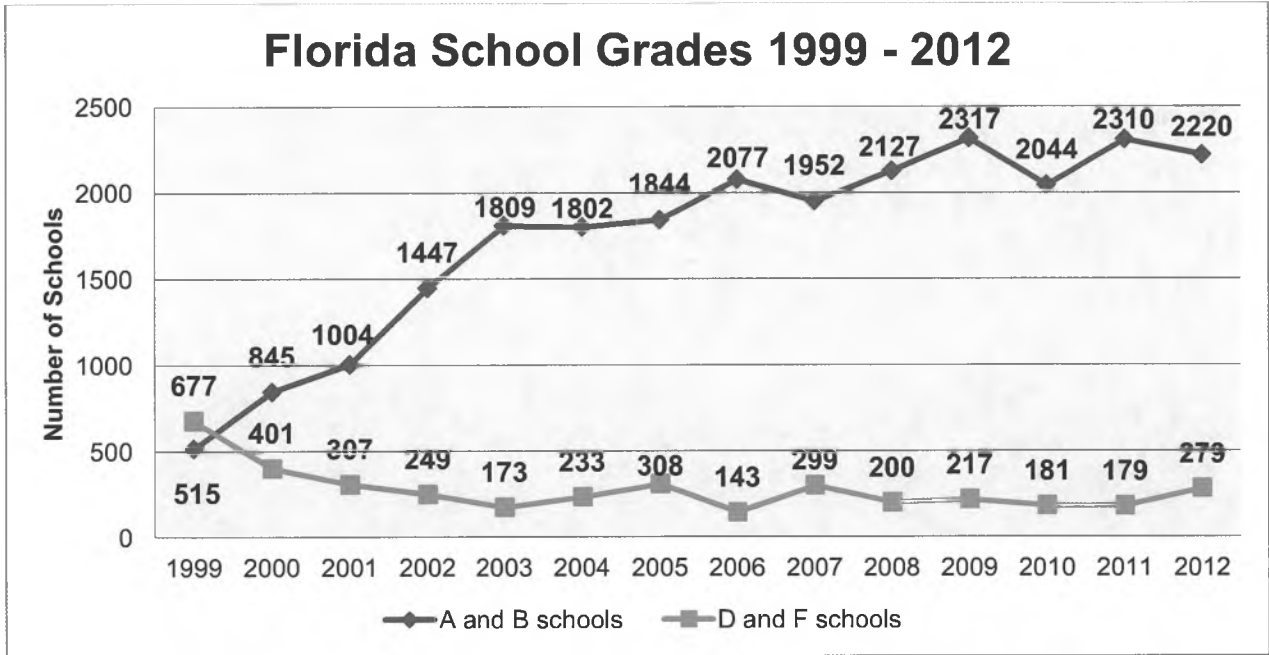
Also, Florida’s system of accountability grades schools A, B, C, D, or F, which many complained was unfair to schools with predominantly minority student bodies. A small but noisy group continues to bemoan the grading method, claiming that it is unfair to teachers and to students.

It would prove difficult to be any more mistaken, or more willfully ignorant. To be sure, grading schools A through F in Florida represents tough medicine: The state called out underperforming schools in a way that everyone could instantly grasp. Tough love is still love: Florida’s schools improved, both on the state FCAT and on NAEP (again, a source of external validation for the state exam).

Did Florida’s D and F schools wither under the glare of public scrutiny? Quite the opposite: Those schools focused their resources on improving academic achievement. Made aware of the problems in their schools, communities rallied to the aid of low-performing schools. People volunteered their time to tutor struggling students. Improving student academic performance, and thus the school’s grade, became a focus.

In 1999, 677 Florida public schools received a grade of D or F, and only 515 an A or B. Figure 6 tracks the trend for those sets of grades, and critically, the three dotted arrows represent an increase of the standards which made it more challenging to receive a high grade. In 2012, only 279 schools received a D or F, while 2220 schools received an A or B.

FIGURE 6: TRENDS IN FLORIDA SCHOOL GRADES, 1999-2012



When you see this sort of progress the best question to ask: was this just an illusion? That is, was progress achieved by lowering the “cut score” of the state FCAT exam? (The “cut score” is the minimum passing score students can achieve.) In a word: no. Florida did not make the FCAT easier to pass, maintaining a constant standard. Harvard Professor Paul Peterson has demonstrated that Florida has indeed maintained the integrity of the FCAT.<sup>xvi</sup>

Florida’s students have improved both on the FCAT and on the NAEP. Importantly, Florida’s improvement on NAEP also dispels the concern that schools are “teaching to the test.” NAEP exams have a high degree of security, and federal, state, and local authorities do not use them to rate schools or teachers. Teachers lack both the ability and the incentive to teach to the questions on NAEP exams.

Florida’s schools improved their rankings because their students learned to read at a higher level and became more proficient at math. Those who wanted to continue to coddle underperforming schools, while perhaps well intentioned, were effectively in favor of consigning hundreds of thousands of Florida children to illiteracy.

In summary, those with the least consistently gained the most from Florida’s reforms. This is perhaps clearest of all when one examines the formula for assigning letter grades to schools.

Florida determines schools’ grades in equal measure between overall scores, and gains over time. In addition, the state divides the gain part of the formula equally between the gains for all students, and the gains for the 25 percent of students with the lowest overall scores. The state determines these grades by the following formula-50 percent on overall scores, 25 percent based

on the gains of all students, and 25 percent based upon the gains of the lowest performing students.

Notably, *the bottom 25 percent of students play the biggest role in determining the grade of a school.* These students count in all the categories: the overall scores, the overall gains, and the gains of the lowest-performing students.

Notice the elegance of the Florida grading system. The federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) allows schools not to count subgroups depending upon the size of the group. (NCLB divides student bodies into various subgroups based upon race, ethnicity, income, disability status, etc., and requires an increasing passing threshold from each group. The exact size of the groups permissible is determined by obscure bureaucrats in state departments of education—and some exempt far larger groups of students than others.)

*Every school* however has a bottom 25 percent of students. Regardless of why those students have struggled academically, Florida's grading method will not grant schools a high grade unless those students make progress.

Academic fatalists quickly will jump up to argue that many students simply *cannot learn.* Florida and the success of others in substantially improving the scores of poor and minority children should put this "soft bigotry of low expectations" into the shameful dustbin of history that it so richly deserves.

Moreover, Florida's success in getting Hispanic and Free and Reduced-Price Lunch children to read at higher levels than the statewide average for all students in Alaska nullifies such arguments. Bottom line: Tough love for schools works great for kids, especially disadvantaged kids. The children with the least have gained the most.

## **EXPLORING OTHER POSSIBLE EXPLANATIONS FOR FLORIDA'S GAINS**

### ***Demographic Change or Big Spending?***

A small but vocal band of education traditionalists have attempted to discredit the Florida reforms as the source of academic improvement in the state. We will therefore address several alternative explanations for Florida's academic success.

For instance, could demographic change explain some of Florida's improvement? According to the National Center for Education Statistics, in 1998, 44.7 percent of Florida children attending public schools were minority students. During the 2008 school year, 53 percent of children were minorities. In 1998, 43.8 percent of Florida students had a family income that qualified them for a free or reduced-price lunch under federal guidelines. In 2009, Florida's percentage had increased to 49.6 percent.<sup>xvii</sup> In other words, Florida's student body has become more rather than less socio-economically challenging over time.

Changes in public school funding are also an unlikely source of improvement. Spending per pupil in Florida expanded at a rate slower than the national average during Governor Jeb Bush's term in office (1999-2003), and remains below the national average on a per pupil basis (see Figure 1 above).<sup>xviii</sup>

Some may ask whether Florida's cellar-dweller performance in the 1990s led to a "regression to the mean" effect, whereby improvement came relatively easily. However, most of the states such as Florida that ranked near the bottom of NAEP in the late 1990s remained near the bottom in 2011.

Florida does have some unique characteristics, including a Hispanic population comprised of a higher percentage of Cubans than most states. Could the marked improvement in Florida's Hispanic scores be linked to relatively unique cultural characteristics? Not likely. Black and White students also made strong gains during this period. The percentage of Hispanics of Cuban origin actually declined during the period observed down to 30 percent of Hispanics in 2007.<sup>xix</sup>

### *Artifact of Third Grade Retention?*

Could the third grade retention policy have created the appearance of gains on NAEP? Professor Walter M. Haney of Boston College argued that Florida's progress on fourth grade NAEP scores represented a "fraud" due to the third grade retention policy.<sup>xx</sup> Haney presented evidence that Florida's retentions increased after the debut of the policy, and ascribed subsequent NAEP score increases to the fact that Florida's worst performing readers were repeating third grade and thus were not tested in the fourth grade NAEP, inflating the fourth grade scores.

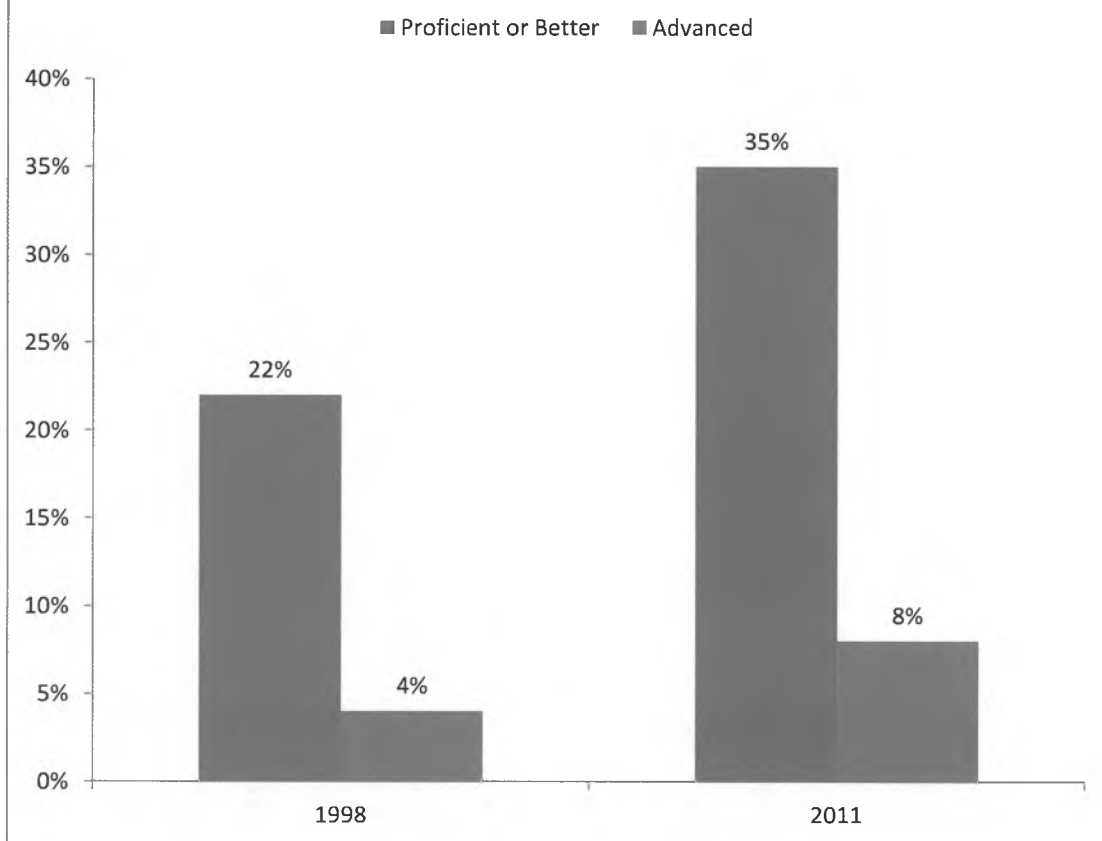
This analysis was later replicated in a "Think Tank Review Project" review performed by a group funded by the National Education Association.<sup>xxi</sup> However, neither analysis holds up under scrutiny.

First of all, Florida's NAEP scores improved strongly between 1998 and 2002. Gains during these years were not at all impacted by the retention policy. Consider that every NAEP testing since 2005 included 4<sup>th</sup> graders who were retained in third grade. Isn't that the point? That students in 4<sup>th</sup> grade should be capable of 4<sup>th</sup> grade level reading?

A good deal of the improvement in fourth-grade reading NAEP scores has come from increases in the percentage of children scoring at the "Proficient" and "Advanced" levels. FCAT scores categorize student reading achievement from 1 to 5, and the retention policy only impacts a portion of those in category 1.

Florida demonstrated very large gains among the sort of students who were profoundly unlikely to have been reading at FCAT Achievement Level 1 in the third grade (and thus unaffected by the retention policy). The percentage of students scoring Proficient on the 4<sup>th</sup> grade reading exam increased by nearly 60% between 1998 and 2009, and the percentage scoring Advanced doubled from 4% to 8% (see Figure 10 below).

**Figure 7: Trends in Florida NAEP Reading Scores for Proficient and Advanced Readers**



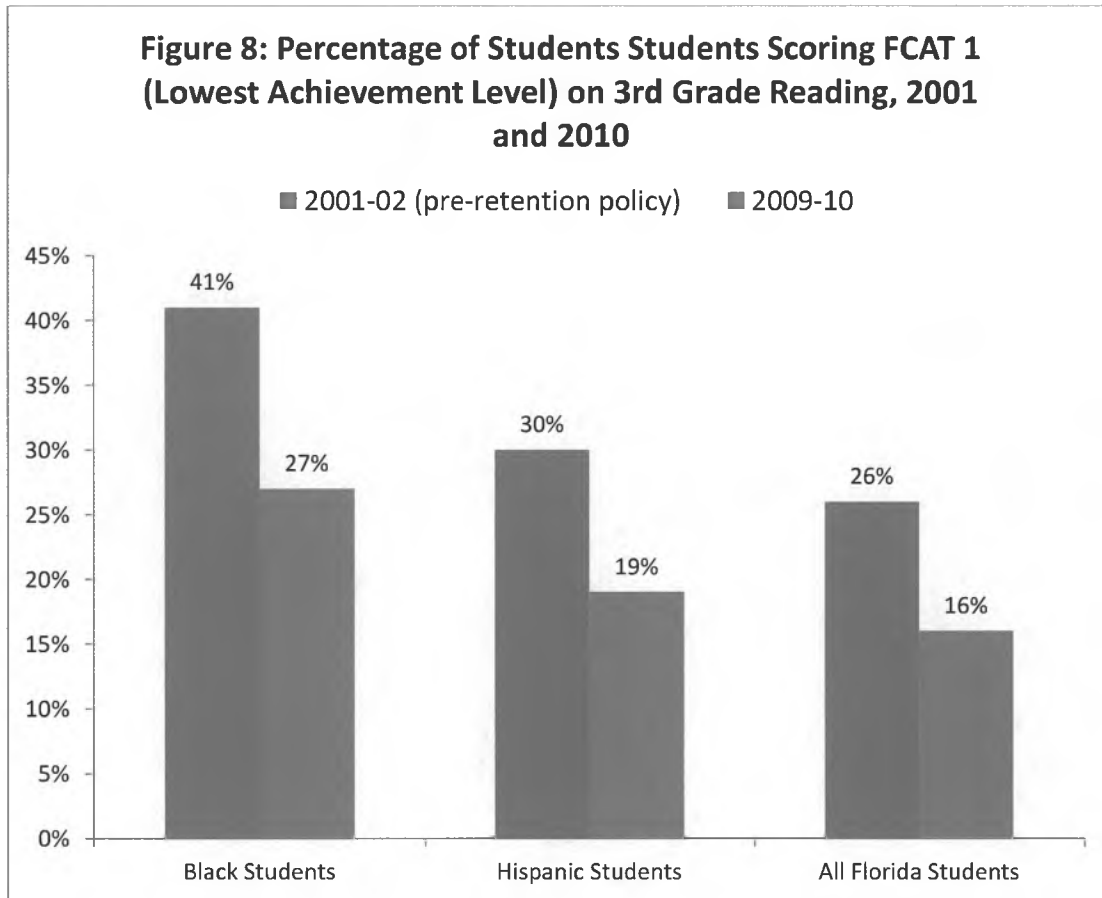
Furthermore, the percentage of third graders scoring FCAT Achievement Level 1 on reading has itself been decreasing. In 2002, 27 percent of third graders scored at Achievement Level 1, but by 2009 the number had declined to 16 percent, which represents a 40 percent reduction in the pool of students eligible for retention.<sup>xxii</sup> Likewise, the actual number of third grade students retained also declined by 40 percent between 2002 and 2007.<sup>xxiii</sup> Nevertheless, Florida's fourth-grade NAEP scores continued to improve throughout this period. If the Haney thesis were correct that retention rates were driving Florida's NAEP improvement, Florida's NAEP scores should have declined in 2005, 2007 and 2009, but instead they increased.

