



PreKindergarten Education Implementation Committee – Meeting

January 16, 2024: 12:30 p.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Microsoft Teams Virtual
Meeting Call In: 802-552-8456
Conference ID: 844 016 330#
[Meeting Link](#)

DRAFT MEETING MINUTES

Present: **Present:** **Janet McLaughlin**, co-Chair, AHS, DCF Deputy Commissioner; **Erica McLaughlin**, Vermont Principals' Association; **Jeff Francis**, Vermont Superintendents Association; **Sandra Cameron**, Vermont School Boards Association; **Colin Robinson**, Vermont National Education Association; **Pam Reed**, Vermont Council of Special Education Administrators; **Theresa Pollner**, Vermont Curriculum Leaders Association; **Morgan Crossman**, Building Bright Futures; **Renee Kelly**, Head Start Collaboration Office; **Sharron Harrington**, Vermont Association for the Education of Young Children; **Korinne Harvey**, Building Bright Futures Appointee; **Chris Wells**, Building Bright Futures Appointee; **Sheila Quenneville**, Committee on Committees Appointee; **Rebecca Webb**, Regional Prekindergarten Coordinator; **Jeff O'Hara**, Speaker of the House Appointee
AOE: Suzanne Sprague, Meg Porcella, Tammy Bates, Amy Murphy, Michele Johnson, Wendy Scott

Others: Molly Loomis, Facilitator; Meg Baker; Kerri Beebe; LouAnn Beninati; Lana Bodach-Turner; Nancy Brochu; Jennifer Brown; Stacie Curtis; Amy Emerson; Jolie Frechette; Jennie Grove; Bethany Hale; Teresa Haskins; Kyle Hibbard; Renee Hinton; Jessica Lamberton; Maybeline Lopez; Meghan Meszkat; Steph Ripley MRUSD; Andrew Sambrook; Sarah Taylor; Sarah Tousignant; Melissa Wood; Clara Wootton; Brenda; CES; Crystal; Ishanna; Jan; Justin, Jenny, Almira; Sarah; Sonja

Deputy Commissioner McLaughlin called the meeting to order at 12:32 p.m. She took a roll call. She asked if there were any amendments to the [meeting agenda](#). Renee Kelly asked about follow up from the [report](#) presented to the Committee on November 28. Deputy Commissioner McLaughlin responded that the Agency of Education submitted the report in December and that discussion of the report was not on the agenda for the day. Pam Reed made a motion to approve the planned meeting agenda; Sharron Harrington seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Deputy Commissioner McLaughlin asked if there was any discussion about the [draft meeting minutes from November 28](#). Sandra Cameron noted that her request on November 28 for more information on how the report calculated per student cost had not received follow up and was not recorded in the minutes. McLaughlin restated the request to add a sentence to the minutes about the request for additional information on how the near cost estimates were established. Shelia Quenneville asked what the “Committee on Committees appointee” meant and McLaughlin clarified. Pam Reed made a motion to approve the minutes with the additional sentence; Jeff Francis seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Members of the public were present and invited to be heard. There were no public comments.

Deputy Commissioner McLaughlin introduced the new Committee facilitator, Molly Loomis. Loomis gave a brief introduction to her work and role, and shared a [presentation of emerging themes](#) based on the phone interviews she conducted with sixteen of the eighteen Committee members in advance of the meeting. According to the presentation, Committee members:

- Care deeply about the needs of young children but have different definitions of what those needs are based on their experience and perspective.
- Want multiple perspectives to be heard and valued during the process and recognize that power dynamics present an obstacle to that.
- Value grounding Committee decisions in research and experience but differ on ideas of where this grounding should come from and what implementation could look like.
- Agree that this is difficult and important work. The large group, divergent perspectives, impersonal format (Zoom) makes it hard to build trust and alignment, but there’s interest in creating a process and space to tackle the challenge.

Loomis acknowledged the political, financial and professional implications, as well as the values and identities, that are at stake for Committee members in this process. She presented a list of underlying tensions she’d heard during conversations with Committee members, including: Lead teacher qualifications; Public education \$ in non-school settings; What about 3 year olds?; Special education & inclusion considerations; Impact on private/nonprofit UPK programs; Possibility of crashing a fragile system; and Afterschool & summer care for 4 year olds. Loomis asked for feedback on the list of underlying tensions. Committee members confirmed that these were key tensions and individuals named additional tensions.

Based on her conversations with Committee members, Loomis shared recommendations for the Committee’s work moving forward including:

- Create structure to guide the work moving forward (outside facilitation, a work plan, and predictable meeting schedule);
- Increase opportunities for conversation, collaborative & feedback (smaller workgroups, time to prepare, regular feedback questionnaire);

- Options for engaging stakeholders (monthly prompts, systems).

Loomis also proposed group agreements to guide the Committee's work, based on her conversations with Committee members. These were:

- Focus on what's best for children
- Respect and make space for multiple voices and perspectives
- Ground decisions in research, data and experience
- Normalize and expect disagreement
- Speak plainly, directly and honestly.

