



Third Grade Remediation Toolkit

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Table of Contents

- Summary 3**
- Key Terms 4**
- Interventions to Support Student Learning..... 7**
 - Promotion Criteria for Students Identified for Retention7
 - TN ALL Corps or High-Dosage, Low-Ratio Tutoring Programs.....8
 - Summer Programming.....9
 - Family Appeal Process9
- Sample Talking Points 11**
 - Directors of Schools.....11
 - School Leaders12
 - Educators13
- 2022-23 SY Sample Timeline 14**
- Template Resources 15**
 - Fall Letter for Third Grade Students15
 - October Third Grade At-Risk Home Literacy Report15
 - January Third Grade At-Risk Home Literacy Report.....15
 - May TCAP Non-Proficient Letter.....15
 - Retention Remediation Plan15
 - High-Dosage, Low Ratio Tutoring Parent Promotion Agreement15
 - Summer Programming Parent Promotion Agreement.....15

Summary

The Tennessee General Assembly passed two key pieces of legislation during the 1st Extraordinary Session of the 112th General Assembly—the Tennessee Literacy Success Act and the Tennessee Learning Loss Remediation and Student Acceleration Act—to help ensure Tennessee students could recover from the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic and close gaps in students' learning. As part of this legislation, the General Assembly updated the state's third grade retention law T.C.A. § 49-6-3115 to ensure students receive additional supports before promotion to fourth grade.

In preparation for implementation, directors of schools have requested the Tennessee Department of Education to provide easy to understand information and resources to support educators' and administrators' engagement with families and school communities this school year. This document was developed in collaboration with directors of schools across the state, and the department will continue to seek feedback to expand this toolkit with FAQs, considerations for best practices and additional customizable templates.

Key Terms

Adequate growth: Adequate growth is a key metric considered for students at-risk for retention. Adequate growth checks will be completed by the department to ensure students participating in required intervention demonstrate an increase in understanding of the standards that will allow them to successfully access, and accelerate mastery of, fourth grade ELA standards the following school year.

Approaching Expectations: A TCAP performance level category that demonstrates a student is approaching understanding and has a partial ability to apply the grade/course-level knowledge and skills defined by the Tennessee Academic Standards. A student who scores “approaching expectations” on the ELA section of their third grade TCAP, and is not covered under exceptions in the law, must complete intervention options or be retained.

Below Expectations: A TCAP performance level category that demonstrates that the student has a minimal understanding and has a nominal ability to apply the grade/course-level knowledge and skills defined by the Tennessee Academic Standards. A student who scores “below expectations” on their third grade ELA TCAP, and is not covered under exceptions in the law, must complete intervention options or be retained.

Benchmark assessment: Standards-based assessment that indicates student’s quarterly mastery of grade-level expectations. Benchmark assessment data is needed for families choosing to make an appeal.

Characteristics of Dyslexia: [Reading challenges](#) that are identified when a student is both identified by a universal reading screener and demonstrates deficiencies in grade appropriate subtests as identified by the department’s [Minimum Universal Reading Screening Matrix](#).

English Learner: A student who (1) was not born in the United States or has a native language other than English, (2) comes from environments where a language other than English is dominant, and/or (3) who qualifies for English as a second language services via a department-approved English language proficiency assessment.

High-dosage, low-ratio tutoring: a reading or math intervention where students receive at least 30 minutes of tutoring twice weekly from trained tutors, in a 1:3 ratio, and can occur during, before or after school hours.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA): A federal law (20 U.S.C. § 1400 et seq.) that ensures services to children with disabilities throughout the United States. IDEA provides clear legal expectations on how states and local education agencies provide early intervention, special education, and related services to more than 6.5 million eligible infants, toddlers, children, and youth with disabilities.

Individualized Education Program (IEP): A school, student and family agreement that specifies specialized instruction and related services a student must receive in accordance with IDEA.

Individualized Learning Plan-Dyslexia (ILP-D): A school, student and family agreement developed in accordance with T.C.A. § 49-1-229 and State Board of Education rule that specifies supports and services children with the characteristics of dyslexia will receive from their school to assist their academic growth and progress.

Intervention: Academic supports such as summer programming, high-dosage, low-ratio tutoring or RTI² for individual students at-risk for reading challenges. Intervention is intended to accelerate learning in reading and ensure students are meeting grade-level literacy expectations.

