

Subject: Important Information - Helping Your Child Learn to Read

Dear Parents and Families,

Welcome to the beginning of your child's K-12 educational journey. As we prepare for an exciting year at Timothy L. Johnson Academy, we want to take this opportunity to reiterate the importance of reading by the end of third grade and share information regarding the supports that will be available to your child to help them learn to read by this important milestone.

The ability to read by the end of third grade is very important in order for your child to access all future learning. We know that in order to maximize student learning, it is essential that our parents/families and educators work together to support our young learners. In addition to the school-based supports described below, *we encourage families to read to their child for 30 minutes each day*. Reading together at home, visiting the library, and encouraging a love for books can make a significant difference.

School-Based Support To Help Your Child Learn To Read:

1. Universal Screener: In order to provide the best support for your child, it is important to understand the skills that they are succeeding in and the skills that they need additional support to help master. Students in kindergarten through second grade will participate in a universal screener, and results will be shared with parents/families. This allows schools and families to work together to provide personalized support as early as possible.

2. Multiple Opportunities To Demonstrate Reading Proficiency: Students will proactively participate in the IREAD assessment in second grade, with the option to also participate in a summer retest opportunity. Offering multiple opportunities for students to participate in IREAD prior to third grade provides another early indicator of whether a student is on-track to read by the end of third grade. This information will inform continued collaboration between our educators and families to provide necessary reading support.

Students who demonstrate reading proficiency in second grade will not be required to test again. Students who are still working to master foundational reading skills will receive additional support and will have another opportunity to participate in IREAD in third grade, both in the spring and during the summer. All IREAD results will be shared with parents/families.

3. Free Summer Learning Opportunities: Students who need additional reading support after participating in the spring administration of IREAD in both second and third grade will have an opportunity to participate in a summer reading course provided by Timothy L. Johnson Academy at no cost to families. This course will be taught using instructional practices aligned to the science of reading, which research shows is the most effective way to help a child learn to read.

4. Tiered Intervention System: Timothy L. Johnson uses a 3-tiered model for intervention. We ensure that the Tier 1 instruction, which every student receives from their classroom teacher, is high-quality and evidence based. In Tier 2, groups of students meet to work on short-term goals and rotate out of groups when they have

shown mastery. The most intensive interventions are Tier 3 groups, which are small groups focused on the SLANT System model for structured literacy intervention. Students receive instruction approved by the International Dyslexia Association from a trained instructor.

If a student is still struggling to read at the end of third grade, after receiving significant learning support, state law requires students to be retained in third grade (as a last resort), with some exceptions. The following students are eligible to receive a Good Cause Exemption (GCE) and are thus exempt from this requirement. Students eligible for a GCE include:

- A student who has previously been retained in third grade;
- A student with an intellectual disability or the student's Individualized Education Program specifies that retention is not appropriate, and the student's case conference committee has determined that promotion to another grade is appropriate;
- A student who is an identified English learner (EL) who has received services for fewer than two years and has an Individual Learning Plan (ILP) committee that determines promotion to the next grade level is appropriate;
- A student who achieved a performance level of "Proficient" or "Above Proficient" on the third grade ILEARN Mathematics assessment; or
- A student who has received two or more years of intensive intervention in reading aligned to science of reading and was retained more than once during kindergarten, first grade, or second grade.

To ensure students continue to receive the maximum support for their unique learning needs, all students who have not passed IREAD, whether they are retained in third grade for an additional year or are promoted to fourth grade, will continue to receive reading support and will retake IREAD until they pass or upon completion of sixth grade.

Thank you for your attention to this letter and for allowing us to be a partner in your child's future success! We encourage you to reach out to our instructional coach, Rachel Bushong, at rachel.bushong@tljacademy.org or 260-579-4659 at any time with questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dawn Starks". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Dawn" and last name "Starks" clearly distinguishable.

Dawn Starks, Superintendent