



PreKindergarten Education Implementation Committee – Meeting

May 14, 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

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Present: Anne Bordonaro, Interim Deputy Secretary of Education; Sandra Cameron, Vermont School Board Association; Sherry Carlson, Let's Grow Kids; Morgan Crossman, Building Bright Futures; Jeff Francis, Vermont Superintendents Association; Sharron Harrington, VTAEYC; Korrine Harvey, family representative; Renee Kelly, Head Start Collaboration Office Director; Janet McLaughlin, Agency of Human Services Co-chair; Jeff O'Hara, prequalified private provider representative; Pam Reed, Vermont Council of Special Education Administrators; Colin Robinson, Vermont National Education Association; Rebecca Webb, regional prekindergarten coordinator; Chris Wells, family representative; Nicole Miller, Vermont Afterschool

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

Others: Valerie Wood, Building Bright Futures; Christy Swenson; Lindsey Wells; Sarah Kinney; Jolie Frechette; Danielle Harris; Tanya LaChapelle

Absent: Erica McLaughlin, Vermont Principals Association; Sheila Quenneville, prequalified private provider representative; Theresa Pollner, Vermont Curriculum Leaders Association

Facilitator Molly Loomis called the meeting to order at 9:33 am. She welcomed members of the public and briefly reviewed the meeting format for public comments, legislative updates, and work group presentations via slide deck followed by group discussion and questions. No questions or comments were made about the agenda.

Loomis requested comments, questions, or suggestions on the draft meeting minutes from April 9. None were made. Becca Webb moved to approve the minutes and Morgan Crossman seconded the motion. Nicole Miller abstained. The motion carried.

Loomis welcomed comments from the public. No public comments were made.

Loomis introduced legislative updates and implications for the UPK Implementation Committee.

- Colin Robinson reported H.887, the “yield bill” passed the legislature late on Friday May 10 with increases to the Education Fund and transfer from the General Fund to cover increased costs. The next step related to public education is a commission on the future of public education. Their first charge is to build a subcommittee on education funding, including increased costs related to student mental health and social emotional needs and the historic town tuitioning program. A veto session is scheduled for June 17 and 18.
 - Webb recommended that the committee set to discuss tuitioning students, particularly students crossing state lines, at a later meeting.
 - Renee Kelley requested a link to the bill with charges for the new commission. Robinson provided the link [to H.887](#).
 - Anne Bordonaro asked if the legislature discussed the UPK Implementation Committee and its current charge. Robinson replied that the UPK Committee was referenced in relation to its long-term system charge’s similarity to the new commission’s charge but expects it will become a point of discussion. Janet McLaughlin added that the bill assigned the commission to consult with the UPK Implementation Committee.
 - J. McLaughlin added that there were no major legislative updates related to early childhood education and afterschool settings.

Loomis reviewed the PEIC Activity timeline with final workgroup meetings set for June, synthesis to begin in July, and an in-person meeting to set recommendations in September. She also shared a [slide deck](#) to accompany the following workgroup reports.

Capacity & Funding Considerations Workgroup Report

Sherry Carlson reported on the Capacity & Funding Considerations Workgroup discussions regarding 1. ensuring capacity is available to meet prekindergarten demand; 2. Considering infrastructure changes; 3. Defining the minimum hours that constitute a full school day for prekindergarten and kindergarten; 4. Considering costs of and fiscally strategic options to sustain expansion; and 5. Making recommendations for oversight. CDD compiled [UPK program data](#) and AOE is compiling TS gold data to estimate capacity. The workgroup discussed using current kindergarten enrollment numbers and cost per pupil times the total number of 3-year-olds as methods for calculating demands. The group determined 4100 three-year-olds participated in prekindergarten in Vermont in 2023. The group reviewed current minimum required instructional hours for prekindergarten, kindergarten, grades 1-2 and grades 3-4. Considerations included if there should be continuity on “full day” hours across prekindergarten – grade 1; definition of “instructional hours” and standards for part time kindergarten; how many hours are developmentally appropriate for prekindergarten; how to meet family and community needs; and the financial implications of full day instruction. Next steps include asking the National Institute for Early Education Research (NIER) about models to estimate cost, capacity and capturing workgroup thoughts on a

collaborative spreadsheet.

- O'Hara highlighted the challenge of creating recommendations in isolation, without considering impacts and structures for other age groups.
- Loomis reported that she contacted NIER for appropriate formulas and models.
- Sandra Cameron asked if the group received input from the school construction task force. Meg Porcella will follow up with AOE leadership.
- Loomis added that the group lacks funding for research and data collection and may concentrate on identifying needs and limitations.

