



**IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

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**MEDIA ADVISORY:**

***Without a clear roadmap to readiness, third grade reading law could mean 86% of Detroit students retained***

**DETROIT** - Earlier this month, Gov. Rick Snyder signed legislation that would, by 2019-2020, require schools to retain students who fail to read proficiently by the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> grade. The governor supported the measure as a part of his 3<sup>rd</sup> grade reading initiative. Today, leaders in Detroit's early childhood education and K-12 landscape are coming together to release, "Readiness in Detroit: A Local Policy Roadmap for Birth to Eight Success."

The document is intended to be a guide for policymakers to ensure local school children are ready for kindergarten and reading proficiently by third grade. Local media and community stakeholders were invited to hear directly from educators, school leaders, and community stakeholders on what we can do to ensure readiness and prevent mass retention in Detroit in 2020.

"There's no doubt that the intention of this latest initiative is to increase the number of proficient readers being promoted to the 4<sup>th</sup> grade," said Denise Smith, vice president of Early Learning at Excellent Schools Detroit (ESD), whose team produced the *Readiness in Detroit* report with the support of the Ford Foundation. "However, when it comes to third grade reading, policymakers tend to focus only on K-3 education. Frankly, given the state of kindergarten readiness, that is just too late to start preparing our students to be proficient readers – and it is such failed thinking that's costing us an estimated \$96,500 over the lifetime of every Detroit child who enters kindergarten unprepared to learn... Proven best practices clearly state that in order to significantly improve a child's life outcomes, we must figure out how as a community, state, and country, to invest in high-quality early care and education from the time a child is born."

The release event served as an opportunity to review of Detroit's current State of Readiness and conversation on how we can make sure the 86 percent of third graders who are not currently on grade level are not left behind in 2020. ESD staff, alongside a community of advocates and educational leaders, discussed the experiences and the report's recommendations on how to support high-quality early childhood care and education delivery, provide stronger transitions for all children, and build the foundations necessary to promote literacy from birth through the first eight years of life.



If you are unable to make it to Tuesday's event please contact Maria Montoya at 504.343.6754 or via e-mail [mmontoya@excellentschoolsdetroit.org](mailto:mmontoya@excellentschoolsdetroit.org) to schedule an alternative interview time with ESD staff and local early care and education advocates. To view the complete report and supporting documents, you can visit [Birthtoeight.org](http://Birthtoeight.org).

"We know our current systems and policies are underdeveloped and disconnected, and our children and our city are paying the price," Smith said. "We set out in this report to create a conversation and specifically offer several recommendations of how local policymakers can harness our city's unique history, culture, and context to provide the best solutions for our children."

**About Excellent Schools Detroit:** *Excellent Schools Detroit seeks to create the conditions necessary to ensure an excellent education for every Detroit child, cradle-to-career. This goal was established by a coalition of Detroit's civic, community, education, and philanthropic leaders. For more information on Excellent Schools Detroit's Early Childhood Education Initiatives, please visit [www.excellentschoolsdetroit.org/](http://www.excellentschoolsdetroit.org/).*