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# AOE Provisional License Mentor Handbook for Public and Private PreK Programs

**August 9, 2024**

Issued by the Vermont Agency of Education Early Education

**LEADERSHIP**          SUPPORT          **OVERSIGHT**

Dear Mentor,

Thank you for supporting your mentee on their pathway to licensure, and by extension, Vermont children, families and PreK programs. The AOE Early Education definition of high-quality Universal PreK (UPK) education focuses on the licensed educator who offers high-quality, effective and evidence based practices utiliing curriculum aligned 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.Mentors play an important role in supporting their mentees in developing their knowledge and practices of high-quality early childhood education promgramming.

This mentor handbook was created to outline the expectations for both mentors and mentees. It is our hope that mentors will utilize this handbook for structuring their mentees' experiences to help them learn the value of reflective teaching practices that will support them throughout their professional career.

To learn more about Prekindergarten Education, please visit the AOE Early Education Webpage

Thank you,

*AOE Early Education Team*

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## Early Education Team Purpose Statement

Each and every young child and their family are diverse in culture, language, geography, values, beliefs, and circumstances. To support individual growth, development, and continuous learning over their lifetime, the AOE is committed to fully including each and every child in a continuum of high quality, evidence-based early learning experiences, from birth through grade three.

## AOE UPK 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 (VELS) while adapting experiences to support the full participation of each and every child to realize their full potential and promote positive outcomes.

## Vermont Early Childhood Guiding Principles

Mentors should reference the Vermont Early Childhood Guiding Principles as the basis of their work with their mentees. These principles

### We believe that each and every child

- Learns within the context of secure and authentic relationships, play, and interactions within their environments.
- Deserves equitable access to experiences that acknowledge and build on their uniqueness.
- Deserves opportunities to deeply learn and develop to their full potential through joyful interactions in safe, accepting environments.

### For each and every family, we will

- Respect and support them as experts, partners, and decision-makers in the learning and development of their children.
- Pledge to be open, genuine, reflective, and respectful listeners and communication partners.
- Build caring communities that are accepting of differences and foster a sense of belonging.

### For each and every child and their family, we will

- Promote understanding of the importance of inclusive and effective early childhood experiences.
- Build equitable access to opportunities, supports, and services.

- Acknowledge and address biases in ourselves and others and the importance of differences such as race, class, gender, family structure, ability, and sexual orientation.
- Advance policies, procedures, programs, and practices that honor and are supportive of each family's culture, strengths, structure, expertise, and preferences.
- Provide options, flexibility, and continuity within each community by working collaboratively within and across agencies, programs, and funding sources.
- Expand the number of early childhood professionals who are well prepared and reflect the diversity of the community.
- Draw upon evidence and research for practices that are responsive and appropriate to the child's culture(s), language(s), abilities, developmental level, identities, and needs.

## Policy Statement of Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs

Regardless of your role in the early childhood field – leader, educator, faculty member, family member – this new policy statement on inclusion released November 28, 2023, is one that you need to both read and share. It underscores that "all young children with disabilities should have access to high-quality inclusive early childhood programs that provide individualized and appropriate support so they can fully participate alongside their peers without disabilities, meet high expectations, and achieve their full potential. The responsibility to ensure that young children with disabilities and their families are included in high-quality early childhood programs is shared by federal, State, and local governments, early childhood systems, early childhood programs and providers, local educational agencies (LEAs), and schools." This publication highlights the foundation for inclusion in early childhood programs as well as recommendations for state and local action. Resources to support inclusion are also included.

Reference: [Policy Statement on Inclusion of Children with Disabilities in Early Childhood Programs (2023)](#)

## Equity Statement

Advancing equity in early childhood education requires an understanding of this broader societal context, biases, and how historical and current inequities have shaped the profession. The biases referred to here are based on race, class, culture, gender, sexual orientation, ability and disability, language, national origin, indigenous heritage, religion, and other identities. To ensure equity and high-quality inclusive learning environments, leadership teams must

- Provide high-quality early education programs that build on each child's unique individual and family strengths, cultural background, language(s), abilities, and experiences.

- Eliminate differences in educational outcomes as a result of who children are, where they live, and what resources their families have.

Educators who are aware of their implicit and explicit biases as they relate to their teaching can better provide learning experiences that are aligned with children's cultural and familial norms. Public and private PreK programs can further promote equitable outcomes for young children by

1. Confronting and dispelling implicit and explicit biases.
2. Improving advocacy for young children and families who are often subject to biases; and
3. Informing changes in policies, practices, and systems through advocacy.