Since the year before the retention policy came into effect, the percentage of Black students scoring FCAT Achievement Level 1 on third-grading reading declined by 37 percent, and the percentage of Hispanic students scoring FCAT Achievement Level 1 declined by 45 percent.

None of these gains has anything to do with the children simply being a year older. In fact, the regression discontinuity analysis performed by the Manhattan Institute demonstrated that children scoring just over the retention threshold, and those scoring below it, continued to struggle with reading despite being a year older.

The third-grade FCAT data presented in Figure 14 demonstrate conclusively that an increasing percentage of Florida elementary students have been learning how to read during the developmentally critical period, grades K-3. Minority students have helped to lead the charge in producing reading gains. Best of all, black and Hispanic students have led in these enormous gains.

Before the retention policy, 41 percent of Florida's Black third graders scored FCAT Reading Achievement Level 1. In 2010, it was down to 26 percent. In the most recent testing, the percentage of Hispanic third graders scoring FCAT Reading Achievement Level 1 fell to 19 percent from 35 percent in 2002. Florida's reforms have reduced retentions the best way possible: by teaching a growing percentage of students how to read in the early grades.



Professor Haney's thesis would be hard-pressed to explain why 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading scores have improved so substantially. One can only characterize the evidence that Florida students have improved literacy achievement, both at the low end and high end as overwhelming.

#### ***Class Size or Pre-school Amendments?***

Florida's voters adopted two significant education policy changes at the ballot box. In 2002, Florida voters passed a state constitutional amendment limiting class size at public schools. The

limit was first implemented based upon school district averages, and then school averages, and only came into force as an actual limit on each class during the 2010-11 school year. A detailed statistical analysis of the Florida class size reduction program found no evidence that it helped to drive academic improvement.<sup>xxiv</sup> This is unfortunate, as the Florida Department of Education has found that it has cost Florida taxpayers more than \$18 billion dollars (and counting) to implement.<sup>xxv</sup>

Florida's preschool amendment may or may not prove to have positive long-term benefits. After voters adopted it, the Florida legislature quite sensibly enacted the program as a choice program to include public and private providers and to allow parents to choose. The Florida preschool program also includes specific academic goals and a provision to remove underperforming providers from participation in the program.

Florida's Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program began in the 2005-06 school year, and thus none of the students have yet reached the fourth grade to be included in the NAEP. The Florida Department of Education has released some preliminary analysis of third-grade reading scores which may indicate a sustained academic benefit to the program, but those data have yet to be subjected to a rigorous statistical analysis.<sup>xxvi</sup>

In any case, none of the NAEP gains seen in Florida before 2009 have anything to do with the Voluntary Prekindergarten Education Program, because the students have not yet reached the age of NAEP testing. In 2011, Florida's aggregate scores did not increase from 2009 levels. A sophisticated analysis of the program will be required to establish the exact nature of its impact, but the aggregate impact of the large increase in 4<sup>th</sup> grade reading scores can safely be dismissed as minimal at best.

#### **FORTUNE FAVORS THE BOLD IN K-12 EDUCATION REFORM**

In December 2006, the New Commission on Skills and the American Workforce released a report titled *Tough Choices or Tough Times*. The commission included a bipartisan mix of education luminaries, including two former U.S. secretaries of education. The report warns, "If we continue on our current course and the number of nations outpacing us in the education race continues to grow at its current rate, the American standard of living will steadily fall relative to those nations, rich and poor, that are doing a better job."<sup>xxvii</sup>

Commenting on the report, Jack Jennings of the Center on Education Policy told the *Christian Science Monitor*, "I think we've tried to do what we can to improve American schools within the current context. Now we need to think much more daringly."<sup>xxviii</sup> These and other observers have reached an unavoidable conclusion: The traditional model of delivering public education requires a drastic overhaul, not incremental reform.

Florida's example shows that it is possible to improve student performance by instituting a variety of curricular and incentive-based reforms, placing pressure on schools to improve both from the top down and bottom up. Alaska's policymakers should view Florida's reforms as a *floor* rather than a *ceiling* in terms of their own efforts to improve education in their state.

Marc Tucker, vice chairman of the New Commission also told the *Christian Science Monitor*, “We’ve squeezed everything we can out of a system that was designed a century ago. We’ve not only put in lots more money and not gotten significantly better results, we’ve also tried every program we can think of and not gotten significantly better results at scale. This is the sign of a system that has reached its limits.”

Indeed, Alaska cannot achieve global competitiveness through mere minor tweaks of an outdated system. Florida’s broad efforts and resulting outcomes prove this. Fortune favors the bold, and a brighter future awaits Alaska’s students if her adults will take strong action.

Alaskans across the political spectrum should work together with educators to fiercely pursue radical improvement in literacy skills. Americans of all philosophical backgrounds agree with the notion of providing equality of opportunity to children, which starts with literacy. Alaska students starting with the least have the most to gain from reform.

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<sup>i</sup> NAEP randomly samples students in states, meaning the scores of various subgroups of students have known levels of sampling error. The statewide average for Florida African American students on the NAEP 4<sup>th</sup> grade reading test was 209 in 2011, and for all Alaska students 208. Statistically this is “too close to call” and effectively a tie.

<sup>ii</sup> See Figlio, David N. “Evaluation of the Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Program Participation, Compliance and Test Scores in 2009-10.” And Figlio, David N., University of Florida, Northwestern University, and National Bureau of Economic Research *Evaluation of the Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Program Participation, Compliance, Test Scores, and Parental Satisfaction in 2008-09* (June 2010). Also see Jay P. Greene and Marcus A. Winters, “When Schools Compete: The Effects of Vouchers on Florida Public School Achievement.” (New York: The Manhattan Institute, 2003) and Cecilia Elena Rouse. “Feeling the Florida Heat? How Low-Performing Schools Respond to Voucher and Accountability Pressure.” (Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute 2007).

<sup>iii</sup> Jay P. Greene and Marcus A. Winters, “Getting Farther by Staying Behind: A Second-Year Evaluation of Florida’s Policy to End Social Promotion.” (New York: Manhattan Institute, 2006).

<sup>iv</sup> Ibid.

<sup>v</sup> Jay P. Greene and Marcus A. Winters, “When Schools Compete: The Effects of Vouchers on Florida Public School Achievement.” (New York: The Manhattan Institute, 2003).

<sup>vi</sup> Cecilia Elena Rouse. “Feeling the Florida Heat? How Low-Performing Schools Respond to Voucher and Accountability Pressure.” (Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute 2007).

<sup>vii</sup> Ibid.

<sup>viii</sup> Jay P. Greene and Marcus A. Winters. “The Effect of Special Education Vouchers on Public School Achievement: Evidence from Florida’s McKay Scholarship Program.” (New York: Manhattan Institute 2008).

<sup>ix</sup> Ibid.

<sup>x</sup> For more information, see Jay P. Greene, *Education Myths* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc., 2005), pp.150-154.

<sup>xi</sup> For example, see Caroline Minter Hoxby, “Rising Tide,” *Education Next* (Cambridge, Program on Education Policy and Governance, 2001) and Matthew Ladner, “Putting Arizona Education Reform to the Test: School Choice and Early Education Expansion,” (Phoenix, Goldwater Institute, 2007).

<sup>xii</sup> Laura Green, “Despite Rise in Scores, Reading Still Emphasized; Schools Want to Reach Lowest-performing Students,” *Sarasota (Fla.) Herald-Tribune*, May 4, 2006.

<sup>xiii</sup> Florida’s retention policy allowed students to demonstrate basic literacy skills to advance with a portfolio, and limited the number of times a student could be retained.

<sup>xiv</sup> Jay P. Greene and Marcus A. Winters, “Getting Farther by Staying Behind: A Second-Year Evaluation of Florida’s Policy to End Social Promotion,” Manhattan Institute Civic Report No. 49, September 2006.

<sup>xv</sup> Greene and Winters, “Getting Farther by Staying Behind,” 2006.

<sup>xvi</sup> See Paul E. Peterson and Carlos Xabel Lastra-Anadón, 2010. *State Standards Rise in Reading, Fall in Math*. Article in the Fall 2010 edition of *Education Next*, available on the internet at <http://educationnext.org/state-standards-rising-in-reading-but-not-in-math/>

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<sup>xvii</sup> National Center for Education Statistics. *Digest of Education Statistics, 2010 Table 44. Number and percentage of public school students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, by state: Selected years, 2000-01 through 2008-09* (Washington DC: United States Department of Education, 2010).

<sup>xviii</sup> National Center for Education Statistics. *Digest of Education Statistics, 2007. Table 186. Current expenditure per pupil in average daily attendance in public elementary and secondary schools, by state or jurisdiction: Selected years, 1959-60 through 2006-07.* (Washington DC: United States Department of Education, 2010).

<sup>xix</sup> United States Census Bureau, American Community Survey 2007 (Washington D.C., United States Census Bureau, 2007).

<sup>xx</sup> Walter M. Haney, *Evidence on Education under NCLB (and How Florida Boosted NAEP Scores and Reduced the Race Gap)*. Paper presented at the Hechinger Institute "Broad Seminar for K-12 Reporters", Grace Dodge Hall, Teachers College, Columbia University, New York City, Sept. 8-10, 2006.

<sup>xxi</sup> For a detailed refutation of the Think Tank Review Project analysis, see Lindsey Burke and Matthew Ladner *Florida's Education Reforms: The Rest of the Story* (Washington D.C.: Heritage Foundation 2010).

<sup>xxii</sup> Florida Department of Education, *Reading Scores Statewide Comparison for 2001 to 2008 FCAT Reading – Sunshine State Standards Test.*

<sup>xxiii</sup> Florida Department of Education, *Figure 2* <http://www.fldoe.org/eias/eiaspubs/xls/npro0607.xls>.

<sup>xxiv</sup> Matthew M. Chingos *The Impact of a Universal Class-Size Reduction Policy: Evidence from Florida's Statewide Mandate.* (Cambridge: Harvard University John F. Kennedy School of Government Program on Education and Governance, 2010).

<sup>xxv</sup> Florida Department of Education, *Florida's Class Size Reduction Amendment History* (Tallahassee, Florida Department of Education).

<sup>xxvi</sup> Leslie Postal, "Pre-K gets results, despite budget woes." *Orlando Sentinel*, March 21, 2011.

<sup>xxvii</sup> National Center on Education and the Economy, *Tough Choices or Tough Times: The Report of the New Commission on the Skills of the American Workforce*, 2006, see <http://www.skillscommission.org>

<sup>xxviii</sup> Amanda Paulson, "To Fix U.S. Schools, Panel Says, Start Over," *Christian Science Monitor*, December 15, 2006. Available online at <http://www.csmonitor.com/2006/1215/p01s01-ussc.html>.

## PreK-Grade 3 Reading and Literacy Practices That Matter

Molly Ryan  
October 2011

This snapshot of five recent research studies addresses reading and literacy in the early grades. It does not reflect a comprehensive review of the literature, although two studies have been added since this review was first completed earlier this year. The following criteria were used to identify the studies included in this summary and the ECS Research Studies Database: (1) wide-reaching recommendations and policy implications; (2) implications for state-level policy; (3) interventions that hold potential for replication; and (4) peer-reviewed/juried — although exceptions are made on a case-by-case basis.

### **Study #1: Educational Investment, Family Context, and Children's Math and Reading Growth from Kindergarten Through the Third Grade**

Jacob Cheadle, *Sociology of Education*, Winter 2008.

**Background:** Children of different backgrounds begin formal education at unequal skill levels.

**Purpose:** This study examines whether the deliberate cultivation by parents of cognition and social skills plays a role in children's math and reading achievement, and subsequent growth.

#### **Findings:**

This study uses the author's term "concerted cultivation" to describe a composite measure of parenting that includes:

- Child participation in adult-orchestrated leisure activities (e.g., clubs, sports, art classes, music)
  - Investment in education materials and resources (e.g., books)
  - Parental involvement with the school (e.g., parent-teacher conferences, fundraisers, volunteering).
1. Higher-level parenting skills moderately offset social-class differences in children's math and reading skills during kindergarten and 1st grade (19% and 16% respectively).
  2. While parenting skills matter, differential growth in student learning occurs during the school year, suggesting that school-based processes or other elements (e.g., instruction, expectations) are the principal sources of the growth gap in achievement after school entry.

**Policy recommendations:**

1. Efforts to more fully inform parents — particularly low-income parents — of the value of efforts such as talking with their children, networking and being involved in their activities, could lead to a greater number of families practicing these strategies and building their children's skills.
2. Broader community support for children's experiences (e.g., public after-school programs) can supplement parent efforts, but such programs are likely to be larger and of lower quality and cannot be expected to produce the same return as higher levels of parent engagement (e.g., parents spending time in the car with their children, talking with them about their day and contextualizing their experiences).
3. While parental influences contribute significantly to the skills with which young children enter school, once children are in school, schools do matter. Policies that provide support for improving the quality of P-3 instruction could help reduce achievement gaps.

For full study: <http://www.ingentaconnect.com/content/asoca/soe/2008/00000081/00000001/art00001>

**Study #2: What Works to Improve Student Literacy Achievement? An Examination of Instructional Practices in a Balanced Literacy Approach**

Catherine Bitter, Miguel Socias, Paul Gubbins and Jennifer O'Day, American Institutes for Research, *Journal of Education for Students Placed at Risk*, 2009.

**Background:** Literacy is the foundation for success in school and, in today's society, for success in life.

**Purpose:** This study describes literacy instruction in San Diego City elementary schools and determines which specific practices, if any, were associated with increased student achievement.

**Findings:** Three measures of literacy instruction demonstrated a consistently positive and statistically significant relationship to students' reading comprehension:

1. **Instruction focused on higher-level meaning of text:** The strongest instructional predictor of increased reading comprehension was teachers' use of higher-level questioning and discussion about the meaning of text. *Teachers "telling" students the answers was negatively related to student outcomes.*
2. **Writing instruction:** Students in classrooms that included greater amounts of writing instruction (discussion about writing and actual composition) improved their reading comprehension more than did students with less writing.
3. Instruction that seeks to foster student responsibility, interactive learning, and sustained, idea-focused, evidence-based discussion has a significant influence on student achievement.
4. Some practices — such as engaging in discussion and conversation with peers in the classroom — that were beneficial for non-native English speakers were less so for fluent and native English speakers, and vice versa. This finding has important implications for designing literacy instruction for the very diverse student populations in most urban districts.

**Policy recommendations:**

1. Policies should encourage or support a balanced literacy approach.
2. Diverse urban settings should explore and implement a balanced approach to literacy.

For full study: <http://www.informaworld.com/smpp/content~content=a908605828~db=all~iumptype=rss>

**Study #3: Socioeconomic Status, English Proficiency, and Late-Emerging Reading Difficulties**

Michael Kieffer, Teachers College Columbia University, *American Educational Research Journal*, 2010.

**Background:** Increasingly, concerns are being raised about students who learn to read by 3rd grade but fall behind in later grades. "Late-emerging" reading difficulties may be particularly common among at-risk populations.

**Purpose:** This study investigates the prevalence of late-emerging reading difficulties among English language learners (ELLs) and native English speakers from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds.

**Findings:** Students for whom English is not their first language (ELLs) and those from low-income backgrounds disproportionately demonstrate late-emerging reading difficulties. Of the two risk factors, the level of family income has the strongest influence.

1. ELLs are more likely than native English speakers of the same income level to demonstrate reading difficulties by grade 3. However, native English speakers also are at risk for reading difficulties in the upper elementary grades or middle school.
2. Poor students are at substantially higher risk for developing reading difficulties during each developmental period, but particularly for difficulties that emerge before grade 3.
3. Among students from upper income backgrounds, the risk for difficulties emerging in middle school is slightly higher than the risk for early-emerging difficulties. This suggests that the particular challenges of adolescent literacy apply to all students.

**Policy recommendations:**

1. Because family income is a more prominent predictor of late-emerging reading difficulties, it is important to continue to closely monitor all low income students' reading abilities through high school.
2. Because more affluent students are at greater risk for late-emergent reading difficulties than they are for early reading difficulties, all students should have their reading skills monitored throughout elementary and middle grades.
3. Upper elementary-level through high school-level reading instruction should emphasize vocabulary development and critical thinking skills.

For full study: <http://edr.sagepub.com/content/39/6/484>

**Study #4: The Relation Between the Type and Amount of Instruction and Growth in Children's Reading Competencies**

Susan Sonnenschein, Amy Benson and Laura Stapleton, University of Maryland Baltimore County, *American Educational Research Journal*, November 11, 2009.

**Background:** Children with limited literacy experiences may be more sensitive to or in need of specific instruction, such as letters/sounds, than children entering school with a greater foundation of prior literacy experiences.

**Purpose:** To consider the longer term effectiveness of two instructional approaches — phonics and integrated language arts — and to investigate the relation between classroom instructional practices and children's reading skills from kindergarten through 5th grade.

