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BATTLE CREEK

# ENQUIRER

MONDAY, MARCH 27, 2023

PART OF THE USA TODAY NETWORK



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## Governor signs change to Mich. third grade reading law

**Clara Hendrickson**  
Detroit Free Press  
USA TODAY NETWORK

Gov. Gretchen Whitmer signed a bill Friday that strikes from law a requirement to hold back third graders who fail a reading proficiency test.

“Today, we are taking action to put power back into parents’ hands so they can work with their child’s teachers and make decisions that are best for their family,” Whitmer said in a statement. “Getting this done will offer parents more flexibility and ensure educators can focus on doing what they do best — helping students reach their full potential.”

Senate Bill 12 passed with the support of every Democratic lawmaker along with two Republican lawmakers in the state Senate — state Sens. Ruth Johnson, R-Holly, and Joe Bellino, R-Monroe — and GOP state Rep. Timmy Beson, R-Bay City, in the state House.

State Sen. Dayna Polehanki, D-Livonia, the bill sponsor and a former teacher, called Michigan’s reading law “state-mandated mass flunking of third grade students based on one reading test score.”

She said in a floor speech ahead of the vote in the state Senate that the retention requirement in the law was implemented unequally with students of color and those in lower-performing districts more likely to be held back a year. She stressed her bill

See **READING LAW**, Page 2A



The third-grade classroom for struggling readers at Detroit Premier Academy was divided into stations. PROVIDED BY KOBY LEVIN

## New fleet of aircraft



WMU College of Aviation Dean Raymond Thompson speaks during the dedication of two T-34 aircraft to the Hooligans Flight Team at Western Michigan University’s College of Aviation in Battle Creek on Dec. 2, 2022. PHOTOS BY BECCA MAHON/BATTLE CREEK ENQUIRER

## WMU College of Aviation to soar ‘to the next level’

**Greyson Steele**  
Battle Creek Enquirer  
USA TODAY NETWORK – MICHIGAN

BATTLE CREEK – Western Michigan University’s College of Aviation is ready to reach new heights with a new fleet of aircraft, courtesy of a multimillion-dollar investment from the WMU Foundation.

On Thursday, the WMU Board of Trustees approved a WMU Foundation loan of up to \$20 million to support the purchase of up to 32 new primary training aircraft as well as a Super Decathlon training aircraft used to develop specialized skills.

The investment will allow the college to replace its aging fleet with the latest technology in the field and will also expand the college’s training capabilities at a time when demand for pilots is ever increasing.

“When we acquired our previous fleet of Cirrus aircraft, Western stood out for the type of training and skills students were able to develop because of the quality of the planes and the high level of technology we equipped them with,” Raymond Thompson, dean of Western’s College of Aviation, said in a release. “It was essential to moving us up to a top three aviation program in the country. This next fleet will take us to the next level.”

The College of Aviation will sell its existing fleet of 28 planes to help defray the cost of the new aircraft. The purchase of the new fleet and sale of the existing aircraft will occur over several years, according to documents included in Thursday’s meeting agenda.

The estimated cost for the new fleet is roughly \$18.3 million, with a net cost after sales of existing aircraft of about \$10.6 million, per the documents.

“We’re very appreciative of the WMU Foundation for helping to make this happen,” Thompson said.



Western Michigan University’s College of Aviation in Battle Creek on March 24.

**“We’re very appreciative of the WMU Foundation for helping to make this happen.”**

**Raymond Thompson**  
Dean of Western’s College of Aviation

“Being able to purchase the new aircraft rather than lease them allows us to start building equity right away and ultimately save money, which is a win for the University and for our students.”

Thompson expects the first round of new aircraft to arrive on campus in 2024.

“This investment means we will continue to attract the best and brightest students to apply to Western Michigan University’s aviation program because we make these kinds of investments in equipment and educational experiences,” Thompson said. “At the end of the day, it’s hard to beat the look on the face of a student who’s going to be the first one in one of these new airplanes. That’s an exciting moment.”

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Volume 123 | No. 244  
Home delivery pricing inside  
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