

Dear Vermont House Education Committee,

Good morning. My name is Juliette Longchamp, the Director of Professional Programs at Vermont-NEA. I am a licensed Vermont Educator in Elementary Education, Special Education, and Middle Grades Math, Science, Social Studies and English. I also hold a doctorate in Educational Leadership and Policy Studies from the University of Vermont. My broad knowledge, coupled with my 30 years of public school classroom experience, allows me to support a wide range of educators throughout the state. In addition to the work about which I am here to share with you today, I also work with public school districts to build stronger new teacher and ESP mentoring programs, coordinate support staff trainings, and support teachers pursuing National Board Certification, a voluntary certification that allows experienced teachers to put their teaching practice to the highest standards we have for teaching in the country.

Vermont-NEA has been involved in two programs that work to strengthen the teaching workforce through supporting educators through the VT Agency of Education Peer Review Process. Since the 2022-2023 school year, 134 teachers have completed certification portfolios and 100 teachers are in process of completing portfolios. You will hear testimony from the Agency of Education tomorrow that traditional teacher education programs graduate fewer teachers than educators pursuing certification through alternative routes, like the two programs supported by Vermont-NEA.

### **GrowVT-ED - Peer Review Support Program**

The Vermont Senate Education Committee encouraged Vermont-NEA to take our Peer Review Support Program “to scale” in the Spring of 2022, as the field was having a difficult time finding licensed educators to fill vacant positions. Vermont-NEA had a Peer Review Support

Class with approximately 15-20 teachers participating each year. The Agency of Education issued 669 temporary licenses in the 2022-23 school year, and the two years following AOE issued over 700 temporary licenses per year. To address this workforce shortage issue, multiple avenues to achieve Level I certification are necessary. This current year represents the fourth year of this program. The following data demonstrates the impact of this program to date.

School Year	# of Participants	Portfolio Status	% Still employed in Vermont Schools	Notes
2022-2023	77	78% Completed	84%	Some candidates who did not get licensed are working as Support Staff.
2023-2024	57	53% Completed 26% In Process	79%	
2024-2025	32	31% Completed 44% In Process	100%	
2025-2026	42	26% Completed 74% In Process	98%	One participant is seeking licensure but currently working in the science field at the University of Vermont.

Through Vermont-NEA asynchronous modules and synchronous seminars each week, participants are finding the support they need to complete their certification portfolios. This work, on top of a new full-time job, is a commitment, to say the least. Participants who are on two-year provisional licenses (or a third year extension) who do not complete during the first year, are still accessing support through Vermont-NEA. The support beyond the first year includes an additional course “Peer Review Continuation Class” and 1:1 office hours.

Teacher turnover negatively impacts student achievement, contributes to shortages, strains schools, and undermines efforts to build a well-prepared, stable, and diverse workforce<sup>1</sup>. Vermont-NEA is keeping data on our participants. We believe since many of our participants live in the communities where they teach and have children that attend community public schools, that the investment in these educators will pay off in the stabilization of the teaching workforce in the community. To date, our data is confirming this assumption.

Candidates for Peer Review are generally moving from a different career. Many were persuaded to not go into teaching as a young adult, some never considered teaching until they discovered the joy and internal rewards of the profession, and some went to school to become teachers but could not pass the Praxis Tests required to student-teach. Every single candidate has a unique path that led them into the teaching profession. Vermont students are benefitting from their world experiences.

### **Vermont Registered Teacher Apprenticeship Program**

Vermont-NEA partnered with the Vermont Rural Education Collaborative, Agency of Education, and the Department of Labor to provide support (mentoring and supplemental instruction) to the first Registered Teacher Apprenticeship Program (VRAP), which was launched during the 2024-2025 School Year. You will hear from John Castle today, who was instrumental in launching this program. Vermont-NEA was in position to utilize the resources developed for our GrowVT-Ed Program to the VRAP Program. As in GrowVT-Ed, participants complete asynchronous readings and modules each week in preparation for their weekly seminar. This year, Lili Foster and Martha Santa Maria (both board-certified educators, classroom teachers, and Vermont-NEA members) are co-facilitating the weekly seminars and providing feedback on the certification portfolios. The participant data is in the table below.

School Year	# of Participants	Portfolio Status	% Still employed in Vermont Schools	Notes
2024-2025	27	70% Complete 30% In Process	100%	
2025-2026	36	8% Complex 92% In Process	100%	Not included in this data is one participant who left midyear and is no longer in schools.

