
TESTIMONY

Testimony To: S.204 Committee of Conference

Respectfully Submitted by: Heather A. Bouchey, Ph.D., Deputy Secretary

Subject: AOE Comments re: **S.204** – an act relating to supporting Vermont's young readers through evidence-based literacy instruction.

Date: May 9, 2024

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on S.204, an act relating to supporting Vermont's young readers through evidence-based literacy instruction. We appreciate both committees' thoughtful work to prioritize the important topic of literacy this session. The Agency has some technical feedback that we believe will aid in the implementation of this bill and align with ongoing work happening in the field.

Section 2:

The Agency requests that the Committee of Conference restore the language as passed by the Senate. Review of screeners is work of the Agency, not the Council, whose recommendations inform our work. The House passed language will make this review more cumbersome and lengthier than it needs to be. The Advisory Council can still provide recommendations to guide the Agency's process.

Additionally, the scoring language as passed by the House will create unintended challenges with vendors and will move our role into an approval process rather than a true review. Additionally, there are potential unintended consequences of requiring the Agency to review and score tools that are not considered evidence based or best practice.

Sec. 2. 16 V.S.A. § 2907 is added to read: § 2907. KINDERGARTEN THROUGH GRADE-THREE READING ASSESSMENT AND INTERVENTION

(a) The Agency of Education, ~~in collaboration with the Council on Literacy,~~ shall review, ~~score,~~ and publish guidance on universal reading screeners based on established criteria that are based on technical adequacy, attention to linguistic diversity, administrative usability and valid measures of the developmental skills in early literacy, including phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.



Section 5:

The Agency requests that the word ~~systemic~~ in subsection (C) in both House and Senate versions be struck and replaced systematic. We believe this may be a drafting error.

Section 7:

The Agency requests that the Committee of Conference restore the Senate-passed term “learning” in place of “development.” Professional learning has a more direct connection to changes in classroom practice where development is more routine training. We also propose additional small language changes help to connect this section to Agency work required in Section 2.

Sec. 7. 16 V.S.A. § 1710 is added to read: § 1710. LITERACY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT-LEARNING

- (a) Each supervisory union and each approved independent school that is eligible to receive public tuition shall provide professional learning activities ~~development~~ to kindergarten through grade-three educators, to include all teachers and administrators, on implementing a reading screening assessment, interpreting the results, determining instructional practices for students, and communicating with families regarding screening results in a supportive way. The instructional practices, programs or interventions included in the professional ~~development~~ learning activities provided pursuant to this section shall be evidence-based, effective ~~and~~ explicit, systematic, and consistent with federal and State guidance and shall incorporate the foundational concepts of literacy proficiency, including phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension.