

Vermont UPK: Universal PreKindergarten

**Presentation to the Prekindergarten
Education Implementation Committee**

**Vermont Agency of Education and
Vermont Agency of Human Services,
DCF Child Development Division**

October 24, 2023

Vermont's Guiding Principles: Supporting Each and Every Young Child and Family's Full and Equitable Participation

Each and every young child (birth through Grade 3) and family in Vermont has diverse strengths rooted in their unique culture, heritage, language, beliefs and circumstances. They have gifts and abilities that should be celebrated and nurtured. Full participation means promoting a sense of belonging, supporting positive social relationships and enabling families and early childhood professionals to gain the competence and confidence to positively impact the lives of each and every child and their family.



Policy Statement on Inclusion

It is well documented that the beginning years of all children's lives are critical for building the early foundations of learning and wellness needed for success in school and later in life. During these years, children's brains develop rapidly, influenced by the experiences they share with their families, teachers, peers, and in their communities. Like all children, it is critical for children with disabilities to be exposed to a variety of rich experiences where they can learn in the context of play and everyday interactions and engage with their peers with and without disabilities.

- U.S. Departments of Health & Human Services and Education (2015). *Policy Statement on Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs*

High Quality Vermont Universal PreK Education Defined

*What defines Vermont Universal Prekindergarten Education (UPK) is the implementation of **high-quality**, effective instruction by **licensed educators** who use **evidence-based practices** within **intentionally designed** early learning environments. Early educators align curriculum with the **Vermont Early Learning Standards** while **adapting** experiences to support the **full participation of each and every child** to realize their full potential and **promote** positive outcomes.*



Key Features of Vermont's current UPK program

Publicly Funded

- A minimum of ten (10) hours of **publicly-funded** prekindergarten education 35 weeks per year

Inclusive

- 3, 4, and 5 year-olds not enrolled in kindergarten

Portable

- Ed funding follows the child

Mixed-Delivery System

- Public Schools
- Private Programs
 - Childcare centers
 - Head Starts
 - Family childcare home providers

Publicly-funded UPK Education under Act 166

- Funded by resident school districts (part of a school district's budget)
- Only children enrolled in prequalified public school or private prekindergarten education programs shall be included in a school district's ADM count.
- Average Daily Membership (ADM) is .46
- 10 hours of UPK per week is considered full-time ADM.
- Adjusted each year by the New England Economic Project cumulative price index.
 - SY 2022-2023 UPK Tuition rate per child is \$3,656.00
 - **SY 2023-2024 UPK Tuition Rate per child is \$3,764.00**

Key Changes Requested in Act 76

- Full school-day, full-school year
- One year of eligibility (4-year-olds and 5-year olds not yet enrolled in kindergarten)
- School district assigned responsibility of providing space for all eligible children
- School district choice about partnering with private programs or other public schools

UPK Settings and Enrollment

	SY 2022-2023	SY 2023-2024
Total Statewide UPK Prequalified Programs	416	415
Total Public School UPK Prequalified Programs	155	155
Total Private UPK Prequalified Programs	212	211
Total Family Child Care Home UPK Prequalified Providers	49	49
Total UPK Enrolled Children	7,541 (9/1/2021- 6/30/2022)	8,334 (Preliminary as of 10/19/2023)

Current UPK Student by Age and IEP status

3-, 4-, and 5-Year-Olds in Preschool 2023-24 (preliminary data)

Three-Year-olds	Four-Year-olds	Five Year-olds	Total
2251	4333	1750	8334

3- 4- and 5-Year-olds with IEPs FFY 2022

Three-Year-olds	Four Year-olds	Five-Year-olds	Total
533	624	208	1365

Vermont State Board Rules Series 2600

2601. Statement of Purpose and Applicability.

2602. Definitions.

2603. Access to Prekindergarten Education.

2604. Prequalified Prekindergarten Education Programs Status.

2605. Staff Qualifications.

2606. Requirements of Prequalified Prekindergarten Programs.

2607. Agreements with Prequalified Prekindergarten Programs.

2608. Establishing or Expanding a School Operated Prekindergarten Education Program.

2609. Tuition.

2610. Reporting the Costs of Prekindergarten Education.

2611. Reporting on the Effects of Prekindergarten Education

2612. Monitoring.

2613. Quality Standards.

2614. Administrative Complaint Procedures.

2615. Effective Date.

Rule 2603. Access to Universal Prekindergarten Education

No less than ten hours a week for 35 weeks annually

Enrolls in district of residence:

-PreK program that it operates or at parent/guardian request, pay tuition to a prequalified PreK education program either in another public school or private program

Each district establishes enrollment procedures

ECSE services may be in a prequalified prekindergarten education program. LEA may, but is not required to, provide ECSE services outside of the LEA boundaries.

