



PreKindergarten Education Implementation Committee – Meeting

March 12, 2024: 9:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

Microsoft Teams Virtual
Meeting Call In: 802-552-8456
Conference ID: 400 249 115#
[Meeting Link](#)

DRAFT MEETING MINUTES

Present: Anne Bordonaro, AOE Interim Deputy Director; Sherry Carlson, Let's Grow Kids; Morgan Crossman, Building Bright Futures; Jeff Francis, Vermont Superintendents Association; Sharron Harrington, Vermont Association for the Education of Young Children; Korinne Harvey, Family Representative; Renee Kelly, Head Start Collaboration Office; Erica McLaughlin, Vermont Principals' Association; Janet McLaughlin, Co-Chair, DCF Deputy Commissioner; Theresa Pollner, Vermont Curriculum Leaders Association; Jeff O'Hara, Prequalified Program Provider Representative; Pam Reed, Vermont Council of Special Education Administrators; Colin Robinson, Vermont National Education Association; Rebecca Webb, Regional Prekindergarten Coordinator

AOE representatives: Molly Loomis; Facilitator; Meg Porcella; Suzanne Sprague

Others: Meg Baker; Jacek Deptula; Margaret Barch-Pearsall; Andrew Sambrook; Sarah Taylor; Valerie Wood

Absent: Sandra Cameron, Vermont School Boards Association; Nicole Miller, Vermont Afterschool Inc.; Sheila Quenneville, Prequalified Program Provider Representative; Chris Wells, Family Representative

Facilitator Molly Loomis called the meeting to order at 9:31 a.m. She asked Anne Bordonaro, Interim Deputy Secretary for the Agency of Education, to begin the roll call. Bordonaro shared that she is also Director for the Federal Division Director and has a long history with the Agency of Education. She will be acting as the Committee Co-Chair in place of Heather Bouchey, Acting Secretary for the Agency of Education. Loomis proceeded with roll call and asked if there were any amendments to the meeting [agenda](#). There were none.

Loomis asked if there was any discussion about the draft meeting [minutes from February 13](#). Rebecca Webb noted a spelling error in her name. Korinne Harvey made a motion to update the minutes to correct the error and Sherry Carlson seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Members of the public were present and invited to be heard. Andy Sambrook, a preschool owner in Hinesburg and Underhill, asked for confirmation the Committee will review the contracts between school districts and prekindergarten community providers. Janet McLaughlin confirmed that it is written into the Act 76 legislation with a timeline. Sambrook also requested that a representative from AOE or CDD respond about the status of an administrative complaint filed in September related to contracts between school districts and prekindergarten community providers. Meg Porcella responded by sharing her email address and requesting that Sambrook follow up over email.

Loomis shared a [presentation](#) with updates from the three Workgroups that met during the previous month. First, Loomis shared a word cloud of individual Committee member's definitions of what "focus on what's best for children" means to them. It was no surprise that the word "children" featured most prominently within the context words like "family", "community" and "resources" to support each and "every child". Loomis also articulated some differences that emerged across definitions, including the focus on 4-year-olds versus 3- and 4-year-olds, and the tension between meeting individual needs and system needs. Loomis also shared a slide of the definitions that each Workgroup drafted together to summarize their shared perspective on "focus on what's best for children". The Committee observed that these group definitions differed across Workgroups but also had similar language about serving children equitably in the context of their families and communities. There was also discussion about how the Capacity & Funding Considerations Workgroup definition that was presented wasn't shared across Workgroup members. Instead, group members identified a tension between supporting the developmental continuum of 3- and 4-year-olds in prekindergarten, and the legislation's focus on 4-year-olds.

Loomis shared a slide with a timeline of both Committee and Workgroup activities for the year and then moved on to Workgroup updates. Jeff O'Hara reported on behalf of the Capacity and Funding Considerations Workgroup, which met for the first time on February 20. He shared slides about the Workgroup's charge, participants, agenda, conversation points, next steps and questions for the Committee. Committee members reflected on the challenge of projecting future capacity needs for prekindergarten based on current enrollment in prekindergarten, as well as how needs for full day and summer care might impact that projection. The workgroup will [meet](#) again on March 19.

Pam Reed reported next on behalf of the Program Quality Considerations Workgroup, which met for the first time on February 23, with slides on the Workgroup's charge, participants, agenda, conversation points, next steps and questions. Committee members offered suggestions to help the Workgroup understand program quality, such as results of prekindergarten site evaluations, national Head Start program performance standards, and Building Bright Futures Act 76 monitoring work. Loomis added that the Workgroup had submitted questions to the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER), who responded with a [memo](#) on national best practices. Representatives from the Vermont Agency of Education, Department of Children & Families, and NIEER will also present at the Workgroup's next [meeting](#) on March 18.

Rebecca Webb reported on behalf of the System-level Considerations Workgroup, which met for the second time on March 8, with slides on the Workgroup's charge, participants, agenda, conversation points, next steps and questions. Committee members inquired about considering connections to federal-level prekindergarten initiatives. Loomis added that the Workgroup had submitted questions to the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER), who responded with a [memo](#) on national best practices. The Workgroup will meet again on April 12.

