

THIRD GRADE PROMOTION INFORMATION FOR SECOND GRADE STUDENTS AND PARENTS



At the end of the 2025–2026 school year, third graders who do not meet the state-defined minimum reading standard *AND* do not qualify for a good cause exemption will **not** be promoted to fourth grade.

- In alignment with the Arkansas LEARNS Act, third-grade students are expected to meet a minimum reading standard to be promoted to fourth grade.
- Arkansas' Right to Read Act focuses on helping students build strong reading skills early.
- By providing targeted support in the early grades, the state aims to ensure students are reading on grade level by the end of third grade.

What is the minimum reading standard set by the state?

A score of **Level 2 or above** on the grade 3 ATLAS summative English Language Arts (ELA) assessment. The ELA score is an overall ability estimate for their total literacy proficiency

LEVEL 1 Limited Understanding	LEVEL 2 Basic Understanding	LEVEL 3 Proficient Understanding	LEVEL 4 Advanced Understanding
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Good Cause Exemptions

- Some students who do not meet the third-grade reading standard may still move to fourth grade through a good cause exemption.
- These exemptions are based on specific criteria and are designed to support individual student needs.

Good Cause Exemption categories:

DLM Eligible: Significant cognitive disability; DLM assessment

IEP/504 + Intervention: Not DLM eligible; active IEP/504 with 2+ years Science of Reading aligned intervention

English Learners: Fewer than 3 years in EL program

Previously Retained: Retained in a prior grade

Prior Intensive Support: Not eligible for Special Education but has received 2+ years intervention and ongoing reading needs

Assessment Portfolio: Grade-level performance but ATLAS Level 1 but portfolio demonstrates proficiency

Other Good-Cause Exemptions: State-approved with documentation

Isolated Traumatic Event: Documented event impacting test performance

Identifying at-risk students early

To ensure students are on track to meet the third-grade reading standard, districts will identify and provide early, targeted intervention to Kindergarten through third grade students who show signs of reading difficulty.

- The intent of the law is to identify and support struggling readers early, well before third grade.
- Schools are required to monitor reading progress starting in kindergarten.
- Students showing signs of risk, such as low scores on K–2 screeners or persistent difficulties with reading fundamentals, must receive targeted, individualized support.

At-risk indicators from K-2

- Ongoing low performance in foundational reading skills as evidenced across multiple data sources
- Classroom literacy work and Curriculum-based measures
- Interim or formative assessments
- ATLAS K–2 Level 1–2 or BOY screener “at risk” results
- Weaknesses in decoding, encoding, phonemic awareness, fluency, and comprehension

Consistent Family Communication

School leaders will be in constant communication with you throughout the process. Below is a tentative schedule for communication:

- April 13, 2026: 2nd Grade ATLAS Reading Summative
 - August 2026: BOY ATLAS Literacy Screener
 - October-November: Fall ATLAS Interim Assessment
 - January-February 2027: Winter ATLAS Interim Assessment
- Scores should be available through the ATLAS Family Portal within 48 hours of each assessment
 - You will receive a letter if your student’s scores indicate that they are at potential risk of not meeting the minimum standards for reading in 3rd grade after each assessment window

Supporting Student Success

Ensuring that all students read proficiently by the end of third grade is a shared responsibility—and a critical milestone for long-term academic success.

The policies and supports outlined in this guidance are designed to promote early identification, timely intervention, and sustained progress for every learner.

By working in partnership with families, implementing evidence-based practices with fidelity, and using data to drive decisions, we can create a strong foundation for student literacy and support successful transitions to fourth grade and beyond.