



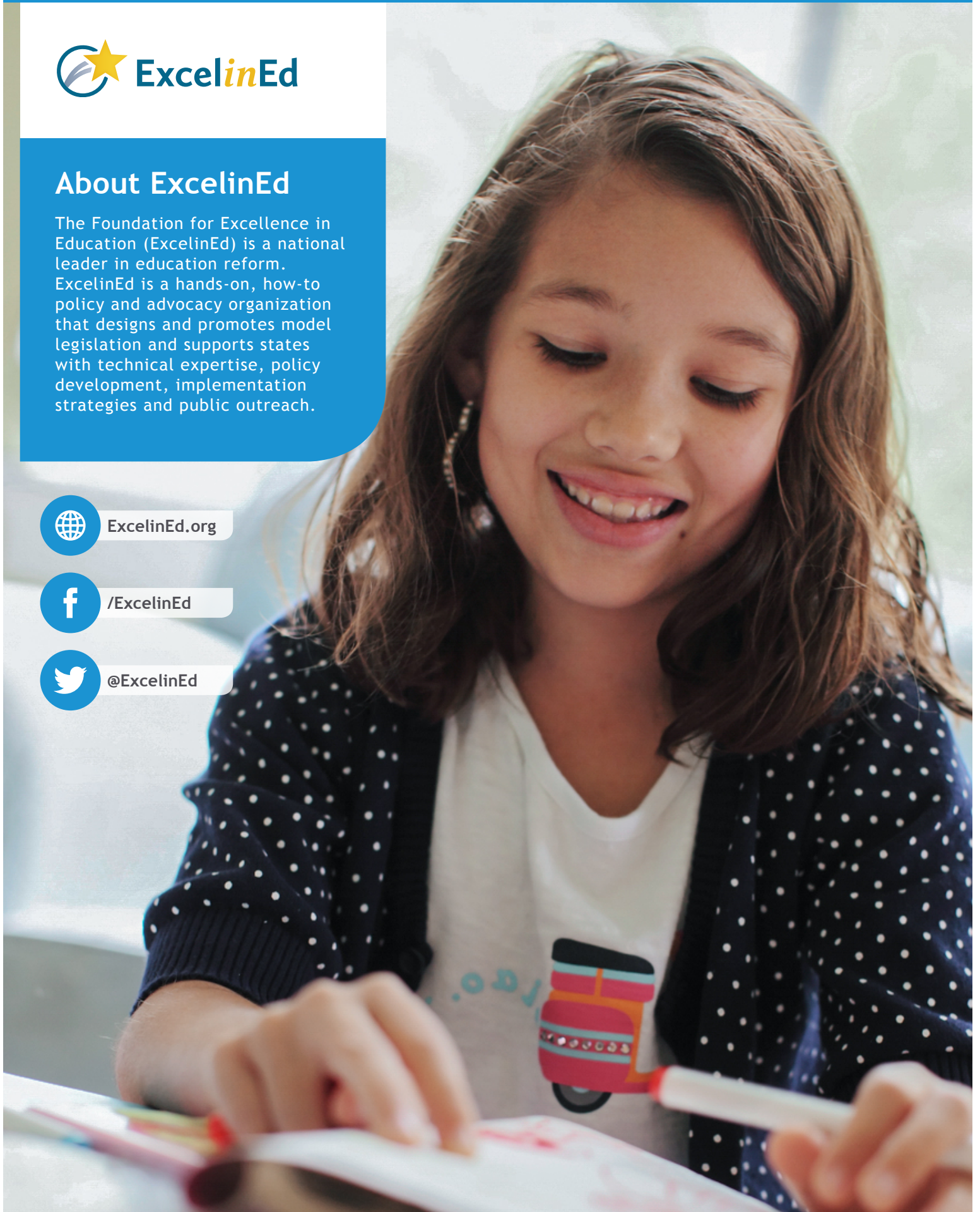
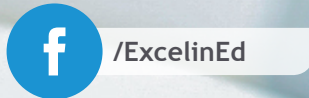
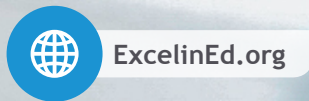
# K-3 Reading

## Communications Toolkit



## About ExcelinEd

The Foundation for Excellence in Education (ExcelinEd) is a national leader in education reform. ExcelinEd is a hands-on, how-to policy and advocacy organization that designs and promotes model legislation and supports states with technical expertise, policy development, implementation strategies and public outreach.



