



PreKindergarten Education Implementation Committee – Capacity & Funding Considerations Workgroup

June 18, 2024: 8:30 a.m. – 10:00 a.m.

Microsoft Teams Virtual
Meeting Call In: 802-552-8456
Conference ID: 386 374 430#
[Meeting Link](#)

DRAFT MEETING MINUTES

Workgroup Charge

The Capacity & Funding Considerations Workgroup is charged with exploring, documenting and reporting back to the Committee on issues, perspectives and possibilities related to:

1. Measures to ensure capacity is available to meet demand for prekindergarten
2. The min # of hours that shall constitute a full school day for both prekindergarten and kindergarten;
3. Any necessary infrastructure changes to expand prekindergarten;
4. Costs associated with expanding prekindergarten, incl. fiscally strategic options to sustain expansion;
5. Recommendations for the oversight of the prekindergarten system.

DRAFT MEETING MINUTES

Present: Heather Bouchey, Interim Deputy Secretary of Education; Sherry Carlson, Let's Grow Kids; Nicole Miller, Vermont Afterschool; Chris Wells, family representative; Sandra Cameron, Vermont School Board Association, Janet McLaughlin, Agency of Human Resources
Absent: Jeff O'Hara, prequalified private provider representative
AOE: Molly Loomis, Facilitator; Meg Porcella; Suzanne Sprague
Others: Maggie Barch, CDD

Facilitator Molly Loomis called the meeting to order at 8:38 am. She reviewed the agenda for the current meeting and requested to reorganize the agenda to start with the UPK oversight matrix and follow with updates from Janet McLaughlin on CDD's true cost of care analysis, and Heather Bouchey's review of AOE field survey. Sherry Carlson motioned to approve the agenda with the suggested change and Nicole Miller seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Loomis asked for questions or comments on the draft minutes from the May 21 meeting. There were none.

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UPK Oversight Matrix

Loomis shared the [UPK Oversight Matrix](#) drafted by the Systems Level Considerations workgroup. She explained the matrix considers responsibility at the agency level, but that systems workgroup members suggested some program/supervisory union level oversight should be captured on the document as well. She posed the question of reporting programmatic or agency level oversight to the capacity and finding workgroup members.

- Carlson noted that lead education agencies (LEA) play a significant role in compliance, such as approving prequalification.
- Meg Porcella noted that LEAs are also responsible for special education identification and overseeing students with IEP. She considered those responsibilities part of oversight and compliance.

Loomis reviewed a list of draft recommendations generated by the System Level Considerations workgroup. She requested additional recommendations or questions from workgroup members.

- Miller commented on the importance of fingerprinting challenges to the EC community.
 - Loomis related suggestions from UPK coordinators and Head Start to streamline systems to reduce fingerprinting burdens.
 - Bouchey noted that Vermont has investigated reducing fingerprinting burdens and that federal regulation prevents agencies from sharing fingerprinting records across entities. She suggested that education licensing could follow CDD's requirements as they are federally mandated. She suggested agencies collectively message the field about the completed work to streamline, about the barriers to simplifying, and to recognize frustration caused by fingerprinting processes.
 - Carlson asked what prevents AOE from aligning with federal requirements and noted that early childcare educators navigate three fingerprint checks. She also noted fingerprint delays are an additional burden.
 - Bouchey noted that time delays may be due to staffing challenges with other agencies that process fingerprints.

AOE Data and Capacity Survey

Bouchey reported AOE's plans to conduct a survey over the summer or fall to collect capacity data from school districts (SU) and supervisory unions (SD). The survey plans to capture current preschool student enrollment, forecasted enrollment, impacts on programs if Vermont moves to a system serving only four-year-olds, how many students could be served by community partner programs and within the district programs, among other data points. Bouchey also reported on her shared testimony with McLaughlin to the legislature on PEIC progress and noted the House Committee on Human Services is anticipating a solid PEIC report on December 1, 2024 to include an ideal recommendation, optional recommendations, and recommendations for implementation. Bouchey related the importance the capacity survey will have in rounding out the PEIC report and noted it would serve to gather stakeholder feedback. She welcomed workgroup input on what data to collect in the survey.

- Loomis shared a draft of survey questions and topics with workgroup members for feedback.
- Chris Wells suggested the survey ask about the current state of kindergarten.
- Loomis suggested asking how kindergarten estimates enrollment as a way to inform formulas for prekindergarten.
- Sandra Cameron suggested directors of special services be asked to engage in the survey.
- Miller suggested weeding out questions that duplicate data points.
- Cameron suggested asking how many classrooms offer prekindergarten.

