

TO: Senator Bongartz, Chair, and Senator Weeks, Vice Chair, Senate Education Committee  
FROM: Gwendolyn Carmolli, Dorinne Dorfman, Cynthia Gardner-Morse, Jay Nichols  
**RE: S.15 and Restoring Language to Support Supplementary Reading Instruction in Grades K-12**  
DATE: Tuesday, March 11, 2025  
CC: Senator Hashim, Senator Heffernan, Senator Hinsdale, Senator Gulick  
Mr. Slattery, Committee Assistant

On 20 February 2025, four supporters (Dr. Dorfman, Ms. Gardner-Morse, Ms. Perambo, and Mr. Cadow) of [S.15, An act relating to providing supplemental reading instruction in all schools](#) testified to the Senate Education Committee on the need to restore prior language in 16 V.S.A. § 2903 PREVENTING EARLY SCHOOL FAILURE; READING INSTRUCTION, in order to ensure reading intervention for struggling readers in any grade level of school. This provision had been removed with the passage of the 2024 K-3 literacy law, [Act 139](#). The greatest concern was that this change would leave the learning needs of struggling readers in grades 4-12 unmet.

The following day, Ms. Carmolli and Mr. Nichols presented their concerns about S.15 to the committee, particularly Ms. Carmolli's concern about the potential confusion that S.15 could cause for implementing Act 139 across grade spans. In her testimony, she shared that Act 139 was a law focused on early literacy (K-3) assessment and intervention. She indicated her support for S.15, to provide intervention for struggling readers in grades 4-12, while also maintaining Act 139 as the K-3 literacy law intended.

Recognizing our different perspectives, the Senate Education Committee suggested that the four of us meet and reach consensus. We have done just that. Working together, we have built an understanding of the varied perspectives and come to agreement on the need to support the intent of Act 139 to provide evidence-based reading instruction and assessment in grades K-3. We also agree that prior language in 16 V.S.A. § 2903 PREVENTING EARLY SCHOOL FAILURE; READING INSTRUCTION should be restored to ensure access to supplementary reading instruction to any enrolled student whose reading falls significantly below proficiency standards for the student's grade level or whose reading proficiency prevents progress in school. We all agree on the importance of restoring language from the previous version of § 2903.

Please see page 2 for our jointly proposed change in the current reading law, [Act 139](#) (p. 6-7) in (b).2.(c). Foundation for literacy.

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| Senate Bill 15 Introduced by Sen. Gulick Jan. 2025   | <b>New Language for 16 V.S.A. § 2903</b><br><b>Proposed by Ms. Carmolli, Dr. Dorfman,</b><br><b>Ms. Gardner-Morse, and Mr. Nichols</b>   |
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| <p>8 based reading instruction to all students. In addition, <del>such</del> <u>all public schools</u></p> <p>9 <u>and approved independent schools that are eligible to receive public tuition</u></p> <p>10 shall provide supplemental reading instruction to any enrolled student whose</p> <p>11 reading proficiency falls below proficiency standards for the student's grade</p> <p>12 level or whose reading proficiency prevents progress in school. Schools shall</p> <p>13 provide support and information to the parents and legal guardians of such</p> <p>14 students regarding the student's current level of reading proficiency, which</p> <p>15 shall be based on valid and reliable assessments.</p> | <p>8 based reading instruction to all students. In addition, <del>such</del> <u>all public schools</u></p> <p>9 <u>and approved independent schools that are eligible to receive public tuition</u></p> <p>10 <u>for students in grades K-12</u> shall provide supplemental reading instruction to</p> <p>11 any enrolled student whose reading proficiency falls <u>significantly</u> below</p> <p>12 proficiency standards for the student's grade level or whose reading</p> <p>13 proficiency prevents progress in school. Schools shall provide support and</p> <p>14 information to the parents and legal guardians. <del>of such students regarding the</del></p> <p>15 <del>student's current level of reading proficiency, which shall be based on valid</del></p> <p>16 <del>and reliable assessments.</del></p> |

Proposed new language, copied from the right column above, for 16 V.S.A. § 2903 in (b).2.(c)

In addition, public schools and approved independent schools that are eligible to receive public tuition for students in grades K-12 shall provide supplemental reading instruction to any enrolled student whose reading proficiency falls significantly below proficiency standards for the student's grade level or whose reading proficiency prevents progress in school. Schools shall provide support and information to the parents and legal guardians.

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Please see the table on page 3 for a side-by-side comparison of the provisions for evidence-based reading in K-3 in Act 139 and the additional provision for grades K-12 (changes highlighted) by restoring prior language in 16 V.S.A. § 2903.

| Act 139   |   | Act 139 + Restoration of Prior Language in 16 V.S.A § 2903  |  |
|---|---|---|--|
| Grades K-3  | Grades 4-12   | Grades K-3  | Grades 4-12  |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Evidence-aligned reading instruction in the classroom</li> <li>- Annual screening in the five components of reading</li> <li>- Supplementary reading instruction for students below proficient by a trained professional</li> <li>- Parent notification if the student is significantly below</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Interpretations of supplementary reading instruction vary. Does this include all students (K-12) who attend schools with grades K-3? Or does this instruction pertain to only K-3 students in any school configuration (i.e., K-5, K-6, K-8, K-12) and not apply to students in other grade levels at those schools?</li> <li>- <b>Removed</b> provisions for supplementary reading instruction from 16 V.S.A § 2903 and parent/guardian information and support.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Evidence-aligned reading instruction in the classroom</li> <li>- Annual screening in the five components of reading</li> <li>- Supplementary reading instruction for students below proficient by a trained professional</li> <li>- Parent notification if the student is significantly below</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <b>Restores</b> 16 V.S.A § 2903 to include the provisions for schools to provide supplementary reading instruction to any enrolled student significantly below proficient or whose reading proficiency prevents progress in school, and to inform and support the parents/legal guardians.</li> </ul> |