

1 TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES:

2 The Committee on Education to which was referred Senate Bill No. 304
3 entitled “An act relating to supporting Vermont’s young readers through
4 evidence-based literacy instruction” respectfully reports that it has considered
5 the same and recommends that the House propose to the Senate that the bill be
6 amended by striking out all after the enacting clause and inserting in lieu
7 thereof the following:

8 * * * Findings * * *

9 Sec. 1. FINDINGS

10 The General Assembly finds that:

11 (1) Explicit and systematic instruction on code-based and
12 comprehension-based reading skills and needs-based support are the most
13 effective literacy practices for the early grades.

14 (2) A strong focus is needed on phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency,
15 vocabulary, and comprehension for all students, and needs-based tiers and
16 layers of support are critical for struggling learners.

17 (3) Reading instruction is interwoven into the principles of creating
18 culturally responsive and inclusive environments for all students. The
19 availability and use of texts that are culturally relevant and representative of
20 historically underrepresented voices is critical to ensure that all students can
21 connect their experiences to the text they are reading.

1 screening results as outlined in the school district's Educational Support
2 Systems procedures.

3 (d) The parent or guardian of any kindergarten through grade-three student
4 who exhibits a reading deficit at any time during the school year shall be
5 notified in writing not later than 30 days after the identification of the reading
6 deficit. Written notification shall follow the Agency's recommendations for
7 such notification.

8 Sec. 3. PARENTAL NOTIFICATION; AGENCY OF EDUCATION
9 RECOMMENDATIONS

10 On or before November 1, 2024, the Agency of Education shall develop and
11 issue recommendations for the substance and form of the parental or guardian
12 notification required under 16 V.S.A. § 2907(d). The Agency's
13 recommendations shall be consistent with applicable State and federal law as
14 well as legislative intent.

15 Sec. 4. REVIEWED READING SCREENERS; AGENCY OF EDUCATION;
16 REPORT

17 On or before January 15, 2025, the Agency of Education shall submit a
18 written report to the Senate and House Committees on Education with a list of
19 the reviewed screening instruments it has published pursuant to 16 V.S.A.
20 § 2907. The Agency shall include any information it deems relevant to
21 provide an understanding of the list of reviewed screening instruments.

1 Sec. 5. 16 V.S.A. § 2903 is amended to read:

2 § 2903. PREVENTING EARLY SCHOOL FAILURE; READING

3 INSTRUCTION

4 (a) Statement of policy. The ability to read is critical to success in learning.

5 Children who fail to read by the end of the first grade will likely fall further
6 behind in school. The personal and economic costs of reading failure are
7 enormous both while the student remains in school and long afterward. All
8 students need to receive systematic and explicit evidence-based reading
9 instruction in the early grades from a teacher who is skilled in teaching the
10 foundational components of reading through a variety of instructional
11 strategies that take into account the different learning styles and language
12 backgrounds of the students, including phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency,
13 vocabulary, and comprehension. ~~Some students may~~ Students who require
14 ~~intensive~~ supplemental instruction tailored to the unique difficulties
15 encountered shall be provided those additional supports by an appropriately
16 licensed and trained education professional.

17 (b) Foundation for literacy. The ~~State Board~~ Agency of Education, in
18 collaboration with the State Board of Education, the Agency of Human
19 Services, higher education, literacy organizations, and others, shall develop a
20 plan for establishing a comprehensive system of services for early education in
21 ~~the first three grades~~ prekindergarten through third grade to ensure that all

1 students learn to read by the end of the third grade. The plan shall be updated
2 at least once every five years following its initial submission in 1998 and shall
3 apply to all public schools and approved independent schools eligible to
4 receive public tuition.

5 (c) Reading instruction. A public school or approved independent school
6 that is eligible to receive public tuition that offers instruction in grades
7 prekindergarten, kindergarten, one, two, or three shall provide highly effective,
8 research-based systemic and explicit evidence-based reading instruction to all
9 students. In addition, a school such schools shall provide:

10 (1) supplemental reading instruction to any enrolled student in grade
11 four whose reading proficiency falls below third grade reading expectations
12 proficiency standards for the student's grade level or whose reading
13 proficiency prevents success in school, as identified using the tiered system of
14 supports, as defined under subdivision 164(9) section 2902 of this title;

15 (2) supplemental reading instruction to any enrolled student in grades 5-
16 12 whose reading proficiency creates a barrier to the student's success in
17 school; and

18 (3) support and information to parents and legal guardians.