**Findings:** Children's entry-level skills, ethnicity and parents' education level predicted children's reading scores at the end of kindergarten. To a lesser extent, type and amount of reading instruction predicted children's reading scores. However, the type of instruction appeared to matter only in kindergarten and 1st grade.

**1. Reading instruction and characteristics of teachers**

- The number of years teachers taught was not related to the amount of time that their classes reportedly engaged in reading activities. The only exception was in 3rd grade, where teachers with three or fewer years of experience reported less reading time than their more experienced peers.
- The number of reading courses taken by teachers was related to the frequency with which kindergarten and 1st-grade teachers reported implementing phonics activities and integrated language arts activities (vocabulary, discussion, explaining what they have read, etc.).
- Neither the number of years of teaching nor the number of reading courses taken was uniquely related to reading scores of children at any time point.

**2. Growth in children's reading skills**

- Only in kindergarten did the type of instruction matter, with phonics instruction predicting higher spring reading scores.
- Children's reading-related skills at the start of kindergarten predicted their reading scores at the end of kindergarten and beyond.

**3. Schooling factors and children's reading development**

- Children who entered kindergarten and 1st grade with more advanced phonics skills benefited from an instructional emphasis on the meaning of the text.
- Children most at risk for reading difficulties did not benefit as much from integrated language arts as those with higher skills.
- *At kindergarten level* – Time spent on reading was positively related to the spring reading score; and children in kindergarten benefited from a direct instructional focus on phonics acquisition.
- *At 1st- and 3rd-grade levels* – Time spent reading was more beneficial for those children whose entry scores were slightly above the mean.
- *At 5th-grade level* – Children with lower reading scores showed more benefit from more time spent reading.

**Policy recommendations:**

1. Early reading instruction should include a direct instructional focus on phonics acquisition during kindergarten, especially for children starting school with fairly limited literacy experience.
2. Instruction focused on decoding skills should be provided to weaker readers; greater focus on comprehension should be provided to those children with stronger decoding and vocabulary skills.
3. Although young children may need instruction in both decoding skills and comprehension, the exact balance between the two should vary depending upon the child's skills.

For full study: [http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/search/detailmini.jsp?\\_nfpb=true&\\_ERICExtSearch\\_SearchValue\\_0=EJ887171&ERICExtSearch\\_SearchType\\_0=no&accno=EJ887171](http://www.eric.ed.gov/ERICWebPortal/search/detailmini.jsp?_nfpb=true&_ERICExtSearch_SearchValue_0=EJ887171&ERICExtSearch_SearchType_0=no&accno=EJ887171)

### **Study #5: How Effective Are Family Literacy Programs? : Results of a Meta-Analysis**

Roel van Steensel, Nele McElvany, Jeanne Kurvers, Stephanie Herppich, University of Amsterdam, Technische Universitat Dortmund, University of Kiel, Tilburg University, *Review of Educational Research*, Mar 2, 2011.

**Background:** Recent international studies have shown that a considerable number of students systematically lag behind their peers in literacy skills. One way of working to prevent delays in children's literacy development is by extending and improving their literacy experiences through "family literacy programs." This study focuses on a specific category of family literacy programs, those that target children's literacy development directly by providing stimulating parent-child activities to be carried out at home and by training parents to transfer the contents embedded in these activities.

**Purpose:** To examine the effects of family literacy programs on children's literacy development.

**Findings:** Family literacy interventions seem to make a modest contribution to children's literacy skills.

1. Family literacy programs more frequently offer a broad range of activities. This is likely a reflection of the move away from the focus of reading readiness in beginning literacy education — advocating the training of specific pre-literacy skills — to the holistic approach advocated in the past two to three decades.
2. Semiprofessionals are often responsible for training the parents of children at risk of educational or reading delays. In some family literacy programs, however, the use of semiprofessionals for at-risk families seemed to be a deliberate strategy. For example, using mothers from the same communities was seen as a way of approaching parents who are sometimes hard to reach. Such programs did not have a significantly lower effect on children's literacy development than programs using professionals.
3. Differences in the effects of programs focusing primarily on core-related literary skills (i.e., abilities necessary for deciphering the written language code) and comprehension-focused programs are small.
4. Only 12 of the 30 studies examined include some measure of fidelity, and in most cases these measures were superficial (e.g., records or ratings of parental attendance at training sessions). In only one program were systematic observations made of parent-child activities.

#### **Policy recommendations:**

1. The conclusion that the overall effects of the programs are small should give program developers, policymakers and educators pause for thought, as the high expectations they might have of these programs are not necessarily justified. This does not mean, however, that the programs should be abandoned. Even small effects can be meaningful when viewed in light of the context in which they were obtained. Moreover, it remains to be determined how program activities are actually implemented by parents and children and how these activities interact with existing family literacy practices.
2. More thorough research is needed on how programs are actually carried out by families. Only 12 of the 30 studies included some measure of treatment fidelity, and in most cases these measures were quite superficial (records or ratings of frequency, duration and completion of parent-child activities; records or ratings of parental attendance at training sessions). In only one case were systematic observations made of parent-child activities.

For full study: <http://rer.sagepub.com/content/81/1/69.abstract>

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***Equipping Education Leaders, Advancing Ideas***

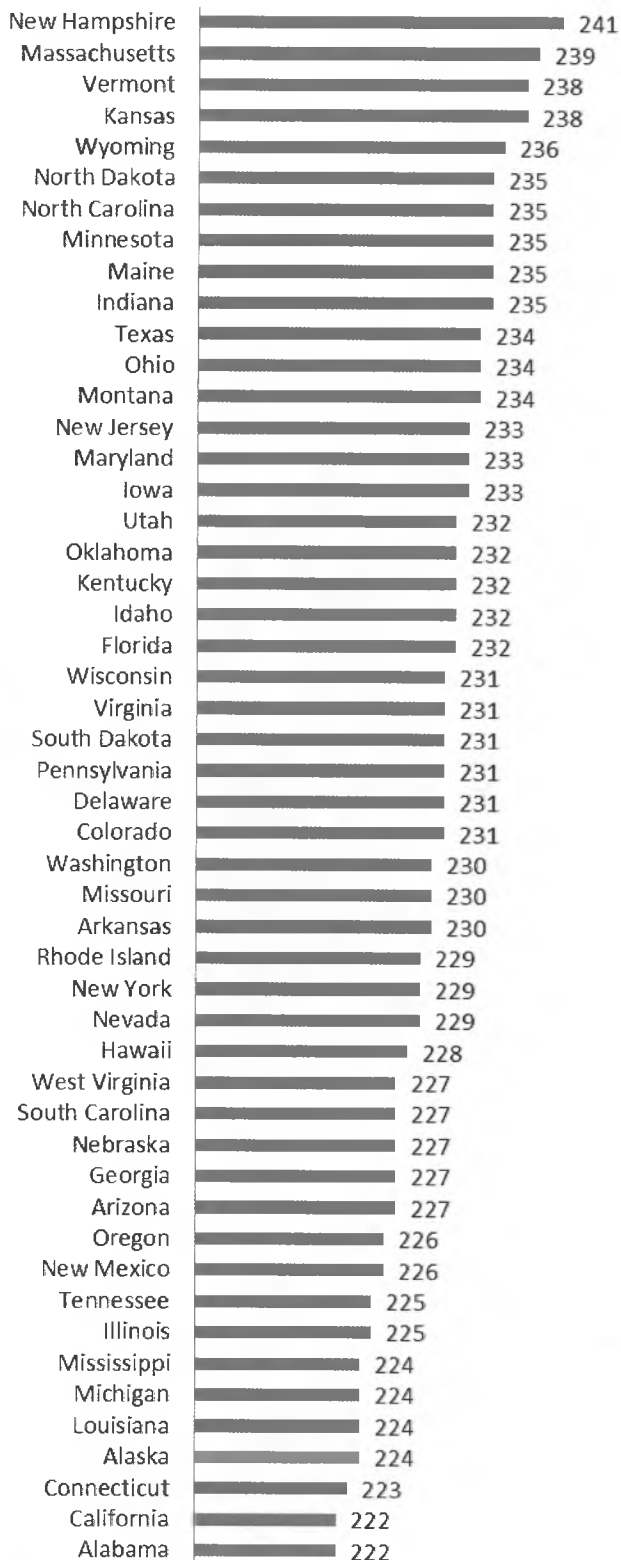
# A STATE AT RISK

*The Urgent Need for K-12 Education Reform in Alaska*

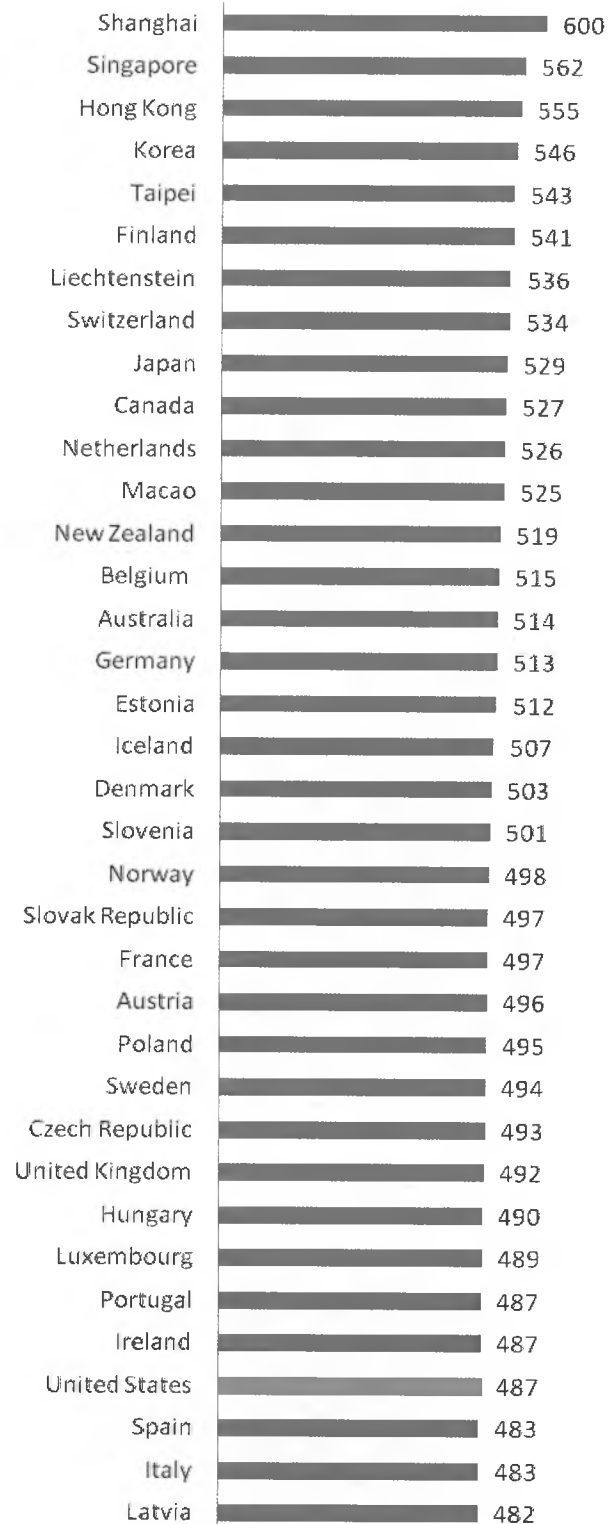


**Bob Griffin**  
Alaska Policy Forum  
Education Research Fellow

**National Math Rankings**  
4th Grade, Low Income, 2011 NAEP



**International Math Rankings**  
Math Scores, 2010 PISA



## A State at Risk

Despite the fact that Alaska contributes more state and local dollars to K-12 education than any other state on a per capita basis, Alaskan kids from all walks of life continue to fall further behind the rest of the country and the rest of the world in achieving good educational outcomes. Alaska's children are just as bright as kids in any state or in any other country in the world. Unfortunately, they have been let down by an education system that hasn't allowed them to live up to their full potential.

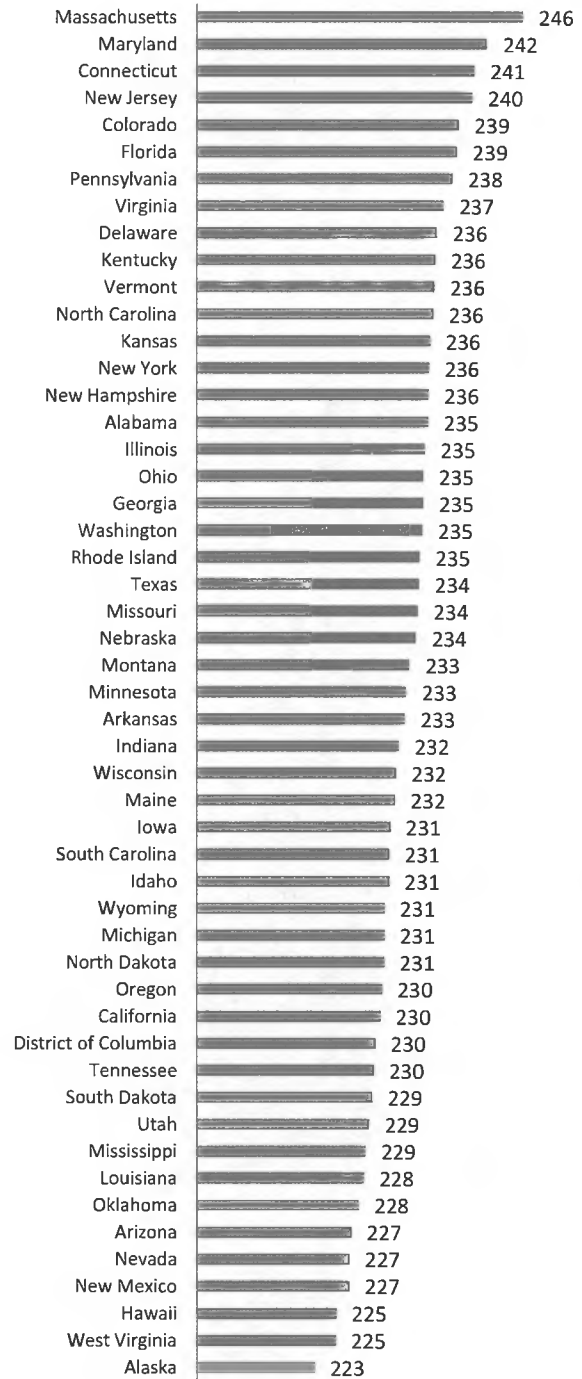
This paper will compare the condition of K-12 education in Alaska relative to other states, highlighting the urgent need for education reform in Alaska. Student achievement in this paper is approached from the perspective of the student's family economic situation. Though data are available comparing students on the basis of ethnic identification, *for the purpose of this paper, the assumption is made that the brightness of a child's mind and their ability to learn, is not closely linked to their ethnicity.*



### Low Achievement-- Not Just Our Low Income Kids

The bar charts on this page compare reading achievement specifically for upper and middle income students to illustrate that Alaska's K-12 education woes are not limited to impoverished villages and inner cities. The most recent data from the U.S. Department of Education's National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) clearly show that our significant problems in Alaska K-12 education include our upper and middle income kids as well.

## Upper and Middle Income 4th Grade Reading, 2011 NAEP



***Even Alaska's rich kids are doing poorly. Often the misconception is promoted that our low performance on national testing is exclusively attributable to schools in impoverished rural and urban areas.***

**What Defines Low or Upper-Middle Income and Why is That Important?**

The dividing line for determining if a child comes from a low or upper-middle income situation, is whether not their family qualifies for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Child Nutrition Program, commonly refer to as the "Free or Reduced Lunch" (FRL) program.

FRL thresholds are based on 185% the official poverty rate. In Alaska, the threshold for FRL is 25% higher than the lower-48.