# K-3 Reading

## Communications Toolkit

### Introduction

By the third grade, students must make the transition from learning to read to reading to learn. If they do not, they cannot do their coursework. Each year, as the grade level demands go up, students tend to fall further behind and become outsiders inside the classroom.

K-3 Reading is a program that implements the mastery of reading for third grade students before the advancement to fourth grade. To confirm students are reading at grade level, the initiative enforces early literacy programs, resources for both teachers and students, early screenings, individual reading plans for at school and at home, assessments and last-resort retention. These processes work together to ensure students are ready for promotion to fourth grade with the necessary skills to flourish in the classroom and in life.

We must demand that every child who sits in a classroom for four years enters fourth grade as a competent reader. If not, then what is the purpose of the classroom?

This makes K-3 reading the most critical of all education reforms for millions of students. If we do not effectively address this challenge, then no other education reform matters.

### Contents

- 04 Key Messages and Talking Points
- 06 Op Ed Example
- 07 Letter to the Editor Example
- 08 Myths vs. Facts
- 10 Social Media
- 12 Digital Graphics
- 17 Infographics



# Key Messages and Talking Points

A person's ability to read is a critical predictor of educational and lifelong success.

- Poverty, dropping out of school and incarceration are all more likely outcomes for a poor reader.
- Graduation, college and career preparedness are more likely possibilities for students who master reading skills.

A strong reading program, beginning in kindergarten and continuing into the third grade and beyond, gives students the best possible chance to maximize their education.

- Successful reading programs begin with phonics in kindergarten and build to reading comprehension and critical thinking by third grade.
- Easy-to-use assessment tools help teachers identify students who may have reading difficulties and also determine what types of help an individual student needs to help them acquire grade level reading skills.
- Successful interventions include increasing teaching time (one-on-one and in small groups of students) as well as targeted instruction on specific sub-skills with more guided and independent practice.

A student who still needs time to master reading must have every opportunity to strengthen and gain this skill before entering fourth grade—to better ensure a successful future.

- A student who misses the opportunity to learn to read proficiently before fourth grade almost never catches up.
- Conversely, students who enter fourth grade capable of reading and able to use their reading skills to learn, are positioned with a much higher probability for high school graduation and readiness for college or a good job.

Beginning in fourth grade and beyond, a student must be prepared to *read to learn* across all subject areas.

- Reading to learn enables a student to comprehend facts in social studies and science, understand word problems in math and interpret increasingly complex concepts in language arts.
- To ensure fourth grade readiness, students may need to repeat third grade (or an earlier grade) and be provided with personalized learning plans and intensive supports so they can then successfully enter fourth grade reading to learn.

States can support this approach by reprioritizing existing funds and/or invest new money to implement reading-to-learn policies. Over time, this saves state dollars on remedial instruction and dropout prevention in the later grades.

- Comprehensive implementation strategies for K-3 Reading policies work best, whereas piecemeal approaches typically fail to produce desired outcomes.
- Early identification of students' reading skills—through assessments, strong reading programs and additional supports for struggling readers—together form a self-supporting system that leads to proven student success.

# Audience-Focused Messaging

Feel free to use the below messaging that aligns to your audience to post or incorporate in any outgoing K-3 collateral.

## Parents

- Your child’s ability to read is a critical predictor of educational and lifelong success.
- A strong reading program, beginning in kindergarten and continuing into the third grade and beyond, gives your child the best possible chance to maximize his or her education.
- If your child still needs time to master reading, he or she must have every opportunity to strengthen and gain this skill before entering fourth grade—to better ensure a successful future.
- Beginning in fourth grade and beyond, your child must be prepared to read to learn across all subject areas.

## Educators

- Your students’ ability to read is a critical predictor of educational and lifelong success.
- A strong reading program, beginning in kindergarten and continuing into the third grade and beyond, gives your students the best possible chance to maximize their education.
- A student who still needs time to master reading must have every opportunity to strengthen and gain this skill before entering fourth grade—to better ensure a successful future.
- Beginning in fourth grade and beyond, your students must be prepared to read to learn across all subject areas.

## State Education Chiefs

- A student’s ability to read is a critical predictor of educational and lifelong success.
- A strong reading program, beginning in kindergarten and continuing into the third grade and beyond, gives students the best possible chance to maximize their education.
- A student who still needs time to master reading must have every opportunity to strengthen and gain this skill before entering fourth grade—to better ensure a successful future.
- Beginning in fourth grade and beyond, a student must be prepared to read to learn across all subject areas.
- States can support this approach by reprioritizing existing funds and/or investing new money to implement reading-to-learn policies. Over time, this saves state dollars on remedial instruction and dropout prevention in the later grades.

