

Advisory Council Recommendations

The Advisory Council on Literacy worked on tasks outlined in Act 28 to develop recommendations aligned with state standards (Act 173, Act 28, 16 V.S.A. §2902, 16 V.S.A. §2903, Education Quality Standards), Multi-tiered Systems of Support (MTSS), and evidence-based instructional practices in order to:

- Address the need to increase literacy outcomes
- Address the need to close achievement gaps
- Promote and sustain the improvement of literacy outcomes

December 2021 Recommendations

December 2021 Recommendations	
Task	Review 16 V.S.A. § 2903
Background	16 V.S.A. § 2903 - Preventing early school failure; reading instruction is a policy to address early school failure and reading instruction in the early grades. The statute outlined a requirement to develop and implement a plan for a comprehensive system of instruction and services in the first three grades, that would be updated every five years. The original plan was submitted in 1998; the most recent plan was submitted in 2019.
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reading is critical to success in learning and has implications for success in school and beyond. ● Highly effective, research and evidence-based literacy instruction for all students is foundational learning for all students. ● Supplemental reading instruction is a critical need when proficiency in reading is below grade level
Recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Update language to conform with existing statutes and best practice language in the field (e.g. change “research-based” to “evidence-based” to align with current federal nomenclature) ● Expand literacy focus to early grades (PreK and kindergarten), as they are foundational learning years for future learning ● Expand supplemental reading instruction to learners who need support it in any grade, not just after grade 4. ● Add a provision to 16 V.S.A. § 2903 to address alignment of assessments across grade levels to better inform instruction and achievement across time

December 2022 Recommendations

Task	Review Blueprint for Early Literacy Comprehensive System of Services, PreK Through Third Grade (Blueprint)
Background	<p>Statute 2903 (16 V.S.A. § 2903) - Preventing early school failure; reading instruction, is a Vermont statute to address early school failure and reading instruction in the early grades. The statute outlines a requirement to develop and implement a plan (Blueprint) for a comprehensive system of instruction and services in the first 3 grades, that would be updated every 5 years. The Blueprint serves as a statewide guide for state and local policy makers and education leaders to develop and implement a comprehensive early literacy plan. The original plan was submitted in 1998; the most recent plan, prepared by Research Making Change (RMC), Vermont Agency of Education staff and a stakeholder group, was adopted in 2019.</p>
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Assessment ● Multi-tiered System of Supports (MTSS) <p>Assessment and Multi-tiered System of Support (MTSS) are critical components of literacy instruction, support for struggling learners, and systemic improvement.</p>
Recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Keep information about assessment and MTSS in the Blueprint ● Provide resources and implementation recommendations on VTmtss, evidence-based instructional practices, comprehensive system of assessment, professional development, and training opportunities on the VT AOE website ● Add information about a comprehensive system of assessment of literacy in the next revision of the blueprint ● Follow action steps outlined in Statute 2902: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Provide professional development in evidence-based instructional practices ○ Provide professional development, as needed, to support all staff in full implementation of the multi-tiered system of support ○ Assist teachers to plan for and provide services and accommodations to students in need of classroom support or enrichment activities. ○ Provide necessary supports promptly, regardless of an individual student's eligibility for categorical programs

- Add/expand the following areas to the next Blueprint with related evidence-based instructional practices: code-based and meaning-based instruction, writing as a component of literacy, evidence-based instructional practices, early literacy and literacy stages of development, foundational skills, and comprehension
- Add language to the description of High Quality Instruction and Intervention to include evidence-based components of Structured Literacy
- Remove “Balanced Literacy Instruction” Header and adjust to reflect the content in this section (ex. “Instructional Practices,” or “Important Instructional Components”)
- Change focus and terminology from “Struggling Learner” to “All Students”, and expand information about instruction for struggling learners
- Ensure all students receive explicit, systematic, cumulative and diagnostic Structured Literacy in PreK through grade 3, and beyond as needed
- Include specific language to ensure students with disabilities and reading difficulties have access to multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS)
- Revise the Balanced Literacy Instruction section to describe comprehensive literacy instruction that includes: literacy development, evidence-based instruction practices for building code and meaning, evidence-based instructional practices for struggling readers.
- Develop and post an instructional guide for early literacy instruction
- Remove reference to “learning styles” from the Blueprint
- Provide evidence-based resources on effective instruction practices prior to the Blueprint revision
- Develop a brief 1–2 page summary of the current Blueprint that includes links to key resources and references
- Develop an implementation plan for the next Blueprint
- Consider ways to support literacy instruction and achievement beyond grade 3