- Carlson noted that classrooms are covered under physical spaces in the survey draft.
- McLaughlin suggested the language in the survey capture data on the different units that make up a class, e.g. how many groups of children operate as one class, and whether one classroom is used by more than one class.
- Loomis asked how Bouchey sees the work being allocated on this project.
 - Bouchey related that she is seeking broader ideas and themes for the survey for AOE to synthesize and bring back to the group to review.
- Carlson requested asking where children on IEPs are receiving UPK services. She also suggested adding definitions, so that, for example, full day prekindergarten means the same to all respondents.
- Cameron suggested asking how programs will support three-year-olds (knowing that some leaders will not have tackled that yet). She hoped that questions will help determine if programs: Will continue to offer three-year-olds programming in the local budget? Will decrease the number of three-year-olds to serve? Will serve children who are at-risk or already identified as having needs? Will require that three-year-olds be served entirely through community partners?
- McLaughlin asked if the survey should ask about afterschool care and wraparound care.
 - Bouchey suggested the survey be specific to prekindergarten; adding afterschool questions should touch prekindergarten students.
 - Miller suggested survey questions about program structure also touch on wraparound care and offered to help refine the question to gather the correct data.
- Cameron noted that the program leaders completing this survey are very innovative and creative and suggested gathering suggestions for UPK implementation from them.
- Loomis reported that AOE will complete the draft for the committee to review in July or August.

CDD True Cost of Care Analysis

CDD commissioned a [study for true cost of care](#) last fall. McLaughlin shared the analysis will look at cost of quality for early childhood education in Vermont and allow for different variables to develop cost models for different scenarios. Variables include size of program, ages of children, demographics of children and families, type of care, funding source, developmental assessments, and facility type, among others. She noted that the project was initiated for child care purposes, to help set reimbursement rates by measuring the true cost of care. She shared that the model can be applied to prekindergarten and reported that CDD published an [RPF](#) last week seeking a national organization to manage this analysis on a regular basis. She noted that prekindergarten capacity and funding is based on an estimated cost set 10 years ago, recently updated for an index that may not track all the different elements that go into the cost of providing tuition. This model can provide a tool to estimate the cost for full day full school year prekindergarten for four-year-olds, estimate the cost for 10 hours/week, and consider a middle ground scenario at 15 – 25 hours/week. The 12-month timeline for the project is based on what is typical for larger states and may take less time. She expected it would not be completed by November. Scenarios for cost models can be included in the PEIC report, but the true cost will not be analyzed before the report is due.

- Cameron noted that the term “tuition” disregards the education funding system which changes every year and setting a tuition with funding being so variable seems risky. She also noted that the term “true cost” depends on the group size and the number of groups of children sharing resources, and suggested care about defining how that true cost was determined. Regarding cost scenarios, Cameron wondered if there is a sweet spot where Vermont can serve all four-year-olds in the most cost-effective model. She noted, for

example, other states set a criteria for a minimum number of children served because that number is linked to cost effectiveness.

- McLaughlin replied that the model should be able to determine the sweet spot and can determine what cost looks like in a small program versus a large program.
- Cameron noted that afterschool for prekindergarten required additional licensing demands that complicate the scenario.
- Loomis noted that the workgroup charge includes exploring the costs associated with expanding prekindergarten, as well as fiscally strategic options to sustain expansion.
 - McLaughlin noted this model will not consider transition costs or start-up costs.
- Porcella noted that some transition and start-up cost questions are included in the AOE's draft survey. She also noted CDD's study will not provide information in time for writing the recommendations but will help answer questions from the legislature when they review recommendations. She noted the AOE survey will be completed in time to provide data for writing recommendations.

Reflections

- Miller hoped the report can relay to the legislature the complexity of the system and how nuanced it is: it is not a one size fits all model.
- Cameron agreed with Miller and hoped the report would inform an outcome in the legislature that is implementable and sustainable.
- Wells hoped that one recommendation of the report sets clear hours required for UPK, as the state level requirement seems too low.
- Carlson hoped the report can provide clarity about what prekindergarten looks like on the ground and inform us on what data collection we should have going forward on a continual basis.
- Bouchey shared that she looks forward to a report that integrates all workgroup conversations, and noted she is concerned about the pressure she places on the report. She also noted the state has long operated with good intentions without the data to inform them. She underscored the value of collecting the perspective of people running local systems.
- McLaughlin shared the group's deep curiosity, and how that curiosity will lead to some clarity for enhancements and a path forward.

No member of the public attended.

The meeting adjourned at 9:56 am.