## VSBPE Rule 5350 Temporary Licenses

The Vermont Standards Board for Professional Educators (VSBPE) Rule 5350 Temporary Licenses: Provisional Licenses and Endorsements states,

> The application for a Provisional License or endorsement shall include a plan for obtaining a Level I Professional Educator License or endorsement and an explanation of how the applicant will be mentors and supervised during the two-year period of the Provisional License by a professionally licensed Vermont Educator.

Reference: [VSBPE Rules Governing the Licensing of Educators and the Preparation of Educational Professionals](#)

## Superintendent Provisional Licenses

At their discretion, a superintendent may submit a provisional license application on behalf of a partnering Universal Prekindergarten (UPK) prequalified private program staff member who meets the provisional license qualifications criteria. The VSBPE encourages superintendents to build relationships across settings and to support the youth in their shared community.

### Temporary Qualifying Criteria

**Emergency License**

Initial licensure sought in Early Childhood Education (ECE)

- One school year ending on 6/30/XXXX

**Requirements**

- Superintendent approval
- Bachelor's degree (Transcripts)
- Current resume
- One year plan

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- Licensed educator mentor supervision for the year provided by the school district.

**Qualifying Criteria**

- Applicant has bachelor's degree but does not meet provisional license qualifying criteria.

**Additional Information**

- No extensions.
- Option to use emergency license to pass Praxis II ECE to qualify for provisional license.

## Provisional License

Initial licensure sought in Early Childhood Education (ECE)

- Two school years ending on 6/30/XXXX

**Requirements**

- Superintendent approval
- Bachelor's degree with coursework in content area (Transcripts)
- Current resume
- Provisional plan for licensure in two years (Peer Review, Vermont Higher Education Collaborative (VTHEC), Educator Preparation Program (EPP)
- Mentored by licensed educator for two years provided by the school district

**Qualifying Criteria**

Applicants for a Provisional license and/or endorsement shall possess a BA degree and meet at least one of the following:

- Possesses any valid professional educator license from VT or another state;
- Possesses any expired professional license from VT or another state provided the license expired no fewer than 2 years and no longer than 10 years;
- Have a major or the equivalent (Minimum 18 credits in ECE) in the content area of the provisional endorsement;
- Have successfully completed a licensure content assessment, Praxis II for the provisional endorsement (subject) they are seeking licensure for;
- Minimum 18 credits in ECE. (Superintendent may request a waiver from the VSBPE for an applicant who does not meet the 18 credits in ECE.)

**Additional Information**

- One-year provisional license (extension) for documented extenuating circumstances. Determination by AOE Educator Licensing.

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## Provisional License Follows the Applicant

AOE Educator Licensing does not rescind provisional licenses for a change in employment even if a provisionally licensed ECE/ECSE educator leaves employment of a private UPK program. Provisional licenses, follow the school year calendar, expire two years on June 30 of a given year. AOE ECE/ECSE provisional educator must notify the superintendent and the AOE UPK State Coordinator of their leaving their current private program and new employment contact information (confidential information).

- When a provisionally licensed educator leaves their current UPK program, the program will be issued a UPK Loss of Licensed Educator letter through the Accountability and Continuous Improvement System (ACIS) by the AOE UPK State Coordinator. At their discretion, the appointed AOE licensed mentor may still offer support to the provisionally licensed mentee at their new public or private PreK program, or another AOE licensed mentor may be assigned.

## Provisional Plan

A provisional plan is a timeline of how an applicant will be licensed ECE or ECSE before their provisional license expires (June 30, 20XX). Changes to provisional license plans should be sent to the superintendent. Provisional plans may include:

- Applicant will complete educator licensing testing requirements, Praxis Core and Praxis II, as required by the instructional level sought.
- Applicant has applied or is enrolled in the peer review process or a college program that will ensure upon completion a license in ECE or ECSE within the 2-year provisional license period.

The AOE Educator Licensing review of a provisional plan does not guarantee licensure. The completion of the provisional plan, within the two years, is the responsibility of the applicant and not the agency. It is recommended that the applicant notify the superintendent quarterly for verification that they are moving through the process towards educator licensure in a timely manner.

Provisional plan template will be provided for each applicant to complete their two- year educator licensure pathway for either ECE or ECSE. Depending on applicant's educational background the following pathways to licensure may be applicable:

- **AOE Transcript Review** offers currently licensed educators to add an additional licensure endorsement through a review and determination of a transcript course crosswalk worksheet and current endorsement competencies completed by the applicant. A 60-hour documented ECE practicum is required. Praxis II ECE may also be required if the applicant wants to teach K to Grade 3.

