

Considering your system, what is working well with respect to Act 166 implementation?

1. We have received CDD results quickly and efficiently. Most preschool partners and parents have been very understanding.
2. We have positive relationships with our preschool partners (and did have) prior to and after 166.
3. The three Addison Districts have collaborated closely to coordinate Universal PreK (UPK) programming throughout Addison County. Our three districts share a single UPK coordinator who works with leadership in each district and at each of our partner PreK program. This collaboration has been and will continue to be essential to the local success of Act 166. We have also increased collaboration and communication between the school districts and the PreK programs including participating in regular meetings to discuss relevant issues and sharing resources and opportunities around professional development. These efforts will strengthen early childhood education and the transition from PreK to Kindergarten over time.

What challenges is your system experiencing regarding Act 166 implementation?

1. We have over 45 preschool partners and Act 166 has taken up a significant amount of staff time. Preschool partners are unhappy with us as we ask them to follow the CDD or secondary dissemination process. We have also had a few parents who did not fill out the paperwork for Act 166 funding but expect the school district to pay the center retroactively. Clearly, there is much confusion for partners and parents around this and it seems to put school districts in awkward positions. Another big challenge is the St. Mike and UVM preschools. Getting college students who work in the centers to complete the CDD/secondary dissemination process has been challenging at best. To date, we still have centers who have not successfully completed the CDD or secondary dissemination process for employees who have been employed at the center since August.
2. We have not been able to pay providers in a timely manner based on the finger printing issues. This is a bigger challenge for small and privately owned centers than for the SU. Also, not good for continuing positive relationships and disconcerting to parents.
3. Processing the paperwork to coordinate 30+ programs and three school districts has been a very big challenge. Tracking residency to bill schools appropriately has been a lot of work. I believe this will get easier as we transition into a single budget as a newly unified district. In the coming years, as we build strong systems to support and track our PreK partnerships, some of this burden will ease up, but the transition has been challenging. The BIGGEST challenge by far has been navigating the background check kerfuffle of this summer and fall. The conflicts between Act 166 and Title 16 have been well documented through various memos. These will need to be resolved before the start of a new school year.

What specific policy and/or implementation recommendations can you make to address each challenge?

1. none at this time
2. Clear up the fingerprinting and ECE Special Education / SU employees issues.
3. Background checks should be handled exclusively by the CDD, and it should be stated explicitly that PreK employees are supervised by directors of PreK programs, not school district administrators or designees. Supervisory unions and districts should be assured that all approved PreK programs have met CDD regulations and should not be required to document this information (including background check information) a second time. This is less pressing but may be helpful: Because our school district partners with other school districts and with private PreK programs far from home (currently as far away as an hour north and an hour south), we might benefit from common forms and documents (e.g., residency forms, UPK program enrollment forms, etc.) developed at the state level. We seem to spend a lot of energy creating common forms across districts. In some contexts, it would be nice if there were something official we could just adopt.

Please share any additional thoughts on Act 166 and its implementation overall

1. Many preschool partners are asking to use the Superintendent's license to obtain a provisional for one of their preschool teachers. Often times in order for the preschool to be approved for Act 166. They make a great case that if we allowed them to use a Superintendent's license that we would be saving parents funds. I am not sure why Superintendents should be asked, or put in this position for employees who we do not hire, supervise or evaluate. Seems like at some point Superintendent's should be more protected and supported.
3. High quality early childhood education is incredibly important, and I would be in favor of scaling up the program to offer more time in PreK to young students. However, the program as it ran this year is not sustainable. Thank you for taking the time to work toward improvements.

4. More educational services earlier in our children's lives should have a positive impact down the road.
5. Tracking students to insure that they are residents. Making sure that centers are compliant. Working on common curriculum and pd. Planning common family events.
6. The partnerships and the mindset with a focus on kids.

5. Supporting PK teachers in licensure. Oversight: there are cases where centers are compliant, but we have concerns about their practice. It's not our jurisdiction, but we are aware. Salary differentials are also a problem.
6. We built the capacity and access and now it is maintaining the access and building the quality programs and educational outcomes with the private programs.

4. I have no idea where VT is going to find the money for all our ideas and programs, but we do need additional funding to provide these services.
6. We had parents enroll with their local schools to access the tuition level rather than at the SU level. This has built relationships with the schools and parents and also the schools have the direct count.

4. I am not sure where Building Bright Futures fits in, but here in the Kingdom they seem disorganized and tough to get a hold of when needed.

Considering your system, what is working well with respect to Act 166 implementation?

7. What has worked well is that our partners have a sound understanding of the expectations of the law. They have years of experience in working with young children. We have enough slots for children of families seeking the pre-k experience.

8. The ten hours that is paid for is working well for families. Families have choice and can send their children anywhere. Preschool payments are working well.

What challenges is your system experiencing regarding Act 166 implementation?

