Reading by Third Grade Matters... A Lot
A Campaign for Children

Strategies for Children’s Early Education for All Campaign works to align research, policy, and practice to ensure that children in Massachusetts have access to high-quality early education and become proficient readers by the end of third grade.
Why Reading Success by Third Grade Matters

Reading forms the basis of learning in all subjects. If children read proficiently by the end of third grade, the broader education agenda (college and career readiness, dropout prevention, STEM) is easier to tackle.
Three-quarters of children who struggle with reading in third grade will continue to struggle in school.

Children who do not read proficiently by the end of third grade are four times less likely than their peers to graduate from high school by age 19.

Only 83% of Massachusetts ninth graders finish high school four years later. The average high school dropout in Massachusetts costs taxpayers an estimated $349,000 more over his/her lifetime than the average high school graduate.

The Stakes are High

Inadequate Third Grade Reading Skills

Documented Negative Effects
- Grade retention
- Behavior difficulties
- Low self-esteem

Potential Outcomes
- Academic failure
- School dropout

Associated Social Consequences
- Low productivity
- Welfare dependence

Associated Personal Consequences
- Depression
- Incarceration
- Teen pregnancy

Massachusetts Leads the Nation, but Only 50% of Students are Proficient

Fourth Grade Reading Proficiency, Massachusetts and Nation
1992-2011 NAEP

% of Students Scoring Proficient or Advanced

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>MA</th>
<th>Nation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>47</td>
<td>33</td>
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<tr>
<td>2011</td>
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<td>34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Many Massachusetts Third Graders Lag in Reading

2012 MCAS

- 61% (43,378 students) Proficient or Above
- 39% (27,733 students) Below Proficient

Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) results over time for individual districts and schools can be found at: [http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/](http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/)
A Large Achievement Gap Persists

The Achievement Gap in Massachusetts
Trends in Third Grade Reading MCAS

Source: Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
A Large Achievement Gap Persists

Third Grade Reading Proficiency in Massachusetts, 2001-2012 MCAS, by Race/Ethnicity
Reading Performance is a Statewide Problem

Source: Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS), Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

2012 Third Grade Reading MCAS
% of students proficient or advanced

- Less than 50% (25 districts)
- 50 - 64% (79 districts)
- 65 - 79% (111 districts)
- 80 - 100% (59 districts)
- Data not available (7 districts)
“Turning the Page: Refocusing Massachusetts for Reading Success,”
By Nonie K. Lesaux, Ph.D.

Commissioned by Strategies for Children in 2010 with support from The Boston Foundation, Irene E. and George A. Davis Foundation, Nellie Mae Education Foundation, and the Pew Charitable Trusts
Define reading success.

Recognize that the solution begins at birth.

Ensure high-quality experiences in all settings where children learn; align solutions across the birth-third grade continuum.
Define Reading Success

Reading Success = Language and literacy development aligned with a child’s age and grade level

*Examples for children in the early elementary grades:*

- I have a wide vocabulary.
- I comprehend.
- I read fluently.
- I speak coherently.
- I write logically.
- I understand different types of texts.
The Path to Literacy Begins at Birth
A Developing Reader’s Journey

WORD COUNT

0      1      2      3      4      5      6      7      8      9
YEAR     YEARS     YEARS     YEARS     YEARS     YEARS     YEARS     YEARS     YEARS

HAS 250-350 words
Imitates speech
Vocalizes feelings (giggles, cries)

HAS 3,000-5,000 words
Looks through a book and retells the story

NOW LEARNING 3,000 words per year
Reads simple books
Asks questions when listening to stories

Reads independently and talks about what he reads
Has 250-350 words
Has 3,000-5,000 words
Now learning 3,000 words per year

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Recommendations

- Program design
- Assessment
- Professional development
- Curriculum
- Partnerships with families
Program Design and Implementation

Analyzing Impact

Key Ingredients  Dosage

Timing  Implementation
A comprehensive assessment system must focus on children’s reading and language development while also critically evaluating the quality and impact of learning environments and services.
Developmentally appropriate pre-k to grade three literacy assessments should measure:

**Print-Level Skills**
- Alphabet knowledge
- Phonological skills
- Concepts about print
- Phonics & decoding
- Fluency

**Meaning-Based Skills**
- Oral language skills
- Vocabulary knowledge
- Conceptual knowledge
- Writing

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**Reading Comprehension**
Professional Development

Professional development should enable early educators, teachers and their instructional leaders to:

1. Identify children’s needs as demonstrated by patterns in data
2. Participate in training targeted to meeting children’s needs
3. Implement changes to instruction
4. Receive feedback and support from instructional leaders and colleagues
Curriculum

Bring language-rich, rigorous and engaging pre-reading and reading curricula into early education and care settings and PK-3 classrooms.
Family Engagement

Expand and strengthen partnerships with families across learning settings and within communities.

Photo Credit: Reach Out and Read
Ensure High-Quality Experiences in All Settings

- Language-rich homes
- High-quality infant-toddler services
- High-quality pre-k
- High-quality full-day kindergarten
- PK-3 alignment

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To partner with Strategies for Children or learn more about what you can do in your community, contact Kelly Kulsrud, director of reading proficiency, at 617-330-7383 or kkulsrud@strategiesforchildren.org.