- **AOE Peer Review** offers an alternate route to educator licensure for initial educators or currently licensed educators wishing to add a new endorsement. Peer Review is a portfolio process, which culminates with an interview with

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experienced licensed educators who have reviewed a candidate's completed portfolio.

- o For initial licensure candidates, a supervised 13-week/520 hours student teaching practicum is required. Praxis Core testing, or alternative, is required for all initial educator applicants.
- o For currently licensed Vermont educators who are adding the ECE/ECSE endorsement, a 60-hour documented practicum is required. Praxis II ECE may also be required if the candidate wishes to teach K to Grade 3.

- [Vermont Higher Education Collaborative](#) **(VTHEC)** offers both ECE or ECSE initial licensure and adding a new endorsement to a current educator license. The ECE programs are an 18 credit (6 courses) sequence of coursework and practical field experiences. The ECSE programs are a 21-credit (7 courses) sequence of coursework and practical field experiences. The initial licensure ECE and ECSE programs include 13-week/520 hours student teaching practicum Praxis Core and/or Praxis II ECE testing is also required based upon licensure route and experience.

## Provisional License Mentor Expectations

It is recommended that the AOE licensed mentor provide weekly mentor support for their mentee via meeting in-person or virtually, email or phone. Mentor support may include:

- Direct observation feedback.
- Curriculum planning meetings with feedback.
- Providing support and resources.
- Attending professional development opportunities together.
- It is recommended to keep mentor and mentee logs to document dates, hours, discussions, and activities.
- Additional support as needed.

## Mentor Expectations and Student Teaching

Mentor support and responsibilities vary depending on the pathway to licensure for the provisionally licensed ECE/ECSE mentee (Peer Review, VHEC, initial licensure versus adding an endorsement). A mentor's first meeting with their mentee should include asking for a copy of the mentee's provisional plan to determine what supports requirements are required by the mentor to help the mentee meet deadlines. Planning how to meet deadlines will often help mentors plan weekly mentoring sessions driven by the mentee's needs. Immediate needs may include curriculum aligned with the Vermont Early Learning Standards, the basics of lesson planning, practice feedback and UPK state assessment, Teaching Strategies GOLD support. Beyond the classroom supports, mentees will need support navigating their pathway to licensure identified on their provisional plans. Provisional plans are not "set in stone" but are flexible because

circumstances can change over the two years of the provisional license. Mentees must notify the superintendent who issued the provisional license of any changes to either their pathway or timeline as noted in their provisional plan.

## Praxis Core Testing Requirement for Initial Educators

All Vermont educator candidates seeking initial educator licensure are required to demonstrate basic skills in reading, writing, and mathematics. Most licensure applicants will demonstrate this by meeting the passing scores established by the Vermont Standards Board for Professional Educators (VSBPE) for the Praxis Core Academic Skills for Educators (CORE®). The Praxis Core subtests measure whether educators have the necessary reading, writing, and mathematical knowledge, and skills critical to learning. All candidates must demonstrate qualifying scores in each of the three subject areas. Different forms of assessment may be used for each subject. Please review [Alternative Praxis Core](#) document for alternative testing requirements (qualifying SAT, GRE or ACT scores or demonstration of knowledge through coursework). Please note that mentees seeking ECSE initial licensure are only required to meet Praxis Core.

**Demonstration of Basic Skills Through Course Evaluation:** In January 2022, the Vermont Standards Board of Professional Educators approved a process for licensure candidates to demonstrate basic skills for educators through an evaluation of previous college level coursework in lieu of Praxis Core or other formal standardized assessments. A completed course review work sheet with course syllabus and transcripts with a minimum of a "B" course grade are required. All candidates must demonstrate qualifying scores in each of the three subject areas (reading, writing and math). If previous coursework does not meet one of the Praxis Core subjects, a candidate may propose a current course that they feel meets the Praxis Core subject; complete the coursework worksheet with the course information and submit to the Peer Review Coordinator for approval. Different forms of assessment may be used for each subject.

Candidates who are enrolled or recently graduated from an educator preparation program (EPP), must meet the requirements and policies of their institution for a recommendation for licensure. Please contact the [AOE.PeerReview@vermont.gov](mailto:AOE.PeerReview@vermont.gov) with any questions.

**Submitting a Course Review Worksheet** (Index of this document) must be completed to use college coursework as an alternative to the Praxis Core. Each course review must include the following

- college information,
- course name and number,
- description of the course, and
- the grade received.

