

MIND THE GAP

Data Asset and Gap Analysis Series: Report 1

Vermont's Universal Prekindergarten Education Law, Act 166

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Measuring what matters isn't easy. And there's truth in that familiar quote: "What gets measured gets done." Acquiring data and developing new metrics in priority areas is important. It is especially important if "we want to learn in real time, maintain accountability, manage by results, continuously improve quality, and assess impact."¹ Data informs our essential questions about how our children, families, and communities are doing.

The purpose of this data asset and gap analysis series is to discover data that are available to answer essential questions, identify their strengths and limitations, determine what data are important but not available, and to develop realistic strategies to bridge these data gaps. This analysis gives us a better understanding of the relevance and impact of any early childhood data gaps identified. It helps support discussions within and across agencies, organizations, and communities on how to bridge data gaps and sustain data assets.

Mind the Gap is Building Bright Future's (BBF) first data asset and gap analysis report in a series that will address essential questions related to child, family, and community well-being. BBF's Vermont Insights (vermontinsights.org) will keep this information in an online data catalogue as part of its publicly accessible early childhood data reporting system. This data catalogue is a dynamic and constantly evolving public resource. It is a collaborative tool to help us all mind the data gap.

The information in this report supports the work of Vermont's 2014 Early Childhood Action Plan (buildingbrightfutures.org) and the measures of progress for each of its six goals/results:

1. All children have a healthy start.
2. Families and communities play a leading role in children's well-being.
3. All children and families have access to high-quality opportunities that meet their needs.
4. Vermont invests in prevention and plans for the future success of children.
5. Data and accountability drive progress in early childhood outcomes.
6. The early childhood system is innovative and integrated across sectors in order to better serve children and families.

It also supports the work of Vermont's Early Learning Challenge (ELC) grant and its focus on the use of data. ELC is designed to strengthen the systems that support early learning and development with the overall goal to improve school readiness for children with high needs. A coordinated, integrated, 21st-century early learning data system is a foundation for these systems.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this specific data asset and gap analysis report is to present and interpret the existing data assets and gaps of Vermont's new universal prekindergarten (pre-K) education policy, Act 166. More information on Act 166 can be found at both the Agency of Education (education.vermont.gov), Agency of Human Services, Department for Children and Families, Child Development Division (dcf.vermont.gov/cdd), and Building Bright Futures websites (buildingbrightfutures.org). Children three, four, and five years old and not enrolled in kindergarten will be referred to as pre-K eligible children.

The results of our analysis indicate that while Vermont has a number of pre-K data assets, it also has some significant data gaps. There are two primary reasons for these gaps. First, some of the needed data are contained on "data islands" and are not connected. Second, some data are just not collected.

A six-step process is used by Vermont Insights to conduct data asset and data gap analysis reports. Key stakeholders and data stewards are involved in each step. In this report, six strategies are identified under Step 5 to bridge data gaps and sustain data assets identified in this report.

WHERE TO START?

An important first step is asking well-articulated questions about policies, programs, practice, and initiatives that matter to a wide range of audiences.

SIX-STEP PROCESS

Step 1: Confirm the question(s) asked, by whom, and its alignment across stakeholder groups.

An important first step is asking well-articulated questions about policies, programs, practices, and initiatives that matter to a wide range of audiences. Vermont's universal pre-K law, Act 166, crafted by legislators representing their constituents, asks for specific data (see box on page 4) that, for the purpose of this report, are translated into four major questions:

1. Are pre-K eligible children spending 10 hours or more per week for 35 weeks during a school year in prequalified pre-K education programs?
2. Are pre-K eligible children enrolled in prequalified pre-K education programs school-ready and proficient in numeracy and literacy when entering kindergarten?
3. What is the number of prequalified pre-K education programs and their capacity to serve pre-K eligible children?
4. What is the financial investment made to ensure access to prequalified pre-K education programs for 10 hours or more per week?

These four questions align with many of the ten essential questions early childhood stakeholders articulated in the development of Vermont's early childhood integrated data reporting data system (now called Vermont Insights), such as:

- Are our young children achieving optimal health and development?
- What is the relationship between attendance in various early care and education programs and children's success in life during their school years?
- Are we investing our early childhood dollars wisely?