Loomis asked for responses to these group agreements and Committee members shared their agreements and suggestions. Rebecca Webb made a motion to approve the five agreements to guide the Committee process moving forward; Erica McLaughlin seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Loomis shared a [Project Plan](#) for the Prekindergarten Implementation Committee's work through December, 2024. The plan outlined the roles, goals, process, and timeline that the Committee will use to guide its work moving forward. Loomis reviewed each of these areas and emphasized the distinction between the roles of Workgroup members (to explore Workgroup topics, gather resources and feedback, and report issues and possibilities back to the Committee) and Committee members (to make decisions about how to integrate Workgroup issues and possibilities into the report). Loomis stated that Committee members will each participate in one of three Workgroups and that each Workgroup will meet for 90-minutes monthly in addition to monthly Committee meetings.

Loomis asked for feedback on the Project Plan. Rebecca Webb noted that the considerations outlined in the Law did not specifically include changes necessary to transition children who are three years of age from the 10-hour prekindergarten benefit to childcare & early education, or how special education services for 3-year-olds would be addressed. Jeff Francis noted possible challenges with sequencing Workgroup topics because information gained from Capacity & Funding Considerations Workgroup and Program Quality Considerations Workgroup may influence the System Level Considerations Workgroup. Colin Robinson made a note that scheduling during summer months may be especially difficult for the Committee.

Loomis shared a [Workgroup Proposal](#) for the Prekindergarten Implementation Committee, which outlined the goals, topics, roles, participation and process that will guide the Committee's Workgroup activities from February - June, 2024. Given the scope of work that the Committee is charged to complete, Loomis stated, Workgroups provide a strategy to break up work into manageable pieces, distribute load across Committee members, and support in-depth explorations to happen simultaneously. The proposal outlined three interconnected topic areas to be explored simultaneously by three different Workgroups:

1. Systems-level Considerations, including:
 - Needs of both the State and local education agencies
 - Whether there are areas of the State where prek education can be more effectively & conveniently furnished in an adjacent state due to geographic considerations

- Recommendations for the oversight of the prek system
2. Capacity & Funding Considerations
 - The min # of hours that shall constitute a full school day for both prek and K
 - Measures to ensure capacity is available to meet demand for prek
 - Any necessary infrastructure changes to expand prek
 - Costs associated with expanding prek, including fiscally strategic options to sustain expansion of prek
 3. Program Quality Considerations
 - Benchmarks and best practices to ensure high quality prek education
 - Special education services for children participating in prek in public & private settings
 - Changes necessary to transition children who are three years of age from the 10-hour prek benefit to childcare & early education

Loomis asked for feedback on the topic areas and Workgroup Proposal. Becca Webb reiterated that Topic 3: Program Quality Considerations should include considerations of special education services for 3-year-olds, which is an important issue for stakeholders. Jeff Francis reiterated that sequencing the topic areas would be important. Deputy Commissioner McLaughlin added that, as per the timeline in the Project Plan, integration across the three topic areas would happen over the summer months and that exploration of Systems-level Considerations could not wait until then. Sandra Cameron asked about the placement of “Changes necessary to transition children who are three years of age from the 10-hour prek benefit to childcare & early education” under Topic 3: Program Quality Considerations because it seems like a Systems-level Consideration. Erika McLaughlin agreed with Cameron’s suggestion and also suggested that “Recommendations for the oversight of the prek system” could be moved from Topic 1: Systems-level Considerations to Topic 3: Program Quality Considerations. Janet McLaughlin suggested including “Changes necessary to transition children who are three years of age from the 10-hour prek benefit to childcare & early education” under each of the three topic areas.

Discussion continued with Renee Kelly stating the challenges of exploring interconnected topics simultaneously and the need to get to work on all the topic areas. She requested further information on the process for how distinct workgroups will share information with the full Committee. Kelly also noted that we have great data and information, including information on oversight of the prekindergarten system. Morgan Crossman confirmed that there is qualitative information on all of the areas where things are working well and where there are challenges in the implementation of UPK and a very robust report, legislative testimony, and data briefs on the oversight of prekindergarten as it currently stands. Crossman offered that Building Bright Futures, alongside the Agency of Education and Child Development Division, can help Workgroups access information and data related to topic areas. Jeff Francis expressed concern about using old reports to inform the future, and about Act 166 being an impediment to moving forward. Jeff O’Hara suggested that the Committee consider an in-person retreat in the spring to focus on Workgroup integration. Loomis addressed a question about who can listen into Workgroup meetings, noting that

members of the public could listen in but that, due to open meeting laws and quorum, no more than ten Committee members could be present together at any Workgroup meeting.

Loomis shared information on next steps. Committee members should expect an email link to a questionnaire requesting feedback on the meeting, preferences for Workgroup topic areas, and input on suggested changes to the Workgroup topics.

Deputy Commissioner McLaughlin thanked the Committee for their time and members of the public for listening in.

The meeting adjourned at 1:59 p.m.

Meeting minutes recorded by: Molly Loomis.