



**Advisory Council on Literacy**  
September 24, 2021, 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

**Microsoft Teams Virtual Meeting**

**Call In:** 1-802-552-8456

**Conference ID:** #287 040 52#

One National Life Drive, Davis 5, Room 511, Montpelier, VT 05620

**DRAFT MEETING MINUTES**

**Present:** Bill Clark, Vermont Standards Board for Professional Educators (VSBPE); Chelsea Myers, Vermont Superintendents Association (VSA); Sandra Cameron, Vermont School Boards Association (VSBA); Donald Tinney, Vermont-National Education Association (VT-NEA); Beth O’Brien, Vermont Principals’ Association; Mill Moore, Vermont Independent Schools Association (VISA); Gwen Carmolli, Vermont Curriculum Leaders Association (VTCLA); Katie Campbell, St. Albans Town Educational Center; Jennifer Farnsworth, Hiawatha Elementary School; Susan Koch, Union School; Julia Spaulding, Enosburg High School; Cynthia Gardner-Morse, Calais; Jacqui Kelleher, Vermont Agency of Education; Daniel French, Vermont Agency of Education (AOE)

**AOE:** Maureen Gaidys, Suzanne Sprague

**Members of the public:** none

**Call to Order/Amendments to Agenda/Introductions**

**Warned Agenda:**

- Call to order/Welcome/Note Taker
- Review and approve minutes from 8/31/20
- Hear public comment
- Hear overview of Act 28(Gwen)
- Hear presentation on statewide literacy outcomes (AOE Representative)
- Develop work plan (Gwen & Council)
- Adjourn

September 24, 2021 10:00-12:00 online meeting			
Time	Topic	Presenter/ Facilitator	Notes

