

Testimony To: House Education Committee on Education

Respectfully Submitted by: Gwen Carmolli, Chair, Advisory Council on Literacy

Date: May 14, 2025

Topic: Support & Recommendations for H.480

The Advisory Council on Literacy (Council) has been invited to provide testimony on Sec. 10 of H.480, language to amend statute 2903 to include supplemental literacy instruction for students significantly below grade level in grades 4-12.

The Council, established by Act 28 of 2021 and Act 139 of 2024, reviews and gathers input on statewide assessment results, evidence-based research on instructional practices, and statewide requirements, in order to develop recommendations aimed at increasing literacy achievement for all Vermont students.

Act 28 of 2021 outlined funding and established the Council, focusing literacy efforts on students in grades K-3. Act 139 of 2024 outlined requirements for students in grades K-3 that include universal screening, needs-based follow-up assessment and instruction, professional learning on literacy assessment and instruction, and parental notification for students significantly below grade level, and extended the Council to 2027.

During the Council's review and input, recommendations were made to expand the literacy focus and requirements beyond grade 3; there are learning concerns, achievement needs, and evidence-based practices for students in grades 4-12:

- *Expand supplemental reading instruction to learners who need support in any grade, not just after grade (December 2021)*
- *Consider ways to support literacy instruction and achievement beyond grade 3 (December 2022)*
- *Include specific language to ensure students with disabilities and reading difficulties have access to multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS) (December 2022)*
- *Expand the focus of literacy efforts to Adolescent Literacy (December 2024)*

Sec. 10 of H.480 outlines a requirement to provide supplemental reading instruction for students significantly below proficiency standards, and to provide support and information to parents and legal guardians. This language aligns with existing state statute 2902, Tiered system of supports and educational support team, a statute to support learners struggling in academics and social-emotional learning. The language also aligns with the Council's recommendations

(listed above) to expand support for struggling learners beyond grade 3. The drafted language aims to provide support for students struggling in reading in grades 4-12.

The Advisory Council on Literacy supports Sec. 10 of H.480 and recommends the following changes:

- **Maintain the focus of Act 139 as an early literacy law**, to clarify the specific requirements outlined for grades K-3 (ex. Universal screening on phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, comprehension and vocabulary)

No recommended change, Sec. 10, page 14, line 1: keep language as written

- **Clarify the specific requirements for grades 4-12** (ex. Supplemental instruction for students whose reading proficiency falls significantly below proficiency standards), to avoid confusion of Act 139 early literacy requirements and those for grades 4-12

Recommended change, Sec. 10, page 14, line 3: replace “Kindergarten” with “4,” to read “In addition, for students in grades 4 through 12,…”

- **Set an implementation date of July 1, 2026 for Sec. 10 of H.480** to allow time for schools to plan implementation and for the Agency of Education to develop and provide resources and guidance for grades 4-12

Recommended change, Sec. 10, page 14, line 10 - Add “Implementation date of Sec. 10, July 1, 2026”

Thank you for the invitation to testify and for your support to increase literacy achievement .