Literacy: The ability to read text fluently, comprehend information or narrative while reading, and apply this new knowledge to grade level standards.

Meets Expectations: A TCAP performance level category that demonstrates the student has a comprehensive understanding and has a thorough ability to apply the grade/course-level knowledge and skills defined by the Tennessee Academic Standards. This student would **not** be at-risk for retention.

Reading: The process of matching sounds to letters and letter combinations, decoding letters into words, and the ability to put words into sentences and fluently build comprehension from texts both orally and silently.

Retention: The practice of not promoting a student to the next grade level as a result of the student not meeting expectations for proficiency of grade level content. In third grade, a student must receive a “met expectations” or “exceeds expectations” score on their ELA TCAP assessment to demonstrate sufficient mastery of grade level content.

Response to Instruction and Intervention (RTI²): A multi-tiered approach focused on prevention and early intervention that uses a data-driven problem-solving model to identify and address areas of academic need. RTI² is founded on high-quality core instruction for all students (i.e., Tier I), targeted intervention for some students (i.e., Tier II), and intensive intervention for a few students (i.e., Tier III).

Section 504 Plan: Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (29 U.S.C. § 794) states that no individual should be excluded from participation in, be denied benefits, or be subject to discrimination under any program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance. To ensure this law protects students with disabilities in K–12 schools, this is a formal plan developed to support students who have physical or mental impairments that substantially limit daily life activities. Section 504 plans include regular or special education and related aids and services designed to ensure students have access to participate fully in school and school activities.

Specific Learning Disability in Reading: A specific learning disability in reading is a type of student disability supported by an individualized education program (IEP). Multiple assessments are used to identify with a SLD-R (Specific Learning Disability in Reading) focusing on the following areas: basic reading, reading fluency, and reading comprehension. Basic reading skills include the ability to identify and manipulate individual sounds in language; to identify printed letters and their associated sounds; to decode written language. Reading fluency is the ability to read with sufficient accuracy and rate to support comprehension. Reading comprehension is the ability to understand and make meaning of texts. A student with an IEP that outlines a specific learning disability in reading would be excluded from the new third grade retention requirements.

Summer Bridge Camp: A four- to six-week summer camp that extends the school year for fourth through eighth graders, providing two hours of reading and math instruction, an hour of play, and an hour of intervention in small group settings with the goal of accelerating learning and ensuring a student is on-grade

level at the beginning of the year. Students scoring “below expectations” must complete the summer bridge camp as well as high-dosage, low-ratio tutoring for the entirety of fourth grade to be promoted.

Tennessee Learning Loss Remediation and Student Acceleration Act: The *Tennessee Learning Loss Remediation and Student Acceleration Act* was passed by the Tennessee General Assembly in a special legislative session to address the learning loss of students due to COVID-19 related school closures. It requires all school districts to offer learning loss remediation summer programs for students that need additional support.

Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP) Tennessee’s summative assessment system is designed to assess the mastery of grade level standards. Students can score “exceeds expectations”, “met expectations”, “approaching expectations”, and “below expectations” in ELA, Math, Science and Social Studies.

TN ALL Corps: A state-level grant program for school districts and community partners that provides funds to design high-dosage, low-ratio tutoring in reading and math for students in 1st- 8th grades as a specific intervention to accelerate learning.

Universal Reading Screener: A norm-referenced, skills-based assessment used to identify students who might be at-risk for a reading deficiency. As part of the *Tennessee Literacy Success Act*, districts are required to administer an approved universal reading screener to all students in grades K–3 during three administration windows each school year, and report data to the Tennessee Department of Education.

Interventions to Support Student Learning

Early intervention is the key to ensuring that students are successful in third grade and throughout their educational experiences. Students who struggle to achieve mastery of third grade ELA standards are likely to continue to struggle. Third grade proficiency is a strong indicator of high school graduation, higher rates of economic success, and medical health. Lower literacy rates not only negatively impact our children during their early grades, these significant reading challenges impact children's future opportunities.

Students should have the opportunity for interventions, tutoring, and summer programs. If students struggle in third grade and do not score "met expectations" or "exceeds expectations" on their third grade TCAP, schools and districts must provide intervention to help the student accelerate their learning progress.

