



FEBRUARY 2017 LEGISLATIVE BRIEF: READING SUFFICIENCY ACT (RSA)

WHAT IS IT?

The purpose of the Reading Sufficiency Act (RSA) is to ensure that all Oklahoma students are reading on grade level by the end of third grade. RSA targets Oklahoma children in kindergarten through third grade identified as at risk for reading difficulties and provides the necessary supports to help them progress to the appropriate grade level. Students have multiple pathways to demonstrate their reading abilities. However, those who are not reading at grade level by the end of the third grade may be subject to retention based on the decision of a Student Reading Proficiency Team. While much of the focus remains on third-grade proficiency, the true purpose of RSA is to identify struggling readers early and provide them targeted interventions so that they will be successful by third grade.

HOW DID IT COME ABOUT?

RSA was first passed in 1997 (70 OS §1210.508C) and has undergone many iterations. However, the focus on third grade has been in place since its inception. Third grade is the transition year in which the focus of reading instruction becomes “reading to learn” rather than “learning to read.” In 2011, the law was amended to require students who do not score above the “unsatisfactory” level (the lowest of four achievement levels) on the Oklahoma School Testing Program (OSTP) – the state standardized test for third-grade reading – to be retained at the end of third grade. This provision was added to prohibit the practice of “social promotion.”

In 2014, parents, educators and legislators came together to ensure the parent’s role in retention decisions. During the 2014 Legislative Session, HB 2625 added a provision allowing for a team including parent, current teacher, future teacher, principal (who was later removed) and reading specialist to unanimously determine retention or promotion. Students promoted under a probationary status by the team are required to receive intensive remediation.

WHAT’S NEW?

In 2015, SB 630 extended the creation of the team through the 2017-2018 school year. However, beginning in the 2016-2017 school year, students scoring both “unsatisfactory” and “limited knowledge” on the OSTP will be evaluated by a team for possible retention. Also in SB 630, kindergarten through third-grade students are required to be assessed at the beginning and end of each school year for the acquisition of reading skills, allowing a student shown to be reading at end-of-third grade proficiency on the district screener at any point to be exempt from RSA retention. The bill also required students to be evaluated only on the vocabulary and reading comprehension portions of the OSTP, excluding the language arts portions that do not specifically measure reading skills. As a result, students now receive one score for the entire OSTP and a separate score indicating whether or not they have met the RSA benchmark for automatic promotion.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What are the key reading skills students are expected to know?

RSA requires students to be assessed on the Five Essential Components of Reading Instruction: phonemic awareness, phonics, reading fluency, vocabulary and comprehension.

Why do we make decisions about a student based on one test on one day?

Students are not evaluated based on one test given on one day (i.e. the OSTP). RSA law allows multiple pathways to promotion.

What are the pathways to reading promotion?

1. Scoring "at the end-of-third-grade proficiency" on an approved screening instrument
2. Qualifying for one of seven good-cause exemptions (see below)
3. Successfully completing a Summer Academy Reading Program (SARP) **and**:
 - Scoring at least at the 45th percentile on a state-approved Alternative Reading Assessment, or
 - Demonstrating mastery of third-grade reading skills through a student portfolio, or
 - Demonstrating "end-of-third-grade proficiency" on a district-adopted screener
4. Unanimous team decision for probationary promotion approved by principal and superintendent

What are good-cause exemptions?

1. English learners (ELs) with fewer than two years of English instruction who are identified as LEP/EL
2. Students with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) assessed with OAAP
3. Students who demonstrate proficiency on an approved alternative standardized reading test
4. Students who demonstrate proficiency through a teacher-developed portfolio
5. Students on an IEP stating they have received intensive remediation in reading for less than two years, but still have a deficiency and were previously retained one year or were in a transitional grade
6. Students who have received intensive remediation in reading for more than two years, but still demonstrate a deficiency and have been retained for two years prior to third grade
7. Students facing exceptional emergency circumstances preventing them from being assessed

What is the funding for RSA, and how are funds distributed?

Funds are given to districts on a per-student basis for kindergarten through third-grade students reading below grade level. For FY17, \$4,507,271 was appropriated to RSA, which amounts to \$56.13 per at-risk student. For FY16, the allocation was \$6,492,074, which amounted to \$76.87 per at-risk student. Statute (70 OS §1210.508D) required an allocation of \$150 per student until 2011. RSA has never been fully funded based on this definition.

What were the state reading scores for RSA?

In 2015-2016, 88% of third-graders achieved the status "Meets RSA Criteria" by scoring above unsatisfactory on the reading portion of the OSTP, while 12% did not. Among third-graders, 1,674 were ultimately retained by the team, and 1,785 were promoted.

What are Tiered Interventions?

Each program of reading instruction for students reading below grade level is based upon a three-tiered Response to Intervention (RtI) model and requires:

Tier 1: 90 min. PLUS daily scientific research-based reading instruction

Tier 2: Tier 1 90 min. PLUS additional intervention time based on individual needs

Tier 3: Tier 1 90 min. PLUS at least 45-60 minutes of additional intervention time based on individual needs

WHERE CAN I FIND MORE INFORMATION?

- OSDE RSA Webpage: [www.http://sde.ok.gov/sde/reading-sufficiency](http://sde.ok.gov/sde/reading-sufficiency)
- Approved Screening Instruments: http://sde.ok.gov/sde/sites/ok.gov.sde/files/documents/files/RSA-K-3_FormativeAssessments_1.pdf
- RSA Quick Guide: <http://sde.ok.gov/sde/sites/ok.gov.sde/files/documents/files/RSA%20Quick%20Guide1%202016-17.pdf>
- Resources for Parents: <http://sde.ok.gov/sde/parents-reading-sufficiency>