



VERMONT PRINCIPALS' ASSOCIATION
MEMO
From the Desk of Jay Nichols

To: Senate Committee on Education
Date: February 18, 2021
Subject: Literacy Professional Development Approach Possibility

These notes for committee are based on email exchanges I had with Chair Champion yesterday in response to the memo you are working on to send to the Senate Committee on Appropriations.

In the memo under the title Improve Literacy you request \$500,000 "for the Agency of Education to distribute funds to school districts and supervisory unions for literacy training for teachers." I did a little back of the napkin math with a few assumptions that I've haven't been able to verify but for the purposes of this concept, Senator Champion felt it was worth discussing.

Assuming:

- We have no more than 2000 classroom teachers in grades K-3 (VT-NEA wasn't sure how many teachers we have in these grades).
- We want all K-3 classroom teachers to be experts in providing high quality research based proven effective instruction in literacy.
- We want to provide sufficient funds and take advantage of one time funds to make a huge impact.

then

- The funding of \$500,000 comes out to \$250 per teacher it is likely more than that as some teachers will already have literacy training at the expertise level.

- That is unlikely to move the needle in terms of professional learning for teachers.

Thus

- If we appropriated 5 million dollars, we would be looking at \$1250 per teacher at a minimum. Likely quite a bit higher given we probably have less than 4000 teachers that would need the professional learning in grades K-3 - 4000 was my crazy guess but after talking to VT-NEA that number is likely closer to 2000

With that we could

- Develop or implement a high leverage reading course or professional learning professional practice program
- We could fund this for every teacher in K-3
- Might be able to fund for all K-6 teachers depending on cost etc.
- The course/training could take place in the school or within that school system or region
- We could ensure that the training is based on the research on teaching reading that we have all heard about with a focus on the five key components of effective reading instruction: Phonemic awareness • Phonics • Fluency • Vocabulary • Comprehension

However

- This is not necessarily going to improve SBAC scores in grades 3-8 although I think it likely will
- Teachers in grades 3-6 and probably 7th and 8th grade teachers as well, also have to be able to teach all aspects of literacy, especially in terms of comprehension and higher level reading understanding related to higher order thinking etc.
- You would need someone or someone's to develop the professional learning program (It will not be the VPA!)

Questions.

Respectfully submitted,

Jay Nichols