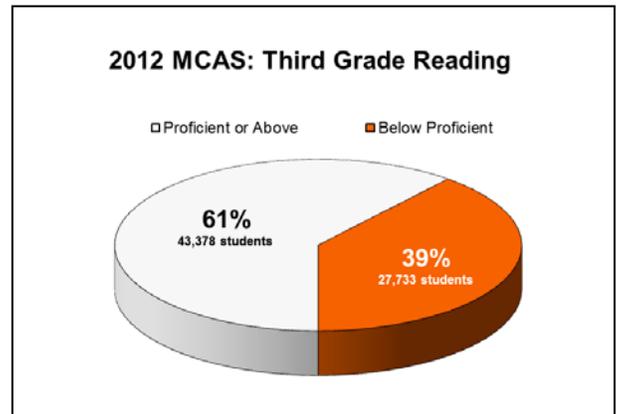


## Chapter 287, An Act Relative to Third Grade Reading Proficiency (H.4243) Lead sponsors: Senator Katherine Clark and Representative Martha Walz

### Third grade reading matters

While Massachusetts is lauded for its education achievement, a crisis lies below the surface. Almost 40% of third graders read below grade level. Research indicates that 74% of children who read poorly in third grade will continue to struggle in school, substantially reducing the likelihood that they will finish high school, attend college and contribute to our knowledge-based economy. In addition, Massachusetts has a large achievement gap, and performance in reading on the third grade MCAS has been stagnant since 2001.

We can do better. Ensuring that children read proficiently by the end of third grade will help close the achievement gap. In a state whose economy depends on a pipeline of skilled, well-educated workers, it will also help secure the commonwealth's future prosperity.



### About the law

On September 26<sup>th</sup> Governor Deval Patrick signed into law Chapter 287, An Act Relative to Third Grade Reading Proficiency (H.4243). This law addresses several key recommendations in the 2010 research report “Turning the Page: Refocusing Massachusetts for Reading Success” to improve third grade reading scores. The report was commissioned by Strategies for Children from Nonie Lesaux, a nationally recognized literacy expert at the Harvard Graduate School of Education.

### What the law does

- Focuses state attention on children’s language and literacy development in early education and care programs and pre-kindergarten to third grade, with a focus on five critical areas:
  - **Comprehensive curricula** anchored in rich content, using a wide variety of texts, emphasizing oral language, and balancing meaning- and code-based skills.
  - **Effective instructional practices** including tiered instructional strategies and materials.
  - **Professional development and training**, both pre-service and in-service, on language and literacy development and the effective use of screening and assessments.
  - **Assessment** that is comprehensive, developmentally appropriate and used to inform practice and report on children’s progress toward meeting benchmarks in language and literacy development.
  - **Family partnership strategies** for improving the quality of home-school interactions to support children’s language and literacy development.
- Establishes the **Early Literacy Expert Panel** to make recommendations to the commonwealth’s three education departments and the Executive Office of Education on the alignment, coordination, and implementation of the five areas above and on “action steps to implement the recommendations contained in “Turning the Page.”” The panel would also advise state education agencies on the refinement and implementation of state plans for early literacy development (i.e. the Massachusetts Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy Plan, the Early Learning Challenge Plan, and Race to the Top) that impact children from birth to third grade. The 9-member panel of experts would:
  - Be appointed by the secretary of education in collaboration with the three commissioners of education and in consultation with the Legislature’s Joint Committee on Education and Joint Committee on Higher Education.
  - Be co-chaired by the secretary of education and a member of the panel.

- Report annually on its activities, including progress on the five critical areas above, the alignment and collaboration among the three commissioners, and all state and federal funding related to early literacy and the programs such funding supports.

### Bill Timeline

- Filed on January 21, 2011
- Public hearing held on May 31, 2011
- Redrafted and given a favorable report by the Joint Committee on Education on March 20, 2012
- Reported by House Committee on Ways and Means on July 9, 2012
- Passed unanimously in the House of Representatives on July 11, 2012
- Passed in the Senate on July 26, 2012
- Signed into law by Governor Patrick, September 26, 2012

## Sponsors: An Act Relative to Third Grade Reading Proficiency

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### About Strategies for Children

Strategies for Children and its statewide Early Education for All Campaign work to ensure that children in Massachusetts have access to high-quality early education and become proficient readers by the end of third grade. EEA is a broad-based coalition of leaders from business, early childhood, labor, religion, health care, education and philanthropy, allied with parents, grass-roots leaders and policymakers on behalf of children and families. For more information, including a copy of the legislation, contact Titus DosRemedios at 617-330-7387 or [tdosremedios@strategiesforchildren.org](mailto:tdosremedios@strategiesforchildren.org).