

S.204 Recommendations for House Education Committee  
Respectfully submitted by Gwen Carmolli, Advisory Council on Literacy Chair  
April 4, 2024

The Advisory Council on Education (Council) has provided testimony and support for bill S.204, appreciating the focus on screening and instructional support for struggling learners in grades K-3.

The proposed bill reflects many of the Council's recommendations:

- A focus on increasing literacy achievement for all students
- Provide resources on evidence-based instructional practices and assessment
- Provide professional development resources and training opportunities on early literacy
- Maintain the literacy position (currently the Act 28 Project Manager) at the Agency of Education
- Continue the Advisory Council on Literacy

A review of bill shows some areas that could be adjusted to further meet the Council's recommendations and to provide clarity for upcoming work to increase literacy achievement for all students:

**Include language in the findings to reflect the importance of early literacy in the learning years before kindergarten, and to highlight the importance of providing support for struggling learners in the grades beyond grade 4.**

Suggested language:

In Sec. 1- add

(4) Research shows that early language and literacy development is foundational to literacy achievement in grades K-3 and beyond.

(5) Evidence shows that it is critical to provide individualized, needs-based support for students to meet developmental milestones and grade level expectations in the early grades, K-3, and in the grades beyond.

**Reduce the data collection expectations to better align with federal and state requirements, address varied capacity of school systems, and to align with evidence-based recommendations.** As the Council is gathering input on data collection to develop recommendations, there is significant concern about data collection that adds burden on schools, shifts data systems recently put in place for Act 173 implementation, and that lacks direct connection to instructional decision making. At this time, the Council supports the collection and use of data at the local level to drive planning and needs-based instruction, and then limited collection of data at the state level to monitor progress of implementation of the state's literacy plan of student need in grades K-3. Schools would continue to provide local assessments and use the data for instructional decision-making, and then share broad data (number of students below grade level and name of universal screener/s) to the state.

Suggested language:

In Sec. 2 - remove

~~(3) the number and percentage of students identified with a potential reading deficit; and~~

~~(4) growth measure assessment data.~~

**Update membership for the Advisory Council on Literacy.** Vermont Curriculum Leaders Association (VTCLA) has added an executive director role and should be included as an ex officio.

Suggested language:

In Sec. 9 - update and add

(1) ~~eight nine~~ **ten** members who shall serve as ex officio members:

(J) the Executive Director of the Vermont Curriculum Leaders Association.

~~(A) a representative, appointed by the Vermont Curriculum Leaders Association;~~

**Update tasks for Advisory Council on Literacy.** The currently listed tasks have been the focus of the Council's work and will be completed by June 30, 2024. As the Council moves forward with fewer meetings, it will be important to have a sequence of tasks that could be achieved within each year and can adapt to different different aspects of literacy instruction (ex. adolescent literacy, early literacy and language development). Update the tasks to reflect annual work on the following: review implementation of the state literacy plan, gather input on services to support school systems, review evidence-based instructional practices, and review literacy assessment results.

Suggested language:

In Sec. 9 - remove and update

~~(A) update section 2903 of this title:~~

~~(3) develop a plan for collecting literacy related data that informs: (A) literacy instructional practices; (B) teacher professional development in the field of literacy; (C) what proficiencies and other skills should be measured through literacy assessments and how those literacy assessments are incorporated into local assessment plans; and~~

(4) ~~recommend~~ **review evidence-based** best practices for Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 literacy instruction within the multitiered system of supports required under section 2902 of this title to best improve and sustain literacy proficiency; and

This bill aligns with recommendations from the Advisory Council on Literacy and works toward the Council's goals to increase literacy achievement for all students. The proposed adjustments could further the alignment and provide clarity for upcoming literacy efforts.

Thank you for your consideration.