

Literary Learning

The Newsletter for Vermont's English Language Arts Educators and Supporters

Fall 2024

Welcome Back!

Read Vermont: Building Strong Readers for Life

PAR for the Course - Participatory Action Research in Vermont Schools

Resources

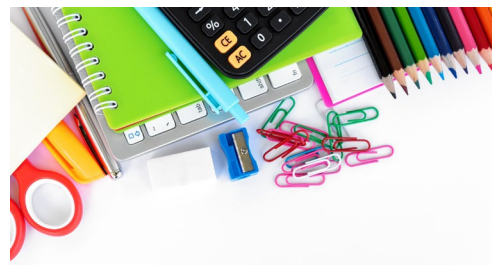
- High School Proficiency Scales
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Welcome Back!

It's hard to believe we are at the start of another school year. I hope you all had a rejuvenating summer during which you could find moments of joy and peace. As a parent, the start of a new school year means something different than when I was an educator; both of my children are embarking on new stages in their educational journeys as one enters kindergarten and one enters middle school. Though I am emotional about the transition, I am confident they will be in excellent hands in their respective schools because of the hard work and commitment of Vermont educators like you.

I am excited to share with you some of the work that has been underway over the summer. Read on to learn more.

Read Vermont: Building Strong Readers for Life

The Vermont Agency of Education (AOE) is thrilled to announce the statewide launch of Read Vermont, a comprehensive initiative dedicated to improving literacy outcomes for all students. Improving literacy is a top priority for Vermont's educators, legislators, and families. Building upon [Act 139 of 2024](#), Read Vermont is designed to ensure every child can read by third grade and graduates high school ready for college or career. The AOE is committed to empowering educators and caregivers as they equip each student with the tools they need to become lifelong readers.

Over the past year, the AOE has collaborated closely with education partners—teachers, curriculum leaders, and superintendents—to understand the needs and opportunities for enhancing literacy instruction across the state. This collaboration has shaped the Read Vermont initiative, ensuring it addresses the most pressing needs identified by Vermont's educators.

- **Resources to support the implementation** of evidence-based literacy instruction and assessment in Vermont's Supervisory Unions/Districts (SU/SDs) and classrooms
- **AOE resources, guidance, and accountability measures** to guide SU/SD shifts in curriculum, instruction, and assessment
- **High-quality professional learning and job-embedded coaching** that supports classroom educators in putting research into practice

At the heart of Read Vermont is a shared vision for literacy: Delivering high-quality reading and writing instruction based on scientific evidence will ensure that every child has the foundational skills necessary to successfully engage with text and experience the joy of reading. Convergent evidence has accumulated over the last fifty years and demonstrates that reading comprehension, the ultimate goal of reading, relies on multiple skills, knowledge, and cognitive abilities, including spoken

language comprehension, accurate and automatic decoding, developed vocabulary, and background knowledge. When students master foundational skills, experience reading success, and discover the benefits of reading, they will continue to grow as readers, setting them up for lifelong success. More about Vermont's shared vision and the evidence that informs it can be found in a [memorandum to Superintendents](#) released August 15, 2024.

Key priorities of Read Vermont include:

- **Professional Learning:** Launching a range of professional learning opportunities for educators and leaders across all grade levels, beginning in October 2024
- **Job-Embedded Coaching:** Offering intensive, personalized coaching for elementary schools (K-3) in select SU/SDs based on need
- **Literacy Learning Network:** Establishing and supporting a network of leaders and educators to share knowledge and best practices statewide
- **Guidance Documents and Resources:** Issuing comprehensive guidance to help schools implement Act 139 and evidence-based literacy practices
- **Family and Caregiver Engagement:** Creating resources to support educators in engaging families and caregivers in their children's literacy development

The AOE is enthusiastic about the positive impact that Read Vermont will have on our students, educators, and communities. We encourage everyone to get involved, stay informed, and support this vital initiative as we work toward a brighter future for all Vermont students. Learn more at the launch of Read Vermont during a special Coffee and Conversations on Wednesday, September 25, from 9-10 a.m. [Register for Read Vermont Launch.](#)

Sign up for the [Read Vermont listserv](#) to stay informed.

PAR for the Course

Over the past several years, the AOE's Proficiency-Based Learning (PBL) team (of which I am a member) has been getting involved in [Participatory Action Research \(PAR\)](#) with more and more schools around the state. A research partnership between a Supervisory Union/District and the AOE, PAR offers an approach that can lead to meaningful and lasting improvements in educational systems by actively involving a variety of education partners in the research and decision-making process. PAR ensures that the work is relevant to the specific needs of an educational community and can therefore lead to solutions that are more likely to be effective and sustainable.

One of the latest districts to get involved in this work is WSESU. The PBL team attended a kick-off at Windsor School on Friday, August 23. As former classroom educators, one of our favorite parts of our work is getting into schools and working with teachers. The faculty of Windsor School were extremely welcoming and receptive as we introduced the [Proficiency-Based Graduation Requirement Content Hierarchies](#), which support equity by providing a cohesive and coordinated vision of student-centered learning across Vermont schools. One district leader said that the "partnership with the Vermont Agency of Education through the Participatory Action Research project and the development of the Proficiency-Based Graduation Requirements emerged at a perfect time to support our district's needs to develop a

local assessment system that reflects both our Portrait of the Graduate and provides for educational equity to all of our students.”

