

GrowVT-Ed Academy

Developing Educators through a Guided and Supported Peer Review Process

Proposal for Discussion

Background:

According to the Vermont “Search for an Educator” database, there are currently 169 special educators and 23 early childhood special educators working on a provisional license. There are 135 elementary educators, 110 Middle Grades (22 ELA, 29 Mathematics, 28 Science, 31 Social Studies), 79 Secondary Teachers (20 ELA, 24 Mathematics, 16 Science, 19 Social Studies), and many other provisional licenses in other areas including Art, Music, Physical Education, English Learners, etc. The teacher landscape moving forward does not favor a strong number of qualified educators in the pipeline, indicating a need to build a system other than the traditional teacher education program route to fill the needs of Vermont students throughout the state. As we look towards the 22-23 school year, we have students with multiple years of disrupted learning. Add to this another year of inadequate qualified teaching staff, Vermont student learning will suffer.

Currently, the state has paraeducators with undergraduate degrees who are interested in teaching as a career. Supporting their professional goals and creating a growing pool of educators is a win-win situation. Research shows that 80% of ESP members live in the community where they work. Growing our own educators with support staff, substitute teachers, and interested community members with a passion for children and young adults will result in increased career satisfaction, decreased teacher turnover, and a more sustainable workforce.

Teaching is a challenging, complex profession requiring increasingly sophisticated knowledge and skills. “A teacher makes hundreds of nontrivial decisions daily, from designing lessons, to responding to students’ questions, to meeting with parents. In other words, teaching is a thinking person’s job; it is not simply a matter of following a script or carrying out other people’s instructional design” (Danielson, 2007, p.2). To equip new educators with these skills through nontraditional routes to teacher

certification requires careful curriculum design and support that provides opportunities to integrate and apply new skills in real time. Teacher quality matters. Effective educators have an immense influence on the lives of children, and conversely, poor teachers may have lasting negative impacts. Building a pool of teachers quickly to fill the emergency needs of Vermont schools needs to be intentionally designed and implemented to ensure that these prospective educators are learning key content and pedagogy and are supported by our strongest educators as mentors and instructors. Vermont-NEA has created this program to provide support and ongoing collaboration that will enable these new educators to grow quickly in their proficiencies and effectiveness as teachers.

The Vermont Agency of Education has an alternative route to certification called Peer Review. [The Agency of Education's Peer Review Mission Statement](#) is:

Peer review provides a non-traditional licensure process for candidates who demonstrate proficiency in meeting the standards for Vermont educators. Peer Review guides prospective candidates through this unique and rigorous process of licensure by evaluating and ultimately recommending licensure to qualified candidates. The peer review process recognizes that rich life experiences and diverse backgrounds, gained outside of formal teacher education programs, can be used to demonstrate the requirements for Vermont educators. This process encourages highly qualified and passionate individuals to pursue licensure to benefit all Vermont students.

Through the Peer Review Process, prospective educators complete the Vermont Licensure Portfolio and document the teaching competencies for their desired licensure area. In order to apply for Peer Review, prospective teachers must pass the necessary Praxis Exams, or equivalent as defined by the Agency of Education. All educators must pass the Praxis Core (Reading, Mathematics, Writing) or have a waiver by qualifying SAT/ACT/GRE as outlined in the testing requirements [here](#). If no properly certified teachers are available, superintendents may ask the Vermont AOE for a provisional license for a prospective educator with certain qualifications. These new educators need sustained, multi-year support, education, and mentoring in order to be effective new educators for the students in their classrooms. Mentoring by skilled mentors provides support, creates cognitive challenge and facilitates a professional vision (Lipton & Wellman, 2017). It is critical that mentors are trained to engage prospective teachers in learning-focused conversations. Vermont-NEA offers mentor training each summer in partnership with Castleton University.

The 2022-2023 GrowVT-Ed Program will include regular seminars throughout the school year, beginning in August 2022. Additional support will be provided in the Summer of 2023 to finish the Peer Review Portfolio. The sequence of seminars is developed with the school year in mind. The August seminars focus on Theme I and Theme III of the Vermont Licensure Portfolio (VLP) and includes understanding learning theories, learner development and learning differences, building

supportive and inclusive classroom environments, and professional ethics and boundaries. Theme II is a year-long focus as candidates gain content knowledge, learn from accomplished teachers in the field to facilitate learning of the content with an emphasis on a constructivism approach, formative and summative assessment, unit and lesson planning, and building a toolbox of effective instructional strategies that actively engages learners.