<p>5 minutes 10:00-10:05</p>	<p>Call to order/Welcome/ Notetaker (Recording Time: 0:01:24 to 0:09:26)</p>	<p>Chair Gwen Carmolli</p>	<p>Today's Note Taker: Cynthia Gardner-Morse <i>At 10:01 AM, Gwen Carmolli opened the meeting by asking that participants (in alphabetical order) introduce themselves today "by sharing one thing you envision students doing well, at the end of this Advisory Council's work..."</i></p> <p><b>Name:</b> <u>Sandra Cameron</u> [Director of Public Policy, Vermont School Board Association] Key Point/s: absent during introductions but she comments at <b>Recording Time 0:26:46</b> "The Pre-K piece is important. Our youngest learners need a really strong start with early literacy and language development. They need consistency in literacy assessment, curriculum and in instruction, across all settings, public and private."</p> <p><b>Name:</b> <u>Katie Campbell</u>, Literacy Specialist [St. Albans Town Educational Center/Maple Run School District]: Key Point/s: "If we do our job well, students will begin to feel confident about reading and begin to have some enjoyment out of it." <b>Name:</b> <u>Gwen Carmolli</u> [Vermont Curriculum Leaders Association VTCLA]) Key Point/s:"Students would be successful as readers, writers and communicators. In that full breadth of literacy, they would be engaged in learning using literacy skills." <b>Name:</b> <u>Bill Clark</u> [Winooski HS teacher/Vermont Standards Board Professional Educators (VSBPE)] Key Point/s: "I would love to see my students taking home books from school and then coming back the next day and asking for more." <b>Name:</b> <u>Jennifer Farnsworth</u> [Special Educator (Hiawatha Elementary School)] Key Point/s: "I would love to see that all students are able to read functionally by middle school." <b>Name:</b> <u>Dan French</u> [Commissioner, Vermont Agency of Education] Key Point/s: "I am interested in closing the equity gaps in our data. When we look at our data you will see trends that some students are doing alright but that others aren't doing so well. I would like to see the students that are struggling be more proficient." <b>Name:</b> <u>Chris Cane</u> [Vermont Agency of Education] unavailable on Fridays Key Point/s: Jacqui Kelleher in for Chris Cane <b>Name:</b> <u>Susan Koch</u> [Montpelier Roxbury School District] Key Point/s: "If this committee is doing its job well, all of Vermont kids will become excited about reading and will be making gains in reading, and making progress." <b>Name:</b> <u>Emily Lesh</u> [Community Member] Key Point/s: Emily informed Gwen that she unable to attend this morning <b>Name:</b> <u>Darren McIntyre</u> [Vermont Council of Special Education Administrators] Key Point/s: not present <b>Name:</b> <u>Mill Moore</u> [Vermont Independent Schools Association] Key Point/s: "I have been thinking a lot about equity lately, and certainly getting all students to be competent readers and writers is an equity consideration. Also, my early academic training was in media studies. As a result, I am very aware of how competence in any particular medium of communication affects people both personally and in their</p>
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			<p>interactions with others. If you don't have competence in all the media we have in our hands now, you are always going to be handicapped."  <u>Name: Chelsea Myers</u> [Associate Executive Director, Vermont Superintendents Association]  Key Point/s: "I have heard a lot of what I was thinking already spoken. Like Secretary French, I was thinking about the equity issues around reading and literacy skills and thinking about our marginalized students and how we support them through the really important skills of literacy development."  <u>Name: Beth O'Brien</u> [Vermont Principals Association]  Key Point/s: "I echo what many have already said. I really believe in Kelly Gallagher's work around Readicide [killing reading in schools], that we have higher literacy rates than at any other time in history, but a lower number of people who enjoy literacy. I think increasing the skills and increasing the joy around literacy go hand in hand."  <u>Name: Julia Spaulding</u> [Student Community Member in 10th grade]  Key Point/s: "To be able to have a student reading on the grade level of the grade that they are in. So say if they are in 1st Grade, they would be reading on a 1st Grade level, too."  <u>Name: Don Tinney</u> [(South Hero) Vermont National Education Association]  Key Point/s: "I would like to see our students experiencing the joy of reading, as Beth mentioned, as they become independent life-long readers."  <u>Name: Cynthia Gardner-Morse</u> [Community Member]  Key Point/s: I would envision all Vermont children being able to read well, using effective MTSS to monitor their progress. No matter what their socioeconomic status, or moving from school to school, all students would be reading on grade level by 2nd Grade.</p>
5 minutes 10:05-10:10	Review and approve August minutes (Recording Time: 0:09:26 to 0:12:00)	Chair Gwen Carmolli	<p><i>Gwen noted that two members need to leave a little early. Susan Koch needs to leave at 11:00. Secretary French needs to leave at 11:45.</i></p> <p><i>Entertain motion to approve August minutes.</i>  Motion: Chelsea Myers  Second: Dan French  Discussion: Gwen seeks Commissioner French's suggestions for how to gather votes in this Teams platform.  Vote yes #: unanimous  Vote no #: None</p>
15 minutes 10:10-10:25	Hear public comment  (No public comment today)	Chair Gwen Carmolli	<p><i>Chair Gwen Carmolli: Please provide name and keep comments brief to allow for other public comments. Thank you for your comments.</i>  Name:  Key Point/s: This meeting circled back but no public comment was offered. (10:45 AM)</p>
25 minutes 10:25-10:50	Hear and discuss overview of Act 28 (Recording Time: 0:12:40 to 0:09:26)	Chair Gwen Carmolli with Council discussion	<p>Name: Gwen Carmolli  Key Point/s: Legislation creating this Legislative Council on Literacy had input from many people and organizations before being passed by House and Senate this Spring (2021) (following Reconciliation)  ~Aim of Bill is to improve literacy outcomes for our students in grades Pre-K through Grade 12  ~Bill provides funding specifically for professional development in the</p>

