

## PreKindergarten Education Implementation Committee

DRAFT Outline of Report Update, 11.3.24

### OVERVIEW OF PEIC

The Prekindergarten Education Implementation Committee (Committee) was created through [Act 76](#) to assist the Agency of Education in improving and expanding accessible, affordable, and high-quality prekindergarten education for all four-year-old children on a full-day basis on or before July 1, 2026.

1. Powers and Duties
2. Committee Membership
3. Committee Process
4. Stakeholder Engagement
5. Report Process & Structure

### INFLUENCES ON COMMITTEE PROCESS

The Committee's charge and process were influenced by a complex and changing landscape in state government, education finance, and public policy. The following describes the history and factors that impacted how and what the Committee was able to achieve due to these influences.

1. Background on Prekindergarten in VT
  - a. Act 166
  - b. Act 76
2. Shifting Economic and Political Landscape
  - a. Legislative intent of Act 76
  - b. Impact of the Commission on the Future of Public Education
  - c. Impact of Governor Scott's issued calls contain education spending
3. Committee Perspectives
  - a. Differing perspectives on the future of public prek from the outset
  - b. Tensions re: scope of committee charge - opportunity for major structural change or opportunity to strengthen successes of existing system
  - c. Differences in ideas re: affordability - efficiency of PreK-12 system vs. resulting destabilization of child care system
4. Committee Resources
  - a. Not resourced to undertake extensive research or stakeholder engagement
  - b. Limited access to prekindergarten data and analysis
  - c. Wide experience across committee meant time getting up to speed rather than focusing on implementation

## **BEST PRACTICES IN PREKINDERGARTEN EDUCATION**

1. National research on best practices that lead to positive outcomes for children
  - a. More time (consecutive years) in prek
  - b. Comprehensive ELDS & curriculum supports
  - c. Small class size & ratios
  - d. Teacher preparation & training
  - e. Mixed delivery system
  
2. Vermont's Success
  - a. Leader in universal access for 3- & 4-year-olds
  - b. Strong at serving children with IEPs in their least restrictive environment
  - c. Meets 7 out of 10 of NIEER's benchmarks for high quality prekindergarten in ELDS, curriculum supports, teacher specialized training, staff:child ratio, screening & referral, QRIS, safety, relationships
  
3. Vermont's Areas for Improvement
  - a. Does not meet 3 out of 10 of NIEER's benchmarks for high quality prekindergarten in lead teacher preparation, assistant teacher preparation & professional development
    - Requirements for these benchmarks differ across settings
      - Prek in public schools meet benchmark for lead (classroom) teacher preparation, private settings don't
      - No setting meets the benchmark for assistant teacher (paraprofessional) preparation because NIEER requires specialized training in ECE
      - No setting meets the benchmark for professional development because of the coaching requirement. NIEER requires state level policy on coaching but Vermont regulates this locally.
    - Moving toward meeting teacher prep benchmarks requires time, support and resources to address workforce shortages
  - b. Data Access & Coordination
    - Committee encountered challenges with access and coordination of data related to prekindergarten education.
    - Importance of data integration on effective prek systems
    - Need to better align data efforts and make data more accessible
  - c. System Oversight & Coordination
    - Current system overseen jointly by AOE and CDD
    - Stakeholder frustration with redundancy & lack of clarity
    - Prek Coordinators play a big role in coordinating across agencies & providing clarity for stakeholders
    - Need to better define roles & expectations, streamline systems

d. Finances

- Focus on info needed to determining costs of implementing preK envisioned by Act 76
- State does not have an estimate for current cost of prek at state, district or program level
- Current per pupil weigh is insufficient for prek
- Methodology used to set the tuition rate paid to community-based prek providers is out of date

### **CHANGES PROPOSED BY ACT 76**

Act 76 proposes to achieve its legislative intent by implementing 4 changes. The sections below describe the Committee's feedback on the implications of these proposed changes.

