

Your Child's Reading in Ohio

A Family Guide to Reading Checks, Reading Plans, Fourth-Grade Promotion, and School Ratings

Michael L. Fuller, Ph.D., LSSBB | Independent Educational Consultant | October 2026

Your child's school may share many kinds of reading information: a fall reading check, a reading plan, a third-grade test score, and a star rating on the school report card. Each one answers a different question. This guide explains each one in plain language and lists questions you can ask your child's school.

This guide covers the 2026–2027 school year. It is not an official Ohio Department of Education and Workforce (ODEW) publication or legal advice.

1. "The reading check says my child is not on track."

Every fall, Ohio schools give a reading check to children in kindergarten through third grade. For 2026–2027, the check must be done by September 30. Children who join a school later in the year follow different timelines.

"Not on track" means your child scored below what is expected for their grade and may need extra help. It is a starting point, not a diagnosis. It does not explain why reading is hard for your child, and it does not describe all of your child's abilities.

The next step is to find out which reading skills need work. These may include hearing the sounds in words, sounding out words, reading smoothly, knowing word meanings, or understanding what was read.

Schools also screen for signs of dyslexia. That is a separate check with its own rules, so its results and timeline may differ from the reading check.

Questions to ask the school

- Which reading check was used, and when?
- Which skills were hard for my child?
- What extra help will start, and when?
- Was my child screened for signs of dyslexia, and what did it show?

Remember: The reading check points to a concern. More information shows what kind of help your child needs.

2. "My child has a reading plan."

If the fall reading check shows that your child in grades K–3 is not on track, the school must write a reading plan within 60 days. The plan is called a Reading Improvement and Monitoring Plan (RIMP). Extra reading help should start right away. It does not wait for the plan.

The plan includes tutoring at least three days a week, or at least 50 hours over 36 weeks. The school checks your child's progress regularly. How often depends on how much help your child needs. The plan can change based on how your child is

doing, but the extra help, including tutoring, continues as long as the plan is in place.

Your child can come off the plan by showing grade-level reading, such as being on track on the next fall reading check or scoring proficient on the state English language arts (ELA) test.

A reading plan is not special education. If you think your child may need special education, you can ask the school for an evaluation.

Questions to ask the school

- What reading skills is my child working on?
- How often is tutoring happening, and has my child been attending?
- How often do you check progress, and can I see the results?
- What will you change if my child is not improving?

Remember: A plan on paper shows what the school intends to do. Ask what is actually happening and whether your child is improving.

3. "Will my child move on to fourth grade?"

In third grade, your child takes Ohio's state English language arts (ELA) test. For 2026–2027, your child meets the test requirement for fourth grade with an overall score of 700 or higher or a reading score (called the reading subscore) of 50 or higher. Passing an approved alternative reading test is another way to meet the requirement.

Some children are exempt from the test requirement under state law. Ask the school which exemptions might apply to your child.

Families can also ask the school to move their child to fourth grade. You meet with your child's reading teacher and principal. If you disagree, your decision as the parent is final. Your child then gets a fourth-grade reading plan and at least 90 minutes of reading instruction every day, including intensive extra help, until your child reads at grade level.

Moving on to fourth grade does not always mean reading help ends. Your child may still need a reading plan.

Questions to ask the school

- Has my child met the test requirement? If so, how?
- Will my child have more chances to take the state test or an alternative test?
- Which exemptions, if any, might apply to my child?
- If we ask for promotion, what are the steps, and what help will continue in fourth grade?

Remember: Moving on to fourth grade and ending reading help are two separate decisions.

4. "What does our school's Early Literacy rating mean?"

Ohio's school report card gives each school and district a rating of 1 to 5 stars for Early Literacy. The rating combines three results: how many third graders scored proficient in reading, how many third graders met the test requirement for fourth grade, and how many K-3 students who were behind in reading caught up the next year.

The rating describes a whole group of students. It does not describe your child, tell you what help your child received, or explain why results went up or down. The rules behind the rating have changed in recent years, so compare one year with another carefully. A blank or missing number does not, by itself, tell you why it is missing.

Questions to ask the school

- What does this rating include?
- Did the rules change this year?
- How is my child doing in reading, and what help is my child getting?

Remember: A school rating is a summary of many students. Your child's own reading information tells you about your child.

The big idea

Each kind of reading information answers one question. Whenever you get a score, a plan, a decision, or a rating, ask: What does this tell us? What does it not tell us? What happens next?

Words to know

Reading check: A short reading test given each fall in grades K-3. Schools call it a reading diagnostic.

Reading plan (RIMP): A written plan for extra reading help for a child who is not on track.

Tutoring: Extra reading help, given at least three days a week or for at least 50 hours over 36 weeks.

ELA test: Ohio's state English language arts test, taken in grades 3 through 8.

Reading subscore: The reading part of the ELA test score.

Exemption: A reason under state law that a child does not have to meet the test requirement.

Report card: Ohio's yearly public report on how schools and districts are doing.

Where to learn more

ODEW Third Grade Reading Guarantee

<https://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Learning-in-Ohio/Literacy/Third-Grade-Reading-Guarantee>

ODEW dyslexia screening

<https://education.ohio.gov/Topics/Learning-in-Ohio/Literacy/Dyslexia/Dyslexia-Screening>

Ohio State University: requesting promotion for your child

<https://ohiofamiliesengage.osu.edu/resources/ohios-third-grade-reading-guarantee-request-an-exemption/>

Full guide for educators, with sources for every point

https://drmikeypsychology.com/Understanding_Ohio_Literacy_Information.pdf

About this guide

Prepared by Michael L. Fuller, Ph.D., LSSBB, Independent Educational Consultant. Drafting was assisted by AI tools (NotebookLM, Perplexity, and Claude, an AI system from Anthropic). The author directed the work and is responsible for all content, sources, and citations. Contact: mike@drmikeypsychology.com.