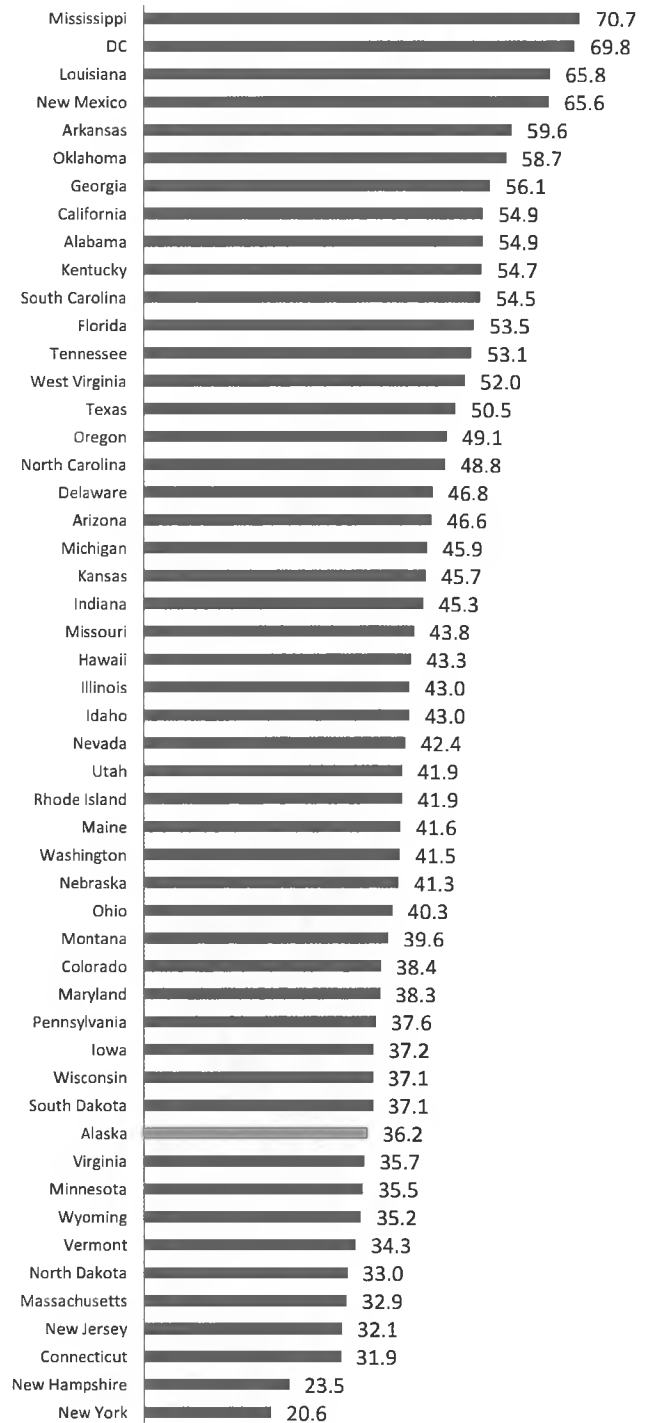


The Free and Reduced Lunch rate is important because low income is one of the key predictors of low academic achievement. In most states, low income kids lag 2-3 grade levels behind the academic achievement of their upper-middle income contemporaries. This is commonly referred to as the "achievement gap".

Alaska currently has an unusually large achievement gap between rich and poor students in most NAEP testing. Fortunately, poverty is not always an absolute predictor of low academic performance. Some shining examples of programs that have had great success despite crippling poverty are starting emerge. Programs like: The DC Opportunity Scholarship Program; The Milwaukee Parental Choice Program; American Indian Public Charter Schools; KIPP Academy; Rocketship Charter Schools and Carpe Diem are quickly dispelling the notion that poor kids are doomed to academic failure.

Though the challenges of low income levels in Alaska are very real bar chart on this page shows that Alaska's low-income student burden is significantly less than the average among the other states. (source: National Center for Education Statistics)

**Percentage of Student Who Qualify for Free or Reduced Lunch (FRL) 2011**



**Though the academic challenges of low income levels in Alaska are very real, the bar chart on above shows that Alaska's burden is significantly lower than the average among the other states and the District of Columbia.**

## The Bad News - 4th Grade Reading

According to the 2011 NAEP data, Alaska is at the bottom or near the bottom in 4th grade reading in nearly every way the data can be sliced. This is very troubling because of the great importance early childhood literacy has on future academic success.

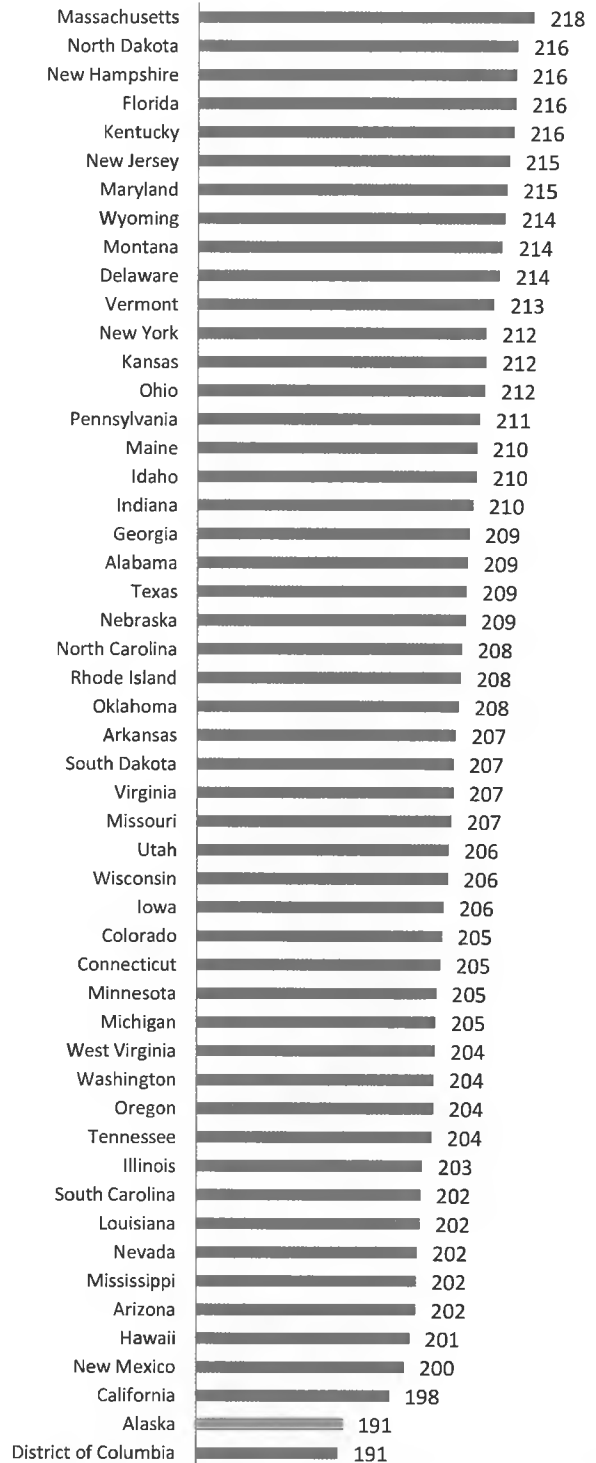


A common adage in education is that in kindergarten through third grade children "learn to read" so that they will be prepared to "read to learn" in later years. In a recent study by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, *Early Warning, Why Reading by the End of Third Grade Matters*, researchers note that children that have not learned to read to by third grade have a 75% chance of being poor readers in high school and subsequently a much higher chance of dropping out. In 2011 only 25% of 4th-graders in Alaska were "proficient" or above in reading by national standards. The figure was 13% for kids from low income families. Children who fail to learn to read by third grade can recover and catch-up later but it is a very painful and resource intensive process.

### Bar Chart Interpretation

This paper uses bar charts to visually tell the story of where Alaska stacks up against other states in NAEP testing. Included in the bar charts are the raw scores attained by each state. It has been observed that kids progressing normally will add approximately 10 points to their NAEP test scores with every year of learning. As an example, in the bar chart on this page low-income Alaskan kids lag behind low-income kids Massachusetts by 27 points. In other words, *Alaskan low income 4th graders were almost three grade levels behind Massachusetts -- at age nine.*

Low Income Students  
4th Grade Reading 2011 NAEP



***In 2011 only 25% of 4th-graders in Alaska were "proficient" or above in reading by national standards. The figure was 13% for kids from low income Alaska families***

## The Good News - 8th Grade Math

### 28th in the US - Alaska's High Point



Alaska is not a bottom tier performer in all of the four main categories of NAEP testing. Our 8th graders were 28th in the nation in math for upper and middle income kids. Unfortunately, our mediocre ranking as Alaska's academic zenith, in a country that was ranked 33rd in 2010 for PISA math scores, is not much of a cause for celebration.

#### Alaska 2011 NAEP Testing

##### UPPER and MIDDLE Income Rankings

4th Grade Reading	50 <sup>th</sup> out of 50
4th Grade Math	44 <sup>th</sup> out of 50
8th Grade Reading	34 <sup>th</sup> out of 50
8th Grade Math*	28 <sup>th</sup> out of 50

\*Alaska's highest ranking out of the four primary measurements of the 2011 NAEP



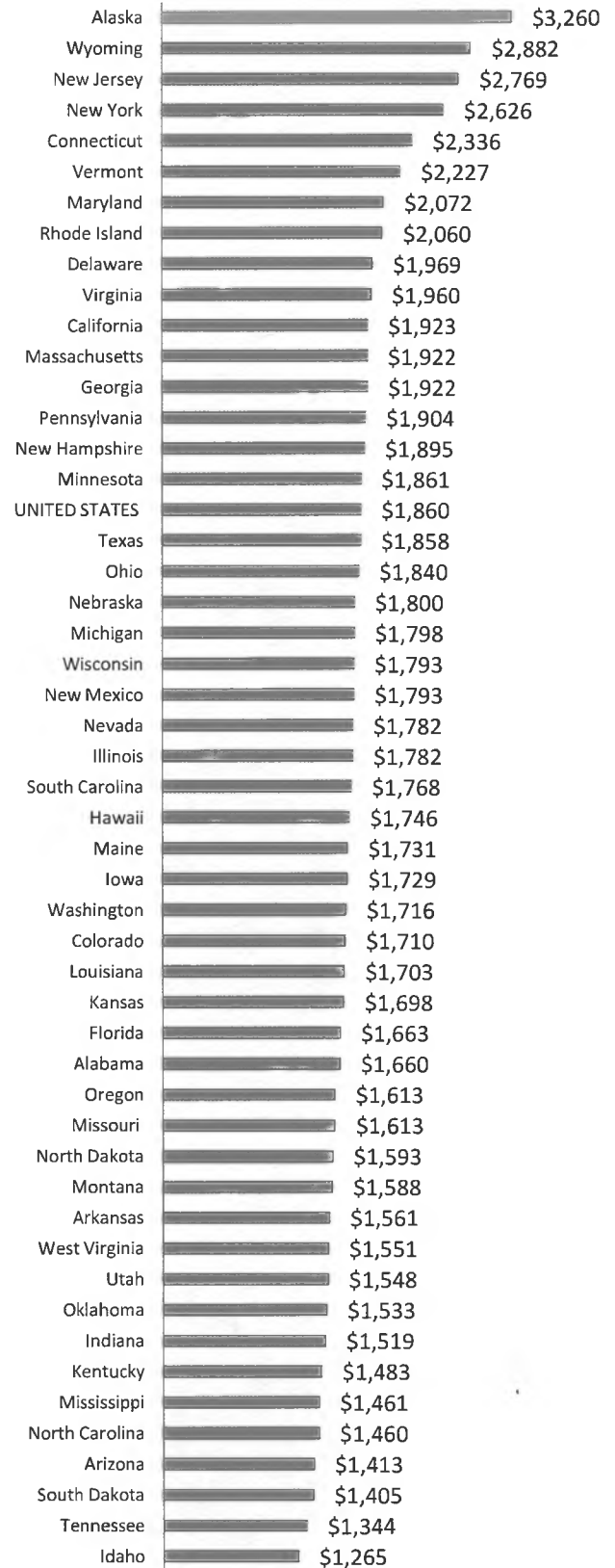
#### Alaska 2011 NAEP Testing

##### LOW Income Rankings

4th Grade Reading	50 <sup>th</sup> out of 50
4th Grade Math	47 <sup>th</sup> out of 50
8th Grade Reading	49 <sup>th</sup> out of 50
8th Grade Math	32 <sup>nd</sup> out of 50

## K-12 Education Spending Per Capita State and Local Spending

Table H-8, 2012 NEA Rankings and Estimates



### ***The Florida Example***

Though Alaska's NAEP scores have seen a slight improvement between 2003 and 2011, most states are seeing much more rapid progress.

Student growth has been especially dramatic in states like Florida that have aggressively embraced K-12 school reforms like: Expanded School Choice; scholarships for disabled students to attend private schools of their choosing; 3rd grade literacy requirements; simplified charter school authorizations; alternative teaching certifications allowing tradesmen and other professionals to teach their crafts in public schools without formal teaching certificates and an easy to understand A-F grading system to help parents easily identify the effectiveness of their schools.

Despite Alaska's rapid increases in K-12 budget growth at the state and local level, our increase in the four primary measurements of NAEP was only 6 points between 2003 and 2011. Florida saw a 25 points growth during the same period with very little budget growth.

Because of the way that Florida structured its reforms, low income students, and students with disabilities saw the most rapid academic gains.



***In 2011, low income Hispanic students in Florida scored higher in 4th grade reading than the average Alaskan 4th grader -- from all ethnic and economic backgrounds. Florida achieved this while spending about half as much per student as Alaska.***



### ***Conclusion***

#### ***Education Reform - Why not Alaska?***

There's an urgent need for change. It's clear that Alaska's kids can't endure the status quo of our K-12 education system much longer.

Our schools are the best equipped and funded in the nation. Our kids are just as bright as anywhere else and our educators and parents are just as dedicated. Still, our state education system has let our kids down in epic fashion.

With our abundant resources and relatively low poverty, there are very few excuses for having a school system that produces among one of the largest achievement gaps between rich and poor while simultaneously posting some of the worst results for affluent kids anywhere.

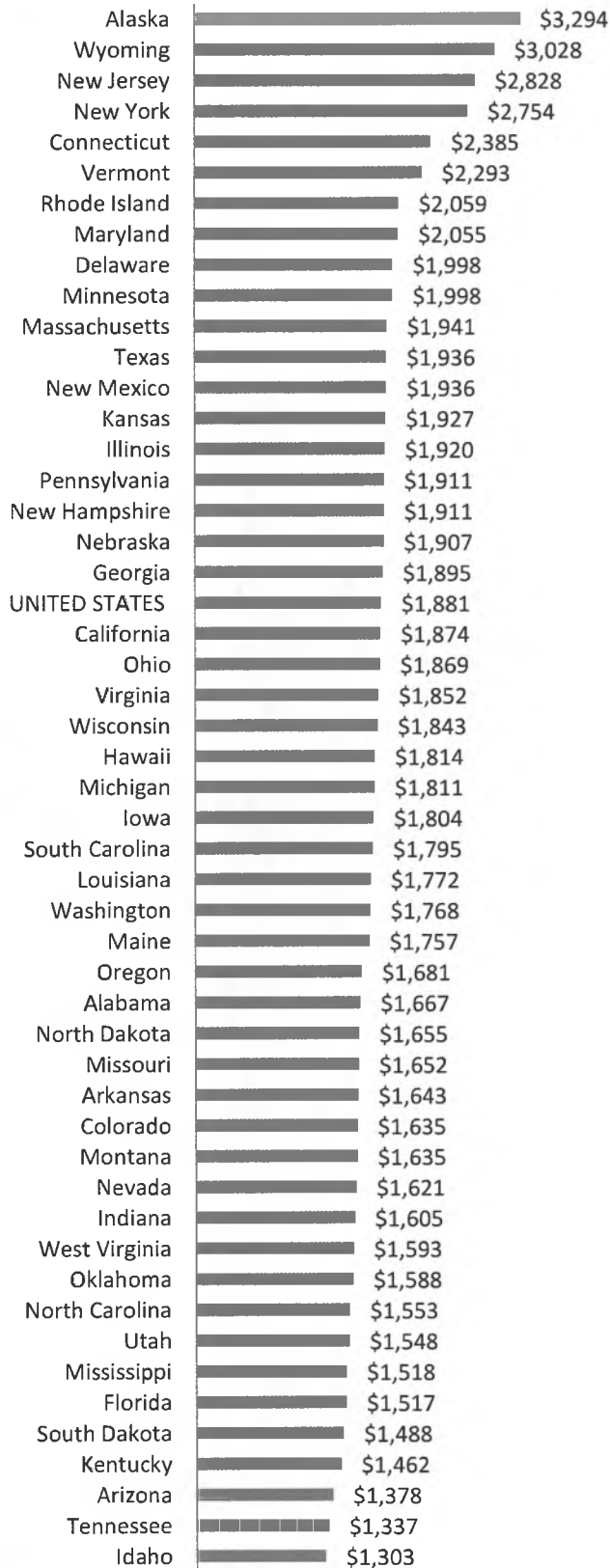
There are plentiful examples of proven school reforms that are sweeping the nation and are producing dramatic improvements. Yet, we here in Alaska continue to employ an increasingly more expensive and dated version of the same K-12 education system that offers very little hope of improvement.