Each Committee member present reported on reflections, insights or opportunities for integration they had from the Workgroup reports. These included:

- Anne Bordonaro: I have tremendous respect for the work of this group thus far and all the people in this group. I've been getting up to speed and recognize that it's a tremendously complex situation. I am listening and curious how the questions that were posed by each Workgroup will inform the next round of work.
- Sherry Carlson: I will comment on the data gaps and the challenge that the Capacity & Funding Considerations Workgroup has. We need to be really clear in our data collection about what we need to know to create this report versus what would be super interesting to know. I think that will be key in getting what we need back to us and focusing on that. I also had a question about how public comments submitted electronically are shared with this group?
- Morgan Crossman: I noted that across the different Workgroups there is a need for additional information and to be able to understand what information we currently have. In the capacity space we have a solid understanding of information that we still need to gather and I really appreciated the conversation today, especially around how to gather information during a time when there's uncertainty and potential for change. How do we think about the right timing and the most systematic but least burdensome way to collect robust information across the state? Regarding Workgroup integration – this group of people has so much expertise. How do we tap into that across the work groups? What types of communication and opportunities should we be thinking about to share really important content, knowledge or insights across our groups?
- Jeff Francis: I cannot help but believe that the current operational paradigm could shift dramatically based on the scenario that's confronting the public education delivery system in Vermont right now. If we are inclined to do some surveys, we may want to wait until the end of the legislative session because there's a possibility that we're going to see policy levers applied to the public education delivery system that are both going to alter the numbers of physical school buildings and personnel. If you listen to policymakers at the highest level, they are talking about budget caps and reducing the number of schools and mandating ratios, which have the potential to affect not only the core K12 delivery system, but any parallel or ancillary systems like the early childhood delivery system. Therefore, the answers that we might see

with respect to capacity could be very different if a survey was done today as opposed to at the end of May. From my vantage point in the education delivery system, I think we're at a moment in history where there's going to be a lot of change if policymakers are serious about making change – and it seems that they are.

- Sharron Harrington: I appreciate this format and that our separate groups aren't seeking the same information in different ways, but we are coordinating and integrating across Workgroups. There's so much anxiety and so many changes in the field already that it's going to be difficult to get the information we need, so it's important to make sure we're doing it in the most efficient way. For example, when we're thinking about capacity and quality, the connection between the workforce and the qualified workforce are important to pay attention to.
- Korinne Harvey: Thank you all for this group and for the insight of the other Workgroups. It was helpful to see that, while we're all charged with different tasks, we're still overlapping and benefiting one another by being able to chip away at our own pieces. As someone who's not involved in government, political or social service work, I have found this entire situation eye-opening and informative. This is a big change and it's amazing to see everybody come together to make it happen. So thank you all so much.
- Renee Kelly: Thank you for the structure, it worked really well. I liked having a solid template with discussion points and hard questions for the Committee; that was very clear and helpful. Yes, it's important to acknowledge the current context we're in and that it's stressful to have change at the systems level. But how can we also make sure that we're still listening to families and responding to their needs? We can't stand still or let the perfect be the enemy of the good. I want this Committee to continue thinking about alignment with current systems but also, when we think about capacity and resources and money, making sure that we don't close any doors on other larger federal funding streams or or components that can help us further evolve this work.
- Erica McLaughlin: I keep thinking about not letting the current status and barriers lower the bar of what we're working towards. I was at a national conference and heard a principal talking about when teachers were introduced to calculators – and the internet and even introducing kindergarten – there was resistance at first but now it's second nature. This is another opportunity to identify barriers but don't let them impede the possibilities. I'm also wanting to learn more about the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) and wondering if that might be helpful to understand our student outcomes over time. I appreciate hearing from everyone and being able to think about the questions other Workgroups are asking.
- Janet McLaughlin: I appreciated hearing about the Workgroup conversations and had one question for the Program Quality group: did you discuss the Teaching Strategies Gold data that's available? It's an assessment of progress that's required

for every child who participates in universal prekindergarten. All the different programs are feeding data into the State of Vermont account. This is a potential source of quality data and it's a key element of the quality standards that currently exist. Also, as we think about the questions we want to ask stakeholders, and the current context of the public education and early childhood space, I want to make sure that we don't add to a sense of instability out there. Let's not gather new information where we can rely on information that already exists.

- Jeff O'Hara: Everyone's captured it so well; I don't have anything new to add.
- Theresa Pollner: I appreciate the format of the group sharing out in a consistent way. I had the same question about Teaching Strategies Gold and will be curious to know more. I was also reflecting on not letting barriers drive our decisions, keeping high expectations and making sure we're seeing opportunities. I also concur heavily with Jeff Francis's about changes to the education system that could potentially inform a survey.
- Pam Reed: I'm feeling grateful that the Program Quality workgroup already has so much information to rely on. We have reports and analysis and studies that we can use to make our suggestions and recommendations. I also noted that any survey we send could be impacted by the legislative outcomes and wondered if we could even answer questions about the capacity of the state.
- Colin Robinson: It's really great to hear the work of the other subcommittees, and it's exciting to see the creative thinking and aspirational visions that we're all working towards. The comments that Jeff Francis made are also weighing on me and our Members significantly at this moment. My general disposition is one of great optimism and aspiration but this is a moment when those are not necessarily leading. But with challenge comes opportunity and it seems like there could be opportunities coming in the next couple years from this work and in the broader context of education.
- Rebecca Webb: I had questions about making sure that the people who get the surveys are the right people to answer the questions. I'm also carrying forward the understanding that so many school budgets recently failed and we've already recognized that preschool in any variation is expensive. How does that impact our work? Reflecting back to Public Comment, it would be helpful to have a written list of all the deliverables and processes that were written into this legislation and the dates and ways those will take place.

Loomis thanked everyone for their participation and asked Committee members to respond to a follow up questionnaire.

The meeting adjourned at 11:01 a.m.

Meeting minutes recorded by: Molly Loomis.