The *Tennessee Learning Loss Remediation and Student Acceleration Act* updated the state's third grade retention requirements and requires intervention for some students before they can be promoted to 4th grade. Starting in the 2022-23 school year, third grade students who score "below expectations" or "approaching expectations" on the third grade ELA TCAP shall not be promoted to the fourth grade unless they meet the requirements.

If a student does not receive a "met expectations" or "exceeds expectations" score on their ELA TCAP in third grade, elementary schools in Tennessee must provide multiple opportunities for intervention.

1. **Retake of the ELA section of the third grade TCAP:** This option is available for students who scored "approaching expectations" or "below expectations" on the ELA section of their third grade TCAP. The state will provide a retake option over the summer prior to the student's fourth grade school year.
2. **Summer Bridge Camp:** This four-to-six-week summer camp would occur between the third and fourth grade school year. A student must attend 90% of summer lessons and make adequate growth on their post-test at the end of summer camp. This option is available for students who scored "approaching expectations" or "below expectations" on the ELA section of their third grade TCAP.
3. **High-dosage, low-ratio tutoring (TN ALL Corps or equivalent):** Fourth grade high-dosage, low-ratio tutoring that occurs twice a week for 30 minutes. This tutoring must occur for the duration of the fourth-grade school year and is available for students who scored "approaching expectations" or "below expectations."

Please note if a student scored "below expectations" on their ELA section of TCAP, the student must participate in multiple interventions including summer camp and high-dosage, low-ratio tutoring, if the parent and district elect a path other than retention.

Promotion Criteria for Students Identified for Retention

For students scoring "**below expectations**" on the TCAP, students identified for retention may be promoted if:

- The student is an English language learner and has received less than two years of ELA instruction,
- The student has a disability or suspected disability that impacts reading, **OR**
- The student was previously retained prior to their current third grade year.

Additionally, students scoring “below expectations” on the TCAP may be promoted if the following interventions are provided:

- The student attends a learning loss bridge camp, maintains a 90% attendance rate at the camp, **AND**
- The student receives high-dosage, low-ratio tutoring using the TN ALL Corps grant or an equivalent high-dosage, low-ratio tutoring model for the entirety of fourth grade,
- The student may be promoted from fourth grade to fifth grade if the student demonstrates adequate growth on their fourth grade ELA TCAP. A student may only be retained in fourth grade one time.

For students scoring **“approaching expectations”** on their TCAP in ELA, students identified for retention may be promoted if:

- The student is an English language learner and has received less than two years of ELA instruction,
- The student has a disability or suspected disability that impacts reading, **OR**
- The student was previously retained prior to their current third grade year.

Additionally, students scoring “approaching expectations” may be promoted if the following interventions are provided:

- The student attends a summer learning camp, maintains a 90% attendance rate at the camp, and demonstrates adequate growth on the post-test, **OR**
- The student receives high-dosage, low-ratio tutoring using the TN ALL Corps grant or an equivalent high-dosage, low-ratio tutoring model (Tier III RT²) for the entirety of fourth grade.
 - If a student is promoted through high-dosage, low-ratio tutoring to the fourth grade, then the student may be promoted from fourth grade to fifth grade if the student demonstrates adequate growth on their fourth grade ELA TCAP. A student may only be retained in fourth grade one time.

The retention and promotion requirements outlined in the law apply to **all** students. The law also contains specific provisions related to students with disabilities. The state retention law does not supersede federal requirements of IDEA and Section 504, and students may not be retained based solely on their disability or suspected disability. In accordance with T.C.A. § 49-6-3115, a student with a disability or a suspected disability that impacts their ability to read cannot be retained. Retention and promotion decisions for a student with a disability or a suspected disability must be made on a case-by-case basis and in consultation with the student’s IEP and/or 504 team to determine whether the student’s performance on the ELA TCAP was due to the student’s disability. Such consultation includes, but is not limited to, a review of evaluation and eligibility data, input from the student’s teachers and parents, benchmark assessments, and classroom performance.

Finally, the law provides an opportunity for families of students scoring “approaching expectations” to appeal a third-grade retention decision as defined by the State Board of Education Promotion and Retention rule and policy. This option is not available to families of students scoring “below expectations.”

