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Talking Points for Senate Ed Committee Testimony  
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Topic: Overview of Teacher Preparation and Literacy Instruction at UVM

1. UVM provides state and nationally accredited teacher education programs, including the only CAEP-accredited programs in Vermont. At the UG level, our PK-12 licensure programs include: Early Childhood Ed, Elementary Education, Middle Level Education, and Secondary Education. Additionally, we offer licensure pathways through a minor in Education for Cultural and Linguistic Diversity and an Accelerated Master's Program in Special Education. We are developing a new UG major in Special Education.
2. Graduate level programs with licensure pathways includes programs in special education (PK-12), Reading and Literacy, Ed Technology, School Library and Media Science. We also offer graduate certificate programs in Resiliency-Based Approaches and Education for Sustainability, a master's in Educational leadership, and doctoral programs in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies and Social-Emotional Behavioral Health and Inclusive Education.
3. All initial licensure programs include multiple practicum opportunities, an intensive student teaching experience, and requirements to demonstrate proficiency through state- and nationally approved assessments, the Vermont Licensure Portfolio, and satisfactory performance on standardized measures (e.g., Praxis Core and Praxis II or their equivalents).
4. You asked about how we prepare students to teach reading to PK-12 students. Our teacher education students take a series of core courses for all Ed majors, including a course focused on students with disabilities and a course focused on language policies and multilingual learners. Across all of our programs, our orientation is towards preparing our future educators to provide instruction and access to high quality literacy instruction for all PK-12 students. We emphasize the need to use peer-reviewed, evidence-based practices that promote equity and access for all students, , including research-based literacy approaches that promote foundational reading skills for all students. In addition, we introduce students to school-wide approaches (e.g., multi-tiered systems of support) that focus on identifying and assessing students who may be struggling with literacy and language acquisition for the purpose of matching them with appropriate, research-based strategies and interventions.
5. As UG students begin to specialize in their chosen grade levels (i.e., early childhood, elementary, middle, and secondary), the literacy-based coursework they take is tailored to the developmental approaches and interventions of their chosen age group/grade band. Students in our early childhood and elementary level school programs are taught to use evidence-based approaches that provide foundational reading skills for students, including approaches emphasizing core literacy (i.e., oral and written language ) skills that are typically taught through explicit instruction: phonics, phonemic awareness, word recognition, syntax, pragmatics, and comprehension. Students are also exposed to theory and approaches that emphasize motivation, executive functioning, theory, and critical and socio-cultural views of reading. Students seeking licensure at the middle and secondary levels develop a basic awareness of these reading and writing foundations, but also take course work that emphasizes comprehension and discipline-focused literacy instruction, including writing.

6. Students participating in our minors and graduate programs in special education, Education for Cultural and Linguistic Diversity (ECLD), and literacy instruction receive more specialized coursework emphasizing literacy and language acquisition for specific populations, including multilingual learners, students with disabilities, and other students who may be on IEPs or other types of educational support plans. Students in our special education programs take a specialized literacy course that includes instruction in structured language and literacy, and students in our ECLD minor take a reading and writing class that aligns with WIDA standards.
7. Across our programs, we emphasize the need for students to understand the importance of evidence-based approaches. We teach them how to become critical consumers of research, so that they can differentiate between research-based practices and practices that may not have a basis in research. Given our emphasis on meeting the needs of all learners, we also ensure that our students are attuned to the needs of students from historically excluded populations (e.g., SWD, multilingual learners, BIPOC students, students from backgrounds where literacy and language may not have been emphasized at home), and the need to collaborate with other professionals who have expertise in specific areas.
8. We recognize that too many learners in Vermont are not meeting standards in reading and writing, and we are committed to engaging with legislators, the Vermont AOE, and state institutions of higher education to explore the strengths and limitations of current pre-service programs, including our own.
9. The fact that so many of the students not meeting standards are students on IEPs and 504 plans and students whose families experience poverty is of great concern. These social realities point to the need to emphasize classroom practices and school-wide systems of support, as well as to situate literacy instruction in a broader social context.