



TO: Senate Education Committee

FROM: Sue Ceglowski, Executive Director, Vermont School Boards Association

RE: S.204

DATE: January 10, 2024

Good afternoon. I am Sue Ceglowski, Executive Director of the Vermont School Boards Association (VSBA). Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony on S.204, an act relating to reading assessment and intervention.

The VSBA has a shared commitment to improving student performance in reading. We work closely with our colleagues at the Vermont Superintendents Association (VSA), Vermont Principals' Association (VPA), Vermont Curriculum Leaders Association (VTCLA), and Vermont Council of Special Education Administrators (VCSEA) to support better outcomes for students.

School boards support improved student outcomes, including literacy, by creating and sustaining conditions that support excellent teaching and learning. We do this by setting school policies, hiring and evaluating the superintendent, adopting measurable goals to support student academic progress, and by developing an annual budget that aligns with stated priorities and provides an equitable distribution of resources to help meet the goals set by the school board. We leave the "how" to our superintendents, who, under Vermont law, are designated as the chief executive officer for the supervisory union/district. School boards rely on the professional expertise of superintendents to chart the path for reaching the stated goals.

In the area of literacy, below are some examples of goals a school board could set, based on the data it has for students. The formula for these types of goals is to move students from X to Y by Z.

1. Our school district will increase the percentage of students who are proficient or above in third grade reading as measured by the \_\_\_\_\_ (insert measurement) from \_\_\_% in Spring 2023 to \_\_\_% in Spring 2028.
2. In our school district, the gap between all students and low income students in third grade reading achievement identified as non-proficient or partially proficient as measured by the \_\_\_\_\_ (insert measurement) will decrease from \_\_\_% in Spring of 2023 to \_\_\_% in Spring 2028.

Once goals are set, the superintendent puts a plan in place to achieve the goals and school boards monitor the results. School boards can also adopt policies if needed and direct resources to meet the goals through the budget process. And, school boards can use the superintendent evaluation process to hold the superintendent accountable for making reasonable progress toward meeting the goals.

S.204 is a bill that gets at the “how” to improve student outcomes in literacy and as such, VSBA is very interested in VSA’s and VPA’s analysis of the bill. What is the legislature’s goal? In VSA’s and VPA’s professional opinion, does the bill provide the steps that should be taken to reach that goal?

Lastly, I would like to comment on the reporting requirement in the bill on page 6, line 16 that requires each school board to annually report, in writing, to the Agency of Education, on or before September 1 of each year, information on the prior school year, by grade, school, and town. I am curious why the bill assigns this responsibility to school boards rather than superintendents. For the reasons I laid out above, my initial response is that it seems more appropriate to require the superintendent, rather than the school board, to submit the required reports.

Thank you for your commitment to improving literacy outcomes for Vermont’s students.