

February 14, 2024

To: The Vermont Senate Education Committee  
From: Chelsea Myers, Associate Executive Director, Vermont Superintendents Association  
Re: S.303 Draft 2.1

Thank you for inviting testimony from the Vermont Superintendents Association on S.303 Draft 2.1. It is critical that educators and aspiring educators are supported in developing the skills they need to effectively teach literacy. I have not had an opportunity to seek feedback from VSA members, but have asked VSA's President and Chair of the Vermont Standards Board of Professional Educators Amy Minor to join me today.

Any policy on literacy contemplated by the Committee should take into consideration the overall context of the education delivery system and the number of requirements and responsibilities currently asked of education professionals.

## Sec 2. Mandatory Completion of Literacy Modules

Professional learning is a critical component of any comprehensive literacy improvement plan. In the Research Brief "[Building Better PL: How to Strengthen Teacher Learning](#)," the authors point out six core components to effective teacher learning programs.

*"For the how of instructional delivery, research suggests the following PL formats can be particularly effective at producing changes in instructional effectiveness: (1) built-in time for teacher-to-teacher collaboration around instructional improvement; (2) one-to-one coaching, where coaches work to observe and offer feedback on teachers' practice; and (3) follow-up meetings to address teachers' questions and finetune implementation. For the what, there is growing evidence that PL may be more productive when it focuses on (1) building subject-specific instructional practices rather than building content knowledge alone; (2) supporting teachers' instruction with concrete instructional materials like curricula or formative assessment items rather than focusing only on general principles, and; (3) explicitly attending to teachers' relationships with students."*

S.303 says, "all professionally licensed Vermont educators employed in a Vermont school shall complete a program of professional learning on evidence-based literacy instruction developed and offered or approved by the Vermont Agency of Education."

In regards to the professional learning developed and offered by the Vermont Agency of Education, though not directly specified in the bill, based on Committee discussions would rely on the online learning modules developed under Act 28 of 2021. As reported by the AOE, these modules are approximately 46 hours in length and currently available for use. In context, the current requirements for relicensure for Level 1 Renewal is 3 credits or 45 hours and for Level II is 6 credits or 90 hours. Given the significant time commitment of these modules, how has this program been vetted for effectiveness in preparing educators to teach reading? Has there been

any feedback from the sample of educators that have utilized the resource thus far? As specified above, effective professional learning for teachers depends on systemic, embedded, and collaborative efforts.

In regards to the professional learning approved by the Vermont Agency of Education, we support added flexibility. With that said, what is the process for this approval? How will it involve education professionals? Will this encompass the vast amounts of literacy training that is already taking place in schools? Will the number of hours need to be commensurate with the online learning modules?

VSA supports any training requirements set forth in S.303 to apply to all education settings, including independent schools and PreK providers.

### Sec 3. Literacy Professional Learning Requirements: Agency of Education List

VSA supports differentiating professional learning needs for different roles within the education system. How will the AOE make that determination? Will it be based on research? Will it be in collaboration with the Standards Board for Professional Educators? If an educator has already undergone significant training in literacy instruction, how will this be accounted for?

### Sec 4. Results-Oriented Program Approval

VSA supports policy that helps to ensure teacher preparation programs prepare new educators to effectively teach literacy.

### Sec 5 & 6. Advisory Council on Literacy

VSA is in support of the continuation of the Advisory Council on Literacy.

In conclusion, additional requirements for school districts and educators should be viewed within the context of already incredibly high demands on schools. Will something be taken off of their plates to fulfill new requirements? What are the costs of these policy decisions both in time and financial resources and what are the opportunities for improved student learning? How and when will we know if it is successful? We ask that the Committee consider these questions as they contemplate these policy changes.

Thank you.