As part of the Peer Review application process, candidates must upload a completed course work review sheet, a current resume, and official transcripts (if not already on file) to AOE Educator Licensing through the online application process.

**Important!** Candidates should not email the form to the AOE.PeerReview@vermont.gov or Peer Review Coordinator directly.

The Course Review Basic Skills Worksheet will then be reviewed by the AOE Peer Review Coordinator, and a determination is made whether courses will work as an alternative to the Praxis Core, or if not, the applicant would be emailed letting them know that they will need to take the Praxis Core test or use another approved alternative method.

References:

AOE Alternative Praxis Core

Educator Testing Service (ETS) Praxis

ETS's Vermont Test Requirements

# Instructional Level Requirements (Praxis II and Teaching)

It is important for mentors to know which instructional level their mentees are seeking to provide support required by each instructional level. In addition to meeting Praxis Core for initial licensure, mentees may also need to meet Praxis II ECE (#5025). Mentees who are seeking instructional levels (14) or (0) are required to pass Praxis II ECE who want to be licensed to teach kindergarten through Grade 3. Per VSBPE 5440-36 Early Childhood Education competencies. The holder is authorized to teach young children

- (16) Birth through PK (Praxis Core only)
- (14) PreK through grade three (Praxis Core and Praxis II ECE)
- (0) Birth through grade three (Praxis Core and Praxis II ECE)

A practicum (60 hours), or student teaching experience (13 weeks), in early childhood education at the birth-to-5 and/or 5-8 age levels is required, depending on the instructional level sought. For the full (0) birth through grade 3 instructional level or (14) PreK through Grade 3, a practicum or student teaching experience at both the birth-to-PreK and the K to Grade 3 are required.

Dividing up the required hours for a practicum or student teaching experience is determined by the mentee with support from their mentor. For a K-grade 3 practicum or student teaching experience, the mentor may assist in making the initial contact between their mentee and the local school district.

# AOE Peer Review

Vermont's alternative educator licensure portfolio review program is called Peer Review. Please note: All Praxis Core and/or Praxis II testing must be completed before being

accepted to Peer Review. For more information about Peer Review including clinic registration, Peer Review Handbook, and/or the applications process please visit the [AOE Peer Review webpage](#). It is recommended that mentors review the Peer Review Mentor Handbook for dispositions required documentation to support mentees in completing the process. Peer Review initial ECE/ECSE licensure mentees must complete a documented, supervised 13-week "student teaching" documented experience with a licensed ECE or ECSE.

For mentees seeking initial licensure through Peer Review, AOE provisional mentors will sign off on their mentees' professional attributes and dispositions form for their 13-weeks student teaching requirement. For mentees who are adding the endorsement through Peer Review, mentors will sign off on their 60-hour practicum form. It is highly recommended that mentors collaborate with their mentees to plan a timeline to ensure the mentees' supervised teaching hours are met. Please refer to the Peer Review Mentor Handbook for specifics. **Please note, as of May 2023, Peer Review portfolio fee ($1500) is free for the next five years per the Vermont Legislature.**

## Vermont Higher Education Collaborative (VTHEC)

The VTHEC is Vermont's newest alternative to licensure through coursework in [ECE](#) or [ECSE](#). Both programs offer ongoing support throughout the 18 months including mentoring for the 13 weeks student teaching experience or 60-hour practicum requirement. For both initial ECE licensure and currently licensed educators seeking to add the ECE endorsement, VTHEC is an 18-credit sequence of ECE coursework. VTHEC offers. For ECSE initial licensure or adding endorsement to a current educator license, VTHEC offers a 21-credit hour sequence of ECSE coursework.

## Practice-Based Mentoring

This section is based upon the **Essentials of Practice-Based Coaching: Supporting Effective Practices in Early Childhood (2022).** The strength of practice-based coaching is the collaborative partnership between the mentor and the mentee. It is important for both mentor and mentee to take time, at the beginning of the partnership, to set expectations that are respectful of each other's time and honor the commitment towards a positive outcome-educator licensure. Without buy-in to build a collaborative partnership, effective mentoring is compromised.

Things to consider when meeting for the first time:

- Scheduling (days and times that work for both parties).
- Mode of Communication (in-person/phone/email/virtual meeting).
- Weekly Communication (schedule/mode).
- Observations (schedule/in-person).

It is recommended that mentors and mentees read the AOE Educator Code of Ethics at their first meeting as part of level setting educator expectations in preparation for entering the education profession.