More information on these ten essential questions can be found at vermontinsights.org/questions/topic-early-childhood.

Each of the four questions asked in Act 166 can be broken down further into sub-questions for more specificity. Here are a few examples:

Essential question: Are pre-K eligible children spending 10 hours per week or more in prequalified pre-K education programs?

Essential sub-questions:

- What is the number of pre-K eligible children by age and town?
- What is the unduplicated count of children served by age and school?

THE PROCESS

Step 1: Confirm the question(s) asked, by whom, and its alignment across stakeholder groups

Step 2: Determine what types and levels of data are needed to answer the essential questions.

Step 3: Search existing data systems and sources that may have the necessary data elements and identify new data under development.

Step 4: Identify, analyze, and catalog data assets and gaps.

Step 5: Recommend strategies to bridge data gaps and sustain data assets.

Step 6: Communicate report findings and support discussions on strategy. Evaluate if data gap is addressed.

- What prequalified pre-K education programs (by name, town, school) do these children attend?
- What are the hours of attendance for each child?

LIST OF DATA NEEDED, exactly as named in Act 166, for monitoring, evaluation and reporting purposes. At a minimum it shall include:

Programmatic Information

- Number of children (unduplicated) served by age year
- Number of private and public pre-K education programs (unduplicated)
- Public financial investment made to ensure access to quality prekindergarten education
- Possible new district “prekindergarten education regions” (based on availability of qualified prekindergarten education providers, commuting patterns, and other region-specific criteria)

Programmatic Quality Information

- Quality of public and private pre-kindergarten education programs to ensure continuous quality improvements through mentoring, technical assistance
- Establish a process for documenting the progress of children enrolled in prekindergarten education programs to help individualize instruction and improve program practice
- Child outcomes
- Collect and report child progress data to the Agency of Education (AOE)
- School readiness and proficiency in numeracy and literacy

Step 2: Determine what types and levels of data are needed to answer the essential questions.

We refer to Step 2 of this process as unpacking the question. It requires the involvement of key stakeholders and data stewards to assure a comprehensive (child, family and community) response to the questions. It includes a review of both available data collections and desired but not yet available data. When unpacking the universal pre-K questions, the list below represents a snapshot of some essential data elements that would be needed to address the four essential questions listed in Step 1:

- Unique statewide child ID
- Child’s age
- Child’s town of residence
- Name of pre-K education program the child attends
- Unique statewide pre-K education program ID
- Town/city where pre-K education program is located
- Name of child’s school
- Unique statewide school ID (town/city school district)

- Unique statewide supervisory union or supervisory district ID
- School's academic school year start and end dates
- Enrollment start and end dates for each child who receives public funding for pre-K (Act 166)
- Hours of attendance for each child who receives public funding for pre-K (Act 166)

An important feature of this process is to capture the level for each data element. These include:

- Child-level (e.g. enrollment and attendance data)
- Teacher or service provider-level (e.g. education and licensure data)
- Program-level (e.g. early care and education program data)
- Organization and community-level (e.g. school, supervisory union/district, town/city or county data)

If a relationship between data elements at one or more levels is needed to answer the questions, then each level must have a consistent and standardized unique identification system. This allows for successful linkage of data within and between systems. For example, if child level attendance data collected at the local school supervisory union/district and reported in the school census to AOE used the unique ID assigned by Agency of Human Services (AHS) to all regulated care and education programs in Vermont (school-operated, Head Start and private), then data from AOE and AHS could be linked to map exactly where and what programs are serving children enrolled in pre-K. This would eliminate the issue of data islands described earlier.

Step 3: Search existing data systems and sources that may have the necessary data elements and identify new data under development.

There are three major organizational sources of pre-K data: Agency of Education (AOE), Agency of Human Services (AHS), and Head Start (seven individual agencies).

