



# RESEARCH BRIEF

## Research Services

Vol. 0404  
November 2004

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## Third-Grade Retention in 2004

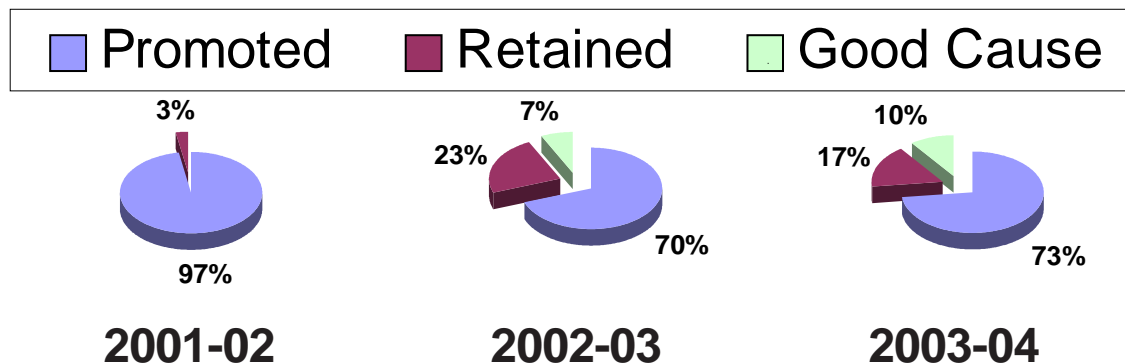
Beginning in the 2002-03 school year, the revised Florida School Code required 3rd grade students to demonstrate reading proficiency by scoring at level 2 or higher on the reading portion of the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT). If not, the student must be retained, unless exempted from mandatory retention for special circumstances referred to as "good cause."

These new requirements have had considerable impact on the retention rates in M-DCPS. This paper presents a brief look at the 3rd grade retention rates for 2003-04, comparing previous years' rates and subgroups' rates disaggregated by ethnicity, free/reduced lunch status, and English proficiency levels.

### Comparison Across Years

The graphs below show the percentages of students promoted, retained, and exempted from retention for good cause for each of the last three years. The percentage of students retained increased dramatically when the new requirements were put into place in 2002-03. The actual number of students retained went from **757** in 2001-02, to **6,622** in 2002-03 (later updated to 6,301 based on promotions due to alternative assessments). The number of 3rd grade students retained last year has diminished slightly, to **5,311**, but this number is still thousands more than the retention rates for other elementary grade levels.

On a by-school basis, about a dozen schools have greater than 40% of their 3rd graders retained. Approximately one-quarter of the elementary schools have at least one-quarter of their 3rd grade students retained.



### First-timers and Repeaters

Last year's third graders can be thought of as two separate groups: those in third grade for the first time (first-timers), and those repeating third grade (repeaters), having been retained from last year. Although about 6,300 students were scheduled to be retained in third grade, only about 5,600 of those students were found **enrolled for the 2003-04 school year**. The status of the rest of the students is unknown, although it is assumed the great majority of them either left the district or chose to enroll in private schools. The table below shows the number and percent of students retained, promoted, and promoted for good cause for each of the two categories of students: first-timers and repeaters. Note that 653 students are being retained in 3rd grade for a second time.

### Third-grade Students 2003-04

	First-timers		Repeaters	
	Count	Percent	Count	Percent
Retained	4658	18.1%	653	11.7%
Promoted	19014	74.0%	3825	68.3%
Good Cause	2039	7.9%	1122	20.0%
	25711		5600	

### Good Cause Promotions

The proportions of students promoted for good cause were slightly higher for repeaters than for students in 3rd grade for the first time. The exact percentages of students promoted

### Promotions for Good Cause

	First-timers	Repeaters
Limited English Proficient for Less Than 2 Years	3.1%	0.5%
Students with Disabilities, Where Statewide Assessment is not Appropriate	0.2%	0.1%
Students with Acceptable Level of Performance on Alternative Standardized Reading Assessment	1.5%	2.0%
Students with Portfolio Reading on Grade Level	2.2%	4.6%
Students with Disabilities who Received Intensive Remediation for More Than 2 Years and Were Previously Retained	0.8%	10.8%
Students Who Received Intensive Remediation for 2 or More Years and Were Previously Retained for a Total of 2 Years	0.1%	2.1%
Total Count	2039	1122

for each type of good cause condition are presented below.

**Race/Ethnicity and Free/Reduced Lunch Breakdown**

For summary purposes, it is convenient to classify the students as either having been retained or promoted, whether by virtue of passing the test or good cause. Tables showing the final disposition of all 3rd grade students by race/ethnicity and free/reduced lunch status are presented below.

	<b>White</b>	<b>Black</b>	<b>Hispanic</b>	<b>Other</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Promoted</b>	92%	75%	85%	92%	83%
<b>Retained</b>	8%	25%	15%	8%	17%
	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%

	<b>Non-F/R Lunch</b>	<b>F/R Lunch</b>
<b>Promoted</b>	92%	80%
<b>Retained</b>	8%	20%
<b>Total Count</b>	8631	22680

**Summary**

The retention rate for 3rd graders increased dramatically in 2002-03, when the new FCAT performance requirements were put into place. Where before less than 800 3rd graders were typically retained in M-DCPS, two years ago approximately 6,300 3rd graders were retained. Last year the number of retained 3rd graders dropped slightly, to approximately 5,300. Around 650 of those students, being retained for a second time, were scheduled to begin 3rd grade for a third time in the 2004-05 school year.

Generally speaking, the retention and promotion rates for the students who were already retained once were similar to the rates for students taking 3rd grade for the first time. However, the cumulative number of students who have been retained at some time in their academic careers is growing geometrically. The impact will continue to permeate higher grade levels as time goes on. Since retention is a major predictor of dropping out of school, the long range effects on the school system as a whole may eventually reach crisis proportions.