Of the priorities for government, there are very few that are more important than preparing the next the next generation with the skills to sustain and improve the achievements of those who came before. Without significant change soon, Alaska will fail in this most fundamental task of educating our kids. Leaving us with: -- *A State at Risk.*

## K-12 Education Spending Per Capita

### State and Local Spending 2008-09

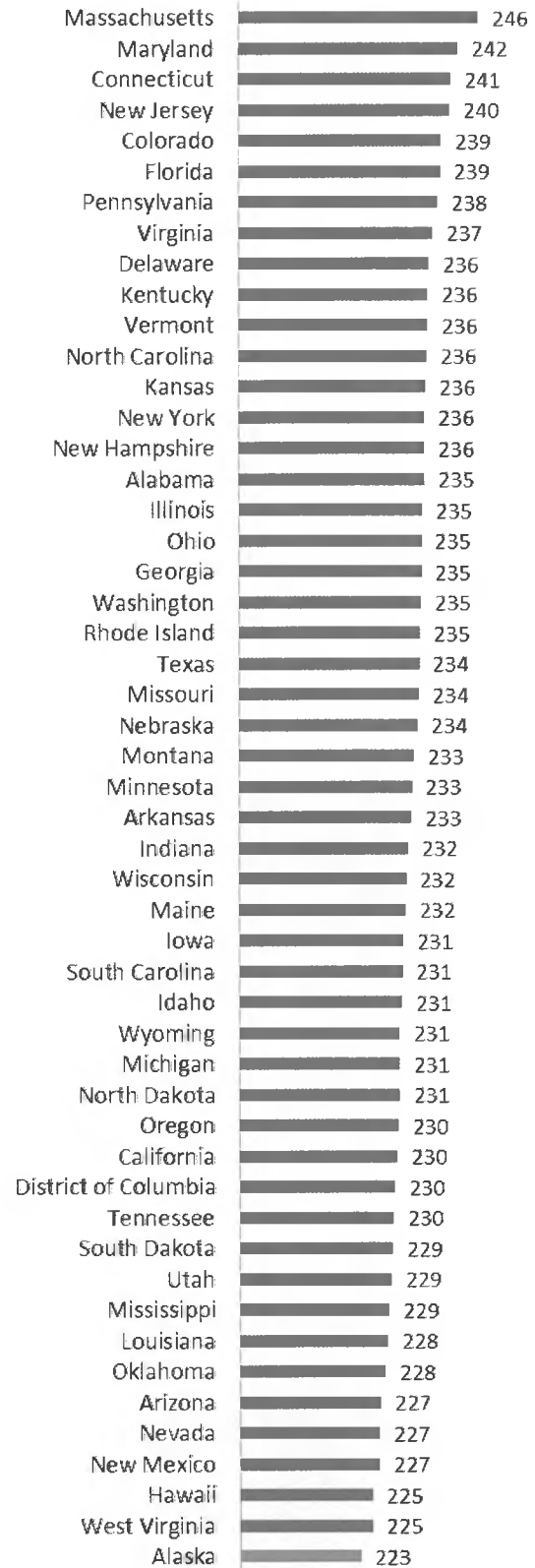
Table H-8, 2012 NEA Rankings and Estimates



## 4th Grade Reading Scores 2011

### Upper and Middle Income

US Dept of Education, NAEP



## Ending Social Promotion in New York City Public Schools Without Leaving Children Behind

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**E**ducators struggle with how best to handle students whose academic performance does not reflect readiness for the next grade by the end of the school year. While retaining these students in grade gives them an additional year to master the knowledge and skills for that grade, critics point out that the practice disproportionately affects low-income and minority children and is associated with low self-esteem, problem behaviors, and an increased risk of dropping out of school. However, promoting students who do not meet academic standards—also known as “social promotion”—puts students at a disadvantage by advancing them to a grade for which they are not prepared.

As part of an ambitious reform initiative, the New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE), the largest school district in the country, implemented a new promotion and retention policy for students in grade 3 during the 2003–2004 school year. The policy was extended to grade 5 in 2004–2005, grade 7 in 2005–2006, and grade 8 in 2008–2009. Under the policy, general education students in these grades are required to score at or above Level 2 on a four-level performance scale on the state English language arts and mathematics assessments in order to be promoted to the next grade. Performance at or above Level 3 is considered “proficient” under the No Child Left Behind Act and is a higher standard than the promotion benchmark.

NYCDOE’s policy is noteworthy in that it emphasizes identifying struggling students early; providing them with support services, such as additional instructional time; and continuously monitoring their progress. Under the policy, at-risk students are identified—based on their performance on the previous year’s assessments, teacher recommendations, or being previously retained in grade—and scheduled to receive support services in and outside of school. Students who do not pass

### Abstract

RAND researchers examined New York City’s test-based grade promotion and retention policy, focusing on 5th-grade students. The findings show that the support services provided under the policy helped students meet promotion criteria and that, overall, few students were retained. Furthermore, those who were retained did not report negative socio-emotional effects. Some of the positive effects from the support services continued into later grades, leading the researchers to recommend a continued emphasis on early identification and support of at-risk students, as well as continued monitoring of the longer-term effects of retention.

the spring assessments are enrolled in summer school. The policy also offers students multiple opportunities to meet promotion criteria.

From March 2006 through August 2009, RAND researchers analyzed the impact of NYCDOE’s policy on student outcomes, focusing on three cohorts of 5th-grade students held to the policy and one pre-policy comparison cohort. Using interviews, case studies, student surveys, and demographic and test score data, the researchers examined the implementation of NYCDOE’s grade promotion and retention policy and its impact on student academic and socioemotional outcomes over time.

### Few Students Were Retained Under the Policy

Overall, approximately 75 percent, or 60,000, 5th-grade students were held to the promotion policy in each of the three cohorts. About 20 percent of those students were categorized as need-

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ing services upon entering the 5th grade. At the beginning of the year, more students needed services in English language arts than in mathematics, but by the end of the year, students were more likely to be retained for failing to meet promotion criteria in mathematics. Few students were retained under the policy, and the percentage of retained students dropped over time, from 2–3 percent in the first two cohorts to 1 percent in the third cohort (about 600 students out of approximately 58,000 students).

### **Supports Provided Under the Policy Helped Students Meet Promotion Standards**

The study found that the policy had positive effects on the achievement of in-need students during the 5th-grade year. The effects were stronger in English language arts than in mathematics. However, for the small group of students entering 5th grade with the lowest scores on the state assessments, additional promotion policy services during the school year had little effect on performance. More frequent attendance at Saturday classes and summer school was associated with greater improvements in mathematics performance.

### **The Positive Effects of the Policy Continued into Later Grades**

The study's findings showed that components of the promotion policy had positive effects for students that lasted into the 6th and 7th grades, including small, positive effects from early identification and intervention; small, positive effects from summer school; and moderate, positive effects from an additional year of instruction due to retention.

### **Retained Students Did Not Report Negative Socioemotional Effects**

The responses to student surveys indicated that retention did not have negative effects on students' sense of school belonging or confidence in mathematics and reading, even three years after being retained in grade. While this is counterintuitive, it is consistent with some prior studies.

### **School Staff Tended to Be Positive About the Policy**

In surveys and interviews, principals and teachers were positive about many aspects of the promotion policy; the majority agreed that the policy helped focus their schools'

instructional efforts and made parents more aware of their children's progress. However, the majority of respondents thought that the promotion policy relied too heavily on state assessment scores and, interestingly, that the policy made it more difficult to retain students who would benefit from being retained but had passed the test.

### **Several Policy Recommendations Emerge from the Findings**

The study's findings led to the following recommendations for policymakers and administrators. While targeted to New York City, these recommendations may also apply to other districts and states considering or implementing test-based promotion policies.

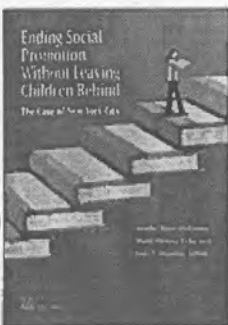
*Continue early identification of students and provision of academic intervention services.* The findings suggest that early identification and support services helped students meet promotion standards and improved student achievement in future grades. One-on-one tutoring was particularly helpful and should be continued and expanded when possible.

*Consider the expected duration and participation when designing Saturday programs.* The researchers found that attending at least seven sessions was associated with improved performance in mathematics. Thus, principals need to consider expected student attendance and program length before investing in such programs.

*Continue to encourage struggling students to attend summer school.* Summer school attendance appeared to have a positive relationship with student achievement, particularly in mathematics, and summer school may also have a positive impact on future achievement in grades 6 and 7.

*Analyze student-level data to evaluate the effectiveness of specific interventions provided to struggling students.* The study highlighted several instructional strategies that can help low-performing students. It is important to systematically collect and analyze data to determine each strategy's effectiveness.

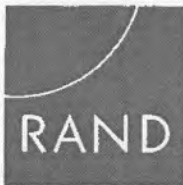
*Continue to monitor the longer-term effects of retention on students.* Two of the most important questions are whether the short-term positive effects of the policy persist over the longer term and whether the policy is cost-effective, compared with alternatives. This study could not answer those questions, but they remain important topics for New York City to address in the future. ■



This research brief describes work conducted within RAND Education and documented in *Ending Social Promotion Without Leaving Children Behind: The Case of New York City*, Jennifer Sloan McCombs, Sheila Nataraj Kirby, and Louis T. Mariano, eds., MG-894-NYCDOE [available at <http://www.rand.org/pubs/monographs/MG894>], 2009, 308 pp., \$37, ISBN: 978-0-8330-4778-6. This research brief was written by Jennifer Li. The RAND Corporation is a nonprofit research organization providing objective analysis and effective solutions that address the challenges facing the public and private sectors around the world. RAND's publications do not necessarily reflect the opinions of its research clients and sponsors. RAND® is a registered trademark.

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## Research Brief

TO: Representative Gabrielle LeDoux  
FROM: Patricia Young, Manager  
DATE: February 20, 2014  
RE: Student Retention Rate, Anchorage School District  
*LRS Report 14.263*

*You wished to know the number of students held back, or retained, during the past several years in the Anchorage School District.*

Ed Graff, superintendent of the Anchorage School District, provided the following information on the number of district students held back during each of the following five academic years.<sup>1</sup>

Number of Anchorage School District Students Held Back, by Grade and Year					
Grade Level	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013
Kindergarten	111	101	108	94	112
1	53	42	46	41	49
2	13	22	16	26	19
3	12	9	15	12	14
4	9	15	6	11	12
5	9	8	11	12	7
6	13	13	9	9	8
7	14	5	11	3	7
8	19	5	3	2	6
9	9	9	4	6	9
10	10	13	10	8	7
11	33	20	16	21	14
12	*	*	*	*	*
<b>Totals</b>	<b>305</b>	<b>262</b>	<b>255</b>	<b>245</b>	<b>264</b>

Notes: \* Fifth year seniors are not considered students who were held back.

Source: Ed Graff, superintendent, Anchorage School District, 907.742.4312.

We note that over the course of these five years, the district has averaged a student population of 48,563 per year.<sup>2</sup> The average retention rate of 266 students per year equates to approximately 0.05 percent of the student population being held back each year.

We hope this is helpful. If you have questions or need additional information, please let us know.

<sup>1</sup> Ed Graff, superintendent, Anchorage School District, can be reached at 907.742.4312.

<sup>2</sup> We base this average on the average daily membership (ADM) counts by year as reported the Department of Education and Early Development on their website at <http://education.alaska.gov/stats/QuickFacts/ADM.pdf>.



OBJECTIVE ANALYSIS. EFFECTIVE SOLUTIONS.

RAND • News and Events • News Releases • 2009 • New York City's School Promotion and Retention Policy Shows Positive Results for Students

## New York City's School Promotion and Retention Policy Shows Positive Results for Students

### FOR RELEASE

Thursday  
October 15, 2009

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The New York City Department of Education's test-based promotion and retention policy, which identifies and provides support for struggling students, has demonstrated positive effects for student achievement in fifth grade that continue into seventh grade, according to a new RAND Corporation study issued today.

Researchers found that the policy helped students boost their performance on state assessment tests, a critical step toward advancing to the next grade level. The study also found that students retained under the policy didn't suffer negative social or emotional effects as a result of repeating a grade level.

Educators struggle with how best to handle students whose academic performance does not reflect readiness for the next grade by the end of a school year. While retaining these students in grade gives them an additional year to master needed knowledge and skills, critics point out that the practice disproportionately affects low-income and minority children. In addition, retention is associated with low self-esteem, behavioral problems and an increased risk of dropping out of school.

However, promoting students who do not meet academic standards—also known as "social promotion"—puts students at a disadvantage by advancing them to a grade for which they are not prepared.

"The emphasis on early identification of students who are struggling academically and providing those students extra learning opportunities is a critical factor in the success of the New York City Department of Education's promotion and retention policy," said Jennifer McCombs, a co-author of the report and a policy researcher at RAND, a nonpartisan research institution.

The other co-authors were Sheila Nakaraj Kirby, a RAND senior economist, and Louis T. Mariano, a statistician at RAND.

The RAND study examined the New York City Department of Education's promotion and retention policy, and its impact on student academic and socioemotional outcomes through Spring 2008. The study focused on students who were in fifth grade in 2005, 2006 and 2007. New York City has the largest public school system in the country.

The department implemented the new policy for students in grade 3 in 2003-2004. The policy was extended to grade 5 in 2004-2005, grade 7 in 2005-2006 and grade 8 in 2008-2009. RAND researchers examined the fifth-grade promotion policy at the request of the New York City Department of Education.

Under the policy, general-education students in these grades were required to score at or above performance Level 2 on both the state English language arts and mathematics assessments in order to be promoted to the next grade. Performance at or above Level 3 was considered "proficient" under the No Child Left Behind Act, a higher standard than the promotion benchmark.

Researchers note that the policy emphasized identifying struggling students at the beginning of fifth grade, provided them with services such as additional instructional time and continuously monitored their progress. Struggling students were identified—based on their performance on the fourth grade assessments, teacher recommendations or being previously retained in grade—and scheduled to receive support services in school and outside of school.

Students who did not pass the spring assessments were enrolled in summer school. The policy also offered students multiple opportunities to meet promotion criteria.

"This approach sets New York's policy apart from test-based promotion policies that use test results to make promotion decisions without providing early educational support services to help students improve," Kirby said.

She said that under the promotion policy a significant number of students needed support services, but few were retained. Upon entering the fifth grade, approximately 20 percent of students were categorized as needing assistance. However, by the end of the year, few students were retained under the policy and the percentage of retained students dropped over time, from 3 percent in 2005 to 1 percent in the 2007 (about 600 students out of approximately 58,000 students).

The students who needed additional support services were not evenly distributed across the city's schools, ranging from 0 to 80 percent of a school's fifth-grade class. Researchers found that schools intervened to help as many students as the school was capable of serving. Although schools with highest number of students needing additional services were significantly more likely to have resources—such as reading and math specialists—than those schools with fewer "in-need" students, they were still less likely to be able to serve every student needing services.

Nearly all of the schools provided additional support to students both during the school day and outside of the classroom, including group tutoring. Fewer schools were able to offer one-on-one tutoring during the school day, a practice the study found was associated with improved achievement in mathematics.

Researchers also found that the promotion policy and its support services had positive effects for students that lasted into the seventh grade, the latest grade for which outcome information was available. Those findings include the following:

- Students who needed services at the beginning of fifth grade scored higher on the seventh grade assessments than they would have without the policy.
- Students who were required to attend summer school after fifth grade because of serious academic difficulties scored higher on English language arts and mathematics assessments in the sixth and seventh grades.
- The positive effects of retention on student performance continued into the 7th grade. These effects were larger than those found for early support services alone.
- Effects were generally larger in English language arts than mathematics.

Researchers suggest that New York City continue its policy of identifying early those students who are struggling academically and to continue providing intervention services. They also recommend expanding one-on-one tutoring opportunities.

The RAND report makes other recommendations, including:

- Ensure that academic service providers work consistently with students who need services, instead of being pulled away for other duties such as substitute teaching, lunch duty or proctoring assignments.
- Continue to encourage struggling students to attend summer school.
- Continue to monitor the effects of retention on students as they progress into high school.
- Analyze data on the services being provided to determine the relative cost effectiveness of different support services.

The study, "Ending Social Promotion Without Leaving Children Behind: The Case of New York City," can be found at [www.rand.org](http://www.rand.org).

RAND Education, a division of the RAND Corporation, is a leader in providing objective, reliable research and analysis on educational challenges that is used to improve educational access, quality and outcomes in the United States and throughout the world.

**Learn More**

[Ending Social Promotion Without Leaving Children Behind: The Case of New York City](#)

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1725 I Street, NW, Suite 300. Washington D.C. 20006

February 14, 2014

Dear Members of the Alaska Legislature:

On behalf of the Digital Learning Alliance, we write in support of HB 197: Requiring the establishment of reading program in school districts for grades kindergarten through three.

Digital Learning Alliance is a national **non-profit** organization that works to improve economic growth across America by advocating for personalized education through the use of digital learning technologies. We accomplish this mission as we empower legislators and education players with technology solutions in pre-K-12, higher education, and adult learning, resulting in the skilled workforce of the future.