AOE has four separate child-level data sets with data elements. While they are not connected, they do share an AOE student-level unique ID so they can be linked. These datasets will be included in the K-12 Statewide Longitudinal Data System (SLDS) in 2017. The K-12 State Longitudinal Data System, (SLDS), currently under development and funded by Vermont's federal Early Learning Challenge grant will start to integrate the following four datasets already collected and maintained by AOE and a fifth dataset, a non-AOE dataset, collected and maintained by each of Vermont's seven Head Start Agencies:

- Pre-K enrollment and attendance data
- EEE (IDEA Part B, 619) data
- Kindergarten Readiness Survey data
- Teaching Strategies Gold data
- Early Head Start-Head Start enrollment and attendance data

ON DATA CONSISTENCY

Successful linkage of data within and between systems relies on a consistent and standardized unique identification system for each level.

AHS has an integrated data system, named Bright Futures Information System (BFIS), with four distinct data sets that use a set of BFIS unique ids that link data across child, family, program and community levels. Currently, this system does not include a program's participation in publicly funded pre-K. Enrollment and attendance data is limited to children who receive publicly funded child care financial assistance (subsidy).

AHS is developing an integrated child and family early intervention and prevention data system for its Children's Integrated Services (CIS.) Data on the approximately 5000 CIS clients served is currently kept manually by the service providers. The new data system will include integrated data on early childhood developmental, mental health, and family support services to pregnant women and children from birth to age six and their families. It will link with the Department of Vermont Health Access (DVHA) Medicaid Management Information System (MMIS) Care Management project to move CIS data collection and reporting into the web-based system being built to support the work of the Chronic Care Initiative. Both the Chronic Care Initiative and CIS need a case management system that allows tracking of individual clients as well as the ability to look at population-based indicators. The MMIS Care Management system will be developed to meet the needs of both programs.

Head Start agencies have a comprehensive child, family, teacher, program and community level data system that follows national Head Start federal data definitions and reporting requirements. However, each is a data island that reports aggregated data federally but not across the seven programs or to the State. The seven Vermont Head Start Agencies use four different data systems:

- PROMIS (NEKCA, SEVCA/Windsor County)
- PROMIS 12 (Capstone Central VT HS)
- Child Plus (Champlain Valley, EES, UCS)
- CAP60 (RCHS)

Through the Early Learning Challenge Race to the Top (ELC-RTT) grant, enrollment and attendance data will be included in the K-12 SLDS in 2017.

Vermont Head Start State Collaboration Office (VHSSCO) annually surveys the seven Head Start grantees about their pre-K partnerships. The VHSSCO shares this aggregated survey data with AOE and BBF SAC.

At this time there is no AOE and AHS interagency exchange of data specific to publicly funded pre-K education programs. However, with the implementation of Act 166, plans are underway to include data on prequalified pre-K education programs in BFIS. The data source will be application for recognition as a prequalified prekindergarten program submitted to both AOE and AHS.

HEAD START DATA SYSTEMS

The seven Vermont Head Start Agencies use four different data systems:

- PROMIS (NEKCA, SEVCA/Windsor County)
- PROMIS 12 (Capstone Central VT HS)
- Child Plus (Champlain Valley, EES, UES)
- CAP60 (RCHS)

AHS and AOE have exchanged the following early childhood data:

- Part C (birth to three) of Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) (CIS – Early Intervention) and Part B (three to school entry), Section 619 of IDEA (Early and Essential Education – EEE) using the AOE student unique ID and following the privacy and FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act) rules.
- AHS’s Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF, Reach-Up) is used for direct certification in AOE for children to participate in the National School Lunch program
- Aggregated state and Head Start grantee-level data about Head Start-LEA pre-k partnerships (see the Vermont Head Start State Collaboration Office, CDD, DCF, AHS report at vermontheadstart.org/FINAL%20Status_of_Head_Start-Pre-Kindergarten_Partnerships_in_Vermont_and_Nationally.pdf.)

Step 4: Identify and analyze data assets and gaps.

This step is organized into four parts: child-level, program-level, teacher-level and community-level data. Each part has two or three key data issues identified with a brief summary of findings on their data assets and gaps.

