



Colchester School District

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TO: Senate Education Committee

FROM: Amy Minor, Chair, Vermont Standards Board for Professional Educators
Co-Chair, Champlain Valley Regional Standards Board
President, Vermont Superintendents Association
Superintendent, Colchester School District

RE: S.303 Draft No 2.1 (S.281) Literacy Education

DATE: February 14, 2024

Good afternoon, I am Amy Minor, I am currently serving as the Chair of the Vermont Standards Board for Professional Educators, I am the co-chair of the Champlain Valley Regional Standards Board for Administrators, President of the Vermont Superintendents Association and the Superintendent of Colchester Schools.

Thank you for your work on the academic performance of Vermont Students specifically in the area of literacy. I would like to share my perspective on a few points of S.303 version 2.1 (S. 281) as currently drafted.

The first point that I would like to make is connected to Section Two B: specifically the last part of that sentence, “ **developed and offered or approved** by the Vermont Agency of Education.”

Professional development does not guarantee improvement in the quality of education, experiences of our students, or improved test scores. The best professional development programs have buy-in and input from stakeholders. As you know we are in a workforce crisis, and we are asking a lot of the educator workforce in Vermont. If we are going to require teachers to complete approximately 45 hours of mandatory literacy training, and hope that it impacts student performance scores it will need to be engaging, impactful, and relevant.

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My understanding of the literacy modules on the Agency of Education's website is that they were originally developed to be used as a resource, not a requirement. I have begun the training, and I do have questions regarding the module's ability to impact the instructional practices of teachers as a stand-alone professional development course.

I would strongly recommend that the development, offering, and approval process for the evidence-based literacy instruction program(s) should be completed by a committee of paid teachers, curriculum coordinators, and administrators working with the Agency of Education. This would generate buy-in, and create opportunities to strengthen the relationship between the field and the Agency of Education. It could also increase the fidelity in literacy instruction across the state.

I recommend a required and regular review process of the endorsed evidence-based literacy instruction program by the review committee as just proposed. Best practices and research change, and I want to ensure that the required training is not stagnant, to be effective it needs to evolve with Vermont's student literacy data, research, and best practices.

My second point, is connected to the Agency's capacity to ensure that any required training is completed. With most new initiatives, as you know the challenge is in the details.

In Vermont, professional learning activities are approved by the local standards board, before the professional educator's license renewal is validated and then sent to the Agency of Education. Local standards boards are comprised of professional educators who volunteer their time to do this work. Some boards may receive a small stipend and others are unpaid. This potential change will require training for local standards boards to ensure that this requirement is tracked and accounted for. I do not believe that the Agency of Education has the capacity to ensure that every professional educator will have completed the requirement, they will rely on the local standards board to do that.

When renewing your educator license, the vast majority of professional educators work towards completing the number of required hours of professional learning throughout the five years that they have to complete the hours. As a result, professional educators who are due to renew their licenses in 2026 may be well on their way to completing their professional learning hours. For those educators who have already completed their required hours, this requirement may not be greeted with enthusiasm to grow their practice.

This in closing is why any required training needs to be impactful, engaging, relevant, and ultimately should include members of the field in the development, delivery, and approval process.

Thank you for hearing my testimony today.