December 2023 Recommendations

Task	Review blueprint and prioritize state recommendations to prioritize funding, training and resources toward improvement efforts
Background	The Council reviewed the large number of statewide recommendations (more than 50) and prioritized them in order to better focus improvement efforts. Members gathered input from constituency groups and then voted on the highest priority recommendations that will support the state's literacy plan.
Strengths	There was appreciation for the evidence-based resources and references, and for the connection to VTmtss.
Recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Develop strategies to address turnover, recruiting, and retention ● Specify a core of required curriculum and instructional expectations that are implemented in all schools statewide ● Ensure any mandate for instruction, curriculum, or assessment is made with a strategy for funding (no unfunded mandates) ● Select valid and reliable assessments for the purpose of statewide assessment, including kindergarten readiness assessments, formative assessments, and required grade-level accountability testing ● Support institutions of higher education to train an adequate number of early educators to ensure all children have access to highly prepared teachers ● Identify and recognize evidence-based programs aligned with ESSA requirements ● Curate a database of literacy materials that reflect cultural and linguistic diversity. Literacy resources reflect the breadth and depth of diversity

December 2024 Recommendations

Task for Act 28	Data collection recommendation
Background	<p>The Council voted by majority to (12 yes, 1 no, 1 abstain) to approve these selections as recommendations that will be included in the final report.</p> <p>There was a request to include data and an overview of the comments and or concerns related to the selections -</p> <p>prefer to have school systems share data (broad proficiency data) & screening information (name of screener).</p> <p>There are questions about purpose of the data collection, connection of the data to instruction & decision making, consistency of data, capacity of systems (school & state), and logistics.</p>
Strengths	The Council noted data collection as an evidence-based practice that is a component of VTmtss and is widely used by elementary schools across Vermont.
Recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Have SU/SD collect & use their own data <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Prefer to have school systems share broad proficiency data, rather than individual student results & screening information, such as name of screener. ○ There are questions and concerns about purpose of the data collection, connection of the data to instruction & decision making, consistency of data, capacity of systems (school & state), and logistics. ● Focus on Adolescent Literacy, if Council is continued
Task for Act 139	Input to support implementation of Act 139
Background	With the passing of new literacy legislation, the Council gathered input on highest needs to support implementation. Results were shared by Council members and included in the 2024 report.
Strengths	There is appreciation for the sustained focus on literacy, and the successful passage of literacy legislation (Act 139 of 2024) that reflects evidence-based research and recommendations made by the Council

<p>Recommendations - Input only</p>	<p>Highest needs to support implementation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provide funds for professional learning on evidence-based instructional practices (VSBA, VTCLA, VPA, VISA, VCSEA, VSA) ● Provide funds for evidence-based instructional materials (VSBA, VTCLA, VPA, VISA, VSA) ● Provide systemic resources for students experiencing dysregulation difficulties (VT NEA) ● Provide funds and support for planning and preparation (VT NEA) ● Implement all aspects of Act 139 (Literacy Community) <p>Additional comments/needs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Provide training on instructional strategies in literacy for students struggling with dysregulation ● Provide accurate information on Act 139 ● Articulate metrics to monitor progress and performance ● Provide funds for substitute teachers to support training and planning
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Accomplishments

- work that has been done by the AOE as a result of the council has been a big accomplishment. The modules are a great resource
- recommended specific updates for the Blueprint in 2022, which the Agency of Education is just starting the process of updating
- Clearly articulated information and recommendations
- provide recommendations regarding best practices in literacy instruction from a variety of stakeholder groups, which ensures that many voices/perspectives are included in the recommendations
- collaborative process on decision making to be quite an accomplishment for this group. There were differing mindsets, perspectives, and approaches from the various members, who found respectful pathways to working together for improved reading results for all k-3 graders in Vermont.
- deeply explored the "ins and outs" of literacy and the components needed to develop appropriate literacy curriculum in schools

- recommendations for revisions to the Blueprint
- Building an understanding of state requirements, evidence-based practices, and efforts in progress related to early literacy.
- discussed and explored resources offered by the state
- recommendations, such as using science backed teaching programs and early screening for dyslexia and other learning differences early
- Advocacy from the Council influencing resources and planning