CHILD LEVEL DATA

I. Unique statewide child-level ID system

A unique statewide child identifier is a single, nonduplicated number that is assigned to and remains with a child throughout participation in care and education programs and services and across key databases. The child identifier remains consistent even if the child moves or enrolls in different services within a state. A child identifier allows the state to track progress of each child over time, throughout the early childhood years, and across programs and sites within the state to improve the coordination and provision of services.

Data Asset: All children who receive publicly funded (Act 166) pre-K tuition, regardless of the setting (school operated, Head Start and private) have a statewide AOE student unique ID. This ID is used throughout their K-12 years. The AOE can provide an unduplicated count of children enrolled in pre-K (Act 166) through their K-12 years regardless of whether they attend a school-operated, Head Start or private pre-K education program (Act 166). It can also provide an unduplicated count of children receiving Early and Essential Education (EEE,) special education services for children age three through kindergarten entry.

THE STRUCTURE OF STEP FOUR

Child-level data

- I. Unique statewide child-level ID system
- II. Child-level program participation data
- III. Financial data
- IV. Child outcomes data

Program-level data

- I. Unique statewide program site identifier with the ability to link with children and teachers
- II. Program site quality data

Teacher-level data

- I. Statewide unique workforce identifier with ability to link to program sites and children
- II. Teacher characteristics

Community-level data

- I. Early care and education capacity to serve pre-K eligible children
- II. Demand for pre-K education programs

Data Gap: Vermont is not able to produce an unduplicated count of pre-K children who participate in other early childhood programs beyond their 10+ hours of pre-K (Act 166) experience. For many children, the reality is they spend more than 10 hours per week in a care and education program. It is not unusual for a child to attend more than one program during the same time period (e.g., a program may operate three days per week and the family needs care and education five days per week) or move from one program to another during their pre-K years (e.g. a program may close.) It is important to also note that Vermont does not have a unique statewide child-level ID system across all early childhood sectors such as health and human services in addition to care and education.

II. Child-level program participation (enrollment and attendance) data

A well-defined enrollment and attendance data collection system combined with a unique statewide child ID used across care and education programs and communities would allow Vermont to track enrollment, attendance, and developmental progress (e.g. Teaching Strategies Gold).

Data Asset: AOE has nearly 10 years of pre-K child-level enrollment data available. It is collected in the Fall Census at the school level and reported to AOE. These data are stored with other K-12 student census data in the Education Data Warehouse. These data are made publicly available on the AOE website's enrollment report (education.vermont.gov/data) and are organized by individual school, supervisory union/district and county. The data can be downloaded in multiple formats, including csv (comma separated values) format, a text file type that can be opened in Microsoft Excel.

Data Gap: These data do represent all children enrolled in pre-K (including EEE) but do not include the age breakdown by single year of age. Pre-K attendance and absence (excused and not excused) data is collected as days per week, not hours per week, and collected in the Spring Census at the school level. It is not made publicly available on the AOE website. Because the data collected does not align with the attendance question asked, 10+ hours per week, and is only reported once a year, it would be difficult to get a precise answer to the question of how many hours pre-K children are attending a pre-K education program (Act 166.) It would be possible for AOE to estimate the number of hours per week using the existing measurement, but as mentioned previously, it would only be available annually. Both Head Start and the Child Care Financial Assistance Program (AHS) have well-defined enrollment and attendance data collection systems that could serve as models for the pre-K education program.

III. Financial data

Prior to Act 166, a statewide or regional tuition rate per child for pre-K was not set, nor was this financial data made available statewide. With Act 166, the Agencies of Education and Human Services will jointly develop a process to determine a statewide rate for 10 hours of prekindergarten for 35 weeks. On September 16, 2014, the State Board of Education decided to use the

DATA GAP

Because the data collected does not align with the attendance question asked, it would be difficult to get a precise answer to the question of how many hours pre-K children are attending a pre-K program.

National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER) cost estimation model developed by the Institute for Women’s Policy Research and Early Childhood Policy Research.² This cost estimation model may lead to a more standardized collection of financial data as well as making that data more publicly accessible to answer the question: What is the financial investment made to ensure access to prequalified pre-K education programs for 10 hours or more per week?