Reference: Snyder, P., Hemmeter, M.L., Fox, L. (2022). **Essentials of Practice-Based Coaching: Supporting Effective Practices in Early Childhood**. Maryland. Brookes Publishing Co.

## Collaborative Partnership

Collaboration between mentor and mentee begins with developing an **action support plan** based upon the mentee's pathway to licensure, provisional plan timeline and mentor requirements detailed in this handbook. The plan should include support of teaching practices through shared resources, experiences, and professional development. **Action support plans and goal setting** is the foundation of collaboration for the mentor and mentee relationship. Setting goals together provides shared direction, purpose, and measurable outcomes within the action support plan. All mentees have strength-related practices that mentors can highlight to support their mentees in recognizing and to build on (p.85). As each goal is achieved it is very important for the mentor and mentee to celebrate successes, no matter how small, together.

## Action Support Plan Template

To support mentors and mentees in creating an action support plan, a template is provided. This template may be edited to address unique needs of each mentee pathway to initial licensure, or not used, and something new created, by the mentor and mentee together. The template is not a requirement, but rather offers guidance for what should be considered in the action support plan. Support action plans are comprised of five components:

- Goal Statement (priority)
- Criterion or goal achievement statement (measurable)
- Action steps (how to achieve the goal)
- Resources (what is needed to achieve the goal)
- Timelines for completing each action step (can be "ongoing" until mentee attains the goal) (p.98).

## Mentor and Mentee Support Action Plan Example

The following is an example of the information that should be included in the mentor and mentee support action plan for assuring that both parties are on the same page for what mentor supports are needed. Action plans are also a way to stay on target for meeting milestones for the mentee's pathway to licensure. Plans are flexible and additional goals may be added.

| Static Information | Mentor and Mentee Collaborate to Complete Information |
|---|---|
| Mentee Name | Ms. Maple |
| Mentor Name | Ms. Smythe |
| Desired Outcome | Early Childhood Educator Licensure |
| Meeting Schedule/Mode (Change as needed) | Example:<br><br>• From September to December (13 weeks student teaching experience for Peer Review) weekly check-ins on Mondays and Fridays via Zoom or phone for 1 hour.<br>• In-person observations and follow up feedback of teaching practice on the following dates.<br>• Email any time as needed for sharing resources, materials, successes, or meeting agenda items. |
| Goal #1 | Example: Complete Student Teaching Requirement |
| Timeline with Action Steps/Resources | Example: Sept. Dec.<br><br>1. Review Peer Review student teaching portfolio required forms and Peer Review Mentor Handbook.<br>2. Review Part II of the VT Core Teaching Standards requirements.<br>3. Use the above information from 1 and 2 for meeting agendas during September-December to ensure all requirements are being addressed.<br>4. Schedule in-person observation times. Alternative days in case of inclement weather, or sickness etc.<br>5. Post observation days, feedback meetings with mentor.<br>6. Mentor action items: observations and feedback resources as applicable. |
| Goal Achieved | Example: Dec. 13 weeks of student teaching completed. |
| Goal #2 | Example: Part II of Peer Review requirement documentation is completed. |

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| Static Information | Mentor and Mentee Collaborate to Complete Information |
|---|---|
| **Timeline with Action Steps/Resources** | Example: Jan.-Feb.<br><br>1. Review Peer Review Portfolio Part II requirements.<br>2. Determine what has been completed through 13 weeks student teaching experience.<br>3. Break down into smaller parts what still needs to be completed with deadlines aligned with meetings.<br>4. Mentor action items: review mentee's narratives, help in selection of evidence, and provide resources as applicable. |
| **Goal Achieved** | Example: Feb. Completed Part II VT Core Teaching Standards section of Peer Review Portfolio. |

**Resource**

Please see Appendix C. Support Action Plan Template (Blank Version.)

Reference: Based upon Essentials of Practice-Based Coaching: Supporting Effective Practices in Early Childhood (Appendix III.G).

## Essential Mentoring Strategies

Regardless of the mentee's pathway to licensure, essential mentoring strategies are applicable. Essential strategies include observation, reflective conversations, supportive and constructive feedback, goal setting and sharing of resources. The observational lens for essential mentoring strategies goes a step beyond student teaching competencies (statements of what a teacher needs to know) or dispositions (what the teacher should possess) by defining *practices* as statements (goals) of observable and measurable actions or behaviors that indicate a teacher's competence (attaining the goal) (p.75). For a deeper look at mentor observation for student teaching observations of attributions (competencies and dispositions), please review the Peer Review Mentor Handbook.

