

HELPING YOUR CHILD BECOME A SUCCESSFUL READER

THE READING SUFFICIENCY ACT: A GUIDE FOR FAMILIES

The Oklahoma Reading Sufficiency Act—or RSA—helps ensure that by the end of third grade, each student has the opportunity to develop strong foundational reading skills needed to be successful in fourth grade and beyond.

Parents are a child's first teacher, and building literacy starts in the home even before children enter public school. Beginning in kindergarten, your child will be assessed to determine his or her reading skills. We want you to be familiar with RSA and the supports available to you and your child during the early grades, when reading development is critical to future academic success.

We hope the information in this guide is helpful to you. If you have questions about your child's reading ability, contact your child's teacher or school. For questions about RSA, please reach out to Melissa Ahlgrim at Melissa.Ahlgrim@sde.ok.gov.

WHAT IS A SUCCESSFUL READER?

The fundamental goal of reading is to comprehend, or understand, what has been read. Reading comprehension means a student must be able to:

- Identify the letters on the page
- Translate those letters into words
- Understand what each of those words mean
- Put the words together in a way that makes meaning
- Recall what was read in order to understand the message

Reading is a complex act that requires a number of skills working together.

HOW DO I KNOW IF MY CHILD IS MAKING APPROPRIATE PROGRESS?

Under RSA, schools must assess every student on grade-level reading skills, beginning in kindergarten. If a student does not meet established benchmarks, the school must work with the parent to create a plan for helping the student in any area that needs attention. This is called an Academic Progress Plan (APP), and it provides the following information:

- Your child's specific area of need
- The instructional services and supports provided for your child
- Strategies you can use to help your child succeed
- Information and policies for promotion to fourth grade

Reading success requires support from many different people. The Oklahoma State Department of Education (OSDE) and your child's school have tools to help each student. However, a student has a greater chance of becoming a successful reader with the help of the family and as a result of his or her own hard work. Each person or group can work to improve a student's reading success in the following ways:

STUDENT

- Be at school on time each day
- Be engaged in class
- Read at least 20 minutes every day
- Read and discuss books that are interesting to you
- Write about your day and what you are reading
- Ask questions in class
- Discuss what you are learning with your family

FAMILY

- Make sure your child arrives to school on time each day
- Model reading at home by reading regularly
- Have children's books in your home
- Read with your child each night
- Talk to your child's teacher about strategies that support reading
- Weave reading activities into trips to restaurants, the grocery store, medical appointments, etc.

SCHOOL

- Provide instruction on the Oklahoma Academic Standards with an evidence-based program
- Set aside sufficient time for literacy instruction
- Assess students' skills at the beginning and end of each year
- Inform parents of any learning gaps and make a plan to address them
- Provide appropriate interventions for students who need additional support
- Monitor students' progress toward reading goals

OSDE

- Provide regional literacy workshops, webinars and other materials on literacy for teachers and administrators
- Provide districts with guidance on evidence-based literacy programs, as well as appropriate interventions for students who need additional support
- Provide guidance to school on services and supports for effective reading instruction and strategies

WHAT DOES THE READING SUFFICIENCY ACT (RSA) MEAN FOR MY THIRD-GRADE STUDENT?

By the end of third grade, students must have solid foundational reading skills to be successful in later grades. RSA provides multiple pathways for students to either be promoted by demonstrating those skills or, if they do not, for a teacher-family committee to create an Academic Progress Plan (APP) to promote the student with appropriate supports. If necessary, a student may need to be retained in third grade for additional instruction. The purpose of this section of RSA is to ensure that students are either ready to move forward with their learning or have a plan in place to help them be successful as they continue to work on these foundational skills.

WHAT ARE THE PATHWAYS TO PROMOTION?

Different students have different needs. **No child's promotion or retention is based on one test on one day.** Students can qualify for promotion to fourth grade in the following ways:

MEET RSA CRITERIA ON THE STATE READING TEST

Students are eligible for automatic promotion to fourth grade if they meet RSA criteria on the reading portion (which consists of reading comprehension and vocabulary sections only) of the third-grade state English language arts assessment.

DEMONSTRATE READING PROFICIENCY ON A STATE-APPROVED SCREENING ASSESSMENT

Beginning in kindergarten, schools assess students at the beginning and end of each year (at minimum). Any student who shows end-of-year third-grade reading proficiency on one of these screeners during first through third grade is eligible for automatic promotion. Visit with your child's teacher to find out which screening assessment is used and its proficiency requirements.

MEET ONE OF THE SEVEN GOOD CAUSE EXEMPTIONS

Every child is different, and there can be special circumstances in which it would be in the best interest of the child to advance to fourth grade. If one of the following seven Good Cause exemptions apply, the student may be promoted and receive additional help through intensive reading instruction in fourth grade as outlined through an Academic Progress Plan.

1. English learners who have had less than two years of instruction in English and are identified as Limited English Proficient/English learner on an approved screening tool
2. Students with disabilities whose Individualized Education Plan (IEP) indicates they are to be assessed with the Oklahoma Alternate Assessment Program (OAAP)
3. Students who demonstrate an acceptable level of performance on an alternative standardized reading test approved by the Oklahoma State Board of Education
4. Students who demonstrate through a teacher-developed portfolio that they can read on grade level
5. Students with disabilities who participate in the Oklahoma School Testing Program (OSTP) and who have an Individualized Education Program (IEP) that reflects that the student has received intensive remediation in reading for more than two years but still demonstrates a deficiency in reading and was previously retained for academic reasons in a previous grade
6. Students who have received intensive remediation in reading for two or more years but still demonstrate a deficiency in reading and who were previously retained for academic reasons in two grades
7. Students facing exceptional emergency circumstances that prevent them from being assessed during the testing window

UNANIMOUS DECISION BY THE STUDENT READING PROFICIENCY TEAM

When a student does not meet the above criteria for advancement to fourth grade, the student may receive a probationary promotion through a **unanimous** decision of the Student Reading Proficiency Team (SRPT). The team is made up of a parent or guardian, the child's current reading teacher, future reading teacher and a certified reading specialist (if one is available). The principal and superintendent must approve the promotion. Any student promoted on probationary basis will receive intensive reading instruction in fourth grade as outlined through an Academic Progress Plan (APP).

HOW WILL MY CHILD BE SUPPORTED IF HE OR SHE IS RETAINED?

Schools must support children with reading challenges. Students who are retained must receive individualized reading instruction outside the regular 90-minute reading block. Additional help may include small-group instruction, reduced teacher-student ratios, more frequent progress monitoring, tutoring, transitional classes, extended school day and summer reading academies. Services will be outlined in the Academic Progress Plan (APP).

FAMILY RESOURCES:

Oklahoma State Department of Education, RSA for Parents – www.sde.ok.gov/sde/parent-reading-sufficiency
Reading Rockets Tips for Parents – www.readingrockets.org/audience/parents
Scholastic Parent Tips – www.scholastic.com/parents