1. Make prekindergarten programs available for the full-school-day and full-school-year for all four-year-old children
  - a. Support for increasing # of hours offered to children
  - b. Align Prek-2 regulations for attendance and length of school day
  - c. Out-of-school care needs & impacts
2. Transition three-year-olds from the current 10-hour prekindergarten benefit to the child care and early education system
  - a. Removing 3 yos from prek benefit could have negative consequences on children, families & mixed-delivery system
  - b. Prek Special Education Services are complex and present challenges for families,
3. Require school districts to ensure four-year-olds whose families choose to access prekindergarten programs have access
  - a. Infrastructure, staffing & service capacity needs are unknown but stakeholders worry about sufficient capacity
  - b. Challenges for families who can more easily access prek in an adjacent state
4. Allow school districts to choose to provide prekindergarten programs directly within schools, through direct contracting with private programs or other public schools, or through a combination of these options.
  - a.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. Continue to expand Access Incrementally
  - a. Maintain the current prekindergarten benefit for both three-year-olds and four-year-olds and take steps to expand hours, starting with four-year-olds.
  - b. Consider extend the timeline for expansion

- c. Build on what is already in place for adjacent state kindergarten programs.
  - d. Develop equivalent prequalification pathways for prekindergarten providers in adjacent states serving children who do not have viable options in Vermont
2. Use National Benchmarks to Guide Vermont's Improvement
- a. Build on Vermont's successes
    - Ensure that prekindergarten programs continue to exist in a mixed delivery system (center-based, public school, and family child care) settings and that these settings continue to meet the high quality markers identified as best practices.
    - Continue to monitor best practices through Vermont's newly-revised Quality Rating and Improvement System (STARS). CDD and AOE partner with relevant stakeholders to utilize learnings from the implementation of STARS system to better support continuous quality improvement at the system and program levels and utilizing data from CLASS assessments to better develop and target training and support.
  - b. Build toward meeting national benchmarks for high-quality
    - Charge agencies to develop transition plans and timelines to meet national benchmarks for teacher preparation across settings
    - Build and invest models from other states (and expand access to VT programs) that have successfully increased the # of prekindergarten teachers with a bachelor's degree and educator licensure with early childhood education (ECE) endorsement.
    - Review, define and make recommendations to expand Vermont's existing coaching and mentoring efforts and models
  - c. System-Level Improvements
    - Define roles & expectations for agencies re: system oversight
    - Task AOE, CDD & BBF to create & implement monitoring and accountability protocol for UPK
    - Ensure high quality data management, data analysis, and making data publicly available.
    - Align statutes for mandatory attendance and length of school day across prekindergarten, kindergarten and grade 1
3. Ensure Adequate Resources
- a. Additional research to understand potential demand and current capacity to meet it
  - b. Collaborate with the School Construction Aid Task Force
  - c. Require districts to articulate implementation plans, including needs & timelines
  - d. Update per pupil weighting to revise prekindergarten ADM to >1
  - e. Revise funding methodology to update pr kindergarten payments to reflect current
  - f. Model anticipated systems-level costs for prek at various hours and delivery models

before making major changes to prekindergarten

#### 4. Prek Special Education

- a. Identify districts where families feel well-supported and clear on their prekindergarten special education service options. Build on these innovations and provide supports for districts that are struggling.
- b. Research opportunities for districts to share early childhood special education resources within small regions to ensure efficient and effective support for three-year-old children.
- c. Expand on Build partnerships between Children's Integrated Services (B-3) and school districts to clarify roles and responsibilities of each when across service agencies to supporting families through the transition from Part C to B, and state and federal level controls.
- d. Consider extending eligibility provision for early intervention Part C services (CIS) beyond a child's 3rd birthday. Although a significant undertaking, this would ensure that three-year-olds are served in a way that minimizes disruption and addresses some of the child and family needs, as well as concerns around transitions.
- e. Clearly communicate resources and options clearly to families navigating prekindergarten special education services. Include guidelines on what schools provider and what resources are available through local mental health agencies and private insurance. Assess challenge ares for families with cross-district service needs and determine if there are ways that state and local partners can find solutions together

#### 5. Continue the Work

- a. Create a working group that has the capacity, ability, and policy experience to create an implementation plan, update statute, and XXX
- b. Continue the Committee's work within the Commission on the Future of Public Education. Any changes to education funding or structural needs in Vermont's public education or early care and learning system should happen in tandem with respect to both planning and implementation.
- c. Address areas of further study

### **STANDARD CONTRACT**

### **LEGISLATIVE LANGUAGE**

### **REFERENCES**

### **GLOSSARY**

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

## **APPENDIX**