

BARRE SUPERVISORY UNION DISTRICT #61

Barre City Elementary and
Middle School

Barre Town Middle and
Elementary School

Central Vermont Career Center

Spaulding High School

John Pandolfo
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*Doing whatever it takes to ensure
success for every child.*

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To: The House Education Committee
From: John Pandolfo, Superintendent, Barre Supervisory Union
Date: January 13, 2017
Re: Act 166 Testimony

Thank you for hearing my testimony, again, on behalf of the Barre Supervisory Union. When I say “we” below I am speaking on behalf of my supervisory union. In summary we support the recommendations made by the Vermont Superintendent’s Association and Vermont Council of Special Education Administrators, and I will add some specific recommendations based on our experience on the ground in Barre. I will also say that: (1) we absolutely support the intent and goals of Universal Pre-Kindergarten under Act 166; (2) we acknowledge and appreciate all the hard work that thousands of individuals across the state have put into the Act 166 implementation effort; and (3) we make recommendations with the intent to help improve Universal Pre-Kindergarten for the children of Vermont.

1) Single Agency Oversight – We support the recommendation that the Agency of Education administer all aspects of the PreK delivery system. Specifically:

- Many of the issues raised in my January 13 testimony were not directly related to statute, but to the rules developed to implement the statute. The Agency of Education understands how education and public schools function and is best able to develop and implement those rules. Dual agency oversight, in my opinion, is what has made implementation cumbersome. Two examples of this are:
 - Issues with program licensing
 - Issues with Criminal Record Checks

2) PreK Region and Partnership Arrangements - We support the recommendation that Supervisory Unions/Single School Districts, through actions of their governing boards, determine PreK regions and partnership arrangements with qualified private providers and public schools. Specifically, we recommend:

- Supervisory Union/Supervisory District/Union District boundaries become the default boundaries for Geographic Regions unless:
 - There is insufficient capacity within those boundaries for the eligible PreK students of the SU/SD/UD
 - The SU/SD/UD chooses to enlarge the Geographic Region because they determine this decision offers educational advantages for their students.
- The “approval” process for Geographic Regions is eliminated, or at least simplified.

3) Affordability and Access for the Most Vulnerable Vermonters - We support the recommendation for further exploration in this area. While we believe in the goal of universal access, we want to be sure the system in place is not biased against those most in need. Secretary Holcombe indicated recently that data will soon be available to help determine whether voucher funds equitably serve students and families in need. Additionally and specifically, we recommend:

- Limiting tuition payments for any student to two years unless a formal determination is made that student is not ready for Kindergarten (i.e.; IEP Team determination). [16 VSA 829 (a) (1)]

4) Clarify that Public Schools can Assess for Services in Excess of 10 hours - We support the recommendation that school districts be allowed to assess for services provided in excess of ten hours within school based programs. I have no specific recommendations here.

In closing, I will restate what I stated on January 13. In the Barre Supervisory Union, we are proud of the work that we have done to put a strong PreK program in place. We believe we have been successfully addressing the goals of Act 166 since before the act even existed. We also believe that compliance with the act as it currently exists hinders us from continuing to achieve those goals. We strongly believe that the recommendations presented today will help to further achieve the goals of Universal Pre-Kindergarten in our supervisory union and at a statewide level.

Thank You!
John Pandolfo