
TESTIMONY

Testimony To: Senate Committee on Education

Respectfully Submitted by: Ted Fisher, Director of Communications and Legislative Affairs

Subject: Recommended Edits to S.281

Date: January 31, 2024

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on the topic of S.281 – An act relating to educator preparation and evidence-based literacy instruction.

The Agency of Education greatly appreciates the committee’s interest in this topic, and on making meaningful strides this year on improving literacy outcomes. We also appreciate you introducing and taking up this bill, which codifies our policy recommendations for literacy.

As Secretary Bouchey noted last week, as additional work and review has occurred at the agency over the last several months, and as the AOE reviewed the final draft language as codified in the bill, we have identified several areas where language can be strengthened or improved to better match our original intent.

I plan to go section by section, with a brief summary of what we want to change and why, followed by proposed new language.

Sec. 1 – Findings

No feedback.

Sec. 2 – Mandatory Completion of Literacy Modules

We propose an adjustment of the effective date of this requirement, as well as some tweaks to the language to allow AOE and educators more flexibility to fully achieve implementation of the training.

Sec. 2. 16 V.S.A. § 1710 is added to read:

§ 1710. MANDATORY COMPLETION OF LITERACY MODULES

(a) On or before January 1, ~~2025~~ **2026**, all *currently* **professionally** licensed Vermont educators employed in a Vermont school shall complete a program of professional learning on evidence-based literacy instruction developed and offered, **or approved** by the Vermont Agency of Education.



(b) After January 1, 2025, all new licensed Vermont educators employed in a Vermont school shall complete a program of professional learning on evidenced-based literacy instruction developed and offered, **or approved** by the Vermont Agency of Education *within* **by the end of** the educator's second year of teaching.

(c) Vermont public and approved independent schools **who employ professionally licensed Vermont educators** shall collect and maintain on file a record of program completion. **The Agency of Education shall provide a format for recordkeeping, including use of the state licensing system as appropriate.**

(d) Educators shall provide evidence of ~~program~~ **required literacy professional learning** completion upon the educator's next license renewal.

(e) by September 1, 2024, AOE will develop and distribute a list of literacy professional learning requirements specific to each licensing endorsement.

Sec. 3 – Results Oriented Program Approval

Upon further review, the Agency has concluded that differentiating rulemaking authority for educator preparation will be too lengthy and burdensome. The components that apply to educator preparation are commingled with other licensing regulations in Rule Series 5000. It will be faster and more meaningful to work within the existing regulatory structure to update educator preparation program requirements.

Sec. 3. 16 V.S.A. § 1711 is added to read:

§ 1711. RESULTS ORIENTED PROGRAM APPROVAL

(a) On or before ~~January~~ **July 1**, 2025, the Agency of Education shall **submit recommendations to the Vermont Standards Board for Professional Educators on how** ~~conduct a review of the Results Oriented Program Approval (ROPA) program~~ to strengthen educator preparation programs' teaching of evidence-based literacy practices. **The Agency shall also simultaneously communicate its recommendations to Vermont's educator preparation programs.**

(b) ~~On or before January 1, 2025, Vermont educator preparation programs shall certify that they comply with the updated requirements.~~ **On or before July 1, 2026 Vermont Standards Board for Professional Educators shall consider, and as appropriate, update educator preparation requirements in Rule Series 5000**

~~(c) The Agency may adopt rules on the ROPA pursuant to 3 V.S.A. chapter 25 as necessary to enforce this section. - STRIKE~~

~~(d)~~ **(c) As part of its review under subsection (a) of this section, the Agency shall recommend to the Vermont Standards Board for Professional Educators whether or not an additional mandatory examination is needed to assess candidates' for educator licensure skills in mathematics and English language arts fundamentals and candidates' understanding of the importance of evidence-based approaches to literacy and numeracy, beyond current requirements in Rule Series 5000**

~~On or before January 1, 2025, the Agency shall develop and make available a model examination for use by educator preparation programs to test a candidate's skills in mathematics and English language arts fundamentals and the candidate's understanding of the importance of evidence-based approaches to literacy and numeracy.~~

~~(e) On or before January 1, 2025, educator preparation programs shall incorporate the examination developed pursuant to subsection (d) of this section into their program curriculum.~~

Sec. 4 – Rulemaking Authority

Sec. 4. TRANSFER OF RULEMAKING AUTHORITY; TRANSFER OF RULES

The Agency now proposes to strike this section, for the same reasons as outlined in Sec. 4, above.