



PreKindergarten Education Implementation Committee – Program Quality Considerations Workgroup Meeting

June 17, 2024: 11:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Microsoft Teams Virtual
Meeting Call In: 802-552-8456
Conference ID: 415 704 886#
[Meeting Link](#)

DRAFT MEETING MINUTES

Workgroup Charge:

The Program Quality Considerations Workgroup is charged with exploring, documenting and reporting back to the Committee about:

1. Benchmarks and best practices to ensure high quality prekindergarten education;
2. Recommendations for the oversight of the prekindergarten system;
3. Special education services for children participating in prekindergarten in public & private settings;
4. Special education services for children three years of age.

DRAFT MEETING MINUTES

Present: Morgan Crossman, Building Bright Futures; Sharron Harrington, VT Agency for the Education of Young Children; Korrine Harvey, family representative; Erica McLaughlin, Vermont Principals Association; Sheila Quenneville, prequalified private provider representative;

Absent: Theresa Pollner, Vermont Curriculum Leaders Association; Pam Reed, Vermont Council of Special Education Administrators

AOE: Molly Loomis, Facilitator; Meg Porcella; Suzanne Sprague, Theresa Haskins

Others: Maggie Barch, CDD; Kaitlin Northey, Assistant professor of Early Childhood Education at UVM; Heather Duhamel, assistant professor and program director for Early Childhood Education Online, VSU

Facilitator Molly Loomis called the meeting to order at 11:05 am. She reviewed the agenda, guest presentations on teacher preparation, and plans for a subgroup committee meeting on special education consideration goals. She introduced presenters: Kaitlin Northey, UVM, Heather Duhamel, VSU, Tammy Bates, and Wendy Scott from AOE. She requested questions or comments. There were none.

Loomis asked for questions or comments on the draft minutes from the May 20 meeting. There were none. Korinne Harvey moved to approve minutes. Sharon Harrington seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Presentation: Kaitlin Northey, UVM and Heather Duhamel, VSU

Presenters shared a [slide deck](#) about the questions they were asked to address: What would it take for Vermont to meet NIEER's benchmark for high quality (Lead teacher must have a BA at minimum plus specialized training in ECE or child Development)?

- Data
- Policy around ECE qualifications, supports, plans to support during transition to new policies and compensation.
- Some of this work is underway across ecosystem

What should the committee know about teacher preparation and specialized training in Vermont to help us make informed recommendations (What's possible? What are the challenges?)

- There are designated pathways to licensure in VT: pre-apprenticeship (tech); apprenticeship or CDA; prior learning credits, associate's degree from CCV + 2-year accelerated bachelor's degree with licensure from VTSU and or bachelor's degree UVM or VTSU with licensure (0-Prek); alternative pathways include Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science + peer review, transcript review, and Vermont Higher Education Collaborative.
- ECE I, ECE II, and ECE III are designations that Vermont is considering to align preparation pathways.
- Research for best outcomes suggests early childhood educator qualifications are set for a bachelor's degree and specialized training and /or child development. In Vermont, ECE bachelor's degree meets that requirement, and a bachelor's degree plus Praxis exams and teacher portfolio earn AOE early education licensure. Some students meet requirements but do not seek AOE licensure.
- ECE teacher preparation programs are straddling the needs of all current and prospective students. Preparation supports early childhood quality in settings; eases workforce tensions; works across settings; and preparation teams have lots of ideas that could be tapped with a focus group.
- Presenters recommended investment in early childhood as a whole, birth – 8, for a high-quality system, rather than concentrating on prekindergarten. Concentrating on prekindergarten may result in further fragmentation of the system. Compensation should match requirements.

Given their expertise and understanding of Vermont's ECE system, what recommendations do they hope we make to Vermont lawmakers? What challenges and opportunities should we highlight?

- Presenters recommended creating and supporting stackable credentials that can be earned as professionals work, retain trained professionals.
- Northey noted research on how early childhood policy correlates with early childhood degree attainment. She recommended Vermont design policy that is consistent: across age and settings, regulating the profession, aligning qualifications and compensation, and recognize that preparation is integral to high quality. She noted preparation and higher education is integral to high quality.
- Northey recommended that policy, prekindergarten funding, and professional organizations support professionals attain training requirements.

- Research is needed to gain more qualitative and quantitative data on early childhood education workforce to understand the impact of public investment, policy change, and continuous quality improvement.
- TEACH Early Childhood Scholarship Program is an important support.

Loomis checked the time with Workgroup members to see if they should adjust the agenda to make time for additional conversation. Erica McLaughlin asked if there would be time to review the program quality matrix with the large group. She requested time to focus on the matrix within this meeting. Loomis confirmed 10 minutes is aside for that review.