## Policymakers

- A person’s ability to read is a critical predictor of educational and lifelong success.
- A strong reading program, beginning in kindergarten and continuing into the third grade and beyond, gives students the best possible chance to maximize their education.
- A student who still needs time to master reading must have every opportunity to strengthen and gain this skill before entering fourth grade—to better ensure a successful future.
- Beginning in fourth grade and beyond, a student must be prepared to read to learn across all subject areas.
- States can support this approach by reprioritizing existing funds and/or investing new money to implement reading-to-learn policies. Over time, this saves state dollars on remedial instruction and dropout prevention in the later grades.

# Op Ed Example

*Opinion submissions are a great way to spread the word via local newspapers. Please use the following example to customize op-ed submissions for your local state/community. Copy and paste the example and customize where indicated.*

## The Ability to Read to Learn Is Mission Critical For Our Children

Right now, *XX* percent of our students in *XYZ CITY STATE* read below grade level. That means, *XXX* nine year olds cannot read Charlotte's Web or *INSERT AGE APPROPRIATE BOOK*. While what seems like the most basic step in a child's education - the ability to read - is actually the foundation of a child's success. Here in *XYZ CITY*, it is the highest imperative of our public education system. It is the one thing that we must do everything in our power to make happen; spend all our resources on to ensure that every child cannot just read but possess the ability to read to learn.

Even with all the technological advancements and devices available, a child still must learn to read. It is this ability that remains a basic predictor of a person's educational and lifelong success.

Reading to learn by fourth grade is mission critical for our children. If a child does not master this skill, he or she will not understand facts in social studies and science. Word problems in math will be unsolvable and navigating the rich world of literature and crafting complex sentences next to impossible. These students almost never catch up and their future is in peril.

This is not just a group of children struggling, but a systemic reality that does not have to be true. If we do not prioritize reading to learn, this issue will continue its long-term implications on our economy and the fabric of our own city and state. Students who cannot read by the end of the third grade are four times more likely to drop out of high school, and high school dropouts make up 75 percent of citizens receiving food stamps and 90 percent of the Americans on welfare. Nearly 85 percent of teenagers in the juvenile justice system cannot read to learn and seven out of ten adult prisoners cannot read above a fourth grade level.

A strong reading initiative, like *NAME OF POLICY OR PROGRAM*, can help make the difference. It starts by making sure kindergartners know the A-B-Cs and the sounds they make. This focus continues, relying on research to guide our efforts, until by third grade each student can read with ease, understands the material and can think critically. This requires easy-to-use diagnostic tests to help our teachers know which students are having problems and what solutions will help them. Our district has implemented (*OR IS IMPLEMENTING*) a system of instruction that will place a heavier emphasis on making sure our students leave third grade with the ability to read. This means a series of check-ups and when needed interventions, one-on-one tutoring and at-home support from kindergarten through the third grade. We want each child entering the fourth grade to do so with the confidence and skills he or she needs to learn.

Regardless of socioeconomic circumstances, every child deserves a fighting chance to reach his or her full potential; to fully embrace the American dream. Let us work together, parents, teachers, administrators and city leaders to ensure our (*INSERT CITY/STATE*) *IMPLEMENTS AND/OR SUPPORTS* the *XYZ* reading initiative so all our kids can read to learn.

As Frederick Douglass so eloquently said, "Once you learn to read, you will be forever free."

# Letter to the Editor Example

*Opinion submissions are a great way to spread the word via local newspapers. Please use the following example to customize Letter to the Editor submissions for your local state/community. Copy and paste the example and customize where indicated.*

## Dear Editor,

Right now, *XX* percent of our students in *XYZ CITY STATE* read below grade level. That means, *XXX* nine year olds cannot read Charlotte's Web (or *INSERT AGE APPROPRIATE BOOK*). While what seems like the most basic step in a child's education - the ability to read - is actually the foundation of a child's success. Here in *XYZ CITY*, it is the highest imperative of our public education system. It is the one thing that we must do everything in our power to make happen; spend all our resources on to ensure that every child cannot just read but possess the ability to read to learn.

Reading to learn by fourth grade is mission critical for our children. If a child does not master this skill, he or she will not understand facts in social studies and science. Word problems in math will be unsolvable and navigating the rich world of literature and crafting complex sentences next to impossible. These students almost never catch up and their future is in peril.

