

***Appendix C: SBBC Policy 6000.1  
Elementary Procedural Manual***

***Parent Fact Sheet  
Third Grade Promotion and Retention  
Exceptional Student Education***

The Florida Legislature's 2003 revision of the Florida School Code has changed the requirements for third grade student promotion and retention. Section 1008.25, Florida Statutes, mandates that beginning with the 2002-2003 school year, any student in grade three, who exhibits a substantial deficiency in reading, must be retained if the student's reading deficiency has not been remediated by the end of grade 3. Reading proficiency is demonstrated by scoring at level 2 or higher on the grade 3 reading portion of the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) or the specified level on a state approved alternative or portfolio assessment. Reading deficiency is measured as scoring at level 1 on the FCAT. Students with disabilities may be exempt from mandatory retention for good cause.

**What is a good cause exemption?**

A good cause exemption is a reason your child may be promoted even though they do not meet the specified promotion criteria. The good cause exemptions provided by the state for all students, including those with disabilities, are:

1. A student is exempt from mandatory 3<sup>rd</sup> grade retention if the student demonstrates an acceptable level of performance on an alternative standardized reading assessment that has been approved by the Florida Department of Education.
2. A student is exempt from mandatory 3<sup>rd</sup> grade retention if the student demonstrates that he/she is reading on grade level through a student portfolio (meeting specified state standards) that reflects that the student has mastered the Sunshine State Standards in reading with equivalence to at least a Level 2 performance on the FCAT.
3. A third grade student is exempt from mandatory 3<sup>rd</sup> grade retention if the student has received intensive remediation in reading for two or more years, has a deficiency in reading, and has previously been retained in grades K-3 for a total of **two** years.

For students with disabilities, the following good cause exemptions have been provided by the state:

4. A student with disabilities is exempt from mandatory 3<sup>rd</sup> grade retention if the student's individual education plan (IEP) indicates that participation in the statewide assessment is inappropriate, consistent with the requirements of State Board of Education rule 6A-1.0943(a). In this case, the student's IEP team may exempt the student from taking the FCAT. In general, the major reason for exemption is that the student's demonstrated cognitive ability prevents them from completing the course work for Sunshine State

Standards. Students who do not complete the coursework for Sunshine State Standards and pass the FCAT may not be able to earn a standard diploma.

5. A student with disabilities is exempt from mandatory 3<sup>rd</sup> grade retention if the student participated in the FCAT, has been previously retained **at least one time** in grades K-3, the student's IEP or 504 Plan reflects that the student has received more than two years of intensive remediation in reading, and the student still demonstrates a reading deficiency.

For ELL students only:

6. An English Language Learner (ELL) is exempt from mandatory 3<sup>rd</sup> grade retention if the student has had less than two years of instruction in an English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) program.

**Should I recommend that my child be exempted by his/her IEP team from having to take the FCAT?**

No, for the majority of students with disabilities, participation in the FCAT is appropriate. The decision as to whether or not a student should participate in the FCAT is made at the IEP meeting after present levels of educational performance, goals, benchmarks and curriculum/assessment adaptations have been discussed and exemption determined only if the student meets the state exemption criteria. It is anticipated that only a small number of students with disabilities will be exempted from the opportunity to take the FCAT.

**Why is my child being retained in the third grade when he/she has been receiving passing grades on his/her report card?**

Retention and failing grades are different. Passing/failing grades represent the growth your child has made toward mastery of the course curriculum in a marking period. Grades reflect performance on your child's instructional level. Grades are indicated as either below level or on/above grade level. Third grade retention is based on reading deficiency as measured by the FCAT reading assessment.

**Are there any benefits to retention?**

Retention should be viewed as a student's opportunity to be provided with additional time to secure a firm foundation in basic reading skills or reaching grade level standards. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) allows students with disabilities to stay in school through the school year the student turns 22. In most instances, one or more of these additional years may be helpful to the student at the elementary level to allow more time for learning essential skills.

**Can my child be retained more than once?**

Retention for students with disabilities is limited to one in grades kindergarten through 5<sup>th</sup> grade. If a student is not meeting the promotion criteria in elementary school, he/she will typically meet the requirement for one retention at elementary at the mandated third grade level.

**If my child is retained, will anything change the following year?**

For any student retained, there must be a specific plan to address the reading deficits. This is done through a Progress Monitoring Plan (PMP). Both the PMP and the IEP must address specific areas of reading for remediation. You will receive information about the PMP if your child requires one.