



# PreKindergarten Education Implementation Committee – Meeting

June 11, 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:** Heather Bouchey, Interim Secretary of Education; Sandra Cameron, Vermont School Board Association; Morgan Crossman, Building Bright Futures; Jeff Francis, Vermont Superintendents Association; Sharron Harrington, VTAEYC; Korinne 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; Theresa Pollner, Vermont Curriculum Leaders Association; Erika McLaughlin, Vermont Principals Association;  
**AOE:** Molly Loomis, Facilitator; Meg Porcella; Suzanne Sprague  
**Others:** Donna Brown, National Office of Head Start, LouAnn Beninati, Let's Grow Kids  
**Absent:** Sheila Quenneville, prequalified private provider representative, Sherry Carlson, Let's Grow Kids, Nicole Miller, Vermont Afterschool, Inc.; Chris Wells, family representative

Facilitator Molly Loomis called the meeting to order at 9:31 am. Members introduced themselves to Donna Brown from Head Start, who will be attending in place of Renee Kelly during her leave from July - October.

Loomis welcomed members of the public and briefly reviewed the meeting agenda. No questions or comments were made about the agenda.

Loomis requested comments, questions, or suggestions on the draft meeting minutes from May 14. Becca Webb corrected an attribution about special education discussions at monthly UPK Communities of Practice on page 2 of the meeting notes was made by her and not Morgan Crossman.

Webb moved to approve the minutes with that change and Crossman seconded the motion. No members opposed, none abstained. The motion carried.

Loomis welcomed comments from the public. There were none. Loomis shared three letters from members of the public that are also available on the [PEIC website](#):

- [J. and S. Berg Public Comment](#)
- [S. Emery Public Comment](#)

- [D. Harris Public Comment](#)

Loomis reviewed the Committee's Timeline noting that final workgroup meetings are set for June, synthesis to begin in July, and an in-person meeting to set draft recommendations in September. Loomis requested member recommendations for providers and parents who would like to share their perspectives at the July and August meetings.

Loomis reported the planning team met and decided that the special education considerations require additional information and expertise to explore fully. They will convene a subcommittee over the summer and include a review of special education feedback that Morgan Crossman and Korinne Harvey have been assembling.

Crossman shared an announcement for BBF's [Early Childhood Grand Rounds](#) virtual seminar on the state of preschool to be held on Tuesday, June 18th at 10:00 AM. The seminar will focus on the National Institute for Early Educational Research's (NIEER) State of Preschool Yearbook and national best practice for universal prekindergarten, situating Vermont in that national context. NIEER will discuss considerations for Vermont prekindergarten based on Act 76 and their experience working with other states. Crossman invited members to attend and to submit questions for NIEER to her in advance.

Crossman also shared an upcoming webinar from Child Trends: [2023 Data Capacity of State-funded Pre-K Programs Across the United States](#). The webinar will be recorded.

Colin Robinson provided an update on the status of the education fund bill (yield bill) that includes prekindergarten vouchers. The Governor vetoed the bill last week and the legislature will return next week for a veto override session.

Janet McLaughlin shared that CDD's upcoming [Act 76 updates webinar](#) will be held on June 20, 2024 at 11:00 am. The webinar will be recorded.

### **Program Quality Workgroup Report**

Loomis shared the [program quality matrix](#) and reviewed changes in format.

- Sandra Cameron requested an additional bullet under inclusion to state public schools are required to have at least a 50/50 ratio of students with disabilities and students who are developing typically.
- Webb noted that she will add inclusionary and equity statements from the current UPK program handbook and AOE regional coordinator handbook to the program quality matrix.
- Meg Porcella asked that the matrix language be corrected to reflect that VELs are not a framework for curriculum instructions, rather are standards for learning that cover growth and development. Loomis agreed to make that change.
- Erika McLaughlin suggested delineating the roles listed in the matrix. She explained in a public school setting, there is a teacher certified by AOE, and other support staff are paraeducators. She suggested use of the terms "lead teacher" and "assistant teacher" may be misleading.
  - Porcella added that AOE has the same recommendation.
  - Janet McLaughlin noted the matrix is using NIEER standard language and suggested setting either the typical language used in Vermont or the NIEER language in parentheses for better clarity.

- Cameron clarified that for public prekindergarten programs operating more than 10 hours, a licensed teacher must be present, meaning all the time that children are present a licensed teacher must also be present.
  - Webb noted that greater than 10 hours in public school is not always clear. Many full day programs, even in public schools, only have a licensed teacher for 10 hours and then switch into an early education (for care) model, which may be impacted by how districts word instruction vs preschool time (prekindergarten vs care).
- Webb suggested replacing “lead teacher” with “teacher” under the “teacher preparation” category of the matrix and E. McLaughlin additionally suggested “certified teacher” in place of “teacher” and clarified that “lead teacher” suggests there are other teachers present. Loomis noted J. McLaughlin’s suggestion to use both terms to ensure a specific, understandable and useful reference relative to national benchmarks.
  - O’Hara noted the language used represents Vermont licensing definitions.
  - J McLaughlin noted other areas where Vermont standards differ from national standards. She suggests the committee be intentional about which national standards are priority for alignment.
- Cameron noted under the “health” category there are required policies for school districts on at least three topics; 1) Wellness and comprehensive health, 2) homeless students and 3) hazing, harassing and bullying.
- Webb noted that these rules apply to UPK programs. They are not mandated policies but are mandated for UPK programs also follow. Cameron noted that private programs are not mandated to have a policy on wellness and comprehensive health or homeless students. Webb also added that prequalification requires programs to enroll homeless students her district policy and are recommended, if not required, to follow their districts Hazing, Harassment and Bullying (HHB) policies ([Universal Prekindergarten requirements](#), UPK Coordinator Handbook).
- Heather Bouchey noted that some policies may impact kindergarten students, not prekindergarten. She suggested a review of each policy to determine what is required and what is best practice and noted that changes may require changes in statute.
- Jeff Francis asked for clarification on how action items are tracked. Loomis confirmed that action items are recorded in minutes and included in her follow up and referenced in the report.
- For inclusion in the “Professional Development” section, Cameron noted a requirement in law that professional development is coordinated by the supervisory union, so it is unique to school districts. She also noted federal requirements for school districts regarding continuous quality improvement, safety, and relationships and Title 1 requirement for family engagement.
  - Bouchey noted that federal requirements may cover only kindergarten and requested a list of policies and regulations to determine what ages they impact.
  - Cameron agreed to share resources regarding requirements.
- J. McLaughlin shared appreciation for the detailed discussion of policy impacts on settings and age groups as it drives the committee’s policy recommendations for how to implement UPK in Vermont.