Students who cannot read by the end of the third grade are four times more likely to drop out of high school. High school dropouts make up 75 percent of citizens receiving food stamps and 90 percent of the Americans on welfare. Nearly 85 percent of teenagers in the juvenile justice system cannot read to learn and seven out of ten adult prisoners cannot read above a fourth grade level.

A strong reading initiative, like *NAME OF POLICY OR PROGRAM*, can help make the difference. It starts by making sure kindergartners know the A-B-Cs and the sounds they make. This focus continues, relying on research to guide our efforts, until by third grade each student can read with ease, understands the material and can think critically. Our district has implemented (*OR IS IMPLEMENTING*) a system of instruction that will place a heavier emphasis on making sure our students leave third grade with the ability to read. We want each child entering the fourth grade to do so with the confidence and skills he or she needs to learn.

Regardless of socioeconomic circumstances, every child deserves a fighting chance to reach his or her full potential; to fully embrace the American dream. Let us work together, parents, teachers, administrators and city leaders to ensure our (*INSERT CITY/STATE*) *IMPLEMENTS AND/OR SUPPORTS* the *XYZ* reading initiative so all our kids can read to learn.

# Myth vs. Facts

**Myth:** Failure to read is only an education problem.

**Fact:** *Failure to read is both an education and an economic problem.* Seven out of every ten prison inmates cannot read above a fourth grade level and 85 percent of teenagers in the juvenile system have difficulty reading. Nearly 90 percent of students who drop out of high school are struggling readers in third grade. And, high school dropouts make up 90 percent of Americans on welfare and 75 percent of citizens receiving food stamps.

**Myth:** Students can learn to read after third grade without challenge.

**Fact:** *Students rarely catch up if they have not mastered reading by third grade.* Students must learn to read in K-3 in order to read to learn in fourth grade and beyond. Reading to learn means comprehending facts in social studies and science, understanding word problems in math and interpreting complex materials in language arts.

**Myth:** The decision to promote a student to the fourth grade is based on one test score.

**Fact:** *Promotion decisions are based on a comprehensive assessment of the student's mastery of third grade reading skills.* Students have three different opportunities to demonstrate sufficient reading skills for promotion to fourth grade:

1. Pass, at a minimum level, the state test.
2. Pass alternative assessment.
3. Demonstrate sufficient reading skills in a portfolio of independently produced student work.

**Myth:** Students and parents may be surprised at the end of the third grade year to find the student is not ready to be promoted.

**Fact:** *Retention is the last resort.* The fully implemented K-3 Reading program identifies students who are struggling to read as early as Kindergarten, with frequent literacy screenings and parent notification/updates on progress over multiple school years. Students are given individual reading plans, home reading strategies and reading interventions before/during/after school and progress is monitored and shared at frequent intervals. Only those students who still demonstrate a need for the additional time to learn to read are retained in third grade.

**Myth:** The ability to read by third grade does not have any correlation with the ability to graduate from high school.

**Fact:** *The ability to read by third grade is imperative for a student's ability to graduate from high school.* This includes the years of high school and beyond, to career and/or college. Students who are not reading proficiently in third grade are four times more likely to not graduate high school. Low-income minority students are eight times more likely to drop out of high school. In fact, 88 percent of students who failed to earn a high school diploma were struggling readers in third grade.



# Myth vs. Facts *(continued)*

**Myth:** Retention means simple repetition of the third grade.

**Fact:** *Students who repeat third grade are supported with a comprehensive program of intensive intervention.* A fully implemented K-3 Reading program is designed to give students every opportunity to be successful. Early literacy screenings and student progress updates are used to determine the student's learning needs. Students are placed with highly effective teachers and in classrooms to optimize learning. The repeated grade is designed to bring students who are significantly below grade level up to the required level of proficiency to be successful in fourth grade and beyond.

**Myth:** The K-3 Reading policy is rigid and allows no exemptions.

**Fact:** *Some students are exempted from retention.* Students with disabilities who have previously been retained, students with disabilities who do not take the same assessment and students with less than two years of English instruction are exempt from retention. Retention also does not apply to students previously retained twice. However, all of these students continue to receive reading intervention services until their reading deficiency is remedied.

**Myth:** Interventions are focused only on the struggling student.

**Fact:** *Interventions require the work of both the student and his or her guardians.* Students receiving interventions typically participate in summer reading camps, spend more time in reading instruction and their learning is monitored more frequently. Parents or guardians also must help, by implementing a read-at-home plan and/or attend parent workshops to learn how to help their child learn to read. Parents or guardians also provide input for the individual reading plans.