Additionally, Vermont has a growing need to diversify its teaching workforce. To support our BIPOC prospective teachers, Vermont-NEA will form an Early Career Educator BIPOC Affinity Group, which will focus on the unique perspectives and realities of these teachers. As we continue to overcome structural racism in the educational system, these conversations are critical in creating a climate that will support our BIPOC educators and students.

Vermont-NEA's Director of Professional Programs, Dr. Juliette Longchamp, supports Peer Review Candidates throughout the state, and is a member of the Peer Review Advisory Committee at the Agency of Education, collaborating frequently with the Peer Review Coordinator. Additionally, NEA has funded a full-time, Professional Practice and Policy Fellowship. Additional Content Area Leads and District Leads (GrowVT-Ed Team) will be determined based on the needs of the cohort of provisionally-licensed prospective teachers.

Understanding the lack of qualified candidates for teaching positions, working proactively to build our own educators, will allow Vermont districts to fill positions with enthusiastic educators committed to their students and developing their practice through cohort seminars, district mentoring and coaching meetings, and weekly seminars addressing the Vermont Core Teaching Standards and content competencies used to develop their Peer Review Portfolio. This process is in no way replacing traditional education programs. The focus of this program is to grow the pool of educators through a supported peer-review process, as the legislature grapples with creating policies that will encourage our brightest Vermont students to pursue education as a lifetime career. Vermont students deserve no less.

Proposal and Timeline:

Month	Activities
<p>March - June, 2022</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Identify paraeducators, substitutes and/or community members with undergraduate degrees with a minor (middle school) or major (high school) in specific content (i.e. math, ELA, art, Social Studies, Science), or liberal arts degrees, and a desire to become certified educators in Vermont. ● Hold webinars for Prospective Teachers.
<p>April - July, 2022</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Prospective Teachers identified and introductory class (online) occurs with a Praxis Prep focus. ● Prospective Teachers who do not have qualifying SAT/ACT/GRE scores study and take the Praxis Core. Members will utilize study materials to support this process. ● Prospective Teachers will take the Praxis II Content Test, if one is required for the certification content area. Testing Information here. ● Each district will identify a strong educator with an interest in supporting Prospective Teachers to be the District Lead. These educators will work with Dr. Longchamp to create a plan for 22-23 seminars leading to the competencies for licensed educators. Districts with fewer than 10 Prospective Teachers will share a District Lead with neighboring districts. ● Districts without licensed candidates for open positions are encouraged to invite paraeducators, substitute teachers, and community members interested in teaching to interview for positions. Superintendents explore provisional license availability for each candidate deemed suitable, with a commitment to join the GrowVT-Ed 22-23 cohort. ● Prospective Teachers who have not passed Praxis Core will develop a study plan and retake each section not completed.