7. The number one challenge this year is attracting and retaining qualified staff. There was an exceptional amount of turnover this year, and it is difficult to attract licensed teachers to early care and education programs where hours are longer and pay is lower than teaching in public school. Also, this year, all prequalified programs are competing for a small pool of licensed teachers. Fingerprinting through CDD was a change this year, and it was very messy. Programs did not fully understand how to access the appropriate paperwork. They have had difficulty getting their questions answered (especially in the beginning of the year). The result is that some fingerprints were sent in with the wrong paperwork. Some fingerprints have been lost. There is a significant lag time in getting clearances. The price to pay for the program and/or the school district is very heavy given the issues that we have experienced. Provisional licensure is not aligned with the new teaching licenses for early childhood education. There is no Praxis II for candidates seeking a provisional license for birth to six, yet it is required for all provisional license candidates who cannot meet the other two conditions for the license. Yet, we have a shortage of licensed teachers for this age group. A popular pathway to teacher licensure is peer review, however, AOE is looking for people to serve on its the peer review committee. The provisional licensure cohort has limited space. In Southern Vermont, the opportunities to take necessary coursework are difficult to find.

8. Background checks and fingerprints needing to be completed before paying vendors. The additional fingerprint check continues to be a nightmare and our preschool director continues to deal with this on a weekly basis. Every preschool has to have a licensed teacher in early education or early special education. In addition, the superintendent is responsible to ensure licensure for teachers that aren't even employees of the SU.

We don't hire the teachers and yet we are responsible for them. I gave an extension to

one preschool teacher that I now regret. If families don't qualify for child care subsidies it's difficult for families to access full-day programming. Teachers with the same license being paid differently. If employed by a school much higher rate of pay and better benefits. Providing EEE services and oversight for students that access programming at great distances. Our preschool director travels to Brattleboro, Woodstock, Springfield, South Londonderry and preschool within that region. Limited options for preschool in our region. Have had some students (3) kicked out of their preschools and we have no say over what happens. Preschools stated they didn't have enough staff to keep all students safe when other students had behavioral issues. No dedicated expert on Act 166 to access. Disconnect between Kindergarten and Preschool.

What specific policy and/or implementation recommendations can you make to address each challenge?

7. Changes in Policy: It behooves the State to explore ways to raise the pay level of pre-k teachers that is more in line with wages paid in public schools. Before incurring new regulations and requirements such as fingerprinting through CDD, State agencies need to develop ways to communicate clearly with each other and the public. Systems should have efficient processes and adequate staff for dealing with the implementation of new policy. Provisional licensure needs to be aligned with new endorsement areas. If peer review for a teaching license birth through six requires the passing of Praxis I, then it seems fair that provisional license should also allow the passing of Praxis I to meet the requirement. Since there is no Praxis II for this endorsement area, it seems appropriate that it is not expected that candidates for provisional licensure pass a Praxis II in an endorsement area that is not being sought. Paths to licensure need to be streamlined and abundant through the development of efficient systems, the offerings of more and affordable courses throughout the State that will apply to teacher licensure, and the expansion of the provisional licensure cohort should be considered (as examples)

8. One Agency needs to take on the oversight of Act 166, we recommend the AoE, with the staffing to provide expertise and guidance.

Please share any additional thoughts on Act 166 and its implementation overall

7. As system that already had effectively implemented Universal access, the 166 implementation failures at the state level have muddled relationships, expectations, and understandings between the district and its partners. District should absolutely not be left on the hook for student counts disputes on the heels of such failures.

8. We like that the families have choice. Our experience has been that the families care deeply and access our director to make an informed choice.

Considering your system, what is working well with respect to Act 166 implementation?

9. Our goals were as follows: A. Establish good, supportive, working relationships. B. Seek to understand how our partners work and what we might learn from them. C. Seek to support an effort toward the highest quality education we can. We are working on goal 3 currently. It is clear that one site's quality is not similarly defined elsewhere. The TSG standards are not widely understood or a point of focus. We are working to support PD, instructional methods, and targeted development of the social emotional skills outlined in TSG. "We're getting there." The biggest challenge for all may be securing licensed teachers, AND KEEPING THEM. Please see the research from Vanderbilt's Peabody school on quality pre-K. Also note the research out of Boston. See author David Kirp for effective policy.

10. The word is out and we have significantly increased the number of children in UPK. We have established 12 partnership agreements to assist us in serving our children from ARSU.

What challenges is your system experiencing regarding Act 166 implementation?

9. Capacity of providers. Selective providers. Varying quality. A focus that is more on economics than education.

10. One of the greatest challenges is that we do not have any eligible partner programs within our supervisory union boundaries. This creates a system in which students without disabilities have unlimited school choice and students with disabilities are restricted to the school-based program (or home, childcare based program) and services within the SU boundaries. The school district does not have the capacity to send staff to partner programs or to serve children outside of the SU boundaries.

What specific policy and/or implementation recommendations can you make to address each challenge?

9. Fully fund 4 year old Pre K in public schools. Expect providers who take public funds teach all children. Master teacher in each classroom. Make this a truly public education policy, not a band aid on economics for young families and childcare providers.

10. The law creates a divide between a preschool child and a preschool child with a disability and has established different rights for the two groups that may be viewed as discriminatory.