Program Quality Workgroup Report

Crossman reported that the Program Quality Workgroup focused discussions on special education and understanding the current successes, challenges and experiences of young children and early childhood educators in special education in the prekindergarten arena and touched on best practice and benchmarks. Webb joined the group's last meeting to share the experience of children participating in special education. Webb discussed special education funding in terms of Act 166 and Act 76, and how special education money follows the child, not the program. The group discussed developmentally appropriate practice, disability and special health care support, screenings, evaluations, cross district service provision, and the transitions across different sectors for three-year-olds. The group discussed staffing, and the increased number of behavioral and social emotional conditions and level of service needed, particularly opportunities outside of prekindergarten for early identification of concerning behaviors and improving access and quality. Transportation was also part of the conversation. The workgroup formed a focus group to compile information on UPK Special Education Service Considerations and Recommendations and identify challenges and successes. Data on family experiences with special education is ongoing. The workgroup also developed a [program quality matrix](#) to track indicators across local and national standards.

- Cameron asked if the group discussed human services that continue beyond age three. She noted that IDEA requires Child Find regardless of whether or not children are in public prekindergarten and wondered if it has been addressed in the group discussion. She also asked if any outreach has been made to VT Assoc of Spec Ed Administrators. Webb described committee conversations about available spaces in school-based programs for three-year-olds, and in the smaller focus group, around Least Restrictive Environment. Pam Reed added that she reports to the Vermont Council of Special Administrators to collect feedback and input for this committee. Reed suggested more collaboration with human services, particularly mental health services.
- O'Hara asked if funding mechanisms for three-year-olds are affected by UPK. Webb confirmed and added that hypothetically three-year olds not funded in school districts are still eligible for special education funding. She also shared the workgroups consideration of if it is developmentally appropriate to have a smaller

population of three-year olds with identified needs served in a four- and five-year-old program.

- Crossman replied that special education is discussed at the monthly UPK Coordinator community of practice where many members are special educators and/or administrators.
- Renee Kelley noted the difference related to services to children with identified needs on IEPs under IDEA Part B and then the need for assessments of children turning three.

Systems-level Considerations Workgroup

Renee Kelly reported the Systems-level Considerations Workgroup. The group strategized topics for conducting stakeholder interviews and is compiling interview results in a [Stakeholder Interview document](#). Similarities across groups include developmentally appropriate practice, consistent and responsive funding models, staffing, enrollment, dual oversight structure challenges, value for clear oversight structure, access to comprehensive services and unmet needs for working parents. The group is working on a [UPK System Outline](#) of agency roles and responsibilities currently in statute. Next steps include continuing to gather stakeholder feedback and information on areas where UPK can be more effectively furnished in adjacent states.

Group insights and reflections

- Webb reported being encouraged by connections and common themes among workgroups, motivated and hesitant about making recommendations.
- Chris Wells asked if more parental feedback would be valuable to the workgroup.
- Colin Robinson noted this was a fulsome report back.
- Pam Reed appreciated the report on legislative and funding action. She valued how the committee can impact improvements as they meet their charge, regardless of UPK implementation.
- O'Hara appreciated the strength of the group and noted the challenges of the charge.
- Nicole Miller agreed with Reed on the committee's impact on improvement.
- J. McLaughlin highlighted how the committee's conversations are impacting practical outcomes. She reported the developing true cost of care analysis may be a resource for the committee.
- Kelley reports that the data is taking form, and shared concern for how the recommendations will be stewarded forward.
- Korinne Harvey shared appreciation for the collective work of the committee.
- Harrington considered the information shared during this meeting was the most robust content discussion so far. She underlined that the considerations are just as important as the recommendations the committee makes and appreciated that each workgroup continued to circle back to what is best for children.

- Crossman recognized the importance of data to all workgroups and challenges to collecting data and bring partner voice into the conversation. She expressed value for documenting the process for future discussions, including tensions and areas where agreement is not shared, to inform decision makers who do not have this committee's level of content knowledge and expertise.
- Carlson appreciated the resources being created as a result of this work. She agrees with Reed on focusing on improvement. She is hopeful that her workgroup can generate a general cost for UPK. She valued clear identification of needs, impacts and data that UPK implementation requires.
- Cameron shared her confidence that the committee can address benchmarks and develop recommendations that are specific and measurable.

Loomis reported that the planning team will be synthesizing information and structuring the report around the 10 considerations outlined in the law, capturing what the committee knows and can make recommendations on, and what more is needed to answer questions and tensions. She asked the group for thoughts on including other ideas for improvement in the report.

- Cameron recommended keeping to the charge, citing the size of the task and the time allotted to complete it.
- Kelly replied that she would like to include all the consideration the committee has the capacity for.
- Webb recommended that the report reflect the breadth of stakeholders that have been considered and included in the conversation to represent that the recommendations were not made in isolation.
- Francis advised that the committee respond to the core legislative charge without creating distractions or confusion.
- O'Hara highlighted that responding to the charge be articulated clearly so that decision makers understand the recommendations fully.

Loomis reminded the group that the last workgroups are scheduled for June and to make recommendations for testimony from guest experts to engage at that time.

Loomis adjourned the meeting at 11:00 a.m.
Meeting minutes recorded by Maggie Barch.