

# The Detroit News

## Letter: How to improve Michigan's third grade reading law

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Michigan's Read by Grade Three law, adopted in 2016, to retain third graders reading more than a grade level behind, includes provisions to screen students, document intervention plans, and provide resources to those who need them.

It does not go far enough in diagnosing and intensively treating individual reading weaknesses in children who are reading more than a grade level behind.

At the end of a pandemic school year, 2,700 third graders statewide received notice that due to poor scores on the state's reading assessment, they may have to repeat third grade unless their school district superintendent grants them an exemption (Re: "Bill pausing third grade reading law sent to full Michigan Senate," May 26).

Our children are capable. They do not deserve to be penalized for not having achieved what the adults in their lives are obligated to give them — the chance to succeed in their education. Neither repeating a grade nor simply passing along a student to the next grade will solve the problem of illiteracy in Michigan, and especially not during a disrupted school year.

For more than a decade, Beyond Basics has worked alongside children and teachers to implement a solution that shows success in moving children forward in reading in an average of six weeks. A certified teacher administers a diagnostic test to all incoming students to determine the severity of their needs.



Once we have results, an individualized curriculum is rolled out by a trained tutor who meets with the child every day for an hour until the student is reading proficiently. Our multi-sensory, holistic and creative program incorporates fine arts enrichment, mentoring and a nurturing tutor-student relationship that benefits the child's overall well-being.

Naysayers complain about the difficulty of finding and funding a structured one-on-one program, but we have been doing this work for years. Now, our state leaders have an opportunity to effect lasting change by funding literacy through the federal COVID relief package that is sending billions of dollars to school districts to help schools move forward from the pandemic.

This investment is the way forward to a brighter future for our K-12 students.

The third grade reading law has finally brought wide exposure to the epidemic of illiteracy in our schools, but it is not the solution — assessment and tutoring are. Once we embrace the opportunity to fund literacy in Michigan, we enable students to succeed in life and connect to all of life's possibilities.

We have seen it time and again — a child who reads is a child who can be educated, and a child who is educated becomes an adult who can thrive.

Pamela Good, co-founder and CEO, Beyond Basics