- Crossman underscored the importance of clarity in the recommendations as the report will be a powerful source document of the considerations and discussions about Vermont’s UPK alongside the systems level matrix.

### **Systems-level Considerations Workgroup**

Loomis shared the [UPK Oversight Matrix](#) draft. She reviewed the goal of the document to understand the formal responsibilities for each area and entity. She reviewed the document structure.

- O’Hara asked if private providers fit anywhere in this matrix.
  - J. McLaughlin offered that private providers, schools, and prequalified UPK partners are not included due to the focus of this document on group oversight.
  - Webb noted that there are other report matrices, created by PEIC Workgroups, which incorporate feedback including UPK coordinator, public school prekindergarten teachers, principals, superintendents, prekindergarten community programs, Head Start and families.
  - Loomis clarified that the goal of this document is to synthesize the current written rules for UPK oversight so that the committee can identify what it needs to understand further to make preliminary recommendations.
- Cameron noted that fingerprinting for public school staff is required by both AOE and CDD. She suggested additions under “System Monitoring” section include Ready for Kindergarten survey, early childhood outcomes for any student with an IEP, Title 1, and general integration of prekindergarten within a prekindergarten – 12 grade system.
  - J. McLaughlin asked for clarification on general integration of prekindergarten with prekindergarten–12 system.
  - Cameron explained that monitoring, compliance and continuous improvement is considered among all grades as a system monitoring component that falls under the responsibility of the supervisory union or school district.
- Donna Brown noted that the federal Office of Head Start oversees Head Start programs and that this wasn’t reflected in the matrix.
- Cameron suggested TS Gold data for all tuition students is completed at the supervisory union or school district level and should be listed in the “Program Monitoring” section. She also noted that STARS should be included in the supervisory union/school district section.
  - J. McLaughlin asked for clarification on the school district role in STARS, as CDD manages STARS.
  - Camerson related her consideration was on self-assessment reflection for how a program is doing on quality standards.
  - J. McLaughlin considered if the matrix should include program-level activities as oversight responsibilities.
  - Loomis agreed to bring the question to the system level workgroup for consideration.
  - Webb offered that public school prekindergarten classrooms are monitored by CDD (as licensed child care programs), AOE and school district.
- Cameron suggested adding Child Find under the “Special Education” or “Communications” sections. She suggested section 504 be listed under “Special Education.” She also

suggested supports for English language learners be included with supervisory/school district responsibility.

Loomis requested members share observations, comments and general insights.

- Webb shared her appreciation for the systems workgroup focus on the cross-border question and for how the matrices demonstrate the complex and numerous systems that make up the early education system in Vermont.
- Robinson noted that there is much work left to do on some of the more complex issues. He valued the opportunity to take this focused look at prekindergarten in comparison to the total system view.
- Theresa Pollner added that she appreciates being part of the group where each member offers a piece of the conversation and is thankful to see how her work connects with others in the group.
- J. McLaughlin noted her appreciation for the matrixes and charts to identify gaps, overlaps, conflicts to help work against benchmarks and lay out enhancement. She suggested it might be helpful for committee members to identify their reactions to these tools and categories.
- E. McLaughlin noted that this information will be used at the legislative level and explained that her urgency for specific language is due to the fact that readers of the recommendations may lack the educational jargon to inform context.
- Kelly voiced her agreement for the value of the matrix and background documents the committee has produced and reflected her eagerness to take the next step for building solid recommendations.
- Brown reflected on her appreciation for the work and how exciting it is for Vermont.
- Sharron Harrington reflected that the workgroups and full committee have built a good framework for future conversations. She valued the group making a conscious decision on where to focus, using NIEER benchmarks as an example, as a way to pull back from the deep and detailed conversations to make sure the committee is creating an equitable assessment across all the categories.
- Crossman reflected on the amount of documentation the committee completed in order to create two source documents to level set and move forward with recommendations. She noted work to be done includes crafting a collective vision, measuring how that vision aligns with legislative intent, identifying tensions between the source documents and making recommendations. She expressed her thanks to Loomis for her facilitation.
- Cameron noted that the complexity of the charge is jaw dropping and a reminder to herself to focus on implementation of a system that is equitable and sustainable.
- Bouchey reflected her eagerness to get a good sense of how to track the committee's progress, and to consider similar work in other states. She expressed gratitude for being in Vermont where the distance between this work and how it gets implemented in the field is smaller than in much bigger states. She noted this group has much more potential for actionable change for that reason.

Loomis adjourned the meeting at 10:57 am.  
Meeting minutes recorded by Maggie Barch.