Please share any additional thoughts on Act 166 and its implementation overall

9. "We're getting there," but I am not sure Vermont is prepared to afford a seriously high quality approach.

11. Nothing really changed in the provision of a quality preschool program that our schools offer. I believe TS Gold and meeting the licensing and STAR standards did more to improve the quality of programming. Act 166 bottle necked the background check process, created animosity between private providers and public agencies and simply provided an avenue for public funds to go to private providers. It took public funding, time and attention of personnel away from public programs. Not sure I can speak to what went well.

12. Many preK students are able to access preK programs in a variety of locations convenient to parent schedules and work locations. WWSU already had an established preK partnership with private providers within our supervisory union. This law has simply added the voucher for parents, and expanded their choice for providers.

13. A) We have put systems in place to track our partner programs in terms of compliance with licensing and regs, CRCs, etc. B) We have been able to fill some open slots in our of our school (district) programs with students off the waiting list in one of our other school (district) programs and pay tuition for those students.

14. I cannot really identify anything is working well with Act 166.

11. Finalizing fingerprinting and adequately providing oversight to private provider in addition to my comments above.

12. A) No single organization in charge and guidance is vague and open to interpretation, adding legal costs to districts B) Not clear as to who is responsible for ensuring the law is followed C) Late notification about new 2016-2017 fingerprint requirements: Resulted in a backlog of verifying results D) Not all providers are applying the \$3092 as full tuition for 10 hours/week for 35 weeks- many providers keep a significant portion to cover their expenses rather than giving families the voucher. E) The number of universal preK State requirements makes it cost-prohibitive for providers to offer universal preK at the \$3092 per year. F) Poor communication between the State and the families about the law: G) ADM issues: Potentially this could result in a higher tax rate for all our taxpayers. H) Resource-Intensive I) Tracking students as parents switch centers to make sure they get the full voucher amount is labor intensive for HUUSD. J) Boundary Applications and Definitions/Process for Applying is still not worked out K) Assessment administration/Tracking and collection of the Assessment Data L) Supervision and Monitoring of the out-of-district sites: Capacity issues at the Supervisory Union. M) Special Education services for PK students attending various sites around the state: N) Discrimination issues: Students with disabilities only receive services in preK if they are attending a site within our Supervisory Unions. The SU is not obligated to provide services in the private centers and there is no capacity to do this. O) 10 hours of preK programming is not enough - many families need full day programs.

13. A) We are not serving the students who need it! The students we are paying tuition for are largely not the students who most need the education it and the families who

11. Add local school district funding to have the personnel to provide the coordination and oversight of the Act 166 oversight. Don't make Act 166 the public schools responsibility. The funding to private providers could be issued directly from the State through licensing. Take schools out of the middle of it.

12. A) One organization in charge, making the rules everyone must follow: This would eliminate inequities B) Require the AOE to be responsible for overseeing the Pre-school programs that are not in the public schools C) Designate one organization as the enforcer of the law: D) Designate which organization is responsible for supervision of sites E) Better communication and information for parents from the agencies about the law and what is entitled 6) Keep the voucher but require children to stay in the boundary of the SU: This would help the SUs and the providers spend less overhead on managing the process. F) Make the contract between the Agency of Education and the providers (similar to early college)

13. A) Allow systems with centralized Directors to oversee programs in separate buildings, even if the director is on site less than 60% of their time.

11. I certainly understand the intention of Act 166 and I support early education and increasing access however that is not what I believe happened. Implementation was a disaster. This was a bill written to access the education fund for the Agency of Human Services under the guise of increasing universal PreK. Did it? I have yet to see how many more children have been served. Most providers are at capacity, some schools may have expanded but they could have without Act 166. Unfortunately as long as the AOE and AHS are independent of one another with regard to early education and care with separate regulations there will always be a disconnect. Forming one agency for early education and care would streamline Universal PreK.

12. Act 166 is a good law that needs to be re-examined due to the above inequities and inefficiencies.

14. Very frustrating!

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What challenges is your system experiencing regarding Act 166 implementation?

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most need the financial support. B) We have a full-time Early Ed Director and struggle to keep up. That person does not feel she is able to sustain her effort. C) By the current regulations, we still will not be able to license our two programs under our centralized (SU) Director. While AHS earlier said we could work through the waiver process, now they are telling us we did NOT need to do that and we are set for this year, but next year we will need to name two 0.6FTE directors, one in each building, instead of using our centralized director. This fuels my director's belief that the job her bigger than one person.

14. Far too strict micromanagement of early education programs from the state. Regulations are too restrictive and demanding, thereby preventing local, private providers from wanting to enter into partner-agreements with school system.

No elementary principal who is serving as the director of a PreK program in their building is in that program more than 60% of their time when they have several other grades to administrate. B) Resolve the cumbersome CRC issue. It is unreasonable that PreK teachers are held to a different standard than K-12 teachers IF THEY ARE TO BE PART OF THE SAME SYSTEM. If they really need to meet different standards separate PreK from K-12.

14. Start over! If we are serious about early education, put it under the direct control of schools, and fund it accordingly.