Data Asset: The April 2014 Head Start Collaboration Office Report, “Status of Head Start Pre-Kindergarten Partnerships in Vermont and Nationally,” provides some insight on the exchange of financial resources between schools and supervisory unions/districts and Head Start Agencies. This includes payment of tuition per child (this varies greatly by Head Start Agency) and lump sum payments from schools predominantly to help raise Head Start teacher salaries so that they are closer to the early education teacher salaries paid by school districts.

Data Gap: There is not a streamlined process for collecting children’s budget information in general. However, with the State enhancing its financial data system, in the next two to three years there should be the capacity to generate early childhood budget information, including universal pre-K education financial data.

IV. Child outcomes (developmental progress) data

As with any data use, Vermont needs to ensure that the data collected are appropriate, valid, and reliable, using scientifically sound instruments. Collecting developmental data from multiple sources (e.g., observations and ratings by teachers, collecting samples of children’s work, and parent questionnaires) and assessing multiple skills, including social-emotional, physical, cognitive and linguistic development, and approaches to learning over time increases the validity of the findings.

Data Asset: Child-level developmental progress data are collected by AOE at three developmental periods (pre-K, kindergarten and grade 3) using three different assessment tools. These are Teaching Strategies Gold (pre-K), Kindergarten Readiness Survey (kindergarten), and the Smarter Balanced English Language Arts (ELA) and Mathematics Assessments which will replace Vermont’s New England Common Assessment Program (NECAP) in the Spring of 2015 (grade 3.) All these tools use the AOE student unique ID. The Kindergarten Readiness Survey was the last to include the student ID in school year 2012–13, so developmental progress of children in pre-K can be explored from a longitudinal perspective from 2011–12 forward.

Data Gap: While these data are in place, there has not been any formal analysis of individual children’s progress over this developmental period, pre-K to Grade 3. Vermont’s Early Learning Challenge grant identified the need for a comprehensive assessment system of developmentally appropriate assessments of children from infancy through Grade 3 as a gap. By 2017 it expects to have a plan in place to address this gap.

ON DATA COLLECTION FOR CHILD OUTCOMES

Vermont needs to ensure that the data collected are appropriate, valid, and reliable, using scientifically sound instruments. Collecting developmental data from multiple sources and assessing multiple skills increases the validity of the findings.

PROGRAM-LEVEL DATA

I. Unique statewide program site identifier with the ability to link with children and teachers

Using a program site identifier to identify and map pre-K education program sites can provide policymakers at the state and local level important information with regard to supply, choice, and use of pre-K education programs. It also provides the ability to link data with staff and the children they serve to better understand the relationships among the site (e.g., ages of children served) and staff characteristics (e.g., staff qualifications), child program participation, and child outcomes to inform policy decisions.

Data Asset: AOE has a unique ID for its schools and supervisory unions/districts that is linked to the child. However, AOE does not have a unique program site ID. AHS does have a program unique ID assigned to all regulated care and education programs (school-operated, Head Start and private programs) in its Bright Futures (child care) Information System (BFIS.)

Data Gap: AOE does not use this AHS program unique ID. Therefore, data are not available to provide a statewide list of pre-K education programs by name, town, or program type (public or private). AOE conducted surveys of all publicly funded programs statewide in 2010 and 2014 (not yet published). This survey is not done yearly and is a time-consuming process as currently structured.

II. Program site quality data

Program quality data for pre-K education programs includes national accreditation, Vermont's quality rating and improvement system (STARS), and teacher qualifications.

Data Asset: There are nearly nine years of verified program-level quality data (STARS and national accreditation) housed in the AHS's BFIS for all regulated home and center based programs, including school-operated and Head Start programs.