The VRAP Program includes teachers from the following school districts:

- North Country Supervisory Union
- Essex North Supervisory Union
- Kingdom East School District
- St. Johnsbury School District
- Orleans Southwest Supervisory Union
- Orleans Central Supervisory Union
- Caledonia Central Supervisory Union
- North Country Supervisory Union
- Slate Valley Supervisory Union (Added in 25-26)
- Burlington School District (Added in 25-26)

Although the two programs, GrowVT-Ed and VRAP, are similar in that the candidates complete their Peer Review Certification Portfolios, VRAP systematically builds in additional support for the new educators. Each educator is assigned an Apprentice Mentor who has the responsibility of diving into the competencies for the certification area with their Apprentice. They learn and document evidence of the application of each competency “in action” in the Apprentice’s classroom, or other evidence that demonstrates their knowledge of the competency (i.e. college coursework, workshops, etc.). The building Principal has the responsibility of reviewing the evidence on the competency sheet and signs off on the competencies. The Superintendent applies to be a part of this program and recognizes the importance of the Apprentice moving from a provisional (or emergency) license, working under their superintendent’s license, to a Level I

Educator License. Curriculum Directors are also involved in that they communicate with Vermont-NEA to ensure mentors are trained and many attend mentor meetings. Two districts, North Country and Slate Valley, have teacher leaders who also support provisionally-licensed educators. This support makes the new educator feel that they are not alone in this licensure journey.

The Vermont Agency of Education's support has been instrumental in getting us to where we are today. Amelia Wurzburg (Emerging Pathways Coordinator), Michelle Farrington (Peer Review Coordinator), Andrew Prowten (Director of Education Approvals), Catherine Wilkins (Licensing Specialist), and Ellen Cairns (Preservice Coordinator) are some of the key support people with whom I have collaborated for both of these programs. Additionally, Sarah Knight at the Department of Labor, has also worked closely with us.

One important and highly impactful point I want to emphasize is that the educators with whom we are working in both the GrowVT-Ed and VRAP Programs are earning their educator license without going into debt. The seminar course is covered by course reimbursement, which is a benefit bargained by their local union. The Peer Review Fee, typically \$1200, is waived until June, 2029. This has allowed many people who dreamed of becoming a teacher but never thought they could afford it, to achieve their goal. Vermont's schools and students are very fortunate to have a growing and slowly increasingly stable teaching workforce. Vermont-NEA is proud to be a part of this.

### **School Year 2026-2027**

Both programs will continue next year. I hope that the VRAP Program, with its increased teacher support, extends to other districts, reducing the numbers in the GrowVT-Ed Program.

Vermont-NEA is committed to support our educators through the licensing process, working collaboratively with districts, the VT-AOE, and the VT-DOL.

I could speak to both of these programs because I have been “living” them for years. I invite you to learn about the importance of these programs from the perspective of the participants.

### **Paraeducator Support**

Vermont-NEA received multiple grants from the National Education Association’s Center for Great Public Schools to support paraeducator mentoring. The two leading districts, Colchester and Champlain Valley, led by Carmel Quinn and Gloria Mantagaris, have set the standard for paraeducator mentoring, and data collected demonstrate increased retention of paraeducators in these districts. Rutland Northeast is in year one of their paraeducator mentoring program and we hope to see this trend. Vermont needs high quality paraeducators to support student learning, and the longer they are employed as paraeducators, the more skilled they become. The paraeducator- to-teacher route is also supported by strong paraeducator mentoring programs. Although Vermont-NEA works with paraeducators with bachelor degrees wishing to pursue licensure through our GrowVT-ED or Vermont Registered Apprentice Program, we are excited about the CCV-VTSU paraeducator -teacher program that will be launched in the fall. . Representatives of CCV and VTSU had a table at our ESP Conference last week and were able to discuss this with many support staff members.

Thank you for your interest in the work Vermont-NEA is doing to support the educator workforce.

Respectfully,

Dr. Juliette Longchamp, NBCT  
Director of Professional Programs, Vermont-NEA

## **Testimonials from Participants**

*Through this class and the peer review process, I have gained valuable insights into my strengths and identified areas where I need to focus on improvement and gain more experience. I have actively sought additional professional learning opportunities to address these areas of growth. The guidance provided by Juliette and Lili in the Reflective Practice class has been instrumental; without their support, navigating the peer review process would have felt daunting.*

### **Middle School Math Teacher Apprentice**

*The Teacher Apprenticeship Program has been a huge game changer for me. It gave me the opportunity to earn my teaching license with the support of my mentors, valuable resources and a strong network. All without the financial burden that might have otherwise made it impossible. My district has been incredibly supportive throughout this process and I'm truly grateful. I am thrilled to be a part of this program and excited to continue growing as an educator so I can be the very best for my students.*

