

**From:** Mark Hage <[mhage@vtnea.org](mailto:mhage@vtnea.org)>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, April 5, 2023 4:11 PM  
**To:** Garces, Amanda <[Amanda.Garces@vermont.gov](mailto:Amanda.Garces@vermont.gov)>; Gleason, Kimberly G <[Kimberly.G.Gleason@vermont.gov](mailto:Kimberly.G.Gleason@vermont.gov)>  
**Cc:** Mark Hage <[mhage@vtnea.org](mailto:mhage@vtnea.org)>  
**Subject:** EQS Manual: Student vs. Learner

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Kim, hi. I hope you are well.

We want to get back to you on the **student vs. learner** issue in the draft EQS Manual. I hope we interpreted your concerns accurately.

Re-reading the **2-28-23 version** of the revised EQS Manual, here is what stood out – please, Kim, let us know if my review missed the boat, or parts of the boat.

Overwhelmingly, the word “student” or “students” dominates. I culled the sections where the word “learner” or “learners” is used (if I missed any, bring them to our attention). The verbs “learn” and “learning” are peppered throughout the document, but that is not salient in this context.)

First, the term “student(s),” as a rule, feels more appropriate and resonate, and it is non-jargonistic. To cite one example, “student behavior” rather than “learner behavior.”

Also, with a few exceptions (see below), I can discern no loss in substituting “student” or “students” for “learner” or “learners.” In fact, in some sections, “students” and “learners” show up together, but without a compelling reason as to why this distinction exists. In retrospect, I wish the Working Group had flagged for itself some of these terminology choices and resolved them internally (ironically, this is one of the unintentional consequences of so many bouts of revision). Where the two words exist in proximity, I do not believe it is because the Working Group believed the distinction was academically, socially, or culturally imperative. Most likely, the two words were synonymous in our minds.

In **three sections**, I think it makes sense to keep “learner” or “learners,” because they are components of **terms of art** in these contexts (*check us on “multi-lingual learner coordinator.” Amanda and I can check with our folks on this phrase, too, and you might want to see what the AOE thinks.*):

### **2120.5 Tiered System of Support**

*Staffing shall be filled by licensed school counselors and other student support personnel with sufficient staff to carry out the school counseling services, such as guidance counselors, Student Assistance Program counselors, home-school coordinators, multi-lingual learner coordinators and school-based clinicians. At the elementary level, there shall be no more than 300 students per school counselor and other student support personnel. Schools with fewer than 300 students shall employ a school counselor and other student support personnel on a pro-rata basis. At the secondary level, there shall be no more than 200 students per school counselor and other student support personnel.*

### **2122.2. Access to Instructional Materials**

ensure **English Language Learners** are entitled to appropriate assistance by providing language interpreters, services, and technology to participate equitably in all instructional and co-curricular programs.

### **2123.2. Development and Implementation of Local Comprehensive Assessment System**

c) includes both formative and summative assessments, including those that establish annual protocols and timelines for assessing the progress and needs of **English Language Learners (ELL)** beginning at the point of enrollment and continuing at designated intervals during the year as determined by the teachers and parents or legal guardians of ELL students or as mandated in law or policy.

In the sections below the dotted line, as I see it, substituting “student” or “students” for “learner” or “learners” would not compromise or confuse the meaning of the Manual. I added “student” or “students” in red to accent this point, presuming there is no legal or statutory barrier to doing so. One caveat, I can’t remember now if “the definition of “Universally Designed Instruction” comes from a respected and established source in the world of pedagogy, whereby “learner” or “learners” is preferred. I think it may have. I did not write this one or research it. I believe **Heather Bouchey** played a major part here. I will ask Heather and **Mike Martin** from the Curriculum Directors Association what they think.

Kim, we’re happy to keep speaking about this matter with you and others.

Amanda and I will run this by our big group at our next meeting and let you know if they have concerns not expressed here. The timing of all this review has proven problematic because of when our full group meetings are scheduled. Looking ahead to the board’s schedule, perhaps this is an issue we can treat as a copyediting process for the last stage of the work to come.

Thanks, Kim.

Best,

Mark

### **Section 2114**

“Universally Designed Instruction” is an educational framework based on research in the learning sciences, including cognitive neuroscience, that guides the development of flexible learning activities and environments that can accommodate individual learning differences. This framework incorporates the principles and practices of “Universal Design for Learning,” which teachers utilize to develop instructional strategies to meet the diverse needs of all learners [students], specifically, but not limited to: multiple means of representation to give learners [students] various ways of acquiring information and knowledge, multiple means of expression to provide learners [students] alternatives for demonstrating what they know, and multiple means of engagement to tap into learners' [students'] interests, challenge them appropriately, and motivate them to learn.

### **2120.1 Instructional practices**

Educators shall promote personalization and high expectations for **each student** and enable so that each **student** to successfully engages in the curriculum and meets the graduation requirements. Classroom instruction shall include a range of evidence-based instructional practices strategies that most effectively improve student learning and engage **all learners [students]** as identified by national and Vermont guidance and locally collected and analyzed student data.

modeling and setting high expectations for **all learners [students]** regardless of prior academic experience, family background, socio-economic status or (dis)abilities and promoting respect for student differences;

cultivating **learner [student] agency** by providing multiple ways for students to engage with and demonstrate their new learning;

### **2120.2 Flexible Pathways**

integrate understanding and respect for the diversity of cultural, racial, ethnic, linguistic, and social identities and experiences that shape and impact **learners' [students']** lives and integrate that understanding into the SU/SD's planning and procedures related to flexible pathways;....

### **Career Technical Education**

V.S.A. §1541a. Any eligibility requirements for a given CTE program need to be equitable, anti-racist, culturally responsive, anti-discriminatory, and inclusive (e.g., communicated in language that is accessible by the **learner [student]**) and clear and accessible to staff, **students**, and parents/legal guardians.

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Mark L. Hage (he/him)  
VT-NEA Director of Benefit Programs & VEHI Trust Manager  
802-223-6375, ext. 2420