



THE UNION OF VERMONT EDUCATORS
10 Wheelock Street Montpelier Vermont 05602

GrowVT-Ed - Information for Vermont State House Education Committee

Dear Vermont State House Education Committee,

Good afternoon. My name is Juliette Longchamp, the Director of Professional Programs at Vermont-NEA. I am a licensed Vermont Educator in Elementary Education, Special Education, and Middle Grades Math, Science, Social Studies and English. I also hold a doctorate in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies from the University of Vermont. My broad knowledge, coupled with my 30 years of public school classroom experience, allows me to support a wide range of educators throughout the state. In addition to the work about which I am here to share with you today, I also work with public school districts to build stronger new teacher mentoring programs, coordinate support staff trainings, and support teachers pursuing National Board Certification, a voluntary certification which allows experienced teachers to put their teaching practice to the highest standards we have for teaching in the country.

Currently, Vermont has over 1200 public school teachers working in classrooms on provisional or emergency licenses. For the first time this year, the majority of these people are seeking initial licensure. The top 4 provisional licenses are Special Education, Elementary Education, Middle Grades English/Language Arts and School Administrators.

A year ago, Vermont-NEA was approached by the Vermont Rural Education Collaborative (consisting of curriculum directors and other leaders in the Northeast Kingdom) to create a "Grow Your Own" program to support the growth of licensed public school teachers in their area. They identified possible future teachers in their schools, currently working as paraeducators and substitutes. Many of these potential teachers interviewed, and were hired, as

public school teachers for this current school year, and were granted a Provisional Educator License from the Agency of Education. The hope is that given proper educational support and guidance through the provisional license period, these new educators would earn a Level I Educator License through the Peer Review Process, Vermont's Alternative Route to Licensure, and enjoy a full career as an educator in the community in which they live. This program was then expanded throughout the state, and is currently working with over 100 educators from all regions of Vermont. Our top content areas are Elementary Education, Special Education, and Middle and High School English/Language Arts. But we also have Math, Science, Social Studies, School Counselors, Social Workers, Early Childhood Educators, Early Childhood Special Educators, CTE, Art, Drama, Music, and Physical Education Candidates.

GrowVT-Ed, Vermont-NEA's Peer Review Support Program, launched in August 2023 with a "Jumpstart to Teaching" week. During this week, participants attended fourteen seminars focusing on Learner Development, Learning Theory, Classroom Management, Professionalism, and Resilience. Five of the seminars were smaller, content-like groups, (Special Education, Elementary Education, Mathematics, English, etc.) to discuss the first weeks of school, curriculum development and other immediate topics.

Following the Jumpstart week, participants attended (and attend) weekly seminars that alternate between focusing on the Vermont Licensure Portfolio and the Competencies for their specific licensure area. Both are required for the Peer Review Portfolio.

GrowVT-Ed facilitation is conducted by Board-Certified Public School Teachers. They are leaders in their field and provide strong support to the new educators. Vermont-NEA also has a Professional Practice Fellow, Barbie Collette from Middlebury Union Middle School, on release to lead the Special Education group in GrowVT-Ed.

To date, six people have completed their portfolios, with several more finishing up shortly. One person has completed his Panel Discussion with the Agency of Education and

granted a Level One License, while the remaining are waiting for their Panel discussion. To complete a Peer Review Portfolio in six months is quite an accomplishment and demonstrates these educators' commitment to the profession and their students. All of the candidates feel that they would have never finished without the support from GrowVT-Ed and Vermont-NEA.

GrowVT-Ed participants are in several different places in the Peer Review Process. Some of the participants were on provisional licenses last year, with the intent to complete licensure through the Peer Review Process, but made little progress while they were teaching. These teachers have provisional licenses that expire in June of 2023. The structure and support provided by GrowVT-Ed this year was what they needed to move forward in their portfolio work. Having support each week, as well as 1:1 meetings to educate, motivate and inspire has resulted in strong progress on the Peer Review Portfolios. The GrowVT-Ed Participants who are first year public school teachers this year, have provisional licenses that expire (for the most part) in June 2024. These individuals have the summer/fall to complete their portfolios with the goal of earning their Level I license in the fall. There are also a few participants who are working as public school support staff and have secured a "student teaching" experience. They will be applying for jobs this spring and will complete their portfolios in the summer/fall of 2023.

In addition to the weekly seminars, GrowVT-Ed offers regular office hours and Writing Days. Office Hours help participants with individual questions and provide motivation and traction to keep moving forward. Writing Days are full "work days" where participants come to write and receive support. There are many who feel that these days, away from distractions of life, are most productive in moving their portfolio to completion.

North Country Supervisory Union created additional district support, due to the number of GrowVT-Ed Candidates in that district. Melissa Lyons, an experienced educator and Instructional Coach, is working with GrowVT-Ed faculty and her district's candidates, checking in with them on their progress and needs. She also is learning how to facilitate candidates so she

can be a district resource in the future, creating a sustainable program in North Country Supervisory Union.

From the experience with GrowVT-Ed this year, and the realization that many people who apply for Peer Review, without support, do not finish, it is clear that support through the process will lead to higher Portfolio Completion rates. The hope is that these new educators will enjoy a full career in public education.

The process has also allows for people with rich work and life experience to join the teaching profession. Many of the individuals have shared that in their hearts, they always wanted to be a teacher, but were steered away from the profession by various people in their lives. Two people have earned doctorate degrees and many hold masters degrees. Having an alternative route to teaching is an important path to licensure, especially for individuals who have found success in other careers, and now want to dedicate their careers to our Vermont students.

The Peer Review Process is daunting. The State's Peer Review Coordinator facilitates a two-hour seminar on how to put the portfolio together, and is always willing to support candidates by answering questions. However, with embedded support and instruction throughout the process, Peer Review candidates will gain a greater understanding of the content, skills and mindsets that great teachers possess, and collaborate with other candidates as they document their competencies through the Peer Review Process.

Respectfully,

Dr. Juliette Longchamp
Director of Professional Programs, Vermont-NEA