<p>August, 2022</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● District hiring continues as noted above. ● GrowVT-Ed Cohort Members who have not passed Praxis Core will develop a study plan and retake each section not completed. ● VLP Seminars for Theme I “The Learner and Learning” and Theme III “Professional Responsibility” held. ● Vermont-NEA will build the GrowVT-Ed Faculty and support the District Leads. GrowVT-ED Team members will create seminars addressing core competencies for the Licensure Area. ● GrowVT-Ed Cohort members placed in schools as provisional educators will be assigned through the district, a trained mentor and begin weekly meetings. Weekly discussions will include curriculum, assessment, students, classroom environment and instruction. ● Paraeducators and other support staff, interested in pursuing teaching, will work collaboratively with a mentor in the content area sought and will plan out the year. They will create a plan that includes a paid, 13-week period where the Potential Teachers are placed with a licensed teacher, leading to a minimum two-week solo period. Ideally, November-February should be the timeline goal in order to finalize portfolio work by the end of the school year.
<p>September-October, 2022</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Weekly meetings with a school-based mentor. ● Weekly seminars addressing VLP and Endorsement Competencies. ● Theme I and Theme III VLP work continues.
<p>November-December, 2022</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Weekly meetings with a school-based mentor. ● Weekly seminars addressing VLP and Endorsement Competencies. ● VLP Theme I and III work continue. ● Endorsement competencies documentation continues for Peer Review Portfolio. ● Observation I cycle from administration completed for provisionally-licensed educators. ● Mentor Observation for both provisionally-licensed educators and those seeking licensure who are not on a provisional license.
<p>January-February, 2023</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Weekly meetings with a school-based mentor.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Weekly seminars addressing VLP and Endorsement Competencies. ● VLP Theme II Evidence Chart - Focus Standards 4, 5. ● Endorsement Competencies continue for Peer Review Portfolio. ● Those who are not working on a provisional license will complete the 13-week, paid, student teaching. ● Mentor Observation II completed. ● Invite Vermont Graduate Program Representatives to a “Graduate Program Fair” to encourage the next professional step for cohort members following certification.
March-April, 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Weekly meetings with a school-based mentor. ● Weekly seminars addressing VLP and Content Area Competencies. ● VLP Theme II Evidence Chart - Focus Standards 6, 7. ● Endorsement Competencies continue for Peer Review Portfolio. ● Observation Cycle II by administration completed for those on provisional licenses.
May-June, 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Weekly meetings with a school-based mentor. ● Weekly seminars addressing VLP and Endorsement Competencies. ● VLP Theme II Evidence Chart - Focus Standard 8. ● Endorsement Competencies Completed. ● Theme II Completed. ● Additional Requirements for Portfolio completed. (Three letters of recommendation, transcripts, student teaching or equivalent form, Model Code of Ethics signature etc.) ● Submit Peer Review Portfolio to AOE (if ready).
July-August, 2023	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Submit Peer Review Portfolio to AOE. ● Peer Review Panel Discussion. ● If panel review results in a certification letter, the teacher will apply for level I License. ● If panel review identifies areas that do not meet competencies, teachers will meet with instructors to review and plan for how to meet competencies (submit more evidence, identify coursework, etc.) After the plan is complete, the teacher will submit evidence of the completion of the plan to AOE.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Apply for available positions.
School Year 23-24	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Achieve Level I License. ● Mentoring Year II. ● Develop a Professional Plan for Year 2.

Proposed Budget - 300 Participants:

Role:	Description	Financials	Cost
District Teacher Leads	Each supervisory union will have a lead teacher as part of the GrowVT-Ed Team, that will work with Dr. Longchamp and the State GrowEd Team. This person will communicate with the Curriculum Directors and assume responsibility for the program, including problem solving, resource collection, communicating with the provisional educators, etc.	\$4500/each District Lead 30 Leads @ \$4500/each Districts with fewer than 10 participants in the program will have a shared Lead with neighboring districts.	\$135,000
Peer Review Fee	The Peer Review Fee is due when the Peer Review Consultant reviews completed portfolios. June-July 2023	\$1200/prospective Teacher	\$360,000

Books/supplies/meeting materials	There are some foundational education books and endorsement competency books that will be required.	\$300/prospective Teacher	\$90,000
Vermont-NEA Professional Practice and Policy Fellow	Vermont-NEA Support - NEA has granted NEA a Fellow for 22-23. The Fellow will work with Dr. Longchamp in developing seminars addressing the Core Teaching Standards and will be the Lead Instructor for those pursuing Special Education Certification.	Full Salary/Benefits	Vermont-NEA
Content Leads - GrowVT-Ed Team Members	Numbers on the GrowEd Team will depend on the applicant endorsement areas. We expect one-two per endorsement area.	\$4500/Teacher 20 GrowVT-Ed Team members maximum	\$90,000
Mentor Teacher	Prospective Teachers need experienced and trained mentors to support each new educator.	\$2500 per trained mentor - Mentors will be in the school/district of the prospective teacher.	\$750,000
GrowEd Vermont Course Fee - 3 Graduate Credits through Castleton University	Vermont-NEA will take the lead on this program, planning content and facilitating communication with districts. Dr. Juliette	\$2,000 per candidate for 3 credits. Note: A six credit option will also be available.	Prospective Teacher - Local District Professional Development Funds