TN ALL Corps or High-Dosage, Low-Ratio Tutoring Programs

All students who score “approaching expectations” or “below expectations” must have access to TN ALL Corps tutoring or another high-dosage, low ratio tutoring option in fourth grade. High-dosage, low-ratio

tutoring ensures that learning gaps are removed and that a child can perform work on grade level and consists of intensive tutoring that occurs at least two to three times per week for 30 to 45-minute sessions. Sessions must be provided by a qualified tutor to help all students accelerate their learning through individualized, intensive support.

For a district's tutoring intervention to qualify as high dosage, low-ratio tutoring, the district must ensure the student attends two tutoring sessions a week for at least 30 minutes for each session, including a reading focus, for a year-long intervention. Students must also receive progress monitoring monthly to track learning improvements.

A district can choose to offer Tier III RTI² interventions as an equivalent high-dosage, low ratio tutoring model. If a district chooses to use Tier III RTI² sessions as a replacement for high-dosage, low-ratio tutoring, the RTI² Tier III session must meet ***BOTH*** requirements for Tier III intervention and high-dosage, low-ratio tutoring. Therefore, the sessions must have a 1:3 ratio between the tutor and students, include a focus on ELA skills development and be maintained for the entire school year.

Please see the [Response to Instruction and Intervention Manual](#) for additional RTI² requirements.

Summer Programming

As part of the *Tennessee Learning Loss Remediation and Student Acceleration Act*, summer programming is available to provide students additional time and small learning groups to address learning gaps. Summer programming may benefit third grade students who are at risk for not demonstrating proficiency on the third grade ELA TCAP assessment.

Summer learning loss bridge camps provide at least four weeks of additional reading and math instruction as well as intervention and activity for students who may have incomplete learning. Summer bridge camps serve priority students (as defined under the Act) entering grades four through eight. Camps must include six hours of daily programming, including four hours of reading and math instruction (with at least one hour of this block dedicated to math and at least one hour for reading), one hour of intervention, and one hour of physical activity or "play."

Third grade students demonstrating a significant reading deficiency on the winter universal reading screener should be prioritized and encouraged to attend summer programming. In addition, any student demonstrating ELA standards gaps on the third-grade benchmark should also be prioritized for summer programming. Many districts begin planning for third-grade summer programming in early winter to ensure a high-quality intervention to support students not demonstrating proficiency.

Family Appeal Process

TCA § 49-6-3115 requires interventions for third grade students who are not proficient on the ELA TCAP. Interventions are the best way a students can improve their basic reading skills and grow their standards-based literacy performance.

If a student does not participate in interventions, or if a student does not meet the expectations within the interventions, the student would have the opportunity to demonstrate proficiency on a retake of the third grade TCAP assessment. If none of these options occur, the student will be retained in third grade.

A family of a student scoring “approaching expectations” can choose to appeal the decision for retention. (This option is not available to students who score at a level of “below expectations.”) Students and families who have experienced a catastrophic personal situation also may be eligible to file appeals.

Information required for submitting appeals support a review of how students have demonstrated growth in Basic Skills and Tennessee ELA standards.

1. **Basic Reading Skills Growth:** The first component of the appeals process is providing evidence of the student’s growth in the basic reading skills. Information demonstrating a student’s above-average growth and improvement on a state-approved universal reading screener will be reviewed.
2. **Standards-Based Growth:** The student must demonstrate accelerated growth in ELA standards mastery. Districts use benchmarks throughout the school year to track standards-based performance and growth on ELA content standards. Student scores on a state-approved standards-based benchmark from the child’s school must demonstrate the student is growing faster than their peers, as measured by national data.

Pursuant to the law, all appeals must be filed by the student’s parent or guardian. Schools should help support families seeking to appeal a retention determination by providing relevant data required to complete and submit an appeal to the department.

Sample Talking Points

During third grade, a district should provide robust communications on student progress in reading development and standards-based literacy development. Additionally, in communications to parents, districts can discuss early intervention opportunities available to support reading skills and standards-based literacy development.