A recent report from the National Assessment for Education Statistics stated that **37% of 4<sup>th</sup> grades cannot read at grade level**. This epidemic causes for states to fall behind in producing a competent and educated workforce. A recent study by the National Conference of State Legislatures stated that for **every \$1 spent on education yields \$8 in return on investment (ROI)**. Based off of this information we commend Representative LeDoux for taking the necessary precautions to ensure students are equipped with essential skills .

The Alaska Legislature should approve this legislation and likewise, continue to develop proactive measures to pave the way for the implementation of quality digital education solutions. The Digital Learning Alliance stands ready to work with you to develop a proposal that best protects Alaska's students.

All our best,

Quinn Kendall,  
Director of Government Relations; J.D.



## Florida's Education Revolution

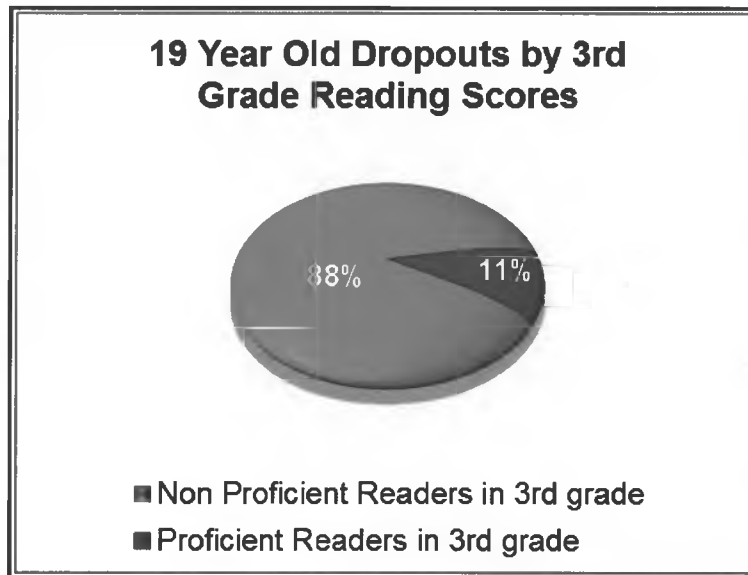
*Reading for Learning*

### PREVENTING A CRISIS: READING TO GRADUATE

If you are concerned about poor graduation rates, you might be a decade too late to do anything about it. According to a recent study by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, literacy in third grade – yes, third grade – may affect the chances that a student will graduate from high school.

Based on an analysis of reading scores and graduation rates of 3,975 students over ten years, students who could not read by the end of the third grade were four times more likely to drop out of high school. In fact, 88 percent of students who failed to earn a high school diploma were struggling readers in third grade.<sup>1</sup>

**Figure 1: Using Third Grade Reading Scores to Predict Dropout Rates**



Reading may also be the key to closing the achievement gap. The analysis found that

<sup>1</sup> Hernandez, Donald J. 2011. *How Third-Grade Reading Skills and Poverty Influence High School Graduation*. Publication of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, available on the internet at <http://www.aecf.org/~media/Pubs/Topics/Education/Other/DoubleJeopardyHowThirdGradeReadingSkillsandPoverty/DoubleJeopardyReport040511FINAL.pdf>.

[www.ExcelinEd.org](http://www.ExcelinEd.org)

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differences in reading achievement explain differences in graduation rates between students of different races and ethnicities. For example, poor Black and Hispanic who are struggling readers are about 8 times more likely than proficient readers to drop out of high school. Conversely, proficient third grade readers of all races – White, African American and Hispanic – graduate at similar rates. Eighty-nine percent of economically disadvantaged students in the study, who achieved proficient reading skills by the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, graduated.

The societal impacts and costs of low graduation rates are profound. Researchers have found a strong association between dropping out of high school and lower lifetime income, higher use of public assistance and higher incarceration rates. Estimates on the total lifetime cost to society for each new cohort of dropouts accumulate into hundreds of billions of dollars.<sup>2</sup>

### **PROMOTING ILLITERACY: THE HARMFUL IMPACTS OF PREVAILING POLICY**

Each year, millions of children, including a disproportionately high number of low-income and minority children, fail to learn basic literacy skills in the developmentally critical grades. Rather than addressing these problems head on, standard practice involves simply socially promoting students to the next grade. Our collective failure to reform this shameful practice preserves a system of schooling that routinely gives the least to the students who start with the greatest needs. For students, the impact lasts a lifetime.

The prevailing practice of social promotion proves especially destructive for children in the early grades. Learning to read does not get easier with age. As a result, illiterate 3<sup>rd</sup> graders move on to become illiterate 4<sup>th</sup> graders, and then 5<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> graders.

Third grade is the year that students transition from “learning to read” to “reading to learn.” Imagine a 5<sup>th</sup> grader, reading on a 1<sup>st</sup> grade level, sitting in a science class. These students will not grasp the vocabulary and scientific concepts described in their textbook because they cannot read - literally. Grade level material keeps increasing year after year, but these students cannot keep up because they *cannot read*.

“Disruptive,” “bored,” and “restless” are among the common adjectives used to describe illiterate middle school students, long since aged out of their literacy acquisition window. Let down by the system, these students often do not finish school, let alone go on to college. Many may wonder why they attend school at all. Students begin dropping out of school in large numbers in the 8<sup>th</sup> grade.

### **FLORIDA’S FIGHT TO END ILLITERACY: LITERACY-BASED PROMOTION**

Florida placed a command focus on reading in the primary grades (K-3) even before the data confirmed the critical importance of developing literacy skills in the those years. In 1999, Florida lawmakers enacted a suite of reforms aimed at substantially improving student achievement. Believing more needed to be done to end the blight of illiteracy, Florida

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<sup>2</sup> Alliance for Excellent Education. 2007. The High Cost of High School Dropouts, What the Nation Pays for Inadequate High Schools. Alliance for Excellent Education Issue Brief, available on the internet at <http://www.all4ed.org/files/archive/publications/HighCost.pdf>.

policymakers in 2002 took bold steps to make reading proficiency a requirement of third grade; however, Florida did not implement the usual retain and repeat model, as you will see below.

Florida requires students to demonstrate their ability to read before entering fourth grade, which means that in Florida, reading instruction, and intervention if needed, begins on day one of Kindergarten. Florida educators catch struggling readers early and provide intensive instruction until they can read well enough to be successful in the fourth grade and beyond.

Florida uses the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) to measure student progress in relation to state academic standards. The FCAT uses five achievement levels to describe academic performance. The lowest of these five levels, achievement level 1, equates to “functional illiteracy.” The Florida literacy-based promotion policy sets a minimum literacy expectation for 3<sup>rd</sup> grade students. Students receive at least two more chances to demonstrate literacy through earning a “proficient” score on an a standardized alternative assessment or through a portfolio of student work indicating that they have met the standards measured by FCAT. Under the policy, a third grade student scoring achievement level 1 on the Reading FCAT must repeat the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, unless the student is eligible for a good cause exemption.<sup>3</sup>

The 2002 Florida statute requires school officials to notify parents of literacy deficiencies, the actions taken to remediate the deficiency, and the possibility of retention. The law requires schools to develop individual intervention plans for students in danger of retention, and to provide intensive literacy instruction that is different from what was previously provided. Obviously, just doing more of the same will not achieve results.<sup>4</sup> Florida’s approach to retention was not simply to send struggling readers through another year of third grade, hoping that this time, it would “stick.” The law requires a completely different course of instruction for those students. And this is what makes Florida’s policy different from other failed retention policies.

During the debate over the law, some argued that the reading or retention policy would be cruel to some children. Ironically, the statistical analysis reveals that the cruelty of the policy, if any, falls upon those promoted without literacy skills. These students continue to fall behind. In a recent *Wall Street Journal* article discussing other states that are introducing legislation based on Florida’s policy, Kyla Burr, a third grade teacher in Tampa, Florida says, "Holding back a child is not an easy decision. But the alternative is you just move them ahead, hope for the best

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<sup>3</sup> The good cause exemptions for the Florida retention policy are: 1. Students with Limited English Proficiency (LEP) who have less than two years of instruction in English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) program. 2. Students with disabilities for whom participation in the statewide assessment program is not appropriate. 3. Students who demonstrate an acceptable level of performance on an alternative standardized reading assessment. 4. Students who demonstrate, through a student portfolio, that they are reading on grade level (based on mastery of the Sunshine State Standards). 5. Students with disabilities who were previously retained in grades K-3, and have received intensive remediation in reading for more than two years. 6. Students who were previously retained in grades K-3 for a total of two or more years, and have received intensive remediation in reading for two or more years.

<sup>4</sup> Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability. 2006. *Third Grade Retention Policy Leading to Better Student Performance Statewide*. Available online at <http://www.oppaga.state.fl.us/MonitorDocs/Reports/pdf/0666rpt.pdf>, page 2.

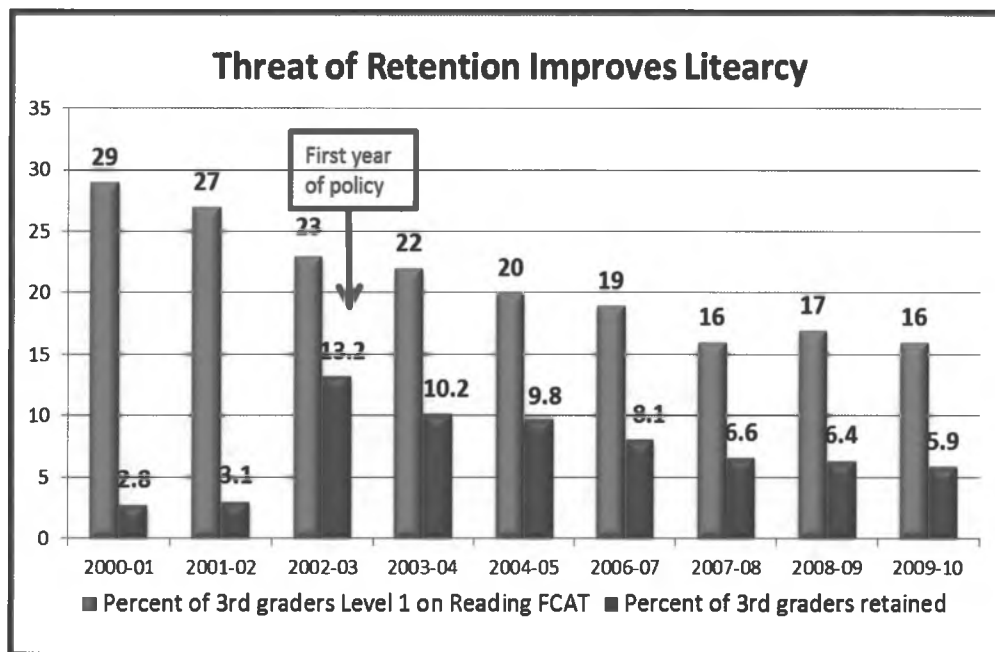
and then watch them struggle in fourth grade.”<sup>5</sup>

### READING TO LEARN: THE IMPACT OF FLORIDA’S READING POLICY

Since the advent of literacy-based promotion, reading scores for all Florida students, but especially for low-income and minority students have soared. When Florida ended social promotion, retention skyrocketed to more than 13 percent. Talk about a tough year. Sadly, a 13 percent retention rate caused more outrage than a 29 percent illiteracy rate.

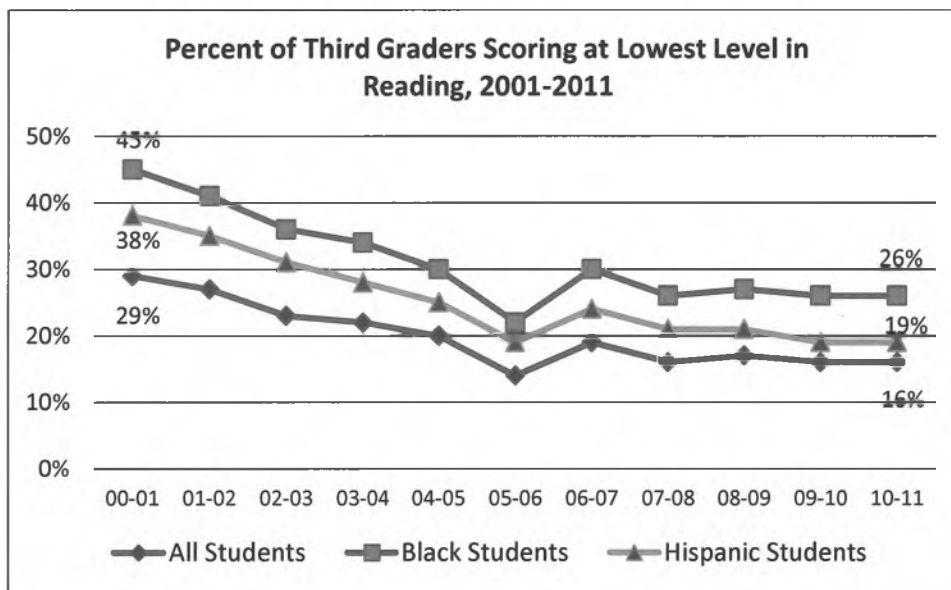
After that initial shock, elementary schools placed a command focus on reading. The result: illiteracy is on the decline. Since 2000-2001, (see Figure 2) the number of Florida 3<sup>rd</sup> graders scoring at the lowest achievement level has *declined by 45 percent*. The percentage of African-American and Hispanic students scoring at the lowest level has *declined by 42 percent and 50 percent respectively*.

Figure 2: A Command Focus on Reading



<sup>5</sup> “Bill Prods Schools to Hold Back Third-Graders, Stephanie Banchero, The Wall Street Journal, February 13, 2012, <http://online.wsi.com/article/SB10001424052970203920204577197341228039310.html>

**Figure 3: Command Focus on Reading: Demographic Impact.** <sup>6</sup>

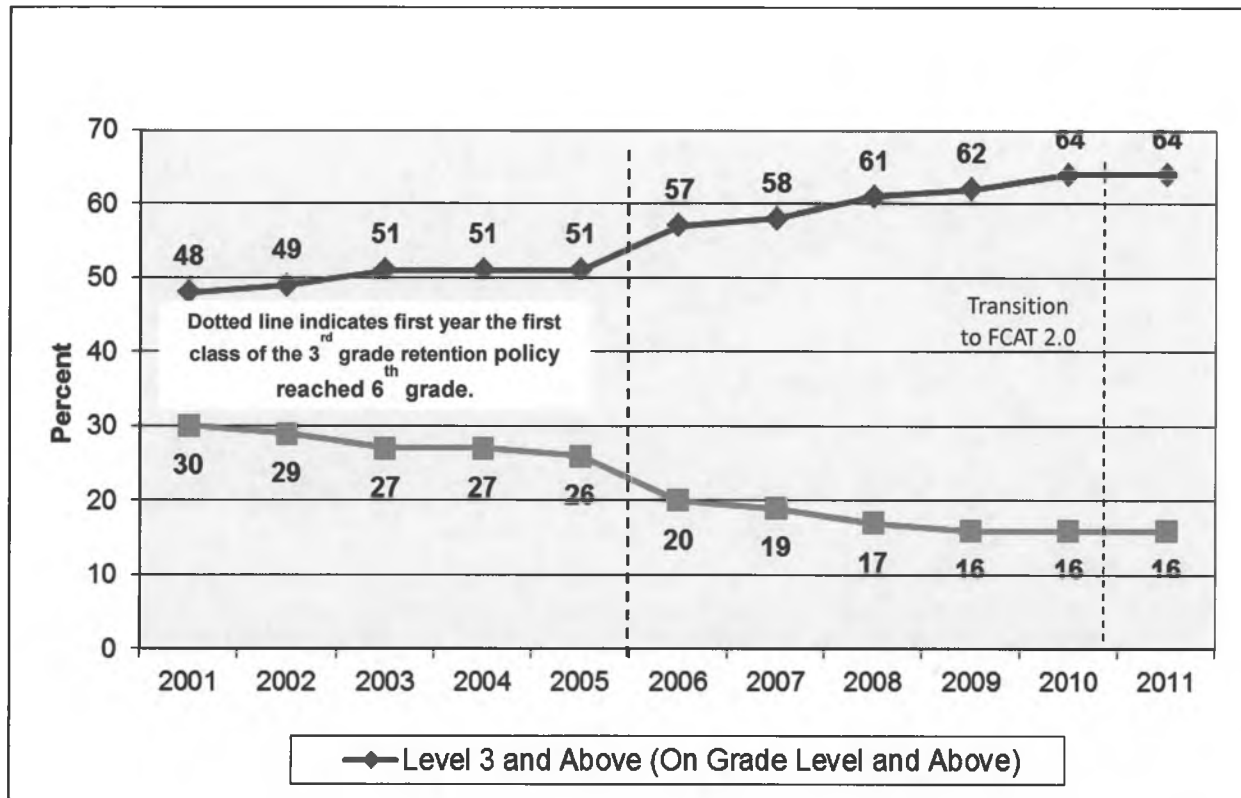


The benefits of literacy-based promotion became crystal clear when students under the policy entered middle school. The percentage of middle school students scoring at FCAT achievement level 1 on reading declined from 30 percent in 2001 to 16 percent in 2010. The percentage of Florida middle school students scoring at grade level or above (FCAT achievement levels 3, 4 or 5) increased from 48 percent to 64 percent during that same period. (Figure 4) One finds the same pattern in the high school FCAT data, with the percentage of 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders scoring at the lowest level on reading falling from 39 percent in 2002 to 26% in 2010<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> Note that for Figures 3 and 4, in 2011, Florida transitioned to a new, more rigorous version of the FCAT, called FCAT 2.0. Through an percentile equating process, the 2011 scores remained the same as the 2010 scores.

