

MEMORANDUM

TO: State Board of Education – Education Quality Standards Subcommittee  
FROM: Jeff Fannon, Executive Director  
DATE: September 15, 2022  
RE: Comments about Proposed Section 2120.1—Instructional Practices

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Thank you for giving me and Vermont-NEA the opportunity to comment about section 2120.1 of the proposed Education Quality Standards (“EQS”). In short, we support the work of the Ethnic Studies and Social Equity Working Group (“Working Group”) created by Act 1 of 2019 and the Working Group’s draft EQS. This work is critical to successfully advance Vermont and examining past injustices, because we know that educating Vermont students is the most effective way to change culture as it will take a sustained effort to build a more culturally sensitive Vermont. Vermont-NEA supports the proposed EQS and believes the Subcommittee should give the Section a passing grade and recommend the adoption of the proposed EQS.

I do, however, have a few minor comments and suggestions that I believe will improve section 2120.1, which I hope you will incorporate into your recommendations to the full State Board of Education.

As an initial matter, all of these “Instructional Practices” require additional professional development resources for educators to thoroughly internalize and apply these practices in their classrooms. As such, the introductory phrase should acknowledge this practical reality as follows:

“Educators shall be supported with, among other resources, appropriate professional development and technology supports to:”<sup>1</sup>

Additionally, the following subsections, I believe, can be strengthened as follows:

f. using educational and assistive technology to reduce barriers to learning and heighten student engagement;

Subsection “f” is significant, and in conversing with teachers about this, it became apparent that this requirement, while necessary, may be a heavy lift in some cases and we need to recognize that some students will require additional resources in order for a teacher (classroom teacher and/or a special education teacher) to learn a new form of technology to instruct a particular student. This should not be interpreted as not saying this is appropriate and indeed in some cases it may be required by federal law, but I did want to acknowledge this obvious resource fact.

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<sup>1</sup> The first word of each listed item will need to be adjusted to be grammatically correct.

i. heightening the salience of learning objectives and providing mastery-oriented feedback;

Subsection “i” seems to be a bit wordy and could perhaps be more succinctly said as “heightening the standards-based curriculum and providing feedback.”

j. employing the use of data to adapt pedagogy to unique student needs and incorporate student feedback into instructional design and curricula;

Subsection, “j,” should be broken into its two separate parts: use of data and incorporating student feedback.

m. fostering classroom culture based on the tenets of restorative justice practices: relationships, respect, responsibility, repair, and reintegration.

Finally, subsection “m” needs to ensure educators assigned to employ restorative practices are properly trained. Without proper training, restorative practice can re-victimize victims but with the veneer of the school doing the harm. That is not what anyone wants; however, we think restorative practices can and should be employed, but we just believe educators need proper training to use these practices. Restorative practice in schools is nothing new and it should be supported with robust professional development for staff assigned to use it, but again, we need to ensure that the resources are available to schools. We support its use, and we support proper PD resources to carry out effective restorative practices.

Thank you for your time and the opportunity for Vermont-NEA to speak about section 2120.1, which we support.