

1 Introduced by Committee on Education

2 Date:

3 Subject: Education; literacy; teacher training

4 Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to: (1) provide
5 grants to supervisory unions and school districts to train teachers in methods of
6 teaching literacy; (2) create a new Literacy Division within the Agency of
7 Education responsible for improving prekindergarten through grade 12 literacy
8 within the State; and (3) require the Agency of Education to review teacher
9 preparation programs and report to the General Assembly on to what extent
10 these programs prepare teacher candidates to use science-based literacy
11 materials and programs.

12 An act relating to improving prekindergarten through grade 12 literacy
13 within the State

14 It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

15 Sec. 1. FINDINGS

16 (a) Addressing literacy outcomes is a key strategy for the successful
17 implementation of 2018 Acts and Resolves No. 173. The following findings
18 from the report entitled “Expanding and Strengthening Best-Practice Supports
19 for Students who Struggle” issued by the District Management Group in
20 November 2017, which informed the development of Act 173, support the

1 urgency to improve Vermont’s literacy outcomes relative to special education
2 reform:

3 (1) “Investing in the effectiveness of core reading instruction is critical
4 for students in general education and students with disabilities.”

5 (2) “Students with mild-to-moderate disabilities who struggle with
6 reading may not be supported by teachers skilled in the teaching of reading.”

7 (3) “While some special education teachers across the supervisory
8 unions had a strong background in the teaching of reading, others indicated
9 that they did not have the training or background to be effective supporting
10 students struggling in reading.”

11 (b) The data indicate Vermont needs to improve its literacy outcomes at the
12 early grades:

13 (1) Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium results from 2016 to 2018
14 indicate that only about 50 percent of students in grade 3 were proficient in
15 English Language Arts in each of these years.

16 (2) From 2015 to 2019, Vermont’s average scale in grade 4 reading on
17 the National Assessment of Educational Progress dropped every year from a
18 high of 230 to a low score of 222.

19 (c) The COVID-19 emergency has adversely affected student academic and
20 developmental progress. Failure to address literacy outcomes now could

1 significantly impact student development for many years to come since literacy
2 is foundational to the success of each student.

3 **Sec. 2. LITERACY GRANT FUNDING; APPROPRIATION**

4 The sum of \$500,000.00 is appropriated from [federal funds] for fiscal year
5 2022 to the Agency of Education. The Agency shall use this appropriation to
6 provide grants to supervisory unions and school districts to train teachers in
7 methods of teaching literacy. The Agency shall administer the grant program
8 and determine which supervisory unions are eligible and the amount to be
9 granted to each applicant based on its assessment of the relative need for this
10 funding.

11 **Sec. 3. AGENCY OF EDUCATION; LITERACY DIVISION; CREATION;**
12 **APPROPRIATION**

13 The sum of \$[] is appropriated from the General Fund for fiscal year
14 2022 to the Agency of Education to create a new Literacy Division within the
15 Agency responsible for improving prekindergarten through grade 12 literacy
16 within the State.

17 **Sec. 4. TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAMS; REVIEW**

18 On or before December 15, 2021, the Agency of Education shall review
19 teacher preparation programs and report to the General Assembly on to what
20 extent these programs prepare teacher candidates to use science-based literacy
21 materials and programs.

- 1 Sec. 5. EFFECTIVE DATE
- 2 This act shall take effect on passage.