Rule 2604. Prequalified PreK Education Programs Status Requirements

A public school or private prekindergarten education program shall be considered prequalified only if it meets all of the following criteria:

- Licensed to provide child care by the Dept for Children and Families, Child Development Division
- Received and maintains at least one of the following quality program standards
 - National Association of the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) accreditation
 - Minimum of four stars in Vermont's Step Ahead Recognition System (STARS) (or three stars with a plan)
- Curricula aligned with the Vermont Early Learning Standards
- Staff meets professional standards (Section 2605)
- Both Public and Private PreK programs must apply for approval to the AOE and AHS

Rule 2605. Staff Qualifications

Public Schools

- Must have a VT licensed ECE/ECSE providing direct instruction in each PreK classroom.

Private Programs

- VT **Licensed** ECE/ECSE must be on site during 10 hours of PreK instruction.

Family Child Care Providers

- **VT** licensed ECE/ECSE, or receive regular, hands-on active training by a VT licensed ECE/ECSE at least 3 hours per week during each of the 35 weeks per year with written documentation.

AOE sponsors Provisional Educator Licenses for qualified educators in private settings working toward AOE licensure and/or endorsement in ECE/ECSE.

Rule 2606. Requirements of Prequalified Prekindergarten Programs (a-d)

Any prequalified public or private prequalified prekindergarten education program shall:

Adhere to all federal and state laws

Implement a developmentally appropriate curriculum that is aligned with Vermont Early Learning Standards (VELS)

PreK education for a minimum of 10 hours a week for 35 weeks per academic year

Child development assessments at least two times a year (Teaching Strategies GOLD)

Rule 2606. Requirements of Prequalified Prekindergarten Programs (e-g)

Report to families on child's developmental progress at least twice a year and offer at least two opportunities to meet with the teacher

Provide opportunities for effective parental involvement and participation

Permit on-site visits, announced and unannounced, by representatives from the AOE, DCF, and SD staff

Rule 2606. Requirements of Prequalified Prekindergarten Programs (h-j)

Complete reports for enrollment, attendance, child assessment, costs of PreK education, finances and other areas as required by state law and the AOE

Participate in training required for fulfilling the program's responsibilities under tuition agreements with districts

Must comply with all requirements of state and federal laws governing IDEA Part B and ECSE, including allowing access to ECSE service providers;

Rule 2606. Requirements of Prequalified Prekindergarten Programs (k)

Participate in the state-approved prekindergarten education monitoring system described in Section 2612.

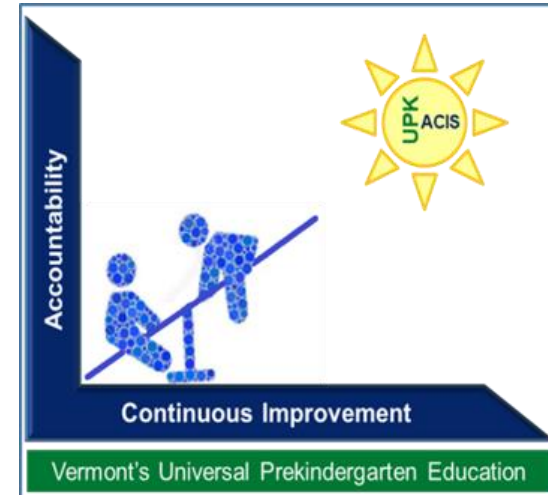
Rule 2612. Monitoring

AOE/AHS Joint Oversight

- UPK application approval process
- ACIS monitoring co-investigations
- Interagency bi-monthly meetings

Monitor

- **Programmatic details** (number of children served, number of programs operated, and public financial investment made)
- **Quality** to ensure continuous improvements through mentoring, training, technical assistance, etc.
- **Outcomes** (school readiness, proficiency in numeracy and literacy, etc.)
- **Effects on equality of opportunities** between private and public programs (socioeconomics, equality of access, staff qualifications, quality of program, and others)



Accountability and Continuous Improvement System (ACIS)

Programs agree to assurances based on the 11 UPK Education Requirements
Includes Desk Monitoring (3-year cycle)
Renewals (3-year cycle)

Early Childhood Special Education and Inclusion in UPK Education Programs



IDEA Part B and Section 619

- IDEA Part B Ages three through 21
- IDEA Part B Section 619 three through five
- Part B, Section 619 of the IDEA Ages three through age five authorizes additional preschool formula grants to states that are eligible for grants under Section 611 of Part B.
- States are eligible if they make *Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE)* available to all children ages 3 through 5 with disabilities.
- While not mandatory, all states are currently providing IDEA services to preschool-aged children.



Focus on Regular Education Settings

- The IDEA places a strong emphasis on educating children with disabilities in settings with children without disabilities with needed supports and aids in regular education settings
- A regular education setting can be a private or public UPK programs, Head Start, family childcare, licensed childcare settings, e.g.).
- A regular education setting also needs to have 50% or more children without disabilities

— 34 CFR §§300.114–300.120, 34 CFR §300.133



Benefits for 3, 4, and 5-year-olds With and Without Disabilities in UPK Programs

A full continuum of individualized placements for children with disabilities

High quality, inclusive environments with their same aged peers

Developmentally appropriate models

A licensed ECE/ECSE Educator in the classroom in all public and some private UPK education programs and a licensed educator onsite in all private UPK education programs for the 10 hours of UPK

Membership and belonging which can continue through adulthood

Questions?