After the initial presentation, content teams broke out into departments, got a closer look at the hierarchy and accompanying proficiency scales for their content area, and discussed the work ahead. Educators are excited about developing common performance assessments that align with the AOE’s Priority-Performance Indicators, which were adopted by the district with little to no revision across content areas.

Data collected from a short exit ticket indicated that educators appreciated the “time to work as a department with the AOE to support” and “learning about the new vision, which is far more logical and streamlined” than other systems they have seen. One educator said they were “excited to keep the momentum going” and wanted to “just go for it right now.” We look forward to continuing this work as well.

Resources

- [ELA Proficiency Scales](#) – Model proficiency scales for English Language Arts are now available for grades 9-12. These scales were developed with input from educators in the field and align with the Priority Performance Indicators in the [ELA Proficiency-Based Graduation Hierarchy](#). Scales for grades K-8 are forthcoming.
****If you are interested in providing feedback on draft scales for K-8, please fill out [K-8 Proficiency Scale Review Interest Form](#).*
- [Proficiency-Based Learning Hierarchies for Grades K-8](#) – Following the publication of the Proficiency-Based Graduation Requirement Hierarchies, content specialists at the Agency of Education went through a similar process to develop Priority Performance Indicators for grade bands K-2, 3-5, and 6-8. This included careful attention to vertical alignment, ensuring the skills and knowledge built in cognitive complexity across grade bands. These Proficiency-Based Learning Hierarchies can be found on the PBGR webpage, organized by grade band.

Professional Offerings and Opportunities

Read Vermont Launch – Join the Agency of Education for the launch of Read Vermont, a comprehensive initiative dedicated to improving literacy outcomes for all students, at a special Coffee and Conversations on Wednesday, September 25, from 9-10 a.m. Improving literacy is a top priority for Vermont’s educators, legislators, and families. Building upon [Act 139 of 2024](#), Read Vermont is designed to ensure every child can read by third grade and graduates high school ready for college or career. [Register for Read Vermont Launch](#) to learn more about this initiative and how to get involved. A recording of the webinar will be sent to all who register.

[Seeing the Elephant: Understanding Evidence for Literacy](#) – In this webinar, Region 1 Comprehensive Center presenters discuss evidence for literacy, including the science of teaching, implementation science, and methodology considerations. By differentiating between evidence, research, and claims about research, participants learn productive ways to analyze and discuss evidence as one piece of a puzzle in decision making. The webinar concludes with a demonstration of a tool to apply ESSA language and ESSA Non-Regulatory Guidance to understand and apply evidence to inform decisions based on local context.

Emily Leute

English Language Arts and
Literacy Specialist
Proficiency-Based
Learning Team

Vermont Agency of Education
1 National Life Drive, Davis 5
Montpelier, VT 05620-2501

PHONE:
(802)828-6598

E-MAIL:
emily.leute@vermont.gov

Expanding Reading Instruction with Multilingual Learners – This free professional learning consists of two virtual sessions on Tuesday October 22 and 29 from 3-4:30 p.m. This series provides ideas for expanding reading instruction to make it more effective for multilingual learners. Participants will learn ways to build on and expand current approaches to teaching reading and to engage multilingual learners in the interactions that support reading development. [And all approaches that support multilingual students support all students.] If you're interested in participating, please [register for the WIDA training](#). If you have any questions, please reach out to stephanie.vogel@vermont.gov, Title III and EL Programs Director.

Assessment Literacy to Support Student Learning

Audience: Administrators, K-12 Educators, and Paraprofessionals

This two-day interactive workshop, available through a contract with Demonstrated Success, is designed to support teachers, paraprofessionals, and administrators to leverage a variety of assessment data to inform instruction, provide actionable feedback to students, and identify broader needs for students and staff development. Participants will work as a whole group for part of the day and then work in groups differentiated by levels and roles. This workshop will take place at the Lake Morey Resort in Fairlee on Sept. 25 and 26, 2024. from 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. For more information, see the [Vermont Agency of Education Assessment Literacy and PLCs - September Flyer](#). Registration is available on the [Vermont Data Use Webpage](#). Contact: Pat Fitzsimmons at pat.fitzsimmons@vermont.gov

Creating Effective Professional Learning Communities

Audience: Administrators and K-12 Educators

This day-long workshop, available through a contract with Demonstrated Success, will focus on strategies to support highly effective Professional Learning Communities. Teams of educators are encouraged to attend and engage in collaborative data inquiry, utilize data-driven protocols to determine student needs, and explore effective intervention systems. Teams will leave with a strong understanding of how to impact student outcomes by using data in a collaborative, continuous cycle of improvement. This workshop will take place on Sept. 30, 2024, at the Lake Morey Resort in Fairlee from 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. For more information, see the [Vermont Agency of Education Assessment Literacy and PLCs - September Flyer](#). Registration is available on the [Vermont Data Use Webpage](#). Contact: Pat Fitzsimmons at pat.fitzsimmons@vermont.gov

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