Strategies for Children Reacts to Release of 2012 District MCAS Scores

September 19, 2012 – The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education today released school and district results of the 2012 MCAS. Earlier this week, the department released statewide results that showed 39% of Massachusetts third graders scored below proficient in reading. Statewide, 60% of third graders from low-income families scored below proficient in reading, as did 26% of third graders from families that are not low-income. Statewide performance in third grade reading has changed little since 2001, when 38% of third graders scored below proficient.

(See chart: Trends in Third Grade Reading by Income.)

Reading is the foundation of success in both the classroom and the workplace. Third grade reading is a critical educational benchmark that strongly predicts children’s future performance in school and beyond. Research finds that children who struggle with reading in third grade are four times less likely to finish high school by age 19 than children who are competent readers. The path to reading success begins at birth, with children’s earliest language development, and includes family engagement, high-quality early education and strong schools in the primary grades and beyond.

An Act Relative to Third Grade Reading Proficiency, which the Legislature passed in July with overwhelming bipartisan support, now awaits Governor Patrick’s signature. The bill, which was introduced by Senator Katherine Clark (D-Melrose) and Representative Marty Walz (D-Boston), would establish an Early Literacy Expert Panel to advise state agencies.

“While statewide performance in third grade reading has changed little since 2001, there are schools and districts across the state making progress. Yet in too many communities, too many children are not reading proficiently by the end of third grade,” said Amy O’Leary, director of Early Education for All, a campaign of Strategies for Children. “We know what to do. An Act Relative to Third Grade Reading Proficiency is an important step in this process. It focuses on research-based strategies to improve the language and literacy development of young children, starting at birth. We urge Governor Patrick to sign the bill. It is time to provide all of our children with the strong start they deserve.”

Strategies for Children and its 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. Read our blog, Eye on Early Education. Find us on Facebook. Follow us on Twitter. View us on YouTube.