For this handbook, our focus is on how mentors can have reflective conversations with their mentees by offering supportive and constructive feedback. A mentor's goal in providing feedback is to support the mentees in learning new behaviors, skills, and practices (p.59). Both types of feedback are given after an observation of teaching practice, however, these feedback strategies can be utilized by mentors in any form of communication with their mentees.

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### Reflective Conversations

Reflective conversations between the mentor and the mentee supports and strengthens their collaborative partnership. Effective use of this strategy is incorporating open-ended questions for the mentee, providing wait time for the mentee to respond, and problem solving together. Along with feedback, mentors are encouraged to share experiences, resources, and knowledge with mentees during all communication with their mentees.

### Supportive Feedback

Supportive feedback is the affirmation of the mentee achieving a goal or action item usually linked to practice implementation, child progress and/or child outcomes (p.59). It is important for mentors to deliver supportive feedback highlighting the "who, what, how and why" context for the mentee. This intentional framing reinforces and encourages the mentee's use of best practices in early childhood education.

### Constructive Feedback

Constructive feedback strategy should reflect not what the mentee did wrong but offer objective observation descriptions with actionable suggestions of improvement and implementation of best early childhood education practices. To not jeopardize the collaborative partnership, it is recommended that mentors emphasize the benefits of the feedback (i.e. child progress and outcomes and teaching practice). It is important for the mentor to remember that you are not the mentee's *supervisor* but rather a *coach* who is supporting the mentee on their pathway to licensure.

References:

Appendix A. Mentor Log Template for Pre and Post Meeting Notes

Appendix B. Mentee Log Template for Pre and Post Meeting Notes

## Circular Relationship Model of Teaching Practice for Mentees

There is a circular relationship between early learning standards, assessments, and instructional practices to promote positive learning outcomes. The circular relationship is a feedback loop as demonstrated in the circular visual below, with each part informing the next part in the loop. Starting at the top with early learning standards, based on child development within identified early learning domains, to inform program curriculum and instructional practice.

Best practice is for assessments to align with the early learning standards-based curriculum for intentional instructional practice, and positive learning outcomes for every child. Within an inclusive classroom this **circular relationship model** shows the feedback arrows representing when support is needed to inform instruction and reassessment (monitoring) of a child's progress. The relationship is **not static** and needs to be circular to show the continuous nature of the learning process. Based on assessment if a child is identified as not progress toward the learning outcome, the

feedback loops back to inform instructional practice with targeted and individualized support and another assessment until mastery is attained.
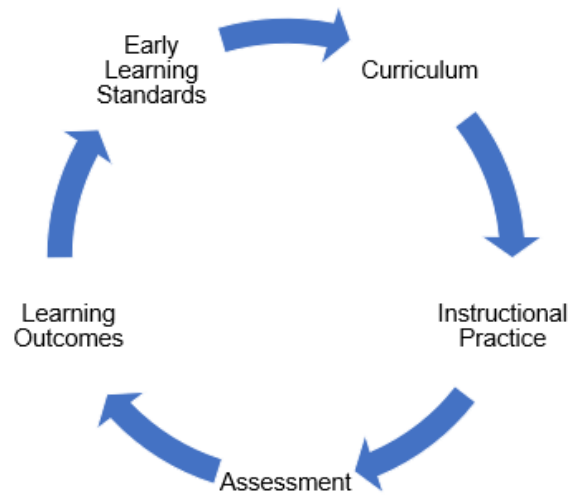


Assessment informs instructional practice for additional strategies or supports for positive learning outcomes.

This **relationship model** must include a fidelity measure for the educator to ensure their practice is inclusive. A measure like Teaching Pyramid Observation Tool (TPOT), Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) or another assessment of educator practice observation tool would give the educator feedback and identified goals for improvement of practice. We have standards and assessments for children, but educators need assessment and support to implement inclusive curriculum and practices with fidelity. If there is a misalignment of curriculum and the selected assessment method, this will impact teachers' instructional practice and child learning outcomes. Intentional instructional practice comes from an alignment between curriculum and assessment to promote learning outcomes. Without the alignment it will be harder to identify which children need support and which strategies will be most effective. External factors, outside of the relationship model, that may affect learning outcomes:

- Age of the child,
- Cultural differences (educator and child),
- Educator personality, explicit or implicit bias,
- Child's personality (p.58).