# Social Media

The following tools can help you amplify K-3 Reading key messages via your social media platforms. Copy and paste the post to the correlating social channel listed in the table. Download the associated image from p. 12-16 in this toolkit.

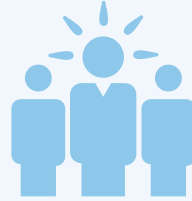
## Key Audiences



Parents



Teachers and Administrators



News and Media



Educational Organizations



Legislators and Elected Officials

## Key Initiatives (Color Coded Key):

Maximize Education

Read to Learn Opportunities

Long-term Consequences

Long-term Benefits

Read To Learn Policies

### Image:



### Facebook:

Thanks to Oklahoma's 3rd grade reading law, failure rates are declining at a rate of 15% with more and more students advancing onto fourth grade each year.  
[bit.ly/2ax2ynU](http://bit.ly/2ax2ynU)

### LinkedIn:

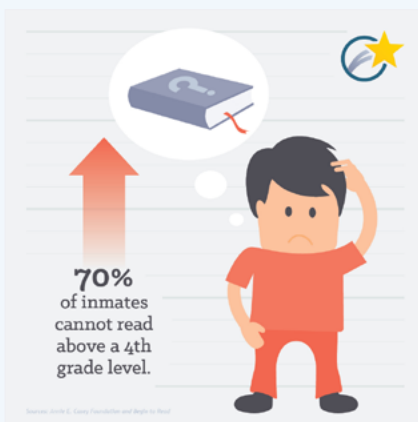
Thanks to Oklahoma's 3rd grade reading law, failure rates are declining at a rate of 15% with more and more students advancing onto fourth grade each year.  
[bit.ly/2ax2ynU](http://bit.ly/2ax2ynU)

### Twitter:

**#DidYouKnow** 1 in 6 children who are not reading proficiently in 3rd grade do not graduate from high school on time.  
**#ReadtoSucceed**

### Instagram:

Poverty, dropout and incarceration are all potential outcomes for a poor reader.  
**#ReadtoSucceed**



Do not settle for simple understanding, push for mastery. Help facilitate conversation about the importance of reading skill by sharing your state's reading gap:  
**#ReadtoSucceed**  
[bit.ly/2hdUpqK](http://bit.ly/2hdUpqK)

Do not settle for simple understanding, push for mastery. Help facilitate conversation about the importance of reading skill by sharing your state's reading gap:  
**#ReadtoSucceed**  
[bit.ly/2hdUpqK](http://bit.ly/2hdUpqK)

Do not settle for understanding, push for mastery. Help facilitate conversation about the importance of **#reading**.  
[bit.ly/2hdUpqK](http://bit.ly/2hdUpqK)

**#DidYouKnow** 70% of inmates cannot read above a 4th grade level.  
**#ReadtoSucceed**

# Social Media *(continued)*

The following tools can help you amplify K-3 Reading key messages via your social media platforms. Copy and paste the post to the correlating social channel listed in the table. Download the associated image from p. 12-16 in this toolkit.

## Key Initiatives (Color Coded Key):

|                    |                             |                        |                    |                        |
|--------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------|--------------------|------------------------|
| Maximize Education | Read to Learn Opportunities | Long-term Consequences | Long-term Benefits | Read To Learn Policies |
|--------------------|-----------------------------|------------------------|--------------------|------------------------|

| Image: | Facebook: | LinkedIn: | Twitter: | Instagram: |
|--------|-----------|-----------|----------|------------|
|--------|-----------|-----------|----------|------------|



Did you know? Before 3rd grade, students are learning to read. After 3rd grade, students are reading to learn. [#ReadtoSucceed](#)

Did you know? Before 3rd grade, students are learning to read. After 3rd grade, students are reading to learn. [#ReadtoSucceed](#)

Did you know? Before 3rd grade, students are learning to read. After 3rd grade, students are reading to learn. [#ReadtoSucceed](#)

Literacy today affects your future tomorrow. [#ReadtoSucceed](#)



According to a recent study conducted by [@Excellence in Education](#), the majority of parents and many teachers are unaware of their state's K-3 reading policy. Become an active participant in the conversation around reading to learn and find out your state reading policy here: [#ReadtoSucceed bit.ly/2hdUpqK](#)

