

July 20, 2026

Whittaker Elementary School

Dear Third-Grade Parent/Guardian,

We're excited to partner with you this year to help your child succeed in third grade! Below, we've outlined important information about the reading expectations for third graders and how we will support your child's reading growth. Together, we can make this a successful year for your child!

Background

Reading is the key to your child's success in school, and third grade is a critical year! At this stage, your child will go from learning how to read to using their reading skills to understand other subjects like math, science, and social studies. Reading and comprehending grade-level text is essential for your child's academic growth, cognitive development, and critical thinking. This year will lay the foundation for future learning and success in school.

The Law: Read to Succeed Act

The **Read to Succeed Act**, which became law in 2014 and was updated in 2024, ensures that all students develop the reading skills necessary to become college, career, or military ready. One important part of this law is the requirement that schools retain third-grade students who are significantly behind in reading at the end of the year.

According to **Act 114**, a student must be retained in the third grade if they do not demonstrate reading proficiency, as indicated by scoring *Does Not Meet Expectations* on the state's summative reading assessment (SC Ready). This requirement is designed to give students who are struggling with reading the extra support they need to succeed.

Good Cause Exemptions

There are some cases in which a student may be promoted to fourth grade, even if they are not reading at the required level. These are called **Good Cause Exemptions** (GCEs). Your child may qualify for an exemption if they:

1. Have limited English proficiency (fewer than two years of English instruction).
2. Have a disability and are receiving specialized services through an Individualized Education Program (IEP).
3. Have already been retained once in an earlier grade.
4. Attend Summer Reading Camp and demonstrate reading progress by scoring *Approaches Expectations* or higher on the end-of-camp assessment.

Please reach out to your school if you think your child may qualify for a Good Cause Exemption.

Expectations for Third Graders

This year, your child will focus on developing both reading fluency (reading smoothly and accurately) and comprehension (understanding what they read). By the end of third grade, students are expected to be able to explain key details from what they've read, both in literary and informational texts.

Here's how we will support your child's reading development:

- **One-on-One Instruction:** Teachers will work with your child individually as needed.
- **Small Group Instruction:** Your child will receive targeted reading support in small groups.
- **Differentiated Instruction:** Lessons will be tailored to meet your child's individual needs.

At home, you can support your child's reading growth by:

- Encouraging them to read aloud to you or a family member.
- Asking questions about what they've read, such as, "What happened in the story?" or "Why do you think that character made that choice?"
- Setting aside time each day for reading.

What to Expect This School Year

- Our goal is to help your child become a confident, independent reader and to ensure they move on to fourth grade on schedule. **Act 114** requires that students who are not reading at grade level receive additional support, including at least 90 minutes of daily reading instruction. These interventions will be based on the **science of reading** and designed to meet your child's specific needs.
- Throughout the year, we will regularly assess your child's progress and communicate the results to you. Working together, we can help your child reach grade-level reading proficiency. Please stay in close contact with your child's teacher to monitor their progress and discuss additional ways to support your child at home.

Let's Work Together!

We're committed to helping your child succeed, and we know that by working together, we can make a big difference. If you have any questions about your child's progress or need more resources to support reading at home, please don't hesitate to reach out to your child's teacher. We're here to support you and your child every step of the way!

Together, let's make this a wonderful school year full of growth and learning!

Sincerely,

Dr. Charlene Stokes
Principal for Whittaker Elementary School
Email: charlene.stokes@ocsdsc.org

Monique Jefferson
Reading Coach for Whittaker Elementary School
Email: monique.jefferson@ocsdsc.org

Student Name _____

Parent Signature _____ Date _____