19 * * * Literacy Professional Learning* * *

20 Sec. 6. 16 V.S.A. § 1710 is added to read:

21 § 1710. LITERACY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

1 Each supervisory union and each approved independent school shall
2 provide professional development to kindergarten through grade-three
3 educators on implementing a reading screening assessment, interpreting the
4 results, determining instructional practices for students, and communicating
5 with families regarding screening results in a supportive way. The
6 instructional practices shall be evidence-based and effective and shall address
7 the foundational concepts of literacy proficiency, including phonemic
8 awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.

9 Sec. 7. RESULTS-ORIENTED PROGRAM APPROVAL

10 (a) On or before July 1, 2025, the Agency of Education shall submit
11 recommendations to the Vermont Standards Board for Professional Educators
12 on how to strengthen educator preparation programs' teaching of evidence-
13 based literacy practices. The Agency shall also simultaneously communicate
14 its recommendations to Vermont's educator preparation programs and submit
15 its recommendations in writing to the Senate and House Committees on
16 Education.

17 (b) On or before July 1, 2026, the Vermont Standards Board for
18 Professional Educators shall consider the Agency's recommendations pursuant
19 to subsection (a) of this section and, as appropriate, update the educator
20 preparation requirements in Agency of Education, Licensing of Educators and
21 the Preparation of Educational Professionals (5000) (CVR 022-000-010).

1 (c) As part of its review under subsection (a) of this section, the Agency
2 shall make recommendations to the Vermont Standards Board for Professional
3 Educators regarding whether an additional mandatory examination is needed to
4 assess candidates for educator licensure skills in mathematics and English
5 language arts fundamentals, as well as candidates' understanding of the
6 importance of evidence-based approaches to literacy and numeracy, beyond
7 the requirements in Agency of Education, Licensing of Educators and the
8 Preparation of Educational Professionals (5000) (CVR 022-000-010) in effect
9 during the period of the Agency's review.

10 * * * Advisory Council on Literacy * * *

11 Sec. 8. 16 V.S.A. § 2903a is amended to read:

12 § 2903a. ADVISORY COUNCIL ON LITERACY

13 (a) Creation. There is created the Advisory Council on Literacy. The
14 Council shall advise the Agency of Education, the State Board of Education,
15 and the General Assembly on how to improve proficiency outcomes in literacy
16 for students in prekindergarten through grade 12 and how to sustain those
17 outcomes.

18 (b) Membership. The Council shall be composed of the following ~~16~~ 19
19 members:

20 (1) ~~eight~~ nine members who shall serve as ex officio members:

21 (A) the Secretary of Education or designee;

1 (B) a member of the Standards Board for Professional Educators who
2 is knowledgeable in licensing requirements for teaching literacy, appointed by
3 the Standards Board;

4 (C) the Executive Director of the Vermont Superintendents
5 Association or designee;

6 (D) the Executive Director of the Vermont School Boards
7 Association or designee;

8 (E) the Executive Director of the Vermont Council of Special
9 Education Administrators or designee;

10 (F) the Executive Director of the Vermont Principals' Association or
11 designee;

12 (G) the Executive Director of the Vermont Independent Schools
13 Association or designee; ~~and~~

14 (H) the Executive Director of the Vermont-National Education
15 Association or designee; and

16 (I) the State Librarian or designee;

17 (2) eight members who shall serve two-year terms:

18 (A) a representative, appointed by the Vermont Curriculum Leaders
19 Association;

20 (B) three teachers, appointed by the Vermont-National Education
21 Association, who teach literacy, one of whom shall be a special education

1 literacy teacher and two of whom shall teach literacy to students in
2 prekindergarten through grade three;

3 (C) three community members who have struggled with literacy
4 proficiency or supported others who have struggled with literacy proficiency,
5 one of whom shall be a high school student, appointed by the Agency of
6 Education in consultation with the Vermont Family Network; and

7 (D) one member appointed by the Agency of Education who has
8 expertise in working with students with dyslexia; and

9 (3) two faculty members of approved educator preparation programs
10 located in Vermont, one of whom shall be employed by a private college or
11 university, appointed by the Agency of Education in consultation with the
12 Association of Vermont Independent Colleges, and one of whom shall be
13 employed by a public college or university, appointed by the Agency of
14 Education in consultation with the University of Vermont and State
15 Agricultural College and the Vermont State Colleges Corporation.

