



VERMONT BLUEPRINT TO CLOSE THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP

The weight of the evidence is clear as to what children need to learn to read.
We know what to do – we now need to do it.

This Blueprint promotes the implementation of best practices that have emerged from decades of research; capitalizes on the rich potential of Vermont's educational resources; responds specifically to Vermont's unique educational challenges; and develops solutions that actively involve education, business, and government in partnership with families. In order to close the achievement gap for Vermont's struggling readers, we need to:

1. Begin at a PreK level to promote all children entering kindergarten ready to read

- Assure effective literacy learning beginning in preschool and continuing through to success in college or career
- Adopt a literacy learning profile that is completed for each child beginning in preschool and continuing until grade 3. For children not achieving at expected levels, a literacy learning plan would be developed and progress monitoring would be ongoing
- Build on existing professional development resources to create a statewide training network for early care and education providers in the area of early literacy learning
- Develop models for transition to kindergarten to maximize readiness for reading and promote future reading achievement
- Using a Vermont model, create training modules in literacy instruction for parents as well as community volunteers, paraprofessionals, and librarians

2. Increase teacher knowledge K-12

- Draw from *Knowledge and Practice Standards for Teachers of Reading* for certification
- Showcase successful school-wide reading instruction models to demonstrate what outstanding reading instruction looks like across grade levels in a multi-tiered system of assessment and instruction
- Create new dual endorsements for educators in elementary education and specific learning disabilities

3. Advance preservice and graduate education in higher education

- Work with the Vermont institutions of higher education to create a model course of study in K-12 reading instruction at the universal level, including best practices for specific learning disabilities
- Develop a corps of teachers committed to high level, state-of-the-art reading instruction that emphasizes research and practice, who are certified to supervise literacy practicum
- Establish a six month post-undergraduate internship model for Vermont institutions of higher education to foster excellence in teaching
- Develop after school or summer opportunities for teachers to participate in supervised literacy practica to address the needs of Vermont's struggling readers, including LD, ELL, economically disadvantaged
- Build in incentives through reductions in student loans for preservice and graduate study in best practices for struggling readers
- Allow transferable graduate credit to count towards receiving the dual endorsement

4. Provide leadership that is robust and informed

- Provide seminar series to increase the knowledge of principals, administrators, and other school leaders about the science of instruction to improve children's literacy outcomes
- Consider graduate education programs for teacher leaders in research-based best literacy practices

5. Enhance the delivery of excellent instruction in literacy through self-assessment

- Develop a self-assessment system for elementary and middle school teams to look at their school-wide reading instruction system and student data to identify areas of need.
- Provide support for targeted professional development based on needs identified
- Develop and promote use of a self-assessment system for colleges and universities to analyze their courses of study in reading instruction for all learners with specific attention to research-based strategies for struggling readers (limited English proficiency, LD including dyslexia, economically disadvantaged, and poor reading instruction)

6. Develop Leadership for Blueprint Implementation

- Create a Leadership Council and hold a series of focus forums on the use of evidenced-based practices grounded in science. Include school principals, teacher leaders, reading specialists, data coaches, special educators, and others to identify current practices and student data to close the achievement gap through best practices for all learners
- Enlist the support, endorsement, and advocacy of all Vermont organizations concerned with universal literacy

7. Enlist the support of the community at large through public relations

- Create key messages:
 - *every child can learn to read with good reading instruction*
 - *successful reading requires effective instruction in:*
 - *phonemic awareness*
 - *phonics*
 - *fluency*
 - *vocabulary*
 - *comprehension*
 - *the costs of reading failure are too great:*
 - *special education costs*
 - *school attendance*
 - *dropout rates*
 - *incarcerated youth*
- Establish an interactive literacy website with social networking capability
- Engage families in the advancement of literacy through workshops for home-school partnerships
- Assure Vermont branding in literacy initiatives by capitalizing on successful Vermont initiatives and practices
- Involve popular Vermont residents, artists, and writers (as volunteers if possible) to promote best literacy practices

8. Update the state literacy law in general education to focus on the achievement gap

Existing states with strong literacy laws to eradicate reading failure:

Minnesota, Texas, Louisiana, Colorado, Kentucky, Washington, Connecticut, Ohio

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COLLABORATION AMONG THE FOLLOWING ORGANIZATIONS

Stern Center for Language and Learning
Vermont Business Roundtable
Vermont Council of Special Education Administrators
Vermont Department of Education
Vermont-National Education Association
Vermont Principals' Association
Vermont School Boards Association
Vermont Superintendents Association

Thank you to the Emily Hall Tremaine Foundation for supporting the development of the Vermont Blueprint.