Q&A with presenters

- McLaughlin asked if presenters have strong recommendations on methods and how to fund them. Northey responded that there are pathways and current funding. She noted that incentivizing credentials should be built into the system and that higher education and programs support the workforce through meeting requirements. She also noted that this work has been done in Vermont and referenced Head Start qualification expectations as a guidance.
- Sheila Quenneville thanked the presenters for noting the importance of infant and toddler childcare in continuum. She related her experience with support for peer review candidates, noting that a mentoring teacher is instrumental. She asked if mentoring is in place in peer review now. She noted that compensation is a challenge to family childcare providers who leave private family care programs to find benefits, retirement in public school programs. She noted that master's degrees should be supported by TEACH.

Presentation: Tammy Bates, AOE Early Education Program Manager and Wendy Scott, AOE, Universal Pre-Kindergarten State Coordinator

Presenters shared a [slide deck](#) and explained that AOE defines high-quality prekindergarten education as instruction by licensed educators who align curriculum with Vermont Early Learning Standards (VELS).

Vermont has offered universal prekindergarten (UPK) since 2014. UPK is measured by quality indicators: UPK Prequalification Application Process with STARS; VELs; AOE licensed endorsement for early childhood educator (ECE) and early childhood special educator (ECSE); program monitoring system; assessment in child development progress; early childhood special education; and early Multi-tiered Systems of Supports (EMTSS).

Act 166 set requirements per setting for licensed ECE or ECSE: public prekindergarten must have an AOE licensed ECE or ECSE giving direct instruction in each classroom; private prekindergarten must have an AOE licensed ECE/ECSE onsite during 10 hours of UPK instruction per week; family child care home prekindergarten must be an AOE licensed ECE/ECSE for direct instruction for 10 hours/week or contract with an AOE licensed ECE for that instruction, or be mentored for at least 3 hours/week by an AOE licensed ECE/ECSE.

Tammy Bates reviewed the NIEER benchmarks that Vermont does not meet, all within teacher preparation. The professional development benchmark requires 15 training hours/year. Vermont requires 45 hours every three years for ECE I. Bates recommended flexibility on that benchmark.

Vermont Standards Board for Professional Educators (VSBPE) oversees program approval,

educator prep programs, quality indicators. Wendy Scott shared rules/statutes that govern VSBPE.

AOE recommendations for Act 76 include that an AOE licensed ECE/ESCE be in each classroom providing direct instruction with curriculum aligned with VELs, as required by public prekindergarten programs and is a NIER benchmark. Presenter shared research and data for Act 76 considerations.

Q&A with presenters

- Harrington noted that passing Praxis exams can be difficult and is cost prohibitive. She asked 1) what supports are available to individuals to grow the workforce in an equitable way for those types of situations and 2) is Praxis and portfolio the barrier for us to increase it?
- Scott acknowledged that AOE recognizes the barrier and is working on other routes to Praxis Core and Praxis which include SAT, course review, math courses and support via adult learning centers.
- Northey noted that flexibility on PRAXIS is key and noted the difference between requiring an AOE licensed teacher or a ECE degreed teacher instructing children. She also noted that a charge for the workgroup may be to clarify the subtle policy difference between requiring an AOE licensed teacher or a person with early childhood education training and bachelor's degree to instruct children. She noted that there are subtleties in NIER standards that allow you to write policy standards to meet their benchmarks
- McLaughlin recommended that all prekindergarten educators have a license. She notes that professionals with an AOE license also ensures that individuals continue learning through professional development and may not be the same for someone with a degree and asked for clarification.
- Northey noted that the expectation for professional development is the same in Vermont across settings. She also noted that the NEIR benchmark is not only for 15 professional development hours, but that coaching and mentoring are also embedded onsite and that teachers (lead and assistant) need professional development plans. She noted that there are models for how this can be done.
- McLaughlin clarified that the terms "lead teacher" equate to "teacher" and "assistant teacher" equate to "paraeducator."
- Quenneville noted that time is a barrier to licensure for full time teachers navigating training requirements and work.

Program Quality Matrix—Teacher Preparation

Loomis shared the [Prekindergarten Program Quality Matrix](#). She reviewed additions ongoing in matrix categories. She questioned if the workgroup and committee should use language defined by NIEER and national benchmarks or the typical wording used in Vermont.

- McLaughlin recommended the term "certified teacher."
- Harrington noted that Vermont's early childhood system is fragmented. In childcare, "early childhood educator" is the term used. She suggested that recommendations use both typical and benchmark language to best reach all audiences.
- Harrington added that recommendations should include timelines and resources.

No members of the public attended.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:30pm.
Meeting minutes recorded by Maggie Barch.