16 * * *

17 (d) Powers and duties. The Council shall advise the ~~Agency Secretary~~ of
18 Education, ~~the State Board of Education, and the General Assembly~~ on how to
19 improve proficiency outcomes in literacy for students in prekindergarten
20 through grade 12 and how to sustain those outcomes and shall:

21 (1) advise the ~~Agency of Education~~ Secretary on how to:

1 (A) update section 2903 of this title;

2 (B) implement the statewide literacy plan required by section 2903 of
3 this title and whether, based on its implementation, changes should be made to
4 the plan; and

5 (C) maintain the statewide literacy plan;

6 (2) advise the ~~Agency of Education~~ Secretary on what services the
7 Agency should provide to school districts to support implementation of the
8 plan and on staffing levels and resources needed at the Agency to support the
9 statewide effort to improve literacy;

10 (3) develop a plan for collecting literacy-related data that informs:

11 (A) literacy instructional practices;

12 (B) teacher professional development in the field of literacy;

13 (C) what proficiencies and other skills should be measured through
14 literacy assessments and how those literacy assessments are incorporated into
15 local assessment plans; and

16 (D) how to identify school progress in achieving literacy outcomes,
17 including closing literacy gaps for students from historically underserved
18 populations;

19 (4) recommend best practices for Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 literacy
20 instruction within the multitiered system of supports required under section
21 2902 of this title to best improve and sustain literacy proficiency; and

1 (5) review literacy assessments and outcomes and provide ongoing
2 advice as to how to continuously improve those outcomes and sustain that
3 improvement.

4 * * *

5 (f) Meetings.

6 (1) The Secretary of Education shall call the first meeting of the Council
7 to occur on or before August 1, 2021.

8 (2) The Council shall select a chair from among its members.

9 (3) A majority of the membership shall constitute a quorum.

10 (4) The Council shall meet not more than ~~eight~~ four times per year.

11 (g) Assistance. The Council shall have the administrative, technical, and
12 legal assistance of the Agency of Education.

13 (h) Compensation and reimbursement. Members of the Council shall be
14 entitled to per diem compensation and reimbursement of expenses as permitted
15 under 32 V.S.A. § 1010 for not more than ~~eight~~ four meetings of the Council
16 per year.

17 Sec. 9. 2021 Acts and Resolves No. 28, Sec. 7 is amended to read:

18 Sec. 7. REPEAL; ADVISORY COUNCIL ON LITERACY

19 16 V.S.A. § 2903a (Advisory Council on Literacy) as added by this act is
20 repealed on June 30, ~~2024~~ 2027.

21 * * * Agency of Education Literacy Position * * *

1 **Sec. 10. POSITION; AGENCY OF EDUCATION; LITERACY**

2 One new permanent classified position is converted from a limited position
3 created in 2021 Acts and Resolves No. 28, Sec. 4 in the Agency of Education
4 in fiscal year 2025 to provide support to the Agency in its evidence-based
5 literacy work.

6 * * * Expanding Early Childhood Literacy Resources * * *

7 **Sec. 11. EXPANDING EARLY CHILDHOOD LITERACY RESOURCES;**
8 **REPORT**

9 On or before January 15, 2025, the Department of Libraries shall submit a
10 written report to the Senate and House Committees on Education with
11 recommendations for expanding access to early childhood literacy resources
12 with a focus on options that target low-income or underserved areas of the
13 State. Options considered by the Advisory Council shall include State or local
14 partnership with or financial support for book gifting programs, book
15 distribution programs, and any other compelling avenue for supporting early
16 childhood literacy in Vermont.

17 * * * Effective Date * * *

18 **Sec. 12. EFFECTIVE DATE**

19 This act shall take effect on passage.

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(Committee vote: _____)

Representative _____

FOR THE COMMITTEE