



**LEGISLATIVE REPORT**

# **ADVISORY COUNCIL ON LITERACY ANNUAL REPORT**

**Act 139 of 2024**

**December 15, 2025**

**Issued by the Advisory Council on Literacy**

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This summary details the work of the Advisory Council on Literacy (Council) following the passage of Act 139 of 2024 (Act 139), the early literacy legislation, and addresses subsequent policy adjustments, assessment reviews, and official recommendations for improving literacy achievement and closing achievement gaps for Vermont students.

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## Context and Legislative Focus

The Council's 2025 work centered on supporting the implementation of Act 139, which mandates evidence-based literacy instruction, screening, and support for grades K-3. Concurrently, the Council addressed concerns regarding literacy support for older students, leading to the successful passage of Act 72, section 10 of 2025 (Act 72) which amended 16 V.S.A. §2903 (§2903) to restore the provision for supplemental reading instruction for K-12 students significantly below proficiency.

## Key Findings and Assessment Results

The review of assessment data highlighted a critical need to intensify literacy efforts, results revealed low overall achievement and large achievement gaps, with only about half of Vermont students demonstrating proficiency. Additionally, scores on the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), the nation's report card, showed Vermont scores declined from 2019 to 2022.

These results showed a critical need to increase achievement and close achievement gaps to support all students in school, setting this up for success beyond school. Additionally, the data indicated the need to maintain support for literacy improvement efforts including Read Vermont, Act 139 and §2903.

## Council Recommendations and Implementation Guidance

Based on assessment review and stakeholder input, the Council developed the following core recommendations to support the Agency of Education (Agency) in maximizing the effectiveness of the new laws:

- **Professional Learning:** Prioritize and provide sustained professional learning on evidence-based instructional practices, assessment, and the Science of Reading framework for K-12 educators.
- **Instructional Resources:** Support schools in the review and selection of high-quality, evidence-based instructional materials.
- **Act 139 Implementation Support:** Provide comprehensive clarity, resources, and support to schools to resolve early confusion regarding the specific requirements (screening, grade levels, notification) of the new K-3 law.

The Council affirmed its commitment to support early literacy through the implementation of Act 139, and advocated successfully for statewide policies to support struggling readers in grades 4-12.



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## 2024-2025 COUNCIL WORK

The Council's 2024-2025 work focused on the following tasks

- Review of assessment results
- Review & input on Act 139
- Input on Act 72 and §2903
- Review of library literacy efforts & recommendations

Recent literacy legislation focused specific efforts on early grade literacy screening and instruction, and supplemental instruction for grades K-12.

Act 139 focused on requirements for the early grades (K-3) to provide foundational skills, screening and support for future literacy success.

Act 72 outlines an amendment to §2903, restoring requirements for schools with grades K-12 to provide supplemental reading instruction for students with proficiency significantly below grade level or struggling to progress due to reading proficiency.

## Assessment Results

The Council reviewed assessment results from two statewide summative assessments, the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) and Vermont Comprehensive Assessment Program (VTCAP) to understand Vermont's literacy outcomes and achievement gaps.

### NAEP

National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), a national assessment of reading is given to students in grades 4 and 8 biannually. The Council reviewed the 2022 results; 2024 results will be reviewed in fall of 2025.

Results of the 2022 NAEP showed a decline in overall achievement from 2019 results (38% 2019, 34% 2022) with fewer than 40% of students meeting proficiency.

Additionally, there was a decline in achievement for students in poverty (4 percentage point decline - 28% 2019, 24% 2022), and a large achievement gap (29 percentage points 2019, 26 percentage points 2022).

### VTCAP

VTCAP English Language Arts (ELA), a statewide assessment of literacy, assesses reading, writing and listening achievement of grade level standards for students in grades 3-9.

Results of the spring 2024 VTCAP assessment showed slight improvement from 2023 (52% proficiency SBAC 2023, 53% VTCAP 2024).



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Results for Historically Marginalized students showed low overall achievement, but showed a slight improvement in the achievement gap between Historically Marginalized and Not-Historically Marginalized students (34 point gap 2023, 33 point gap 2024).

Looking at grade 3 (the youngest grade assessed on VTCAP) results showed a slight decline in achievement from 2023 results (49% proficiency 2023, 48% proficiency 2024).

Proficiency on both NAEP and VTCAP showed low overall achievement with large achievement gaps for students in poverty and Historically Marginalized students. The Council noted the need for continued improvement efforts and concern - too few Vermont students are meeting proficiency! Increasing literacy achievement for all Vermont students is urgent.