		<p>five key areas of literacy instruction based on the National Reading Panel findings: Phonics, Phonemic Awareness, Vocabulary, Fluency, and Reading Comprehension.</p> <p>~Bill also provides funding to support for Supervisory Unions or Supervisory Districts in implementing improvement efforts</p> <p>~Bill created Advisory Council on Literacy</p> <p>Stipulates who shall be members of this Council (p.6)</p> <p>Lists Powers and Duties (p.8)</p> <p>Slides for today's meeting link to both Summary of Bill &amp; longer 14-page version of Bill</p> <p>~Bill References 2 statutes: Section 2903 (Preventing Early School Failure; Reading Instruction) Section 2092 (Multi-Tiered System of Supports and Educational Support Team)</p> <p>~Today's slides link to VT-mtss Field Guide document (129 pages) and resources</p> <p>~3 purposes of this Bill are outlined</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Continue work to improving literacy outcomes (a multi-year and multi-dimensional effort)</li></ol> <p><b>Recording Time 0:16:20</b> -Gwen comments on her district's on-going efforts to improve literacy</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>2. Allocate ESSE Funds to support recovery efforts: both Academic Support &amp; Socio-emotional support</li><li>3. Provide Supervisory Unions with technical support both to provide literacy recovery and to improve and maintain reading outcome</li></ol> <p>Secretary French comments on use of ESSE (Elementary &amp; Secondary Relief Act) federal funding for COVID-19. [Of \$43 million grant with 90% to School Districts &amp; 10% to AOE at State level]s:</p> <p>Legislation is a multi-pronged approach. Council has 1 piece. Agency is looking for advice from this Council particularly on ESSE (Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Act) funds.</p> <p>Legislature is specific in the two strategies ESSER funding can be used for around Literacy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- set up literacy training modules in the core 5 basic components. The agency launched a RFP proposal for bids for the literacy modules</li><li>-Agency will provide technical support to Supervisory Unions.</li></ul> <p>Funding has not yet been allocated, awaiting advice from this Council.</p> <p>Bill Clark (speaking as representative of both Standards Board and Winooski District which is small): Are Districts separate from Supervisory Unions in this Legislation? He wants to be sure Winooski is covered in this funding. It is.</p> <p>Secretary French clarifies at <b>Recording Time 0:19:57</b> - emphasis in Vermont is on curriculum coordination at the District level</p> <p>Gwen also clarifies.</p>
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		<p>Gwen continues: Findings that relate to purpose of Legislation - 4 points</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Addressing literacy is a key strategy Based on DMG Report (linked)</li> <li>2. Data from SBAC (broader assessment) and NAEP (literacy in particular) shows need to address literacy</li> <li>3. ESSE Covid has adversely impacted our students-how to recover learning loss?</li> <li>4. Literacy challenges needs time and assistance</li> </ol> <p>Secretary French states more data will be provided by the Agency of Education for the October meeting.</p> <p>Bill defines Council membership (16 members)  Council will meet not more than 8x per year,  Annual report for Legislature due Dec 15</p> <p><i>At Recording Time 0:25:00</i> Gwen opens discussion of Act 28  Bill Clark administers SBAC. He notes data is not being collected for some students because of lack of accommodations for language learners (ELL). Students do not understand the tests.  Secretary French indicates that ELL data collection details can be clarified by AOE.</p> <p>Sandra Cameron- focus on Pre-K is important (see note in opening comments), notes need for consistency in literacy assessment, curriculum and in instruction, across all settings, public and private.  Chelsea Myers- Question for Secretary French re: Act 173 and Agency of Ed perspective  Secretary French's response is at <i>Recording Time 0:27:36</i>  Act 173 (passed in 2018) -Special Education Funding policy reform  -Shifts from current model where State will reimburse ~60% of costs to Districts to Block Grant Funding (giving Districts fixed amount of \$)</p> <p>Why have a policy change? <i>Recording Time 0:28:41</i> Based on UVM research  -Creates wrong incentive for addressing student need  -Costly to administer  Best practice is effective Multi-Tiered Support Systems (MTSS)  -Students overidentified for Special Education (Vermont has 3x regional emotional disturbance intervention)  -No flexibility with Federal \$, but offer Districts some flexibility for intervention investments before student is recognized as eligible for special education using MTSS funds</p> <p>Even before COVID 19, concern about Vermont literacy was identified by studies prior to Act 173  DMG Report offered qualitative observations:  -Special educators did not feel that they are fully trained in teaching literacy  -Different Districts have different approaches to literacy</p> <p>Act 173 - Technical funding rules are in place. But how to implement Best Practice for districts? Literacy Curriculum is a practical way to do this.</p>
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			<p>-Lack of state-wide data for pre-K thru Grade 3 (Districts have this by doing bench-mark assessments, but we need to understand state-wide patterns at this level [after COVID Delta surge].)</p> <p>Literacy is a through-line between Act 173 and Act 28. Data will show that we need to take action. Both Literacy and Math skills are impacted by the pandemic.</p> <p><b>Recording Time 0:33:22:</b> Beth O’Brien shares reasons for concern about accuracy of SBAC measurements (decrease in scores compared with Common Core measurements). ELL (English Language Learners) are not the only ones struggling. Pandemic has devastated students’ SBAC stamina. Beth suggests we make sure that assessments are valid measurements of skills we are trying to assess. (Not assess computer screen reading skills) Beth recalls comprehensive DRA assessments which were used with fidelity because they were scripted but which were cumbersome.</p> <p><b>Recording Time 0:35:32</b> Bill Clark -</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. agrees that ELL students are not the only ones impacted. Reading is a general education issue. Mentions problems with computer screen reading.</li> <li>2. (speaking as Licensing Board member): Standards Board is in process of making needed changes in licensing for special educators because of shortage.</li> </ol> <p><b>Recording Time 0:36:57</b> Chair Gwen Carmolli’s computer screen locked up. Beth O’Brien takes over leading the meeting.</p> <p>Julia Spaulding comments on SBAC issues, having taken them a lot of times. Julia shares that as students with dyslexia (and years behind grade level) she and her sister took the SBAC in Seventh Grade. Julia got 4’s and her sister got 3’s, despite both being 3 years behind grade level.</p> <p>Beth O’Brien comments “Great news.”</p>
<p>25 minutes 10:50-11:15</p>	<p>Hear and discuss literacy assessment results</p>	<p>-h</p>	<p><b>Recording Time 0:37:55</b> Name: Secretary French Key Point/s: wants to review data later (probably October), looking for areas of agreement, not dismiss results or merits of individual instruments. He notes a State level policy is needed to make decisions based on data, not based on anecdotal evidence. Embrace data as a place to build consensus and to see trends in both SBAC and in NAEP, (not discuss merits of different instruments). As professional educators, we need to unpack the data and see trends.</p> <p>Another question is to identify what data we would like to have and to consider how long we take teachers out of instructing to do assessments. Certain instruments (like DRA) have huge internal variations depending on the teachers giving the assessments. Commercial assessments tend to have better validity and reliability.</p>

