



STATE OF MICHIGAN  
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
LANSING

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STATE SUPERINTENDENT

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Subject: Response to Read by Grade Three, Year One Report

The Michigan Department of Education (MDE), on behalf of the State Board of Education (SBE), engaged with our strategic research partner, Education Policy Innovation Collaborative (EPIC), to conduct an independent evaluation of the Read by Grade Three (RBG3) law. EPIC joined with Michigan Education Research Institute (MERI) partners to seek funding to conduct a five-year study and was awarded grants totaling \$5.5 million over five years from the U.S. Department of Education Institute for Education Sciences (IES) and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation beginning September 1, 2019.

MDE requested that the evaluation consist of three major components.

The first major component MDE wants to understand is the impact the RBG3 law, specifically retention, will have on student outcomes. The law aims to improve early literacy outcomes for students across the state of Michigan through improved instruction, implementation of early monitoring and identification systems, required interventions for students identified as having a "reading deficiency" under the law, and a requirement that students who do not meet a state standard for reading proficiency by the end of third grade are retained.

Second, MDE wants to understand how the law is being implemented. EPIC is collecting data via surveys, observations, and interviews. Surveys will be conducted every year of the study with teachers, principals, superintendents, intermediate school districts (ISDs) and local district coaches to get a better understanding of how the RBG3 law has affected instruction, interventions, and professional development. EPIC will participate in classroom observations. Additionally, EPIC will also continue to conduct state-level interviews to get an understanding of how the law is implemented by MDE and the resources available to assist districts with implementation.

Finally, MDE wants to know the cost-effectiveness of the RBG3 law. While implementation of the RBG3 law has been underfunded relative to similar reforms in other states, grant funds have been allocated through the school aid act to assist ISDs and districts with the implementation of the law. MDE wants to better understand how the funds are being used at the ISD and district levels and how the funds affect student outcomes.

MDE was pleased to have the chance to read and review the EPIC Read by Grade Three: Year One Report and provide a response. In this response, we will highlight 1) what the MDE finds exciting in the report, and 2) what the MDE is working to improve based on the report.

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### **What the MDE finds exciting in the Year One Report**

- Third-grade student achievement in both math and ELA has improved since the RBG3 law was passed. Notably, the greatest gains in third grade ELA achievement occurred in districts that had the lowest elementary ELA achievement and in urban districts.
- Many teachers reported increased implementation of evidence-based instructional practices in their classrooms since passage of the RBG3 law, with teachers in traditionally underserved districts being more likely to report increased time spent on these evidence-based instructional practices.
- Michigan was one of nine states to issue guidance on its third-grade reading policy during the COVID-19 pandemic in spring 2020. Michigan's guidance required that all components of the RBG3 law continued to be administered during school-building closures, except for retention which was temporarily suspended due to the absence of state testing. MDE continued to provide resources, including a [RBG3 technical assistance webinar](#), [frequently asked questions \(FAQ\) document](#), and [Early Literacy Assessment Guidance for Learning at a Distance](#) to assist districts with understanding the RBG3 law and to provide guidance about how to navigate the components of the law in a virtual setting, as applicable.

### **What MDE is Working to Improve**

- Enhanced communication and additional resources regarding "read at home" and summer programs to improve educator perceptions of the value of these programs. MDE is currently working on guidance around summer learning that will be shared widely and housed on the [MDE Literacy website](#).
- Continue providing resources around evidence-based instruction to all educators with an emphasis on those in lower-achieving and urban districts.
- Immediately prior to the pandemic, MDE's communications were primarily focused on the retention portion of RBG3 since it was the first year of implementation of that element of the law. MDE will increase communications concerning retention and other aspects of the RBG3 law primarily through our [Read by Grade Three listserv](#). Parent and district resources can be found on the [MDE Literacy website](#).

### **Final Thoughts**

The MDE thanks EPIC for its collaboration on this important evaluation and report. We also thank the ISDs, districts, and educators for participating in the evaluation activities and providing survey and interview data to the research team so that we can collectively work to improve student outcomes. Questions or comments about the Read by Grade Three law should be directed to [MDE-EarlyLiteracy@michigan.gov](mailto:MDE-EarlyLiteracy@michigan.gov).

Sincerely,



Dr. Paula Y. Daniels, Director  
Office of Educational Supports