

From: Kristen Olmstead <olmsteadkristen14@gmail.com>
Sent: Sunday, June 18, 2023 9:02 PM
To: Samuelson, Jennifer <Jennifer.Samuelson@vermont.gov>
Subject: URGENT Secretary of Education message

Dear State Board of Education Member Samuelson,

I am writing to express my concern about the reading proficiency levels of students in Vermont. As you are aware, research has consistently shown that reading proficiency by third grade is a critical milestone for students, and that students who are not proficient readers by this point are at greater risk of not graduating from high school. According to Vermont's 2019 Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium (SBAC) data, only 50 percent of Vermont third graders scored proficient or above in English Language Arts. Those scores have declined to 42.5 percent in 2021 with the impact of a global pandemic.

To address this issue, I strongly urge you to select a Secretary of Education who is knowledgeable about the [science of reading](#). According to [Education Week](#), 31 states have passed laws or implemented new policies related to science-of-reading-based instruction as of May 9, 2023. [Mississippi](#) has made impressive gains in their NAEP reading scores in recent years by making changes to their approach to teaching reading.

Selecting a Secretary of Education who is well-versed in the science of reading would demonstrate your commitment to improving reading proficiency levels in Vermont and ensuring that all students have the opportunity to succeed in their education and career choices. This individual would be able to lead efforts to implement evidence-based reading instruction practices in Vermont schools, and work with educators to improve reading outcomes for students.

I urge you to take this important step in support of the students in our state. The cost of doing nothing is too high. Literacy success is an equity issue and a fundamental human right. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

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