According to a recent study conducted by Excellence in Education, the majority of parents and many teachers are unaware of their state's K-3 reading policy. Become an active participant in the conversation around reading to learn and find out your state reading policy here: [#ReadtoSucceed bit.ly/2hdUpqK](#)

Study by [@ExcellinEd](#) shows the majority of parents are unaware of their state's K-3 reading policy. [#ReadtoSucceed bit.ly/2hdUpqK](#)

Graduation, career and college are within reach of students who read to learn. [#ReadtoSucceed](#)



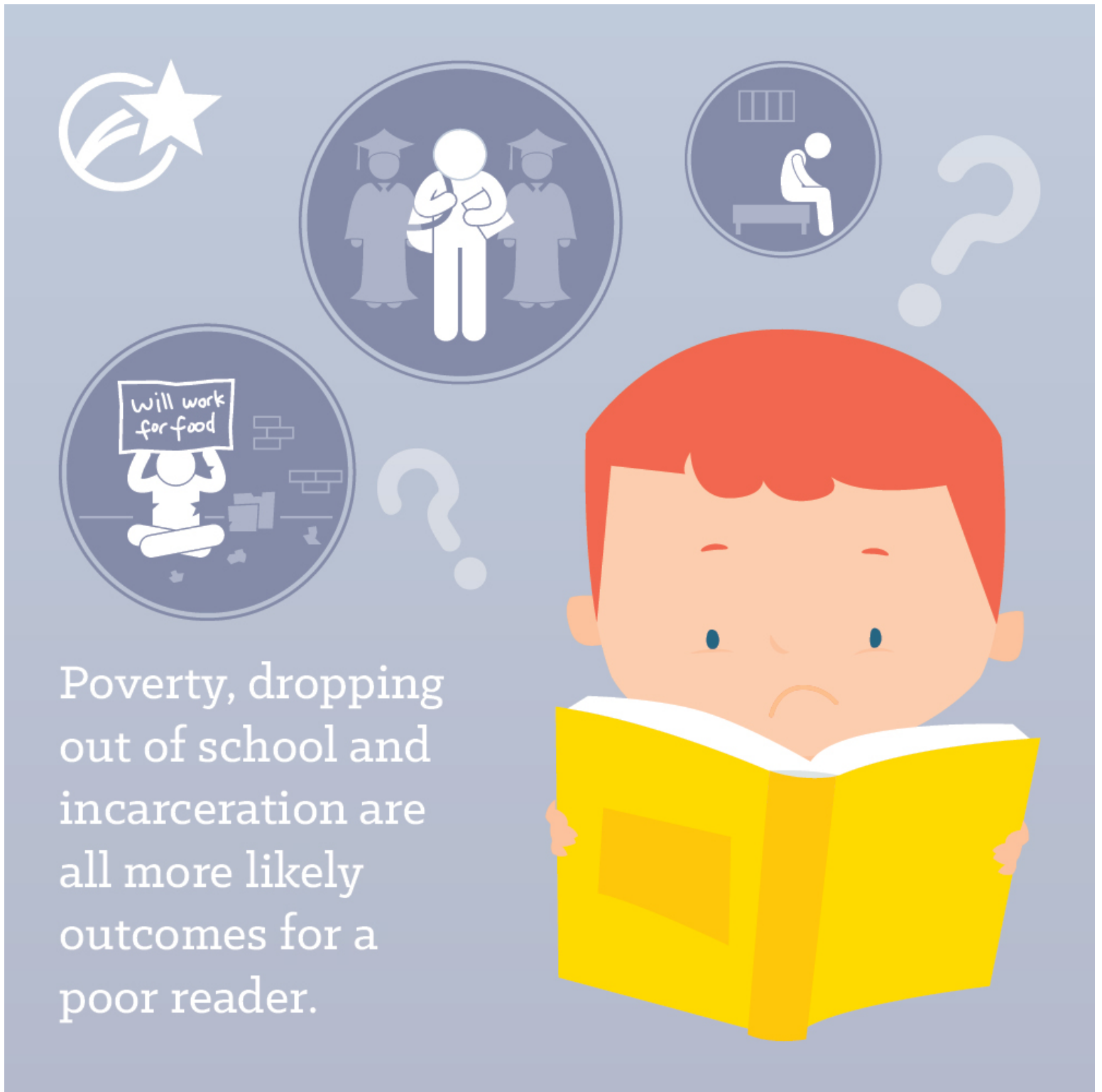
What is the greatest gift a parent can give? The gift of literacy. Turn your child's bedtime story into a foundation for success. [#ReadtoSucceed bit.ly/2afSVJN](#)

