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H.697

Introduced by Representatives Austin of Colchester, Buss of Woodstock,
Farlice-Rubio of Barnet, Ode of Burlington, Roberts of Halifax,
Stebbins of Burlington, and Toof of St. Albans Town

Referred to Committee on

Date:

Subject: Education; literacy; curriculum; positions; professional development

Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to advance
literacy instruction by:

(1) defining science-based reading methods;

(2) converting a limited service literacy position to a permanent full-
time position within the Agency of Education;

(3) extending the life of the Advisory Council on Literacy to 2030;

(4) establishing one permanent full-time position within the Agency to
review, research, and recommend curriculum and professional development
resources to Vermont school districts; and

(5) appropriating money to fund ongoing professional development for
all educators that increases the skills, knowledge, and understandings of
current best practices in reading instruction and assessment based on science-
based practices.

1 An act relating to the advancement of literacy instruction

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

3 Sec. 1. FINDINGS AND INTENT

4 (a) The General Assembly finds that:

5 (1) Investing in the effectiveness of core reading instruction is critical
6 for students in general education and students with disabilities.

7 (2) Students with mild to moderate disabilities who struggle with
8 reading may not be supported by teachers skilled in teaching reading.

9 (3) While some special educators have a strong background in teaching
10 reading, others may not have the training or background to be effective in
11 helping students struggling with reading.

12 (4) It is essential to acknowledge that being able to meet or exceed grade
13 level literacy proficiencies, understand code and meaning of text, and apply
14 these skills, knowledge, and understandings across all academic disciplines is
15 foundational to the advancement of learning.

16 (5) It is only through continuous professional development; well-
17 researched and vetted curriculum materials; development and implementation
18 of statewide or districtwide developed literacy plans; a clear and sequential
19 continuum of literacy benchmarks; and national, State, and local assessments
20 to measure attainment of competencies that Vermont's goal of having all
21 exiting third grade students on a trajectory of academic success can be met.

1 (b) It is the intent of the General Assembly to continue to expand upon and
2 implement the initiatives introduced in 2021 Acts and Resolves No. 28 and the
3 efforts and findings of the Advisory Council on Literacy, by promoting
4 foundational literacy and grade level reading proficiency based solely on:

5 (1) scientific evidence;

6 (2) best practices with accurate, verifiable, and measurable outcomes;

7 and

8 (3) ongoing participation of local, State, and national assessment data by
9 educators, administrators, the Agency of Education, the State Board of
10 Education, local school boards, and parents.

11 Sec. 2. 16 V.S.A. chapter 99 is amended to read:

12 CHAPTER 99. ~~GENERAL POLICY~~ STUDENT SUPPORTS AND

13 LITERACY

14 Subchapter 1. Student Supports

15 § 2901. SUCCESS FOR ALL STUDENTS IN THE GENERAL

16 EDUCATION ENVIRONMENT

17 * * *

18 Subchapter 2. Literacy

19 § 2903. PREVENTING EARLY SCHOOL FAILURE; READING

20 INSTRUCTION

21 * * *

1 (b) Foundation for literacy. The State Board of Education, in collaboration
2 with the ~~Agency~~ Agencies of Education and of Human Services, higher
3 education, literacy organizations, and others, shall develop a plan for
4 establishing a comprehensive system of services for early education in the first
5 three grades to ensure that all students learn to read by the end of the third
6 grade. The plan shall be updated at least once every five years following its
7 initial submission in 1998.

8 * * *

9 § 2907. SCIENCE-BASED READING METHODS

10 (a) As used in this chapter:

11 (1) “Science-based reading methods” means explicit, systematic,
12 evidence-based reading research that includes developing foundational reading
13 skills by relying on phonemic phonological awareness, phonics and decoding,
14 fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension that can be differentiated to meet the
15 needs of individual students.

16 (2) “Science-based reading research” means research that applies
17 rigorous, systematic, and objective observational or experimental procedures to
18 obtain knowledge relevant to reading development, reading instruction, and
19 reading difficulties.

20 (b) Essential components of science-based reading methods include:

21 (1) language acquisition;

- 1 (2) literacy development;
- 2 (3) phonological processing;
- 3 (4) phonics and word recognition development;
- 4 (5) spelling;
- 5 (6) fluency;
- 6 (7) vocabulary development;
- 7 (8) text comprehension development;
- 8 (9) assessment administration, interpretation, and correction in
- 9 instruction, if warranted;
- 10 (10) letter formation;
- 11 (11) orthographic processing;
- 12 (12) morphological awareness;
- 13 (13) structure of language;
- 14 (14) language-based learning disabilities;
- 15 (15) written expression; and
- 16 (16) identification, assessments, and interventions for students who are
- 17 not mastering grade level proficiencies in spite of the amount of time, focus,
- 18 and instruction of reading.

