

October 2014

## Third Grade Reading Guarantee lays the foundation for a top-notch education

Representative Amanda Price

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/mrj>

### Recommended Citation

Price, Representative Amanda (2014) "Third Grade Reading Guarantee lays the foundation for a top-notch education," *Michigan Reading Journal*: Vol. 47 : Iss. 1 , Article 10.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.gvsu.edu/mrj/vol47/iss1/10>

This Other is brought to you for free and open access by ScholarWorks@GVSU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Michigan Reading Journal by an authorized editor of ScholarWorks@GVSU. For more information, please contact [scholarworks@gvsu.edu](mailto:scholarworks@gvsu.edu).

# Third Grade Reading Guarantee lays the foundation for a top-notch education

by Representative Amanda Price

The development of reading skills serves as the major foundation for students' academic ability and all school-based learning. In fact, reading is one of the most important measurements of the success of public education.

Up until third grade, students are learning to read. From fourth grade on, they are reading to learn. But how can they properly learn if they cannot properly read?

Proficiency in third-grade reading is measured by the MEAP test in Michigan. According to our state's education dashboard, 70 percent of Michigan's fourth-graders were deemed "third-grade reading proficient" during the 2013-14 school year, meaning also that nearly one-third of our students do not meet that benchmark.

I believe that these statistics must improve in order for our students' overall education to improve.

In October 2013, I introduced House Bill 5111, which establishes the "Third Grade Reading Guarantee" and, as a last resort, would retain children in third grade until proficiency is reached. House Bill 5144 – introduced by Rep. Thomas Stallworth, D-Detroit – is tie-barred to my legislation and provides early interventions to help increase reading proficiency in Michigan, focusing on the identification of and intervention for struggling readers in kindergarten through third grade. The goal of both bills is to improve literacy throughout a child's early education, not to retain students in third grade.

The current version of HB 5111 allows superintendents to take into consideration alternative assessments, student portfolios and good-cause

exemptions for students with an IEP or ESL students.

While 30 percent of Michigan's third-graders did not meet the minimum reading proficiency benchmark last year, less than 1 percent of those children were retained. And of those students who cannot proficiently read at a third-grade level, nearly two-thirds of them are not likely to graduate from high school.

When I first introduced House Bill 5111, it was intended to be the opening sentence in a much larger conversation about literacy in Michigan – and it has been just that.

Critics of my legislation cite studies about retention negatively impacting a child's self-esteem, and more than a few argue that children make up the gap in proficiency by fifth grade. While both are important to consider, making social promotion the only factor in moving children forward does a disservice to those children in the long run. By addressing the issue of reading proficiency at a young age, we are laying the cornerstone for a stronger, more complete education and success in life.

Thirty-two states and the District of Columbia have policies aimed at improving third-grade reading proficiency, and the majority of these states require early assessment and intervention as well. In addition, 14 states and the District of Columbia require retention of students on the basis of reading proficiency, most of which re-



Third Grade Reading Guarantee lays the foundation for a top-notch education

quire assessment and remediation for students in all K-3 grades.

Reading is the foundation upon which an entire education is built. By striving to improve the number of third-graders who are reading-proficient in our state, we are raising the bar for all Michigan students. It is time we make the “Third Grade Reading Guarantee” a top priority for our

students, because Michigan’s children are a top priority for the future of our great state.

*Amanda Price is a Republican State Representative from Park Township, Michigan. You can contact her campaign by e-mail at [amanda.nprice@gmail.com](mailto:amanda.nprice@gmail.com).*