What is the greatest gift a parent can give? The gift of literacy. Turn your child's bedtime story into a foundation for success. [#ReadtoSucceed bit.ly/2afSVJN](#)

What is the greatest gift a parent can give? Literacy. Turn bedtime into future success. [bit.ly/2afSVJN](#)

What is the greatest gift a parent can give? The gift of literacy. Turn your child's bedtime story into a foundation for success. [#ReadtoSucceed](#)

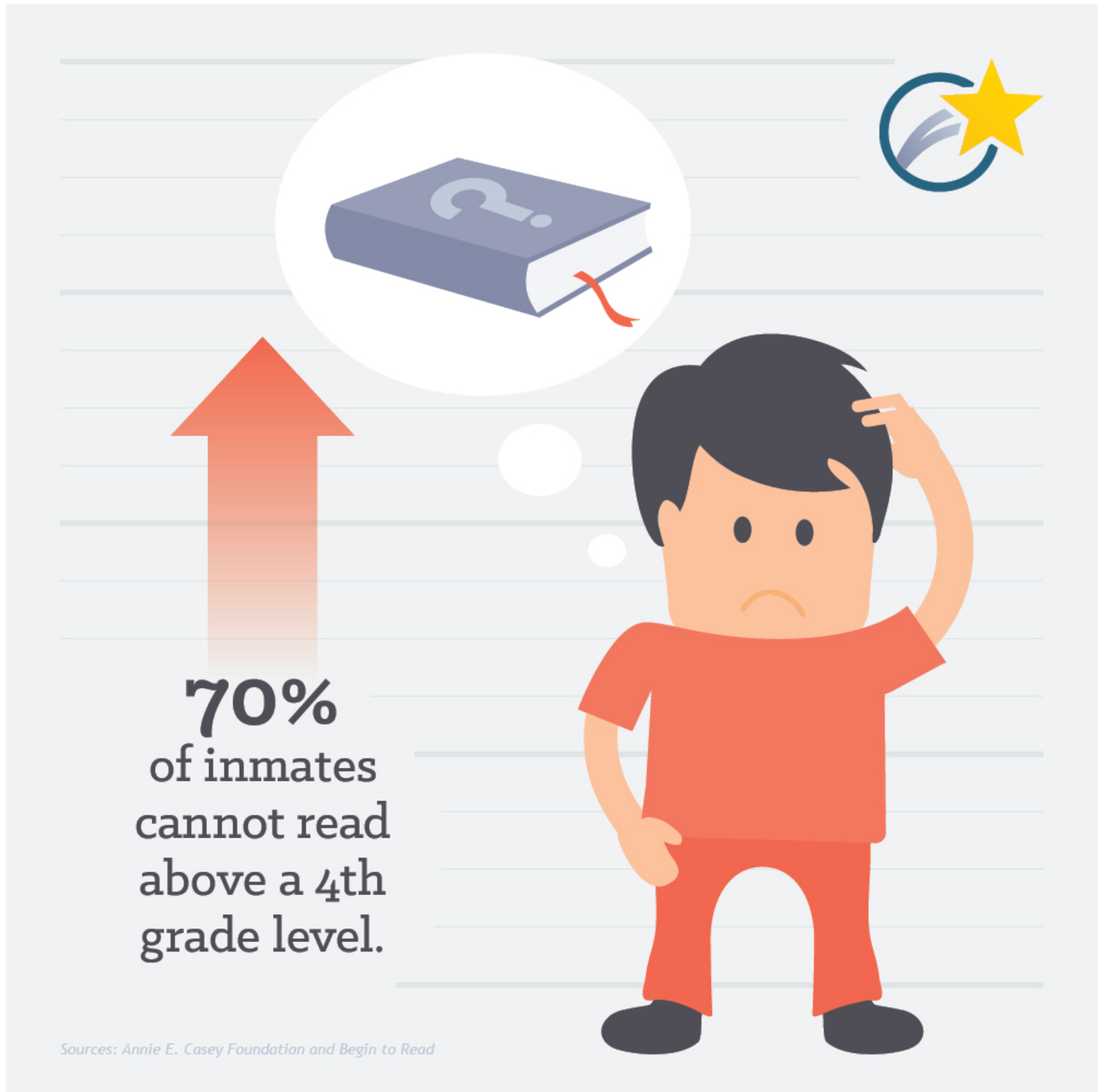
# Digital Graphics



## *How to Use this Image*

- 1. Click on image to select.*
- 2. While image is selected, right click and select 'Save As' or 'Save Image As' and save to your computer.*
- 3. Post to social media with your own content or using one of the sample posts provided on p. 10-11.*