In essence, a child assessed as needing support for meeting a learning outcome may just need more time (age), information presented in a cultural context (family), or a mismatch of personalities between teacher and child (educator needs to be mindful of). The next section briefly covers the Vermont Early Learning Standards (VELS) for curriculum alignment for developmentally appropriate practices and expectations. The new VELS Manual is a must resource for mentors to review and discuss together.

# Vermont Early Learning Standards Manual

The Vermont Early Learning Standards (VELS) Manual is a companion resource to the Vermont Early Learning Standards (VELS) booklet with the intention of supporting and implementing developmentally appropriate practices across Vermont early learning environments and settings. The purpose of this manual is to help inform how to effectively use the VELS in daily practice and how to align curricula in order to provide high-quality early education for each and every child. The VELS Manual is a fluid document which will be informed by changes in standards, research, and requirements and updated by Vermont's Agency of Education Early Education Team. Please reference the VELS Manual for a deeper dive into curriculum development including Universal Design for Learning (UDL), Teaching Strategies assessment, and lesson plan templates.

**Resources**

[Vermont Early Learning Standards (VELS) Manual](#)

[Vermont Early Learning Standards (VELS) Booklet](#)

## VELS Described

Play is featured prominently in every domain of the VELS, understanding children's play is the foundation upon which to foster learning across all development and content domains. The inclusion of play is paramount when planning for and implementing curriculum, learning goals and intentional teaching practices. VELS are divided into three major domains Developing Self, Communication and Expression, and Learning About the World. Within the major domains are elements (sub-domains) as follows:

- **Developing Self:** Approaches to Learning, Social-Emotional Development, Growing, Movind and Being Healthy.
- **Communication and Expression:** Language Development, Literacy Development, Creative Arts and Expression.
- **Learning About the World:** Mathematics, Science, Social Studies.

Discussed in detail in the VELS Manual is Universal Design for Learning (UDL), a framework of strategies that promote equitable access for all children. For this reason UDL is briefly introduced in the next section.

Reference: [Vermont Early Learning Standards (VELS) Manual](#)

## Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

Your mentee may or may not know there are different approaches to teaching, like UDL. Universal Design for Learning (UDL) is a teacher practice framework for increasing access to education environments and opportunities. Learning environments, materials,

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and activities are planned ahead of time, with the aim of welcoming all learners. UDL's key components make it appropriate for early childhood education settings.

**UDL promotes:**

- **Universal** supports for all learners.
- Creating **inclusive** learning environments.
- **Equity** in access to education opportunities for positive learning outcomes for each and every child.

The UDL framework encourages teachers to create a more inclusive and transformative learning experience for everyone by removing barriers to successful learning. Through these guidelines and suggestions, teachers can increase accessibility and participation for all learners. While educators and instructors can apply the guidelines to various disciplines, domains, and education levels, they can benefit children and teachers in an early-learning setting.

In the classroom, children have a variety of learning styles, strengths, weaknesses, needs, and barriers. For example, some may have a language barrier or a learning disability. Regardless of their differences, it's important to find ways to remove those obstacles to learning and provide them with the instruction and tools needed to be successful. UDL incorporates flexibility and variability into lessons to enable teachers to make the necessary accommodations to their teaching strategies to meet each child's needs.

## Principles of UDL framework

- Principle I. Provide Multiple Means of Representation. Present information and content in different ways.
- Principle II. Provide Multiple Means of Action and Expression. Differentiate the ways that students can express what they know.
- Principle III. Provide Multiple Means of Engagement.

For a more in-depth review of the UDL framework, please see the VELS Manual.

Reference: [Vermont Early Learning Standards (VELS) Manual](#)

## Early Muti-tiered System of Support

Early MTSS is a tiered framework of universal promotion, prevention and intervention is the model for delivering a comprehensive range of evidence-based practices, strategies and resources to families and early childhood practitioners with the goal of improving early learning, social and emotional well-being, and competence for Vermont's young children birth thru age 8.

Early MTSS is a framework based on pyramid model practices that promotes social and emotional well-being for all children. Early MTSS promotes:

- Teacher self -reflection of developmentally appropriate expectations of students,

- Teacher reflection of developmentally appropriate practices,
- Supports creating response plans with targeted supports for individual students,
- Prevention for suspension and expulsion in early childhood settings.

Self-paced, online training modules are available, as well as onsite mentoring, implementation, and technical assistance. This would be an opportunity for mentor/mentee professional development! For more information contact, Amy Murphy, Inclusion/Early MTSS Coordinator at Amy.Murphy@vermont.gov.