Consider the following strategies:

1. Track the progress of student performance on universal reading screeners (administered three times a year as required under the *Tennessee Literacy Success Act*). Consider sending letters and scheduling parent-teacher conferences to accompany each universal reading screener report.
2. Use “at-risk” designations on screeners to prioritize students in interventions in early grades.
3. Utilize additional assessments, such as survey level assessments, benchmarks, and additional progress monitoring tools, to refine interventions if a child is not progressing in reading or standards-based literacy development. Support teachers in having conversations with parents.

Below, sample talking points for directors of schools, school leaders and educators are provided as optional resources to support planning communications to families.

Directors of Schools

- We believe that all students should have the opportunity to successfully experience on-grade-level lesson and to master grade level content. Some students need more supports than other students.
- Student learning and growth is measured in a variety of ways—including classwork, benchmark tests, exams, and the statewide annual assessment.
- One of the most important things we want to know is how our youngest students are progressing towards becoming strong readers by third grade. Research shows it is a milestone for achievement that impacts their future in many ways.
- Your student’s TCAP score, specifically in English Language Arts, indicates they need some additional support to be ready for success in fourth grade.
- We have a strong plan to provide that support to those students.
- Our district has high-dosage, low-ratio tutoring (optional here), summer programming, and RTI² to ensure that students have supports tailored to their unique learning needs.
- It may benefit some students to participate in these learning opportunities before they take their third grade TCAP.
- In the event that a third-grade student struggles and does not demonstrate proficiency in English Language Arts on the TCAP, we want to ensure that additional learning supports are in place.
- Students will be prioritized for summer programming to receive small group extended learning time to develop those third grade literacy standards not met during the school year. At the end of camp, students will be given an opportunity to demonstrate growth their camp experiences and/or re-take their TCAP assessment.
- Additionally, our district will offer high-dosage, low ratio tutoring for your student to receive support throughout their fourth-grade year. This will ensure that your student has the needed supports to be successful in future years and achieve their lifelong learning goals.
- These are important learning opportunities that are not available to every student but are prioritized for students who could benefit the most.

- Attendance is critical to a child’s success in school. If a child misses multiple days a month, they can easily fall behind in the daily instruction that their teachers are delivering. Attendance is critically important.
- However, if your family chooses not to engage in additional supports for your student, your child may not move ahead to the next grade.
- Extra learning time is a valuable and exciting opportunity for our students. We encourage you to take advantage of these opportunities and partner with us to help keep your student on track.
- If your student scored “approaching expectations” on the third grade ELA TCAP, you may choose to file an appeal with the state department, and the district will provide you with your universal reading screening data and benchmark data to include in your appeal.
- For more information about the supports your school offers, please talk with your student’s principal or teacher.

School Leaders

- We believe that all students should have the opportunity to successfully experience on-grade-level lesson and to master grade level content. Some students need more supports than other students.
- Student learning and growth is measured in a variety of ways—including classwork, benchmark tests, exams, and the statewide annual assessment.
- One of the most important things we want to know is how our youngest students are progressing towards becoming strong readers by third grade. Research shows it is a milestone for achievement that impacts their future in many ways.
- Your student’s TCAP score, specifically in English Language Arts, indicates they need some additional support to be ready for success in fourth grade.
- We have a strong plan to provide that support to your student. *[Insert specific supports.]*
- Please schedule a meeting with your student’s counselor to review your student’s home literacy report and the supports that we have at our school.
- In the event your child struggles in their universal screening or benchmark assessments during third grade, we will offer summer programming seats for your student to receive small group extended learning time to develop those third-grade skills not mastered during the school year. At the end of camp, students will be given an opportunity to demonstrate growth their camp experiences and/or re-take their assessment.
- Additionally, our district will offer high-dosage, low ratio tutoring for your student to receive support throughout their fourth-grade year. This will ensure that your student has the needed supports to be successful in future years and achieve their lifelong learning goals.
- These are important learning opportunities that are not available to every student but are prioritized for students who could benefit the most.
- Daily attendance is critical to a child’s success in school. If a child misses multiple days a month, they can easily fall behind in the daily instruction that their teachers are delivering. Attendance is critically important.
- However, if your family chooses not to engage in additional supports for your student, your child may not move ahead to the next grade.
- Extra learning time is a valuable and exciting opportunity for our students. We encourage you to take advantage of these opportunities and partner with us to help keep your student on track.
- Our district sincerely hopes that your child takes advantage of any and all learning acceleration opportunities and partners with us to keep your child on track.