1 Sec. 3. LIMITED SERVICE POSITION CONVERSION;

2 APPROPRIATION

3 (a) The limited service position created in 2021 Acts and Resolves No. 28,
4 Sec. 4(a) is converted to one full-time, classified, permanent position in the
5 Agency of Education in fiscal year 2025.

6 (b) The sum of \$100,000.00 is appropriated from the General Fund to the
7 Agency of Education in fiscal year 2025 for personal services and operating
8 expenses for the one full-time, classified, permanent position converted from a
9 limited service position in subsection (a) of this section.

10 Sec. 4. 2021 Acts and Resolves No. 28, Sec. 7 is amended to read:

11 Sec. 7. REPEAL; ADVISORY COUNCIL ON LITERACY

12 16 V.S.A. § 2903a (Advisory Council on Literacy) as added by this act is
13 repealed on June 30, ~~2024~~ 2030.

14 Sec. 5. APPROPRIATION; ADVISORY COUNCIL ON LITERACY

15 The sum of \$50,000.00 is appropriated from the General Fund in fiscal year
16 2025 to the Agency of Education for per diem and reimbursement expenses for
17 members of the Advisory Council on Literacy, created under 2021 Acts and

1 Resolves No. 28, as amended by Sec. 4 of this act, for fiscal years 2025, 2026,
2 2027, 2028, 2029, and 2030.

3 Sec. 6. AGENCY OF EDUCATION; POSITION; APPROPRIATION

4 (a) Establishment of one full-time, permanent, classified position is
5 authorized in the Agency of Education in fiscal year 2025 to review, research,
6 and recommend curriculum and professional development resources to
7 Vermont school districts.

8 (b) The sum of \$100,000.00 is appropriated from the General Fund to the
9 Agency of Education in fiscal year 2025 for personal services and operating
10 expenses for the one full-time, permanent, classified position established in
11 subsection (a) of this section.

12 Sec. 7. APPROPRIATIONS; INTENT

13 (a) Intent. It is the intent of the General Assembly that the appropriations
14 under this section shall be used to support the following:

15 (1) The Agency shall continue to arrange for State-sponsored, statewide
16 needs-based professional learning and State-sponsored conventions and
17 summits where educators, support staff, administrators, and special educators
18 can expand their understandings of current best practices in literacy instruction
19 and assessment. It is the intent of the General Assembly that all professional
20 development shall adhere to the science of reading methods along with other
21 evidence-based materials. This opportunity will bring focus and attention to

1 literacy, learning, support, and sharing of best practices between supervisory
2 unions and school districts, as well as support informed and sustained coaching
3 efforts at the local level.

4 (2) Educator preparation programs are an integral link between the
5 classroom and the greater education environment. These programs are
6 essential to developing and sustaining Vermont's mission to ensure that all
7 prekindergarten through grade 12 educators are literacy experts in evidence-
8 based reading methods and assessments. The Agency of Education, in
9 collaboration with directors of Vermont educator preparation programs, school
10 boards, principals, superintendents, and the Vermont Professional Standards
11 Board, shall continue to meet annually in order to determine subject matter and
12 geographic areas in Vermont where there is a critical need for elementary
13 classroom teachers. It is imperative that all Vermont students are mastering
14 the reading skills and understandings to meet grade level proficiencies.

15 (3) The Agency of Education shall be able to support a platform or
16 clearinghouse that can support both the Agency and the local education
17 agencies in accessing evidence-based practices, materials, and research in one
18 place. This continues to be a substantial investment. By modernizing our
19 educational delivery systems, all educators will have equal access to necessary
20 resources in order to advance student learning and build necessary instructional
21 expertise.

1 (b) Appropriations.

2 (1) The sum of \$250,000.00 is appropriated from the General Fund to
3 the Agency of Education in fiscal year 2025 for the purpose of funding
4 ongoing professional development for all educators that increases the skills,
5 knowledge, and understandings of current best practices in reading instruction
6 and assessment based on science-based practices.

7 (2) The sum of \$500,000.00 is appropriated from the General Fund to
8 the Agency of Education in fiscal year 2025 to support targeted practice-based
9 coaching and professional learning to improve early multitiered systems of
10 support.

11 (3) The sum of \$150,000.00 is appropriated from the General Fund to
12 the Agency of Education in fiscal year 2025 to support the Agency's Learning
13 Management System.

14 (4) The sum of \$2,100,000.00 is appropriated from the General Fund to
15 the Agency of Education in fiscal year 2025 for the purpose of developing a
16 45-hour professional development module.

17 Sec. 8. EFFECTIVE DATE

18 This act shall take effect on passage.