## **Act 139**

Council reviewed Act 139, the new literacy law effective as of July 2024. The legislation established requirements for screening, support, and accountability across the state's education system. All K-3 educators must receive professional learning on implementing screeners, interpreting results, determining instructional practices, and communicating with families. Schools must provide systematic and explicit evidence-based reading instruction to all students and offer supplemental intervention for those falling below proficiency. Furthermore, supervisory unions and schools must report annually to the Agency of Education (AOE) on student performance and the screeners used. To sustain these efforts, the law mandates that the Agency strengthen educator preparation programs in evidence-based literacy, continue the work of the Council, and establish a permanent Literacy position within the Agency.

The Council reviewed input from members and their respective constituency groups to provide guidance for the Agency to prioritize implementation efforts and support.

Council members described a need to support schools/school systems by providing professional training in evidence-based instructional practices, and guidance in selecting evidence-based instruction materials. Effective training and resources will strengthen instructional practices and align instruction to Science of Reading research and evidence.

Additionally, the Council discussed the importance of supporting the implementation of Act 139. Early in the implementation, aspects outlined in the new law caused confusion. The Council encouraged the Agency to provide school systems with recommendations, resources and support needed to understand and fully implement the new literacy law.

Council members expressed appreciation for the literacy efforts from the Agency related to early literacy and Act 139 implementation, as well as gratitude for the evidence-aligned resources of the Agency's website, Read Vermont initiative, professional



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learning opportunities, and presentations for the Council. The Agency clearly demonstrated that literacy is a top priority both for funding and for improvement efforts.

**Recommendations:**

- Provide professional learning in evidence-based instructional practices and assessment
- Provide evidence-based instructional materials and resources
- Continue to support the implementation of Act 139

## **Input on §2903**

To address ambiguity related to language and grade levels referenced in Act 139 and changes to §2903, the Council reviewed the policies, making recommendations for clarification, which the Legislature enacted.

The Council interpreted Act 139 as an early literacy law, for grades K-3, based on the title of the law, *an act relating to supporting Vermont's young readers through evidence-based literacy instruction*, and language within the law. The Agency similarly found Act 139 was an early literacy law.

The Council found Act 139 updated §2903 to reflect early grades but removed provisions for struggling readers in grades 4-12.

The Council reviewed the language and voted to support Act 139 as an early literacy (K-3) law, and to amend §2903 to restore language for grades 4-12, as reflected in §2903 prior to Act 139. The Council worked collaboratively with representatives from literacy advocates, the Agency, and statewide school leadership to develop language that maintained Act 139 as an early literacy law, and restored language requiring supplemental instruction for significantly struggling readers in grades 4-12.

**Recommendations:**

- Support early literacy efforts, as outlined in Act 139
- Clarify the grades requirements in Act 139 (grades K-3)
- Provide professional learning and resources supporting evidence-based instruction for students in grades K-12

## **Literacy Efforts from VT Libraries**

The Council heard presentations from the Vermont State Librarian and Vermont School Library Association (VSLA) about their literacy efforts and recommendations.

State Librarian Catherine Delneo reported to the Council that “A smaller percentage of Vermont’s school children are attaining scores of ‘Proficient’ and ‘Advanced’ on the National Assessment of Education Progress test than twenty years ago. Worse, Vermont’s scores have declined at a faster pace than the national average in recent



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years.” The VSLA report found that supporting families by demonstrating strategies to build skills and knowledge is most effective to support emergent readers. Their report reviewed studies that found providing books alone to children and families does not improve reading readiness skills. Modeling interactive behavior between children and their care providers strengthens readiness outcomes.

Additionally, the Council heard a presentation on school libraries from VSLA, representing a survey of literacy related work in Vermont school libraries. The school librarians reported themes within their literacy work: choice, collaboration, access, recommendations, and joy. Additionally, they are providing materials that meet students’ interests, are culturally responsive, and support state standards. Their work supported Act 139 by providing library materials aligned with Science of Reading research and evidence.

#### **VSLA Recommendations:**

- Implement Reach Out & Read program
- Increase professional learning & resources for early literacy development
- Add an early literacy position at the Agency of Education

### **On-going Literacy Efforts**

The Council heard presentations and updates from the Agency on literacy efforts including Read Vermont, a new comprehensive program focused on improving student literacy outcomes statewide.

Read Vermont provides educator training and resources based on the new [Act 139 literacy law](#), including opportunities for school-based instructional coaching, professional learning series on evidence-based instructional practices, and evidence-based resources. The aim of the initiative is for all children to read proficiently by third grade.

The Council indicated strong support for Vermont’s literacy efforts, including shifts in instructional practices, instructional materials, assessments, and professional learning. With declining assessment scores and wide variations in literacy instruction and assessment, the Council advocated for a continuation of Read Vermont, and for language changes to §2903, subsequently passed in June 2025.

Funding for the Agency’s literacy efforts has been a combination of state and federal funds, prioritized based on Agency priority and recent legislation. With recent and expected future educational funding challenges, the Council expressed the need for continued - and increased, if possible - funding for literacy efforts.

