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**To:** SBE - Public Comment <[SBE.PublicComment@vermont.gov](mailto:SBE.PublicComment@vermont.gov)>  
**Subject:** Secretary of Ed Search Comment

The following public comment reiterates what I shared in the virtual meeting held this evening, October 2. Thank you very much for that opportunity, and for the dedicated efforts of the search team in this important work!

The Agency of Education has an opportunity with this hire to choose a leader who can support our schools in making the children of Vermont a literacy success story. That success will require a turnaround, and the leadership courage to set a vision that unites our educators in the service of equity. Literacy and equity are inseparable from one another, and the reading data for our 4<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> graders is a loud wake-up call, while the disparity between children qualifying for free and reduced lunch and those with higher socio-economic status is double-digit. Even those with advantages are struggling to a far greater degree than necessary. Our current and future political, economic, and social well-being depend on a literate populace. As a nonprofit dedicated to helping students individually since our founding in 1983, the Stern Center has taught many thousands of students to read who were not learning reading at school because balanced literacy models don't effectively teach a significant swath of aspiring readers. We raise thousands of dollars each year given by donors to our nonprofit so that we can award income-based financial assistance for these services. We are now expanding our training for teachers as their awareness of the literacy crisis takes hold, and education leaders and teachers alike become more aware and determined to remedy the problem. We're proud to help cohorts of teachers to understand and practically apply in their classrooms the decades of research now getting more traction. Yes, Vermont AOE needs an effective administrator, and a savvy navigator of our state's education culture and norms--but we don't need someone just to do business as usual. We need a leader who can choose a meaningful platform through which they demonstrate their leadership on behalf of the students and teachers in our state. Leading on literacy is a platform that can support every student's future.

Thank you,  
Laurie

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