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Al Frugoni offers an open-fire cooking demonstration on May 4 during "Move In Day" at Liberty Park for the Memphis in May World Championship Barbecue Cooking Contest. Memphis in May will host the Open Fire World Championship during the barbecue contest. BRIAN STRICKLAND/THE COMMERCIAL APPEAL

MSCS to make all third graders retake TCAP literacy tests

Bri Hatch
Chalkbeat Tennessee

Memphis-Shelby County Schools will require all third grade students to retake state standardized reading tests on the last two days of the school year because of a timing conflict with Tennessee's data release schedule.

District officials said May 7 that they're implementing a universal re-testing because of the high stakes nature of a 2021 Tennessee law that holds back some third graders who don't score as proficient on the state test.

The Tennessee Department of Education will release preliminary state testing results on May 20, the day before MSCS closes for summer break. Those late results mean the district wouldn't have time to determine which students are eligible for retests, which can help underperformers avoid extensive interventions required by Tennessee's third grade reading law.

Other school districts affected by extensive winter weather closures earlier this year are also grappling with the same issue. Metro Nashville Public Schools is currently considering its options, a spokesperson said.

Out of "an abundance of caution," said MSCS Accountability and Data Director Bill White, all 5,450 third graders will spend their last two days retaking the literacy portion of the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program.

"These poor third graders are taking a lot of tests. And we recognize that," White said. "We want any student who may have not been proficient the first time to have the opportunity to hopefully improve their score."

Retake scores aren't used in official proficiency data for the district, or in state and federal report cards. But students who pass the second time are exempted from required intervention measures.

Last year, just under 30% of MSCS third graders passed last year's reading test, known as TCAP. A little over 40% of third graders passed statewide. According to the Tennessee law, all remaining students were required to receive additional tutoring or attend summer school.

Over 150 MSCS third graders were held back last year, and nearly 1,300

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Sneak peek at good eats

Memphis in May BBQ contest cooks up something new for 2026

Brian Strickland
Memphis Commercial Appeal
USA TODAY NETWORK - TENNESSEE

The smoke is already filling the beautiful Memphis sky, an unmistakable signal that the 2026 Memphis in May World Championship Barbecue Cooking Contest is about to begin.

Ahead of the big event, friends, family and members of the media were invited to a behind-the-scenes experience at Liberty Park, where the barbecue contest will be held May 13-16. Dubbed "Move In Day," the Memphis in May team was hard at work on May 4, setting the stage for what many consider the world's most legendary barbecue showdown. About 200 teams are expected to compete.

The 2026 competition also brings

something new — an addition as bold as the flavors that have defined this event for nearly 50 years. The Open Fire World Championship will debut, celebrating the art of live-fire cooking with 15 international teams competing.

Al Frugoni, world famous Argentine pitmaster and social media influencer, provided a behind-the-scenes sneak peek of this new "public-facing food experience," blending traditional Argentine *asado* (open-fire cooking) with American barbecue.

"It's been around for 10,000 years," Frugoni explained, manning the grill. "But this is the first time it's being introduced to the Memphis in May barbecue contest."

Describing Memphis as the "capital of barbecue," Frugoni said the first time he attended the world-famous contest

Memphis in May World Championship Barbecue Cooking Contest

When: May 13-16; gates open 5 p.m. May 13 and noon May 14-16

Where: Liberty Park in Memphis

Details: memphisinmay.org

was as a fan in 2021. It was the "camaraderie" of the event that he first fell in love with, describing it as "thousands of strangers sharing the same experience, the same passion: barbecue." He knew instantly he wanted to participate.

Not only will Frugoni's country of

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City alleges Tyre' Nichols attorneys shaped criminal cases for lawsuit

Lucas Finton
Memphis Commercial Appeal
USA TODAY NETWORK - TENNESSEE

Attorneys for the City of Memphis, in a recent court filing, alleged attorneys representing RowVaughn Wells, Tyre' Nichols' mother, have "actively coordinated with both federal and state prosecutors to shape proffers and pleas to support the civil action against" the city and other defendants.

The motion was filed in the early morning of May 11, hours before the par-

ties met at an afternoon status conference the same day.

According to the filing, two of Wells' attorneys were in contact with prosecutors from the U.S. Department of Justice and the Shelby County District Attorney's Office. According to the city's attorneys, this was not odd on its face, but certain aspects raised red flags.

Neither the DA's office nor attorneys for Wells responded to requests for comment on the filing at the time of publication. During the status conference, however, attorneys for Wells and

the city both discussed the filing.

Bruce McMullen, a partner at Baker Donelson, which represents the city, likened the emails to "collusion," adding he believed "that was totally improper."

Meanwhile, Sarah Raisch, who represents Wells, said the communications between Wells' legal team and prosecutors were commonplace. She added prosecutors often consult with the family of victims in cases of huge public interest.

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Antonio Romanucci, one of the attorneys working with the family of Tyre' Nichols, speaks to the press.

CHRIS DAY/THE COMMERCIAL APPEAL

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