

**Senate Bill 56 - public education component**  
Proposed to Senate Committee on Education  
Draft March 2, 2023  
Submitted to Committee by Jay Nichols  
Executive Director Vermont Principals' Association

**Study Committee Plan and Bill Rewrite**  
**Goal: 4 year olds in public schools**

1. The bill should clearly state that beginning July 1, 2023 any school district that chooses to operate or is already operating a full day/full week program will receive full student ADM (1.0)  
We understand that weighting has not been determined for preK students at this time and look forward to that analysis. In the meantime, it is important that schools districts operating full day five day a week prek receive a full student ADM
2. All school districts shall have planned for providing full day full week prek for all four years olds in public schools or arranged by public schools by October 15, 2024.
  - a. Budget Development
  - b. Special Education Service Plan
3. All school districts shall be required to provide or arrange for full day full week prek for all four years olds effective July 1, 2025.

**Study Committee Members:**

- VSBA ED. or designee
- VSA ED. or designee
- VPA ED or designee and an active principal with a current four year old program in their public school appointed by VPA.
- VTNEA ED or designee and an active teacher currently teaching a four year old program in their public school appointed by Vermont-NEA.
- VCSEA ED or designee
- VTCLA ED or designee
- Building Bright Futures ED or designee
- AOE Sec. of Ed or designee
- The Co-Chairs of the Task Force on the Implementation of the Pupil Weighting Factors Report

Study Committee Charge:

**Provide guidance to General Assembly and School Districts for implementation of preK full day full week programming at or arranged by public school districts for the beginning of the 2025-2026 school year.**

Sample questions/concepts for Study Committee to Consider:

- What does research tell us about evidenced-based strategies for our youngest learners (space, group size, qualification of staff, developmentally-appropriate practice, learning standards, etc.)?
- What should be the appropriate level of preK 4 year old ADM weighting?
- What is the capacity for the proposed shift and how will schools meet the requirement if they don't have enough room for all 4 year olds in their communities (ie: open a new space, develop agreements with adjacent public schools)?
- What additional AOE personnel/resources would be needed to oversee the implementation of 4-year old program?
- What is the true supply of licensed early educators vs. the change in demand and what might a teacher recruitment plan include; same for paraeducators?
- What are some examples of ways to provide 10 hours/week for three year olds with special needs in settings where peers without disabilities are present? (ie: play groups)
- How can SBE rules be amended to support extended day programming (afterschool) that aligns with the rules for kindergarten so that districts have fewer barriers?
- What are the necessary health & safety and child development standards in NAEYC accreditation or STARS that might not be covered by existing requirements in public schools?
- Would private programs contracted by public schools be required to attain NAEYC accreditation and also abide by the same State of Vermont AOE health & safety requirements?
- What metrics are needed to ensure that we are improving outcomes for students?
- Examine environmental safety requirements of public schools vs private childcare centers?
- What does research tell us about evidenced-based strategies for our youngest learners (space, group size, qualification of staff, play based and developmentally-appropriate practice, learning standards, etc.)?
- And other questions or issues that may come up in the Implementation Taskforce discussions/meetings.

Extra Notes/Comments for Committee and LGF Mtg and moving forward:

It has been a long week and I'm a little frustrated. Please bear with me for just a few minutes so I can at least share our thinking on this and a possible resolution. All four of our associations (VTNEA, VPA, VSA, VSBA) have the same view that we can do this now with 4 year olds. I'm using the motto of former Commissioner of Education David Wolk from Rutland, talk straight and tell the truth.

1. Too unwieldy a task force with too broad a scope and we can't agree to that
2. It is a recipe to do nothing and too far from the concept of 4 year olds in public schools as was introduced in S.56
3. We believe the question isn't whether to do it but how to do it and how to effectively do it in terms of four year olds in public schools
4. We need full ADM pupil weighting for full day Prek right now as part of the bill, we should be rewarding school districts like Winooski that are doing the right thing in an area where they don't have private early childhood providers available. We are hurting some of our poorest communities by not providing this financial support that is being provided in a public school by public school teachers.
5. My assignment was to work with the other V's to make this happen and I was told we were all on the same page to make this happen. Let's Grow Kids is an advocacy group with a mission, we get that but we are advocating for the right thing for kids here. No more waiting lists for 4 year olds. We strongly believe this will positively affect the entire state and will long term help private programs as well - in places where this has occurred they haven't seen private businesses close, in fact, in Windsor Central they have seen two new businesses open. We

have superintendents that are ready to testify to this. Unfortunately, their testimony was canceled and not rescheduled and that should happen.

6. We did Kindergarten decades ago and we know more now than we ever knew then. Public schools with licensed early educators is the place for our Vermont 4 year olds, optional to parents of course, some schools are already doing this; let's give them full 1.0 ADM and let's make it an expectation with a clear timeline.
7. All of our organizations VTNEA, VPA, VSA, VSBA are fully supportive of significant increases in CCFAP which funds can be used for the private preK programs. We can almost immediately take care of 4 year olds not getting access to high quality educational developmentally appropriate experiences - to not move forward on this is a failure to our students. The same old same old process isn't working. It is time to disrupt the system. The questions in this study committee concept here were supposed to be answered by Act 166, here we are 7 years later; let's get these kids into public schools with licensed teachers, with health benefits, and with retirement benefits who are appropriately trained and compensated for full day school-based programs for our four year old children. It will help the entire state economically in the short term and in the long run.
8. This is the Senate Education Committee. This is good for Vermont students and positions us to have truly the best public education in the nation - worries about using education fund dollars to prop up private businesses should not be our main concern here; doing right by thousands of children should be.
9. Thus, if you want to do a full study committee to look at all aspects of early childhood programming: This is what the charge of the Committee should be:

How to expand UPK to **ensure** best child outcomes – including all options for expansion – **AND** an implementation plan to move 4-year olds into public schools.

Example from Oklahoma.

<https://www.glenpoolps.org/schools/elementary/PreK%20Guide%20for%20Oklahoma%20Families.pdf>