Data Gap: This database is not linked with AOE's data. A pre-K education program must meet specific requirements to be qualified for public funding through Act 166, including having a four- or five-star level or three stars with an approved plan to achieve four or more stars in a specified time frame. The program must also have a licensed teacher with either an early childhood or early childhood special education endorsement. Prior to Act 166 and under Act 62, these same requirements were reviewed and data stored at the local school district or supervisory union/ district level and not reported and aggregated at the state AOE level or connected with AHS's BFIS.

ON UNIQUE ID

Coordinated and integrated state early childhood data systems that include a unique statewide workforce identifier would help Vermont better understand information about the adults caring for children.

TEACHER-LEVEL DATA

I. Statewide unique workforce identifier with ability to link to program sites and children

Coordinated and integrated state early childhood data systems that include a unique statewide workforce identifier would help Vermont better understand information about the adults caring for children. This workforce includes teachers, assistant teachers, aides, master teachers, educational coordinators and directors, as well as other individuals who care for and educate young children.

Data Asset: AOE has a teacher licensure data base that includes early childhood and early childhood special education credential data.

Data Gap: This data is not linked to a teacher's place of employment, whether it be a school-operated, Head Start or private pre-K education program or K-12 school.

II. Teacher characteristics

With unique statewide workforce identifier and workforce characteristics, Vermont would have longitudinal workforce data connecting teachers to the programs in which they work and to the children they serve. The result will be a better understanding of the relationships among the workforce, program site characteristics, the quality of services, and child outcomes.

Data Asset: There are nearly three years of verified teacher-level education, licensure, and credentialing information data housed in the AHS's BFIS that uses a unique statewide workforce identifier that links with program sites. AOE has a longstanding teacher licensure database with credential information.

Data Gap: The program site data does not include whether the program is a pre-K education Act 166) program. The program site data in AHS's BFIS does not include enrollment data for all children in regulated care and education. It includes enrollment data only for children receiving a child care subsidy, but the teacher and child data are not linked. The AOE teacher licensure database collects some of the same data as the AHS BFIS workforce data but is not linked.

COMMUNITY-LEVEL DATA

With community-level data, Vermont can assess and monitor universal access with a particular focus on the supply and demand equation.

I. Early care and education capacity to serve pre-K eligible children

Note that capacity to serve is tied to the qualified pre-K provider criteria: a four or five star level or three stars with an approved plan to achieve four or more stars in a specified time frame and a licensed teacher with either an early childhood or early childhood special education endorsement.

Data Asset: The AHS BFIS has a proxy measure of the capacity of child care and education programs by age groups: infant, toddler, pre-school and school-age. Programs self-report and update their desired capacity and waiting list by age groups. This data is available at the town level and can be aggregated by the school or supervisory union/school district level for 2013 and onwards. This data system includes the program's STARS level but does not include data on the licensed teacher criteria.

Data Gap: There is no direct measure of the capacity of early care and education programs (school-operated, Head Start and private programs) to provide pre-K education services. Vermont early care and education programs do not report their enrollment data to AHS except for children enrolled and receiving public funding/subsidy through the Child Care Financial Assistance program. The BFIS data system does not include data on the licensed teacher criteria. This data is collected at the school and/or supervisory union/district levels.

DATA GAP

There is no universal or timely measure of parents' and families' demand for early care and education programs, their preferences for type and location at the individual child-level, or their commuting patterns.

II. Demand for pre-K education programs

Data Asset: Community child care resource and referral agencies located in all areas of the state provide child care referral services and collect information on need and preferences for people who call for information. They also do follow-up surveys to determine if families were successful in finding a program. Typically, an emphasis has been placed on more difficult types of care and education programs to access, such as infant and toddler programs and programs that serve children with special needs. This data collection system could be tailored to collect valuable pre-K education program demand and access/use of pre-K education programs of parents' choice.

Data Gap: There is no universal or timely measure of parents' and families' demand for early care and education programs, their preferences for type and location at the individual child-level, or their commuting patterns.

Data Asset: A handful of supervisory unions/districts are members of the New England School Development Council that offers its members annual enrollment projections.

Data Gap: There are no reliable Vermont population estimates at the town level by single year of age between decennial census years, so it is difficult to determine an accurate number of potential pre-K enrollment each year. In addition, Vermont, unlike most other states, does not produce population projections. This leaves local policymakers on their own to devise approaches to determine each year how many pre-K children live in their catchment area.