			<p><b>Recording Time 0:40:03</b> - Susan Koch disagrees about a lack of data for Pre-K through Grade 3. Many schools are using Ren-Star [Renaissance Star?] based on Agency recommendations, so we do have some data to look at. Other schools are using Fountas &amp; Pinnell. Use what we have.</p> <p><b>Recording Time 0:41:09</b> - Beth O'Brien asks for public comment. She does not see anyone. Secretary French concurs that there is not public to be heard. [Note: People were on the telephone wanting to make a comment, but were unable to unmute.]</p> <p><b>Recording Time 0:43:52</b> - Gwen returns to take over for Vice Chair Beth. Cynthia Gardner-Morse requests scheduling meetings ahead, wanting more of a quorum for these meetings. Secretary French prefers Doodle Polls for scheduling.</p> <p><b>Recording Time 0:45:38:</b> Discussion of literacy assessment results was warned for this September meeting. Gwen shares a cursory overview of findings for both SBAC and NAEP scores listed by grade. Her chart notes that more information will be presented in October. -SBAC scores for Grades 3-9 for 2017 - 2021 (Reading, Writing, Speaking and Listening are the subject areas assessed) 2020-no Smarter Balanced Assessment was given due to COVID-19</p> <p><b>Recording Time 0:47:16</b> -NAEP Scores for both Vermont and for nation Grade 4 and Grade 8</p> <p>Jenn comments that K-3 harder to assess. Not much information available at the state level</p> <p><b>Recording Time 0:49:13 Council Member</b> suggests we gather from districts the data that we have now. Need to target K-3 b/c skills at that level are critical Gwen: comments on trends -differences between lower and upper grades -downward trend over time in NAEP Scores -hovering at 50% for SBACS in Grade 3 - plenty of room for growth on a 100-point scale</p> <p>Secretary French cites Beth's comments about the difficulty of testing using computer screens, notes that other states have the same stamina issues around taking that we do. He would like to know how Vermont compares to other states on SBAC</p> <p><b>Recording Time 0:51:52 Council Member</b> discusses a possible reason for the difference between the test results at Recording Time 0:51: 54. Notes that at Grade 6 and up everyone becomes a literacy teacher, assessed on non-fiction on the SBAC</p> <p>Cynthia notes a need for unity in testing at the lower grades in order to compare scores. Also would like time to review the assessment results ahead of the next meeting. Gwen asks Julia about assessment experiences, but Julia has no further comment about that at this time, having already expressed her frustration about receiving high scores when she recognized that she</p>
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			and her sister were struggling. Sandra Cameron cites TS Gold assessments and results from the Kindergarten Readiness Survey about Pre-K and early kindergarten data
30 minutes 11:15-11:45	Hear and discuss proposed work plan	Chair Gwen Carmolli and Council	<p>Name: Key Point/s: Gwen (see "Our Work" slide for summary): Reminds that our charge is to advise on how to improve the Literacy Plan and sustain literacy outcomes. ~See Section 2903: Preventing Early School Failure; reading instruction <b>Recording Time 0:56:37:</b> Inputs and outcomes for plans ~2902 MTSS and best practices connection ~Sustain literacy improvement</p> <p>Gwen proposed a Work Plan: Meet 8 times per year: August, September, October, November, January, March, April, May (skipping meeting in the busier months, December and February) Work on tasks in a sequence, based on the bill:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Statute 2903 &amp; state literacy plan</li> <li>● Supports to SUs/SDs</li> <li>● Data collection</li> <li>● Best practices for MTSS</li> </ul> <p>Hear &amp; discuss literacy outcomes as data becomes available Discuss &amp; come to consensus on advice or recommendations Develop &amp; approve key points for Report (with two-page summary) for the General Assembly. For the December deadline, the report would be how we are organizing our work.</p> <p>~Gwen stresses the need for group consensus and the whole group approving key points for the Report that we will submit to the Legislature</p> <p>Council is expected to come to consensus as a group, despite individual differences, Include key points for Council to review before submission to Legislative Assembly <b>Recording Time 0:58:25:</b> Gwen notes the variety of expertise within this group: ~Some with lived experience, including one current student ~Leaders of organizations ~Backgrounds in literacy ~Background in leadership</p> <p>Gwen asks us to reflect on how to develop solidarity for our group recommendations in common</p> <p>She shares an outline of Council's responsibilities as a full group. As individuals, we represent a constituency group We are working collaboratively to focus on common goal: * improving and sustaining literacy outcomes for Vermont students from Pre-K through Grade 12* Discussion of Gwen's proposed work-plan starts at about <b>Recording Time 1:01:10.</b></p>