#### **Recommendations:**

- Increase professional learning opportunities and resources
- Maintain support for early literacy efforts (Act 139)
- Expand resources and professional learning opportunities to include early literacy, language development, and adolescent literacy



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- Expand the Council's focus to adolescent literacy

## **ABOUT THE COUNCIL**

Act 139 of 2024 (Act), *an act related to supporting Vermont's young readers through evidence-based literacy instruction*, was passed in May 2024, which provided funding and requirements to strengthen literacy instruction and improve literacy achievement.

The Act found that effective teaching is based on systematics and explicit evidence-based instruction of code-based and comprehension based skills; instruction in phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension within a culturally responsive and inclusive setting.

The Act creates funding and requirements in the following areas: assessment and intervention; parental notification; reading screeners; reading instruction; literacy plan for approved independent schools; literacy professional learning; teacher preparation recommendations; Advisory Council on Literacy; literacy position at the Agency of Education; and early childhood literacy resources report.

The Council is represented by roles outlined in Act 28 and Act 139, meeting up four times per year. Council information, including agendas, minutes and related materials, is maintained and publicly available on the VT AOE [web page for the Advisory Council on Literacy](#).

## **2024-2025 Membership**

Catherine Campbell, Vermont-National Education Association

Sandra Cameron, Vermont School Boards Association

Gwen Carmolli, Vermont Curriculum Leaders Association, Council Chair

Bill Clark, Vermont Standards Board for Professional Educators

Bev Davis/Julie Regimbal, Vermont Superintendents Association, Executive Director Designee

Catherine Delneo, Vermont Department of Libraries

Jennifer Farnsworth, Vermont-National Education Association

Michael Flanagan/Katherine Barwin, Community Member

Rommy Fuller-Young - Higher Education

Cynthia Gardner-Morse, Community Member - Literacy Advocate

Tonya Girouard, Vermont-National Education Association

Susan Gray, Vermont Independent Schools Association

Charlie Gunkel/TBD, Community Member - Student



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Mary Lundeen, Vermont Council of Special Education Administrators  
Beth O'Brien, Vermont Principals' Association, Council Vice Chair  
Anna Russo, Vermont Agency of Education Special Education Specialist  
Zoie Saunders/Emily Lesh, Vermont Agency of Education Secretary of Education/designee  
Stacie Shields, Higher Education  
Donald Tinney, Vermont-National Education Association

Recommendations developed by the Council are aligned with current state requirements Act 28 of 2021, Act 173 of 2018, Act 139 of 2025, 16 V.S.A. § 2902, 16 V.S.A. § 2903, 16 V.S.A. § 2907, and, Vermont's Rule Series 2000 - Education Quality Standards of 2019 and 2025. Additionally, recommendations are aligned with evidence-based research and practices, in order to promote and sustain the improvement of literacy outcomes and close achievement gaps.

The Advisory Council on Literacy is deeply committed to increasing literacy outcomes for all students.

## **Summary of Council Work**

As outlined in Act 139, the Council has worked on the following tasks to monitor literacy achievement and develop recommendations for literacy improvement efforts. These recommendations reflect input from Council members and their respective constituency groups, alignment with evidence-based research and state literacy requirements, and approved by vote by the Council.

Act 139 Task	Progress
Review literacy assessments and outcomes, and provide recommendations to continuously improve and sustain literacy improvements	<i>Annual review of results Recommendations expected spring 2026</i>
Provide recommendations on updates for Section 2903 of Title I6 (16 V.S.A. §2903), and support implementation and maintenance of the statewide literacy plan	<i>Completed spring 2025</i>
Provide recommendations for services to school districts on the implementation of the statewide literacy plan, and	<i>Recommendations expected spring 2027</i>



Act 139 Task	Progress
staffing needs at the Agency of Education to provide school districts' supports	
Provided recommendations for best practices in literacy instruction for tiers 1, 2, and 3, within a multi-tiered system of support (MTSS) to improve and sustain literacy proficiency	<i>Completed fall 2024</i> <i>Annual review of resources</i>
Provide recommendations for collecting literacy-related data that informs instructional practices, teacher professional development, and literacy assessments	<i>Completed spring 2025</i>

## CONCLUSION

Considerable momentum is driving literacy improvement in Vermont, with strong collaboration and support from the General Assembly, Agency of Education, State Board of Education, school systems, higher education, literacy advocates, and literacy instructors. This Council consistently sees evidence of shifts in materials, instruction and assessment practices, and is encouraged by this collective commitment.

To ensure this collective commitment translates into increased achievement and reading proficiency for every Vermont student, a critical, ongoing investment is required. We must secure dedicated, multi-year funding for high-quality professional learning, instructional coaching, and instructional materials aligned with research and evidence-based principles of effective literacy instruction. This investment would solidify foundational literacy across the state and fulfill the shared promise made to every Vermont student.

