

1 Introduced by Committee on Education

2 Date:

3 Subject: Education; literacy; teacher training

4 Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to put in
5 place the groundwork for improving literacy for all students in the State, while
6 recognizing that achieving this goal will require a multi-year and multi-
7 dimensional effort requiring continued focus by the General Assembly, the
8 Administration, and school leaders.

9 An act relating to improving prekindergarten through grade 12 literacy within
10 the State

11 It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

12 Sec. 1. FINDINGS

13 (a) Addressing literacy outcomes is a key strategy for the successful
14 implementation of 2018 Acts and Resolves No. 173. The following findings
15 from the report entitled “Expanding and Strengthening Best-Practice Supports
16 for Students who Struggle” issued by the District Management Group in
17 November 2017, which informed the development of Act 173, support the
18 urgency to improve Vermont’s literacy outcomes relative to special education
19 reform:

20 (1) “Investing in the effectiveness of core reading instruction is critical
21 for students in general education and students with disabilities.”

1 (2) “Students with mild-to-moderate disabilities who struggle with
2 reading may not be supported by teachers skilled in the teaching of reading.”

3 (3) “While some special education teachers across the supervisory
4 unions had a strong background in the teaching of reading, others indicated
5 that they did not have the training or background to be effective supporting
6 students struggling in reading.”

7 (b) The data indicate Vermont needs to improve its literacy outcomes at the
8 early grades:

9 (1) Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium results from 2016 to 2018
10 indicate that only about 50 percent of students in grade 3 were proficient in
11 English Language Arts in each of these years.

12 (2) From 2015 to 2019, Vermont’s average scale in grade 4 reading on
13 the National Assessment of Educational Progress dropped every year from a
14 high of 230 to a low score of 222.

15 (c) The COVID-19 emergency has adversely affected student academic and
16 developmental progress. Failure to address literacy outcomes now could
17 significantly impact student development for many years to come since literacy
18 is foundational to the success of each student.

19 **Sec. 2. PURPOSE**

20 The purpose of this act is to put in place the groundwork for improving
21 literacy for all students in the State, while recognizing that achieving this goal

1 will require a multi-year and multi-dimensional effort requiring continued
2 focus by the General Assembly, the Administration, and school leaders.

3 Sec. 3. LITERACY GRANT FUNDING; APPROPRIATION

4 The sum of \$500,000.00 is appropriated from [federal funds] for fiscal year
5 2022 to the Agency of Education. The Agency shall use this appropriation to
6 provide grants to supervisory districts and supervisory unions, on behalf of
7 their member school districts, to train teachers in methods of teaching literacy.
8 The Agency shall administer the grant program and determine which
9 supervisory districts and supervisory unions are eligible and the amount to be
10 granted to each applicant based on its assessment of the relative need for this
11 funding, taking into account the following factors across applicants:

12 (1) the literacy assessment scores of students;

13 (2) the number of literacy instructors per enrolled students;

14 (3) the percentage of students eligible for free or reduced-priced meals;

15 and

16 (4) the number of students subject to exclusionary discipline per
17 enrolled students.

18 Sec. 4. AGENCY OF EDUCATION; LITERACY DIVISION; CREATION;
19 APPROPRIATION

20 The sum of \$[] is appropriated from the General Fund for fiscal year
21 2022 to the Agency of Education to create a new Literacy Division within the

1 Agency responsible for improving prekindergarten through grade 12 literacy
2 within the State.

3 **Sec. 5. AGENCY OF EDUCATION; LITERACY VISION**

4 On or before December 1, 2021, the Agency of Education, in collaboration
5 with the Vermont School Boards Association, the Vermont Superintendents
6 Association, the Vermont Principals Association, and the Vermont Council of
7 Special Education Administrators, shall develop a State-wide vision for
8 literacy, including the core principles for early literacy instructional practices
9 and a clear articulation of expectations for Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 literacy
10 instruction.

11 **Sec. 6. AGENCY OF EDUCATION; DATA COLLECTION**

12 On or before December 1, 2021, the Agency of Education, in collaboration
13 with the Vermont School Boards Association, the Vermont Superintendents
14 Association, the Vermont Principals Association, and the Vermont Council of
15 Special Education Administrators, shall develop a plan for collecting literacy-
16 related data that informs:

17 (1) literacy instructional practices;

18 (2) teacher professional development in the field of literacy;

19 (3) what proficiencies and other skills should be measured through

20 literacy assessments; and

21 (4) how to identify schools progress in achieving literacy outcomes.

1 Sec. 7. TEACHER PREPARATION PROGRAMS; REVIEW

2 On or before December 1, 2021, the Agency of Education shall review
3 teacher preparation programs to assess to what extent these programs prepare
4 teacher candidates to use science-based literacy materials and programs.

5 Science-based literacy uses a body of scientifically validated and replicable
6 studies of both literacy instruction and human processing to provide a more
7 thorough understanding of what processes are involved in literacy, where
8 challenges generally occur, and what preventative or remedial instruction can
9 be implemented.

10 Sec. 8. AGENCY OF EDUCATION; REPORTS

11 (a) On or before December 15, 2021, the Agency of Education shall report
12 its findings and recommendation under this act, and its progress in achieving
13 the purpose of this act, to the General Assembly.

14 (b) On or before each of December 15, 2022 and 2023, the Agency of
15 Education shall report the State-wide progress in achieving the purpose of this
16 act to the General Assembly.

17 Sec. 9. EFFECTIVE DATE

18 This act shall take effect on passage.