<sup>7</sup> Note that the Florida Department of Education found technical problems with the 2005-06 FCAT, ultimately resulting in the Department invalidating the results for that school year. Whether or not these glitches explain the large and temporary drop in FCAT 1 reading scores during that school year (see Figure 2) is not clear, but the overall trend in the data remains unchanged.

**Figure 4: Impact of Policy in Middle School, FCAT Reading, Grades 6, 7 and 8**



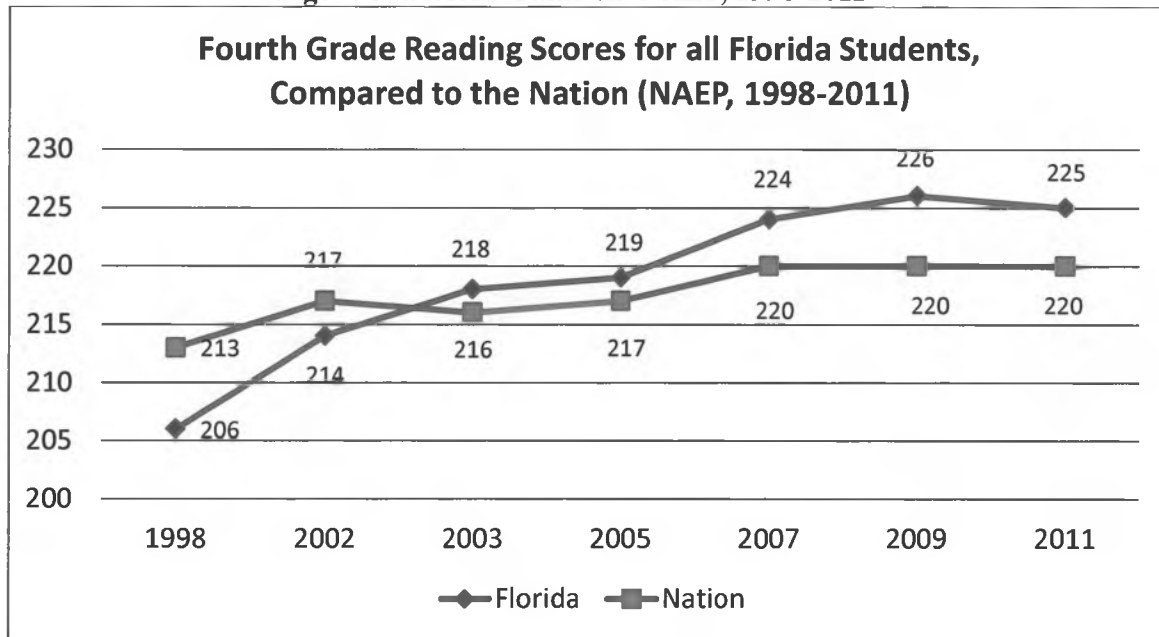
Scholars at the Manhattan Institute studied the impact of the literacy-based promotion policy on student test scores. The statisticians carefully compared the academic progress of students retained under the policy to two very similar groups of students: those who avoided retention by narrowly scoring over FCAT achievement level 1 on reading, and students who scored low enough for retention but received a good cause exemption. One year after retention, the retained students scored higher than the comparison groups. After two years, the advantage of the retained students had grown larger, equaling approximately 5.6 additional months of reading instruction over the comparison group students. Florida's retention policy proved to be a successful intervention for these students.<sup>8</sup> Preliminary results of a follow-up study show that the first cohort of retained students continued to out-perform those promoted to fourth grade in reading, math and science even after six years.

<sup>8</sup> Greene, Jay P. and Marcus A. Winters. 2006. Getting Farther Ahead by Staying Behind: A Second-Year Evaluation of Florida's Policy to end Social Promotion. Manhattan Institute Civic Report No. 49, available on the internet at [http://www.manhattan-institute.org/html/cr\\_49.htm](http://www.manhattan-institute.org/html/cr_49.htm).

Florida's surging scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) (Figure 5) serve as a source of external validation for these gains. Critics of Florida's policy claim that the leap in NAEP scores the first year after the policy were due to all the struggling third graders were retained. On the one hand, that certainly bears out what the research says – that reading by third grade is critical to success in 4<sup>th</sup> grade. But consider that for that claim to be valid, the greatest impact of the policy would be in the first NAEP testing year after implementation. But even a cursory examination of the scores shows that the gains continue – because the policy drove good reading instruction and intervention into grades K-2, ensuring that 4<sup>th</sup> graders were better prepared to succeed on NAEP. Florida's 4<sup>th</sup> grade scores have continued to rise even after actual retentions have fallen by more than half since the first year of the policy because more students are learning to read correctly in the first place.

However, the 2011 NAEP reading scores show that leadership at all levels – from the Governor's office to the principal of a school – is critical in ensuring continued success. Even a brief lack of focus on reform can stall success.

**Figure 5: Florida Gains on NAEP, 1998-2011**



### **COST-BENEFIT OF RETENTION**

Many people often assume that Florida's literacy-based promotion policy must have entailed massive expense. This, however, is not the case. In the first year of the policy (2002-03) Florida retained more than 27,000 students in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade, but the Digest of Education Statistics reveals that spending per pupil in the state only increased by \$112 per pupil in inflation adjusted dollars- from \$7,935 in 2001-02 to \$8,047 in 2002-03.<sup>9</sup> This increase is well within the normal range of year-to-year variation, and in fact falls below the normal inflation rate.

<sup>9</sup> See United States Department of Education *Digest of Education Statistics*, Table 168 online at [http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d09/tables/dt09\\_186.asp?referrer=list](http://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d09/tables/dt09_186.asp?referrer=list).

Such a result seems counter-intuitive but the reasons for the lack of a major fiscal impact follow: schools have a capacity to adapt to changes. On staffing, imagine an elementary school in the first year of the policy with the statewide average of 27 percent of 3<sup>rd</sup> graders retained. The school had far more 3<sup>rd</sup> graders than expected, *but also fewer 4<sup>th</sup> graders*. From a staffing perspective, the common-sense solution for many was to shift one or more teachers from a 4<sup>th</sup> grade assignment to a 3<sup>rd</sup> grade assignment.<sup>10</sup>

The literacy-based promotion policy forced schools to organize themselves around the hugely critical goal of ensuring effective reading instruction. Schools focused greater amounts of time and effort on reading, and encouraged parental involvement. Schools intensified reading instruction in grades K-3 as part of an overall focus on literacy and teachers intervened in earlier grades to ensure student stayed on track to achieve reading success.

The policy also created a significant incentive for greater involvement by parents. Recommendations to read to children 30 minutes a day carry greater force with the retention policy in place. Just Read, Florida!, Governor Bush's state-wide reading initiative, provided training to parents around the state, sharing 20-minute strategies parents could do at home to support the instruction happening at school. The retention policy provides an important nudge to parents to focus on helping their children learn to read.

Florida enacted these strategies using grant money from the United States Department of Education that was available to all 50 states and by examining federal and state funding streams to identify any funds that could be re-prioritized or repurposed. Through this thoughtful approach, the state was able to fund more than 90% of the needed instruction and intervention to ensure students were reading well enough to be successful in third grade. Less than 10% of the funds used that first year of implementation were new state money. With per-student funding levels below the national average, the Florida success rested upon making better use of existing funding and maximizing the effectiveness of federal dollars.

Florida's success with the use of federal reading funds may have been unique because state lawmakers leveraged those funds rather than simply dispersing them to districts and hoping for the best. And in 2004, the state created a protected reading allocation by earmarking a portion of the Florida Education Finance Program for school districts to develop K-12 literacy plans. To receive that allocation, the Florida Department of Education must approve the district plan annually.

The statute requires that district reading plans include evidence that

- Leadership at the district and school level guides and supports the initiative.
- Data analysis will drive all decision-making.
- Professional development is systemic and job embedded, through reading coaches, and is targeted at individual teacher needs as determined by analysis of student performance data.

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<sup>10</sup> With the advent of mid-year promotions, some students will no longer spend an additional year in school despite having been "retained."

- Measurable student achievement goals are established and clearly described.
- Appropriate research-based instructional materials and strategies are used to address specific student needs.

The effort allows districts to vary their plans according to local needs and capacity, but the district strategies ultimately must draw upon the latest scientific literacy instruction research.

#### **A NATIONAL MOVEMENT: LITERACY-BASED PROMOTION**

Florida is no longer alone in successfully implementing retention policies. Former New York City Schools Chancellor Joel Klein's team studied the Florida policy, and implemented a retention strategy for New York City schools. The RAND Corporation conducted a formal study of the New York City policy. This careful study not only identified statistically significant academic gains associated with the policy, it also measured the psychological impact on retained students. The RAND team found:

- The emphasis on early identification of struggling students and on providing them extra learning opportunities was a critical factor in the success of the city's policy.
- The policy and supportive services had positive effects on student performance in the 5th grade that continued into the 7th grade.

Retention had no negative effects on students' sense of school belonging or confidence in mathematics and reading. Retained students reported a greater sense of school belonging than at-risk promoted and not-at-risk students, even four years after the retention decision.

Florida's retention success has inspired lawmakers in Arizona, Indiana, and Oklahoma to pass laws to emulate the practice in addition to other elements of Florida's comprehensive approach to reform. Americans broadly support the concept of equality of opportunity for all. Only an urgently serious approach to literacy truly squares with this deeply held value. Florida radically improved the literacy skills of their children. Lawmakers and educators in your state can as well.

#### **LITERACY AS A RESPONSIBILITY FOR STUDENTS, PARENTS AND SCHOOLS**

Florida's policy recognizes the overwhelming importance of literacy acquisition by creating accountability for educators, parents and students alike. Social promotion sets students up for failure rather than success. Florida's literacy-based promotion policy served as a vital piece of an overall strategy that improved Florida's national test scores from among the worst to among the best within the span of a decade. Florida's reforms have narrowed achievement gaps by moving all students forward, but doing the most for the students who start with the least.

## **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

### **What challenges did Florida face implementing the third grade promotion policy?**

A major challenge when implementing the third grade promotion policy was clear communication on the specifics of the policy and effectively communicating that the policy was an opportunity for a struggling reader to get the assistance he or she needed to become a proficient reader.

Providing and defining good cause exemption options to the policy was also challenging. Providing an open hearing and laying out the good cause exemptions clearly is critical to the acceptance of the policy. In addition, having clear expectations on the student portfolio of work option is critical.

Establishing a strong state and district professional development program, including reading coaches to mentor teachers to teach reading effectively, was also important to the policy's success. Florida provided professional development on research-based reading instruction including data-based decision making for district and school administrators, reading coaches, and teachers. Florida also provided resources, such as parent workshops, that included student activities and support to parents about how they can support reading at home in the evenings. The strategy of working with parents showed that the state was committed to do something for their children to help them become successful, not just working with teachers and relying on the education system, but also the parents themselves, to change the culture to ensure student success.

### **Is retention “cruel to children”?**

The status-quo is cruel to children. Educators who retain children and teach them how to read are doing them an enormous favor. The RAND Corporation's study of the New York City retention policy found positive psychological benefits for retained students.

### **How does Florida measure early reading proficiency?**

Florida initially provided several options to measure early reading proficiency. The Early Reading Diagnostic Assessment K-3 (ERDA) and the Diagnostic Assessments of Reading K-12 (DAR) were available through the Florida Department of Education's Office of Assessment and School Performance free of charge for the school district's lowest-performing 15 percent of all K-12 students. A developmental screener, the Florida Kindergarten Readiness Screener, which originally included the Early Childhood Observation System (ECHOS) and Dynamic Indicators of Basic Early Literacy Skills (DIBELS) and now updated to include the Florida Assessment of Instruction in Reading (FAIR), provides schools with a tool for assessing early literacy. FAIR was also provided free of charge to districts to provide reading data to support teachers with making informed instructional decisions based on student needs, to monitor the progress of all K-12 students identified with a reading difficulty, and to predict end of the year outcome performance. These assessments focus on phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary,

and comprehension and identify areas in which the student is struggling.

### **How much does a literacy-based promotion policy in third grade cost?**

Implementing a literacy-based promotion policy in third grade will not incur additional costs on the state. The federal government requires all states to have a statewide standards-based assessment in third grade. Educators use this assessment to determine if students have acquired the necessary reading skills to advance to 4th grade. However, states should consider investing or leveraging existing resources to provide reading coaches who can assist teachers to learn the science of teaching reading.

### **What was the fiscal impact of this policy in Florida?**

The amount of funding spent on ensuring kids know how to read, even if it takes them an extra year, is by far made up for in less costs remediating them for the next nine years in the K-12 system, if we are lucky, or as dropouts. Primary grades are the least expensive options to remediate students and the most realistic time to make it happen. An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

Any cost incurred with a test-based promotion policy should be regarded as an investment in child literacy, not a by-product of retention. Retention has been tried in other states before as a policy to address illiteracy and failed, as have efforts to fund literacy efforts without test-based assurance of its effectiveness. It was the unique combination of retention coupled with effective interventions that define Florida's policy and ensured its success. The key to the financial viability of this policy is making better use of existing local, state and federal funds. With a national average level of spending of \$10,000 per child per year, a typical American student has had \$40,000 invested by taxpayers by the time they reach the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. Taxpayers provide that money to *educate* rather than merely babysit the child. A child's future hangs precariously in the balance during the early grades, and we must fiercely pursue the maximum bang for every buck invested whether or not you decide to dedicate additional state funds for literacy interventions.

### **How do elementary schools deal with the extra students from a facility standpoint?**

There are no extra students. The retention policy results in greater numbers of 3<sup>rd</sup> graders, but smaller numbers of 4<sup>th</sup> graders. Policy implementation sometimes involved changing a teacher assignment from 4<sup>th</sup> grade to 3<sup>rd</sup> grade.

### **What about studies that show in other states that retention "does not work"?**

Florida's model is very different. Researchers have subjected the Florida policy to two rigorous statistical evaluations and found both times that the policy helped retained students to gain literacy skills. As noted, educators and lawmakers have tried and failed with retention policies around the country previously. Florida's was different in that it targeted K-3, and that it only used objective data as the basis for retention. The Sunshine state also had an appropriate balance

of good cause exemptions only students who could benefit found themselves included in the policy.

Retention itself is not the goal here, it's strong instruction and intervention coupled with the test-based promotion that makes it a successful combination. In addition to Florida data demonstrating increases in proficiency on the statewide-standardized assessment and the National Assessment for Educational Progress (NAEP), several research studies (listed in detail in the following question's answer) provide evidence that Florida's policy is working.

**A third grade promotion policy may help temporarily, but where is the long-term evidence? Does retention cause students to drop out?**

The first class of retained students in Florida has not yet graduated high school. Evidence of the policy's impact on high school graduation and dropout rates will first be available in 2013 for third graders retained for the first time under the policy in 2003.

Reading proficiency in Florida, at every grade level and all subgroups (white, black, Hispanic, students with disabilities, etc.) has steadily been increasing over the last decade. Florida's graduation rates have been consistently increasing and they are at the highest rate ever. Likewise, Florida's dropout rates have been consistently decreasing and are at the lowest rate ever.

Research conducted on Florida's retention policy by the Manhattan Institute in three separate studies has shown there are statistically significant positive effects of the policy over time. Their currently published findings studied the program for the first three years of implementation and the preliminary results of their follow up study show that those positive effects continue, even six years after the retention year.

**Why can't we just fund literacy efforts without a retention policy?**

A literacy program or policy is not enough because it does not provide the necessary pressure for the adults in the system to help kids that are not proficient. A literacy policy needs to be student-focused with specific help for students that are not proficient, like non-promotion to the next higher grade, coupled with literacy strategies. Florida did not just retain students for the sake of retention -- the state implemented improved professional development for teachers and principals in the research on reading and put reading coaches in place, among a number of other interventions to truly change what was happening in the public schools. Policymakers need a test-based promotion policy like Florida has to ensure teachers and students have the accountability for learning and mastery that children need to succeed.

