



State of Vermont
Vermont Department of Education
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Commissioner Armando Vilaseca Statement on Pre-kindergarten

Public education in Vermont includes preschool. When I talk about my role as Vermont's Commissioner of Education, preschool is as much a part of the conversation as elementary school, middle school, high school, technical education, special education and higher education. Many Vermont communities have made high quality pre-k education an important component of their education continuum for years, often in partnership with home and centered based child care, Head Start, and parents of young children. It is important to recognize that early learning is a system with multiple pathways and programs that lead to kindergarten, not a system defined by and for our public schools alone. Others are just getting started, or re-tooling their efforts to be more effective with a broader, more inclusive scope. Any doubt about the appropriate place that pre-k holds in public education in Vermont, and the importance of ensuring a collaborative approach, was addressed with Act 62, signed into law in July 2007.

The importance of high quality pre-k education is no longer a question. It is one of the most effective school and student improvement strategies we have. I intend to do what I can to promote the development, sustainability and growth of high quality early learning opportunities for all preschoolers in the state, ensuring they meet or exceed standards related to teachers, programs, and curriculum that are consistent with the expectations we have for other parts of our public education system, and that it fulfills the collaborative intent of Act 62. I encourage administrators, boards, educators, and parents to explore all available funding and partnership opportunities to help establish or sustain high quality early learning opportunities for all 3 and 4 year olds.

Addressing public education in Vermont without consideration for what happens to children before they enter public school kindergarten is an incomplete conversation. The creation of high quality early learning opportunities for children in isolation of other parts of our existing early care and education continuum is an incomplete system. The significant economic constraints faced by public schools in our state means we cannot afford to ignore the positive impact that high-quality early learning opportunities can have on children throughout their public school careers.