	Longchamp, Director of Professional Programs at Vermont-NEA will lead this initiative. The contract course fee will cover three credits and Vermont-NEA Staff time.		
			<p>Total State Funds: \$1,425,000 or 4,750 per teacher</p> <p>Prospective Teacher: \$2,000 from PD Funds as part of their local Collective Bargaining Agreement</p>

- Application Process
 - Undergraduate Studies and minimum GPA of 3.0 - there is some flex here for peer review, but transcripts should reflect strong content knowledge.
 - Recommendation from Administration (candidates are recognized through their work as a paraeducator, substitute, etc. for the quality of their work and dispositions)
 - Willingness to commit to the work required of both the job and concurrent Peer Review Portfolio work.
- Student Teaching or Equivalent
 - Options for Student Teaching
 - Hire as an educator and ask the AOE for a provisional license
 - Assign Paraeducator to a teacher for 13 weeks as the Student Teaching Experience (Continue to receive payment as a paraeducator during the 13 weeks.)

Roles and Responsibilities:

Vermont-NEA Director of Professional Programs and Staff/Fellow

- Coordinate and design the program including seminars, webinars, and other trainings.
- Maintain a central hub with all information needed for all Curriculum Directors, District Leads, and Cohort Members.
- Train District Leads on the portfolio process.
- Collaborate with Curriculum Directors throughout the process.
- Collaborate with the AOE Peer Review Coordinator and other AOE Staff as questions and issues arise.
- Create content to support the development of the Vermont Licensure Portfolio along with the District Leads.
- Provide office hours for the cohort members to address specific issues, celebrations and/or concerns.
- Recruit and develop GrowVT-Ed Team of practicing educators, reflecting the needs of the group.

Curriculum Directors - Or District Designee

- Work collaboratively in identifying District Leads
- Develop the application process for the prospective Teachers
- Collaborate with Vermont-NEA throughout the process and inform of any successes and challenges.
- Determine, with other district administrators, placements for each Prospective Teacher (placed in the classroom on a provisional license, assign to a teacher for a paid Student Internship Placement of 13 weeks)

District Leads - GrowVT-Ed Team Members

- Work collaboratively with Vermont-NEA (Dr. Longchamp, NBCT and NEA Fellow) to plan and implement cohort seminars, and develop systems of support for GrowVT-Ed Potential Teachers from the district or shared district.
- Communicate regularly with the district Curriculum Directors to inform and seek guidance as necessary for the program.
- Attend seminar sessions and check-ins with the district cohort members.
- Plan and implement seminars focusing on content area expertise and pedagogy utilizing the competencies for content areas for which they have experience.
- Troubleshoot any problems that arise with other district leads, curriculum directors, and Vermont-NEA, as determined by the specific issue.
- Attend trainings for District Leads, conducted by Vermont-NEA.
- Provide feedback to district cohort members on work associated with their portfolio development.

- Write a letter of recommendation for licensure for the district cohort members providing specific examples, which will be part of the Peer Review Portfolio.
- Other items that may come up as we develop this program.

Content Area Leads - GrowVT-Ed Team Members

- Collaborate with Vermont-NEA, District Leads, and Cohort members.
- Design and facilitate seminars on endorsement competencies to support Prospective Teachers, as determined by Vermont-NEA, District Leads, and GrowVT-Ed Cohort Members.
- Provide feedback on candidate's Endorsement Competencies on the Peer Review Portfolio.

Prospective Teachers - GrowVT-Ed Cohort members:

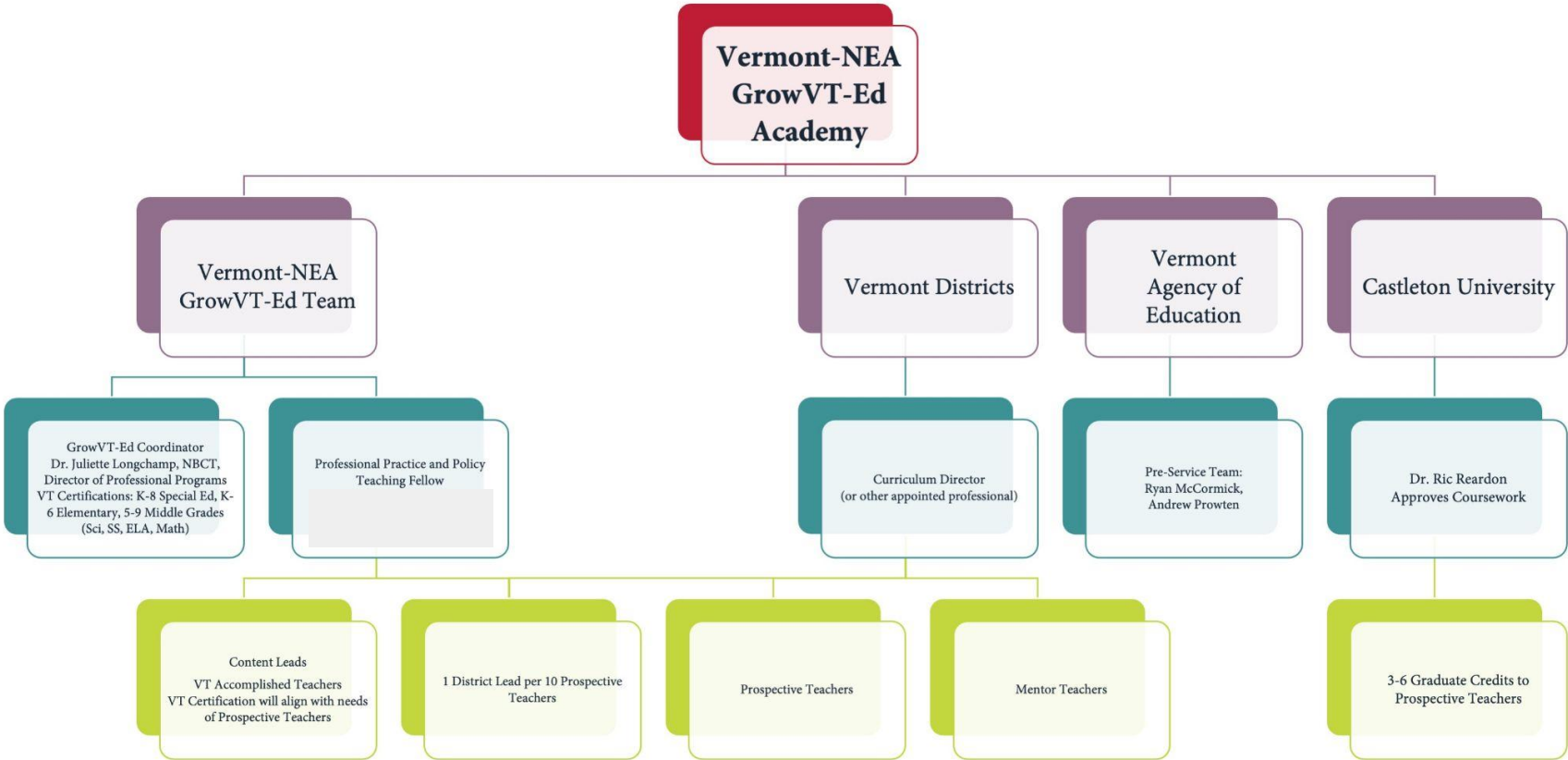
- Attend all seminars (most will be virtual and recorded for flexibility, but synchronous attendance is expected).
- Attend weekly mentor meetings, if working as a teacher of record.
- Meet portfolio and seminar work deadlines.
- Communicate with District Lead and Endorsement Lead as needs arise.
- Reach out to Vermont-NEA staff as necessary.
- Complete Application for Peer Review and complete necessary pre-work (Praxis Core, Praxis II).
- Complete all district expectations as a first year educator.

Evaluation Metrics: Vermont-NEA will apply Improvement Science to this project. Data that will be collected and analyzed in order to strengthen the program includes:

- Seminar Evaluations after each seminar
- Participant Surveys September, November, January, April and June
- Curriculum Director/Admin Surveys
- Number of GrowVT-Ed participants achieving Level I Certification through the Peer Review Process
- Number of GrowVT-Ed participants returning for Year Two

Program limit: 300 Prospective Teachers

Organization



References

Danielson, C. (2007). *Enhancing Professional Practice: A Framework for Teaching*. Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

Lipton, L., & Wellman, B. M. (2017). *Mentoring Matters, 3rd Edition: A Practical Guide to Learning-Focused Relationships*. MiraVia, LLC.