			<p>full group or breakout? Combination?  Tools to build consensus  Proposed adjustments  Bill Clark suggests individuals be assigned to (or choose) topics to research offline and report back the conclusions to the larger group</p> <p>Chelsea comments that with only 8 meetings, subcommittee time would be needed to accomplish our research for breakout groups, noting that sub-committee groups are still subject to Open Meeting laws.  Cynthia suggests using the varied expertise of this Council to collectively inform our discussions.  Don Tinney notes that using Zoom meetings may be easier for classroom educators in the group (no travel time, less need for finding and planning for substitute teachers) suggests scheduling at their convenience, perhaps after school.  Secretary French wants this Council to have an orientation to Open Meeting laws. He suggests not making “Chat” comments because they don’t show up for people on the phone. [Chat comments have not been read for this report. ] Breaking into sub-committees would need to be warned with agendas and have notes available for the public, as well as a physical meeting place for each subcommittee meeting, like the physical meeting place in Montpelier for today’s meeting. The public has an interest in these deliberations.</p> <p>Gwen mentions Act 173 Advisory Discussion groups as one possible model.</p> <p><b>Recording Time 1:07:36:</b> Discussion of pros and cons of subcommittee groups ensues. Gwen comments on deeper dive with subcommittees</p> <p>Secretary French cautions against breaking into subcommittee groups too soon in Council’s work.</p> <p>Bill Clark shares his classroom experience (success) with break-out groups.  Gewn asks for consensus tool suggestions  Bill Clark suggested using a Google Doc (if part of public record), broken into subject areas with a template</p> <p>Meeting winds down with questions remaining about the sequence of topics to study in which months</p> <p>Proposal for next month’s work plan including:  ~How to generate consensus &amp; if we’ll vote  ~Should group form subcommittees or remain in larger group?  ~Open Meeting law information to be included next time.  ~Making time to hear Public comments  ~Convenient meeting times to be chosen using Doodle poll</p>
10 minutes 11:45-11:55	Wrap Up and discuss next meeting	Chair Gwen Carmolli and Council	Name: Beth O'Brien proposed that we vote to adjourn meeting: Bill Clark seconds proposal Key Point/s: <b>Next meeting to be held on-line on Wednesday, October 27, from 12 :00 to 2:00 PM</b>