*My portfolio is now complete and the feeling of accomplishing this is tremendous. My educator counting will now include continuing my learning through a master's degree program. Thank you for building the Vermont Registered Apprenticeship Program. I look forward to a long career in education.*

### **Physical Education Teacher Apprentice**

*Writing this letter is the final item required to fully complete my portfolio! It signifies the end of a year-long journey to attain licensure, and feels like the perfect way to cap off this process. What I had anticipated being a long and arduous process, has instead been a non-linear path that has involved opportunities to dig deeper into educational theory, collaborate with fellow educators and reflect on my own educational practices. The process has indeed been long, but I am not taking for granted how it's allowed me the time, space and mentoring necessary to refine my practices and set me on the path to becoming the best educator I can possibly be.*

*The guidance and support provided by Juliette and Lili has been invaluable, and they are both true experts. Their dedication to providing every bit of support possible to each of us has made the complex licensing process drastically more attainable.*

### **Elementary Education Apprenticeship**

*I must give all the accolades of arriving at this current destination of a completed portfolio to my two mentors from the Registered Teaching Apprenticeship Program, Juliette Longchamp and Lili Foster. I was one of many "lost in the weeds of licensure", when through the power of self-manifesting, I was able to grab hold of a camouflaged life-line that was only discovered through happenstance. Time and space limits my narrative of how I have finally graciously arrived at the beginning of a new journey, securing licensure.*

*This has not been an easy task, but all throughout this portfolio process I have remembered an old saying one of my professors would often cite, "A good student rises to the level of the bar a teacher sets." I have been doing just that, the moment I set foot on the path of the Registered Apprenticeship Program weekly since last fall, I have been participating and contributing to the needs of this program and to my own professional growth. There were moments when I was stretched extremely thin while working full-time, tending to the needs of self and family, and continually digging deeper to procure the validation for the necessary credentials to secure licensure. It has not been an easy path, but I kept moving forward and I have not been on this path alone, which for me was the best learning tool. My learning style is being offered just an ever so lightly accompaniment in support of navigating how to get where I needed to be, which is here, for now.*

### **School Counselor Apprenticeship**

*I have been wanting to reach out and thank you and your team for all the help and guidance during the Peer Review process. When I first learned of this process I initially tried to start it on my own. I quickly became overwhelmed with the instructions, and how to format and save the portfolio. I do not think I would have been successful without your help and this class. I felt as though I could ask questions at any time and would have a clarifying answer quickly. I enjoyed our weekly classes where I learned not only how to prepare my portfolio but also new approaches to teaching. It is because of this class I have been issued my Level 1 teaching license for Pre-K to 3. Thank you again for all the guidance and support through this process.*

### **GrowVT-Ed Participant**

*Creating my portfolio has been a long but rewarding process. I have met with and received guidance from some outstanding educators over the past two years working in Shelburne. Their support, and the support of the VT NEA and the Grow VT Ed class in which I am currently enrolled has enabled me to finish this portfolio. The countless hours spent reviewing lesson plans, following up with ideas on differentiation, analyzing student work and assessments has finally all come together and landed on these pages you're about to read. I have worked hard on this and I am truly proud of what I've been able to accomplish. My hope is that my work in the classroom inspires students to also be proud of their accomplishments. I offhandedly mentioned to a class of 7th graders that I was enrolled in a class and needed to take some video of myself teaching for it. The response from some of the students was, "But why? You're an adult, you're a teacher, why are you in school?" I hope the ensuing conversation about lifelong learning resonated with them as much as it resonated with me.*

**GrowVT-Ed Participant**

*I am in my second year of teaching at Burlington High School, where I was hired as a STEM Interventionist at the beginning of the 2022-2023 school year on a provisional license. When I first began this role, I came from a background in conducting environmental research and a degree in Environmental Science from the University of Massachusetts - Amherst. Though I enjoyed working in this field, I began working as a science tutor at my former high school during the winter months and quickly discovered a passion for education that ultimately led me towards pursuing a permanent career change to become a fully licensed teacher in the state of Vermont through the Peer Review alternative path to licensure. This flexible pathway to licensure has been invaluable for me in making this smooth career transition possible, and I am grateful that I have had the opportunity to not only apply for licensure in this manner, but to also enroll in the Grow VT Ed Program to guide me through this monumental undertaking and help me grow my teaching practice in the process.*

**GrowVT-Ed Participant**

<sup>1</sup>Tan, T., Wei, W., Carver-Thomas, D., & García, E. (2025). Teacher turnover in the United States: Who moves, who leaves, and why [Brief]. Learning Policy Institute.  
<https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/teacher-turnover-united-states-brief>