

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback from the field. The proposed paradigm shift has us rethinking our current early education construct and imagining innovative solutions to very complex challenges. I'm aware of your request for a study on the costs, benefits, and feasibility of replacing prekindergarten education with a system that provides kindergarten education for children who are four or five years of age, and child care services for children who are age zero through age three. Below is a summary of initial feedback from early education colleagues, who consider children to be the most important stakeholders.

Benefits:

Focuses on equity and best practice by:

- Reducing transitions for children who may currently be attending more than one program each day;
- Providing all day programming to all children, not only those who have means to pay and those eligible for childcare subsidy;
- Preserving developmentally appropriate curriculum and instruction (through the VT Early Learning Standards);
- Providing educational equity, especially to children with special needs;
- Promoting a cohesive Kindergarten-grade 12 curriculum, instruction and assessment model;
- Supporting working families by providing access to funding for before- and after-school programming.

Reduces workload for Agency of Education by:

- Eliminating the need for provider contracts;
- Shifting burden of monitoring quality standards to School Boards and Superintendents;
- Simplifying rules and regulation (aligning with State Board of Education);
- Streamlining funding by eliminating the need for invoicing.

Concerns & Recommendations:

- Recommend a review of State Board of Education rules, to ensure best practices for our youngest learners;
- Consider language to specify Kindergarten-4 and Kindergarten-5, as the curriculum and instruction is unique to each group (eg: Common Core SS and Next Generation Science Standards apply at age five);
- Clarify that enrollment in Kindergarten is voluntary (until age 6);
- Consider that some School Districts may not capacity to serve all four-year-olds (from Bennington);
- Under Essential Early Education (EEE) or Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE):
 - Consider how to provide EEE services to three-year-old children as Special Ed regulations require inclusive settings (50% nondisabled children). School Districts could:
 - offer a EEE program for three-year-olds within kindergarten-4 for a portion of the program hours (10 of 35). Developmental needs could be quite different, however mixed age grouping is common practice now and teachers provide differentiation; and/or
 - serve three-year-olds within playgroups & visits to childcare programs within the SD boundary (this is costly, but similar the the current service delivery model).