5 minutes 11:55-12:00	Adjourn Meeting	Chair Gwen Carmolli	September meeting adjourns at 11:22 AM
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*The Council shall advise the Agency of Education, the State Board of Education, and the General Assembly on how to improve proficiency outcomes in literacy for students in prekindergarten through grade 12 and how to sustain those outcomes and shall:*

- ❖ **Advise the Agency of Education on the statewide literacy plan** - how to update section 2903, implement & maintain the statewide literacy plan
- ❖ **Advise the Agency of Education on services to provide school districts** to support implementation of the statewide literacy plan - professional development, staffing and resources
- ❖ **Develop a plan for collecting literacy-related data** that informs instructional practices, professional development, and proficiencies to measure
- ❖ **Recommend best practices for Tier 1, Tier 2, and Tier 3 literacy instruction** within MTSS, section 2902
- ❖ **Review literacy assessments and outcomes**, and *provide ongoing advice to continuously improve those outcomes and sustain improvement*

## I. **Responsibilities**

**Full Group:** Hear presentations, develop and approve advice and proposals for tasks outlined in Act 28, work collaboratively to improve and sustain literacy outcomes for students in prekindergarten through grade 12

**Individual:** Represent constituency group, work collaboratively with council members, share note-taking

**Chair:** Plan and facilitate meetings, prepare Advisory Council on Literacy reports

**Vice Chair:** Support Chair to plan and facilitate meetings, serve as Chair in the event the Chair is unable to attend

## II. **Members:**

Sandra Cameron, Vermont School Boards Association (VSBA) Katie Campbell, St. Albans Town Educational Center  
Gwen Carmolli, Vermont Curriculum Leaders Association (VTCLA), Chair Bill Clark, Vermont Standards Board for Professional Educators (VSBPE) Jennifer Farnsworth, Hiawatha Elementary School  
Daniel French, Vermont Agency of Education (AOE), Secretary of Education Cynthia Gardner-Morse, Calais  
Chris Kane, Vermont Agency of Education (may change) Susan Koch, Union School  
Emily Lesh, Richmond  
Darren McIntyre, Vermont Council of Special Education Administrators (VCSEA) Mill Moore, Vermont Independent Schools Association (VISA)  
Chelsea Myers, Vermont Superintendents Association (VSA) Beth O'Brien, Vermont

Principals Association (VPA), Vice Chair Julia  
Spaulding, Enosburg High School  
Donald Tinney, Vermont-National Education Association (VT-NEA)

## **Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 11:22 a.m.

DRAFT