## UPK Suspension and Expulsion (Act 35)

Some of you may be aware of the recent passage of the no suspension or expulsions under age 8 law. Having a discussion with your mentee about developmentally appropriate expectations and practices utilizing frameworks like UDL and Early MTSS can significantly reduce suspensions and expulsions from occurring. Our main purpose as educators is to provide access to high-quality and inclusive education to promote positive lifelong outcomes for children. Please highlight this purpose in your work with your mentee. The following is the history of Act 35 and Act 166 (S.283) and required reporting.

**Act 35 (2021)** is an act relating to the Task Force on Equitable and Inclusive School Environments that prohibits the suspension or expulsion of students under age 8 unless the student poses an imminent threat of harm or danger to the other in the school. Act 35 prohibited suspension and expulsion in public PreK and elementary schools.

**In 2022, Act 166 (S.283)** introduced additional amendments to 16 V.S.A. § 1162, extending the above restrictions to approved independent schools and private prekindergarten education programs. The full text of the relevant updated language follows; the language added through the amendment is in italics: Sec. 3. 16 V.S.A. § 1162 SUSPENSION OR EXPULSION OF STUDENTS (d) Notwithstanding anything to the contrary in this chapter, a student enrolled in a public school, approved independent school, or prequalified private prekindergarten program who is under eight years of age shall not be suspended or expelled from the school; provided, however, that the school may suspend or expel the student if the student poses an imminent threat of harm or danger to others in the school.

### Suspension and Expulsion Required Reporting

This joint agency memo offers definitions and exclusionary discipline reporting requirements for public and private Universal Prekindergarten (UPK) programs. To meet the obligations related to UPK Suspension and Expulsion data collection, a public and private program must complete an online AOE incident report for each student who is suspended or expelled withing 5 days of the incident. Within the 5 days of the incident programs must be sent to the child's school district of residence.

Reference: UPK Suspension and Expulsion Incident Report

## Conclusion

This mentor handbook is a guideline to support you and your mentee in building a trusting relationship with a solid plan of action for helping your mentee through the

educator licensing process. It is important to keep in mind that you are not your mentee's supervisor (no corrective action plans!), but rather an experienced advisor who encourages your mentee to grow into a professional who is worthy of the educator license bestowed upon them. Best of luck on your journey with your mentee!

## Handbook Reference

Snyder, P. Hemmeter, M.L, and Fox, L. (2022). *Practice-Based Coaching: Supporting effective practices in early childhood*. Maryland. Brookes Publishing Co.

## Appendix

The following appendix includes mentor and mentee log templates for action planning, communication plans and meeting reflection to support building a trusting, collaborative and effective mentoring relationship.

**Appendix A. Mentor Log Template for Pre and Post Meeting Notes**

| Static Information | Mentor Completes Information |
|---|---|
| Mentee Name | |
| Date and Length of Meeting | |
| Type of Meeting (Virtual/In Person) | |
| Support Action Plan Goal Progress | Reflective Conversation Starters |
| Constructive Feedback | Mentor Provided Resources and Materials (Action steps for Mentor) |

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**Appendix B. Mentee Log Template for Pre and Post Mentor Notes**

| Static Information | Mentee Completes Information |
|---|---|
| **Mentor Name** | |
| **Date and Length of Meeting** | |
| **Type of Meeting (Virtual/In Person)** | |
| **Support Action Plan Goal Progress Updates** | **Summary of Meeting (include Action Steps)** |
| **Mentor Supports Provided** | **Reflection of Conversation During Meeting** |

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**Appendix C. Support Action Plan Template (Blank Version)**

| Static Information | Mentor and Mentee Collaborate to Complete Information |
|---|---|
| Mentee Name | |
| Mentor Name | |
| Desired Outcome | |
| Meeting Schedule/Mode (Change as needed) | |
| Goal 1 | |
| Timeline with Action Steps/Resources | |
| Goal Achieved | |
| Goal 2 | |
| Timeline with Action Steps/Resources | |
| Goal Achieved | |
| Goal 3 | |
| Timeline with Action Steps/Resources | |
| Goal Achieved | |
| Goal 4 | |
| Timeline with Action Steps/Resources | |

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| Static Information | Mentor and Mentee Collaborate to Complete Information |
|---|---|
| Goal Achieved | |
| Goal 5 | |
| Timeline with Action Steps/Resources | |
| Goal Achieved | |
| Goal 6 | |
| Timeline with Action Steps/Resources | |
| Goal Achieved | |

Reference: Based upon Essentials of Practice-Based Coaching: Supporting Effective Practices in Early Childhood (Appendix III.G).

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