Step 5: Recommended strategies to bridge data gaps and sustain data assets.

The following six strategies build upon the partnerships and collective work of the early childhood system to sustain its data assets and bridge its data gaps. These current and future data will assist policymakers, practitioners and parents to successfully monitor the intended outcomes of Vermont’s universal pre-K policy.

Strategy 1: Agency of Education, Agency of Human Services, and Head Start develop a shared unique statewide ID system at the child, teacher, and program level. This could serve as the model to develop a shared unique statewide ID system that starts at birth and includes health, care, and education.

Strategy 2: Agency of Education, Agency of Human Services, and Head Start develop a common definition and data collection system for enrollment and attendance using the Head Start and CCFAP models as a starting place and looking to the national Common Education Data Standards for guidance.

Strategy 3: Agency of Education and Agency of Human Services create a shared searchable data base, linked to or using BFIS that captures all current and future pre-K requirements information. Create an AOE, AHS and BBF data sharing agreement to make publicly available, through Vermont Insights, prequalified pre-K education program data in easy to use interactive charts, tables and maps. All shared data would comply with federal and state education and privacy laws (e.g., Family Educational and Rights Privacy Act: FERPA).

Strategy 4: Early childhood stakeholders collaboratively design effective and sustainable options to obtain parent information on their care and education program needs and preferences for pre-K education programs. This can be accomplished through an ongoing mechanism or consider a new data collection survey for parents.

Strategy 5: Building Bright Futures and early childhood data stewards work together to determine what solutions may be viable to address community data gaps, such as pre-K enrollment projections.

Strategy 6: Early childhood financing stakeholders work with the Governor’s Chief Performance Officer (CPO), the AHS and AOE CFOs to identify the early childhood finance data and reports (that includes universal pre-K) that can be obtained from the Department of Finance and Management’s new data system.

WHY MIND THE GAP?

Identifying and addressing data gaps can help inform questions that matter to a wide range of audiences. More comprehensive data can be used to make better decisions, develop greater appreciation and understanding, and gain insights for action.

Step 6: Communicate report findings and support discussions on strategy. Evaluate if data gap is addressed.

This report will be shared with the BBF Data and Evaluation Committee, Vermont Insights stakeholders, as well as AHS, AOE, and Head Start program directors, and data stewards. It will also be brought to the new early childhood data governance council once formed in early 2015. Vermont Insights will evaluate the progress made on the proposed strategies and present the findings for discussion in one year at the December 2015, BBF Data and Evaluation Committee meeting and Early Childhood Data Governance Council meeting.

CONCLUSION

Identifying and addressing data gaps can help inform questions that matter to a wide range of audiences. More comprehensive data can be used to make better decisions, develop greater appreciation and understanding, and gain insights for action. Today's commitment and focus by diverse stakeholders on the successful implementation of Act 166 provides an excellent opportunity to address the critical data gaps in a systematic and sustainable way. Through a shared organizational data development agenda and plan, the 2018 legislative session can have the data needed to evaluate the results of Act 166. In addition, Vermont's early childhood system's vision to integrate and use early childhood data to track child, family and community well-being will help stimulate dialogue and knowledge gathering in order to inform policy and investments so that children's health, development, and learning flourish.

Endnotes

1. Lisbeth B. Schorr and Frank Farrow. (July 2011.) *Expanding the Evidence Universe: Doing Better by Knowing More*. Center for the Study of Social Policy.
2. The NIEER model looks at pre-K programs having teachers with Bachelor's degrees, programs of varying length (3, 6, and 9 hours), and varying class sizes (15, 17, and 20 students) for 185 days per year. When adjusted for Vermont specific cost-of-living adjustments (provided by NIEER) and 10 hours per week for 35 weeks, the costs were \$3,315 for a class of 15 students, \$3,053 for a class of 17, and \$2,757 for a class of 20, with the average of the three being \$3,042. The average was rounded to \$3,000 based on estimated class size.

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