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Act No. 139 (S.204). An act relating to supporting Vermont's young readers through evidence-based literacy instruction

Subjects: Education; literacy; reading instruction

This act creates several requirements related to evidence-based literacy instruction and training for educators, including the following:

- Sec. 1 of this act contains legislative findings regarding literacy and reading instruction.
- Sec. 2 creates a new requirement for the Agency of Education to review and publish guidance on universal reading screeners and for public and approved independent schools that are eligible to receive public tuition to use those universal reading screeners to screen all students in grades kindergarten through three, at least annually, and provide supplementary evidence-based reading instruction and ongoing monitoring of progress for students with screening results significantly below relevant benchmarks. This section also requires supervisory unions and approved independent schools that are eligible to receive public tuition to report certain data related to the use of universal reading screeners to the Agency of Education, which is then required to annually report to the House and Senate Committees on Education and the Governor regarding the status of the State's progress in improving literacy learning, as well as the data collected from supervisory unions and approved independent schools.
- Sec. 3 requires the Agency of Education to issue recommendations for the form and substance of parental or guardian notification for students with a screening result that is significantly below the relevant benchmarks.
- Sec. 4 requires the Agency of Education to submit a report to the House and Senate Committees on Education on or before January 25, 2025 with a list of the universal reading screeners they have reviewed and published guidance on pursuant to Sec. 2 of this act.
- Sec. 5 of this act makes amendments to 16 V.S.A. § 2903 regarding preventing early school failure and reading instruction to conform to the terms used in Sec. 2 of this act. It also creates a new requirement for approved independent schools that are eligible to receive public tuition to develop grade-level appropriate school literacy plans that are informed by student needs and assessment data. Sec. 6 of this act requires approved independent schools that are eligible to receive public tuition to develop their literacy plans on or before January 1, 2025.

- Sec. 7 of this act requires supervisory unions and approved independent schools that are eligible to receive public tuition to provide professional learning activities to kindergarten through grade three educators on implementing a reading screening assessment, interpreting the results, determining instructional practices, and communicating with families regarding screening results in a supportive way.
- Sec. 8 requires the Agency of Education to make recommendations to the Vermont Standards Board for Professional Educators on how to strengthen educator preparation programs' teaching of evidence-based literacy practices as well as whether additional educator exams are needed to assess skills in math and English language arts fundamentals. The Standards Board is then required to consider such recommendations and update applicable rules accordingly on or before July 1, 2026.
- Sec. 9 of this act adds additional members to the Advisory Council on Literacy and amends the number of meetings the Council holds each year from eight to four.
- Sec. 10 extends the prospective repeal of the Advisory Council on Literacy from June 20, 2024 to June 30, 2027.
- Sec. 11 converts one limited-service position within the Agency of Education to one classified permanent status position to support the Agency in its evidence-based literacy work.
- Sec. 12 of this act requires the Department of Libraries to submit a report to the House and Senate Committees on Education with recommendations for expanding access to early childhood literacy resources on or before January 15, 2025.

Multiple effective dates, beginning on May 30, 2024