

Dear Chair Campion and members of the Senate Education Committee:

I am glad to see the legislature's renewed focus on early reading education. I applaud your efforts to tackle the complex issue of improving our literacy instruction.

I want to set the record straight on 16 V.S.A. § 2903. I think Secretary French may have been mistaken when he said the Vermont State Board of Education (SBE) had fallen behind and had not generated a report since 2009. (Do I detect a little friction between Secretary French and the SBE?) The latest report (dated July 9, 2019) is available on the AOE website:

<https://education.vermont.gov/sites/aoe/files/documents/edu-a-blueprint-for-early-literacy-comprehensive-system-of-services-prek-through-third-grade.pdf>

I am surprised that Vermont's educational leaders are not aware of this report. I was critical of this report in my [VTDigger commentary](#) for not following the majority opinion of the 2000 National Reading Panel.

Where are the structured literacy experts among the stakeholders in the committee's current bill? In over 20 years of trying, have these same leaders been able to improve our literacy rate? I note that this report contains many of the same buzz words as the committee's current bill: "evidenced-based" and "highly skilled teachers." How will this bring change?

Translating research into practice is very difficult in any professional field. Practitioners must believe their current practices are effective to be able to practice their profession. Dr. Susan Neuman (29 January 2021), who has experience in both research and applying research to the classroom, offered the most relevant testimony for you and your committee. She said, "Your teachers are going to hate this." No professional wants to hear that their current practice is not effective and a professional does not want to be told what to do. Dr. Neuman suggested hard decisions need to be made about curriculum. Other states have curriculum mandates. Are you and the committee willing to specify curriculums based on structured literacy?

What are you and the committee doing to reassure Vermont taxpayers that \$3 million is going into effective change and not to a bloated educational bureaucracy?

Thank you for all your hard work to improve our children's literacy outcomes.

Sincerely,

Mack Gardner-Morse