# Digital Graphics *(continued)*



## *How to Use this Image*

- 1. Click on image to select.*
- 2. While image is selected, right click and select 'Save As' or 'Save Image As' and save to your computer.*
- 3. Post to social media with your own content or using one of the sample posts provided on p. 10-11.*

“The more that you read,  
*the more things you will know.*  
The more that you learn,  
*the more places you’ll go.*”

Dr. Seuss,  
*I Can Read With My Eyes Shut!*



### *How to Use this Image*

- 1. Click on image to select.*
- 2. While image is selected, right click and select 'Save As' or 'Save Image As' and save to your computer.*
- 3. Post to social media with your own content or using one of the sample posts provided on p. 10-11.*

# Digital Graphics *(continued)*



## *How to Use this Image*

- 1. Click on image to select.*
- 2. While image is selected, right click and select 'Save As' or 'Save Image As' and save to your computer.*
- 3. Post to social media with your own content or using one of the sample posts provided on p. 10-11.*



“Not all readers are leaders,  
but *all leaders are readers.*”

*Emilie Buchwald, Award-Winning Children’s Author*

### *How to Use this Image*

- 1. Click on image to select.*
- 2. While image is selected, right click and select 'Save As' or 'Save Image As' and save to your computer.*
- 3. Post to social media with your own content or using one of the sample posts provided on p. 10-11.*



# Infographics

The following infographics can be downloaded to your computer to save, print or use on your social media channels with a post. (Right click to select download. To use on social media platform, attach like any other image or social graphic.)



### How to Use This Infographic

1. Click on infographic to select.
2. While infographic is selected, right click and select 'Save As' or 'Save Image As' and save to your computer.
3. Post on your website, print or share anywhere you like!



## READ to LEARN: Open the Door to Success!

Starting in 4<sup>th</sup> grade, students **must** read to learn everything.

A student who can read to learn unlocks the door to success.

**Strong readers are:**

Better at learning skills and have higher grades.



More likely to graduate from high school and attend college.



More likely to be employed as young adults.



The student who misses the opportunity to learn to read before 4<sup>th</sup> grade **almost never catches up.**

Nearly 90% of students who do not earn a high school diploma struggle to read in 3<sup>rd</sup> grade.



85% of teenagers in the juvenile justice system have difficulty reading.



Students in **Kindergarten through 3<sup>rd</sup> grade** focus on learning the basics to read.

**3<sup>RD</sup> GRADE:** Decode multisyllabic words, read with comprehension at their grade level.

**2<sup>ND</sup> GRADE:** Recognizing irregular words, prefixes and suffixes, reading appropriate texts.

**1<sup>ST</sup> GRADE:** Beginning sentence structure, sounding out words, reading aloud.

**KINDERGARTEN:** Understanding word structure, knowing their letters, beginning phonics.



**All students have the potential to succeed.**  
The right programs and policies can make the difference between a student struggling to a student thriving.

What helps ensure each child has the best chance for success?

- 1 Early literacy programs starting in Pre-K.
- 2 Teachers given the tools and support they need.
- 3 Screenings beginning in Kindergarten.
- 4 Individual reading plans developed with parents.
- 5 Mentoring and tutoring before and after school.
- 6 Letting kids repeat 3<sup>rd</sup> grade to cement reading skills.

Sources: [www.afterschoolalliance.org/documents/Afterschool-Literacy-Brief.pdf](http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/documents/Afterschool-Literacy-Brief.pdf); Annie E. Casey Foundation; [www.asccc.org/content/reading-may-be-key-unlocking-basic-skills-success](http://www.asccc.org/content/reading-may-be-key-unlocking-basic-skills-success); Begin to Read; [www.childtrends.org/indicators-reading-proficiency](http://www.childtrends.org/indicators-reading-proficiency); [www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RF/introduction/](http://www.corestandards.org/ELA-Literacy/RF/introduction/); [www.nea.org/grants/facts-about-childrens-literacy.html](http://www.nea.org/grants/facts-about-childrens-literacy.html)

### How to Use This Infographic

1. Click on infographic to select.
2. While infographic is selected, right click and select 'Save As' or 'Save Image As' and save to your computer.
3. Post on your website, print or share anywhere you like!