- If your student scored “approaching expectations” on the third grade ELA TCAP, you may choose to file an appeal with the state department, and the district will provide you with your universal reading screening data and benchmark data to include in your appeal.
- For more information about the supports your school offers, please talk with your child’s counselor or teacher.

Educators

Schedule a time to walk parents through the home literacy reports, benchmark reports or other literacy data to help the family understand these reports.

- We want to support your student and accelerate their learning.
- It appears that your child has some learning gaps in their literacy that may put them at risk for having a significant deficiency in reading. That means we need to really work on developing their reading skills and helping them meet academic expectations for their age
- As educators, we review universal screener data and ELA assessments to track your child’s progress in third grade, and a student’s score on a universal screener would show lack of significant progress in reading development and classwork and unit assessments provide us with evidence of third grade standards development.
- We have several supports in our school to help support your student’s learning including *[Insert specific supports.]*
- I also want to take time to support your child’s learning at home. *(Discuss ways to support learning at home.)*
- There are free resources available that you can order- fun decodable books to help students practice becoming strong readers. <https://www.tn.gov/education/decodables.html>
- Remember that attendance is essential. (Please tailor this conversation to the child’s attendance record).
- Finally, I want to make sure that we stay in close contact about your child’s progress. I will be setting up the following strategy for us to communicate.

2022-23 SY Sample Timeline

Timeline	Communication
Mid-October	Home Literacy Report 1- needed interventions in tutoring and summer programming
January 15	Home Literacy Report 2- at-risk for retention
March	Summer programming prioritized sign-ups for at-risk students
May 19-26	Initial TCAP data results data available [raw scores and raw-score-to-scale-score (RSSS) conversion tables should be used to identify prioritized students]
May 30 – June 2	Parent notification, explanation of available student interventions, and development of parent agreements/retention plans
May 30- June 9	Grade 3 TCAP ELA Retest (This re-test is a separate process from summer programming).
May 30	Parent appeal process for students scoring “approaching” opens and appeals accepted
May 30- August 1	Department reviews appeals and returns decisions in 10-day window.
Mid-June –Mid July	Possible Choice for Delayed Summer Programming Launch
August 1	Parent appeal process closes for upcoming school year

Note: This table is a representative example. Some dates are based on third party vendors or local district discretion and may be subject to change.

Template Resources

These optional resources are provided for interested districts as examples and templates, editable and customizable for use at the district's discretion. Please note that in accordance with T.C.A. § 49-1-905(d) (4), districts must provide notice to parents or guardians of students in third grade who have an achievement level of "approaching expectations" or "below expectations" on the ELA portion of the student's most recent TCAP test.

Fall Welcome Letter for Third Grade Students

The [Fall Welcome Letter template](#) is an example of a letter to parents from school leaders to communicate how important third grade is in a student's development and to encourage strong parent-teacher engagement.

October Third Grade At-Risk Home Literacy Report

The [October At-Risk Home Literacy Report template letter](#) from school leaders to parents helps explain the student's data after the first administration of the district's selected, state-approved universal reading screener, and encourages discussion about specific intervention options available to the student.

January Third Grade At-Risk Home Literacy Report

The [January At-Risk Home Literacy Report template letter](#) from school leaders to parents highlights a need for interventions to support a student's demonstrating reading deficiencies in universal reading screener data. The letter encourages a school-and-family meeting and encourages the family to register their child for summer programming. If used, this letter could be shared with teachers to ensure seamless communications with families to schedule meetings, discuss the data, and help register for summer programming.

May TCAP Non-Proficient Letter

Two template letters, tailored for students scoring [approaching expectations](#) and students scoring [below expectations](#), notifies families of their child's performance on TCAP and provides the intervention options necessary for promotion.

High-Dosage, Low Ratio Tutoring Parent Promotion Agreement

The [Fourth Grade Promotion Plan template](#) supports parents in understanding expectations and requirements for students receiving high-dosage, low-ratio tutoring in lieu of retention. [This sample Tutoring Agreement Template](#) notifies families of the expectations required and has the parent or guardian agree to the requirements of this intervention.

Summer Programming Parent Promotion Agreement

The [Summer Programming Template](#) supports parents in understanding expectations and requirements for students participating summer bridge camp in lieu of retention.