**Could a third grade progression policy jeopardize federal funds?**

Not if districts observe the strict rules around supplanting (where the state is currently funding an initiative then federal funding comes into the state). For example, Florida's policy requires that students retained at 3<sup>rd</sup> grade receive supplementary learning experiences such as a summer reading camp. Districts will have to think creatively about their funding sources for some

activities, but it is not an insurmountable dilemma and has not resulted in Florida losing any federal funds.

**Does the Florida policy retain students for demonstrating deficiencies in all of the subjects or only in reading?**

The Florida policy bases promotion and retention decisions solely on reading. In Florida, as is typical in most states, performance on the reading statewide assessment is highly correlated with performance on the math assessment. Also, reading is the foundational skill students need to be able to learn all subject area content.

**Do the interventions associated with this policy require new funding sources or can we provide them with reallocations of existing dollars?**

Both. A large portion of funding in Florida, previous to this policy, was typically used for summer school and post-failure remediation. Lawmakers reallocated these funds and allowed them to be used for “preventative care.” Florida lawmakers also focused the federal Title I Title II and IDEA funds on ensuring students can read. In addition, the timing of the implementation coincided relatively well with the infusion of Reading First funds from USDE, which was used to hire reading coaches to mentor teachers, and implement other aspects of quality reading instruction: professional development, research-based curriculum, and assessment driven instruction.

**Does the state mandate which instructional and support services are to be utilized as interventions?**

No, the state does not mandate specific services, but, the services selected by the district must be consistent with scientifically based reading research. The Florida Center for Reading Research (FCRR) [www.fcrr.org](http://www.fcrr.org) has extraordinary information about the materials that educators use to provide these services. Additionally, Florida has a statewide textbook adoption cycle that requires districts to select scientifically-based reading research (SBRR) materials consistent with research and Florida’s literacy-based promotion policy. The adopted programs can be found at [http://www.fldoe.org/bii/instruct\\_mat/pdf/adopted.pdf](http://www.fldoe.org/bii/instruct_mat/pdf/adopted.pdf).

**What is the timeline for notifying students of retention?**

The statewide assessment is administered in April; results are back to the school and parents before the end of the school year in May. Students cannot retake the statewide assessment to meet the third grade promotion policy. Instead, students may demonstrate proficiency on an approved alternate measure like SAT10 or through a student portfolio.

**If a student moves into the school district from out-of-state at the beginning of 4<sup>th</sup> grade (or any grade after 3<sup>rd</sup>), must that student meet the third grade promotion requirements?**

No. In addition, the third grade promotion policy does not apply to students not enrolled in public school for third grade.

**How does the state ensure consistency in student portfolios to demonstrate a consistent standard across districts?**

The state has a comprehensive framework for what needs to be included in a student portfolio. Having a consistent policy statewide has alleviated the concern about students leaving one district for another because the portfolio is rumored to be easier.

State guidance to districts on the portfolio option requires that the contents:

- Be selected by the student's teacher;
- Be an accurate picture of the student's ability and only include student work that has been independently produced in the classroom;
- Be an organized collection of evidence of the student's mastery of the state reading standards and benchmarks assessed by the Grade 3 FCAT 2.0 Reading assessment;
- Be signed by the teacher and the principal as an accurate assessment of the required reading skills.

**In small, rural schools where there may only be one third grade teacher, what happens to retained students?**

In cases where there is only one third-grade classroom, staff changes may need to occur. It is imperative that teachers collaborate and use school support to provide a strategy to ensure these students receive intensive interventions. Schools should consider using an online blended model to ensure students receive instruction from the most effective teacher.

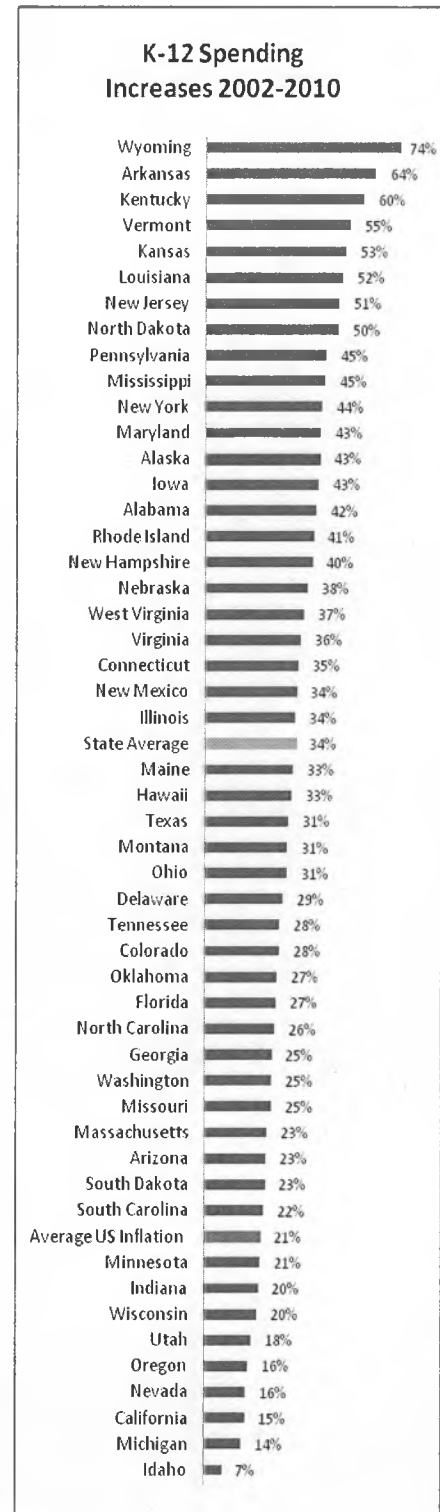
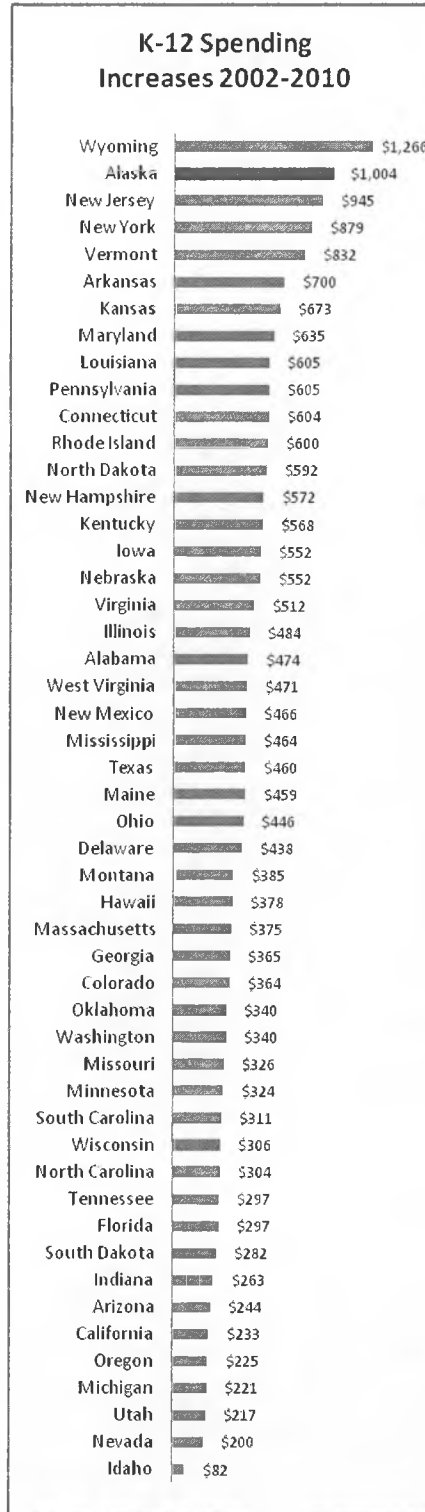
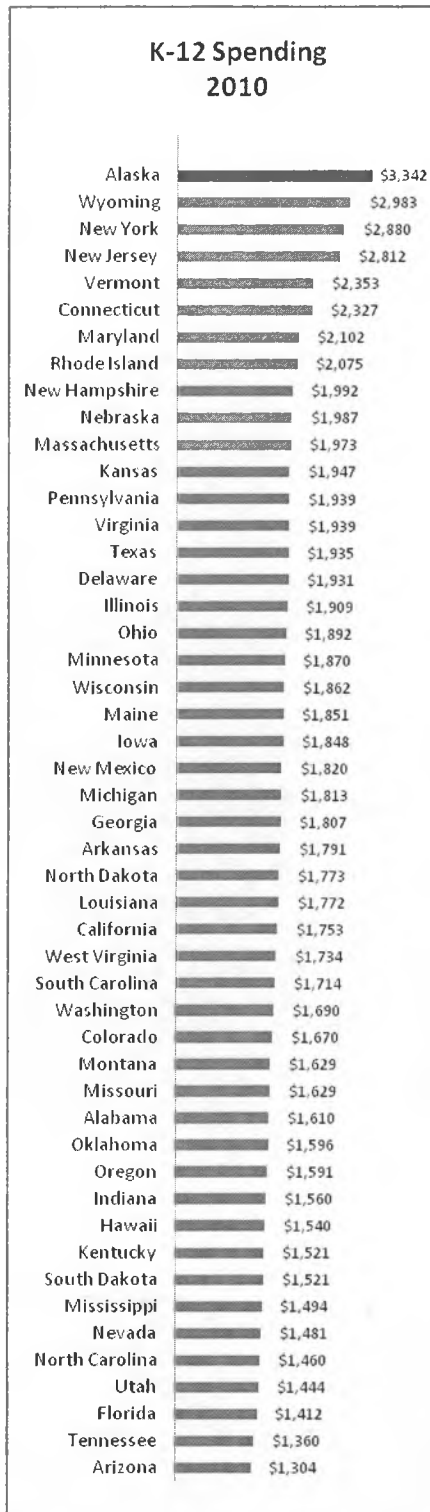
**Is there a specific curriculum for the retained students?**

Retention alone will not solve the problem of teaching students to read; these students will require differentiated curriculum and instruction. Florida knows that doing the same thing for another year will not produce different results. This is why Florida and the U.S. Department of Education provided funding for Scientifically Based Reading Research (SBRR), so we know what is effective to help struggling readers. Educators must provide retained students additional intensive instructional time using SBRR materials/programs more frequent progress monitoring, and more targeted instruction based on student needs to accelerate progress. Please visit <http://info.fl DOE.org/docu share/dsweb/Get/Document-6117/dps-2011-86.pdf> for all of the information.

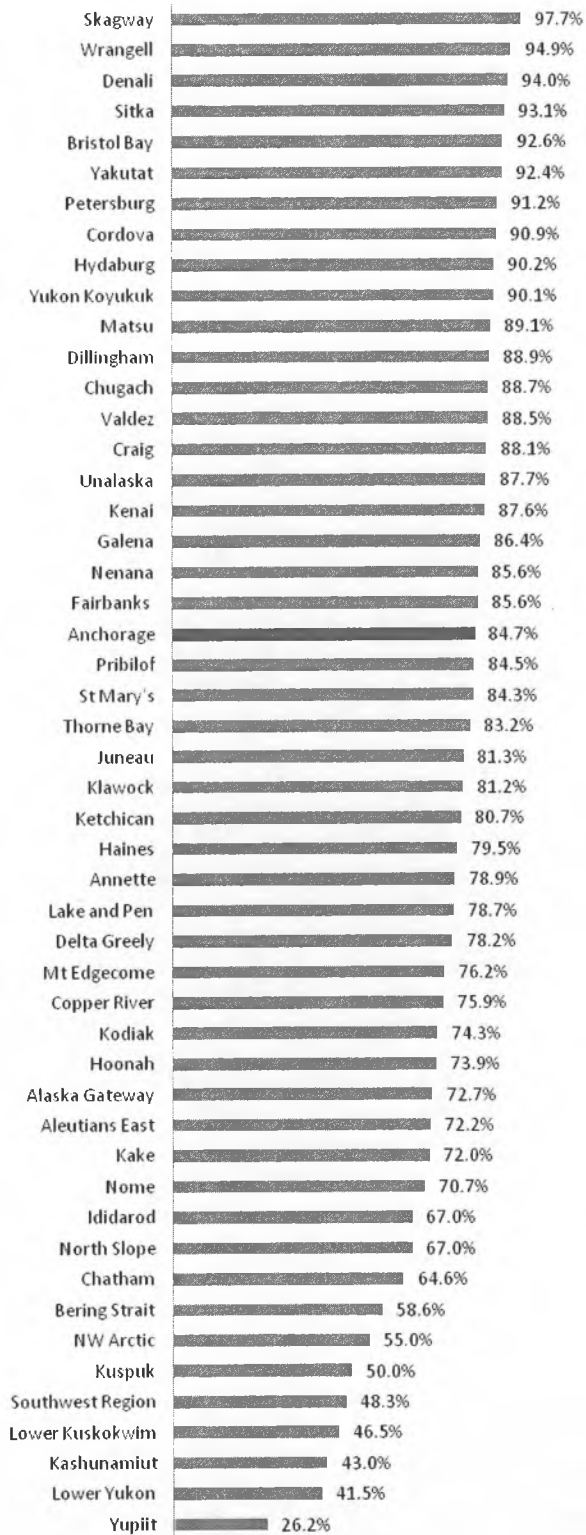
# K-12 Spending Comparison

State and Local K-12 Spending per Capita

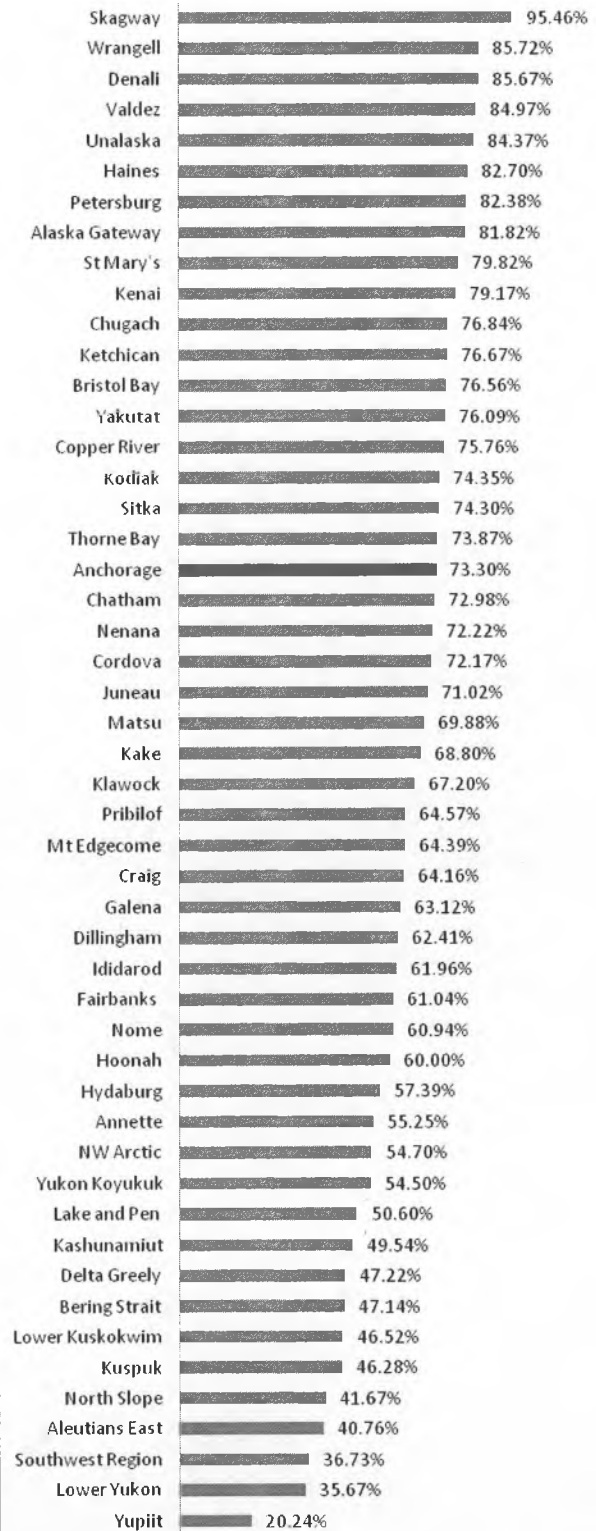
Source: NEA Rankings and Estimates, Dec 2012 and Dec 2004, Table H-8



Alaska School Districts  
2011-12 SBA Reading Proficiency



Alaska School Districts  
2011-12 SBA Math Proficiency



## 10 Year Cumulative NAEP Score Changes

