



VERMONT PRINCIPALS' ASSOCIATION  
MEMO  
From the Desk of Jay Nichols

To: House Education Committee

Subject: Testimony Draft 1.1 Prekindergarten education

Date: February 27, 2018

Dear House Education Committee Members,

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify on the proposed legislative changes to Prekindergarten education.

Statement of Purpose:

- The VPA fully supports the elimination of joint Administration of Prekindergarten programs and further agrees that the appropriate lead regulator is the Agency of Education
- Moving the accounting and contracting functions from school districts to the Agency has the potential to ease burden on school districts and will allow for more statewide efficiency. We acknowledge that not all of our members support this move but we understand the state's interest in moving in this direction
- Making the quality criteria for prekindergarten providers as simple and clear as possible better limits issues of miscommunication and facilitates overall understanding for all stakeholders

On Page 2, I took the liberty of suggesting replacement language for (2) as follows:

“Prekindergarten education” means services and learning experiences for prekindergarten children that is developmentally appropriate and based on Vermont’s learning standards.

- We support the new language designed to better ensure the quality of private provider programs:
  - National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) accreditation or 4 STARS in the DCF system
  - Having a licensed/endorsed teacher on site during hours that are publicly funded
- We support the changes to public provider around providing district instruction during hours publicly funded, meeting State Board rules for safety and quality, and being supervised by a school district.
- We continue to have concerns about paying “tuition” on what is essentially a “voucher” that may be exacerbating the inequity that many of our neediest children are victim to. The lack of transportation options and the 10-hour minimal bar make it very difficult for our neediest and many of our working families to take advantage of prekindergarten programming. The current law was designed to help ensure better access to high quality programming for our poorest families and may actually be serving as a benefit more for families that do not need the services as much.
- Allowing schools to utilize the ADM formula for hours above the 10-hour minimum is a good move that will hopefully lead us to full day program options for children and families. If we really want to realize the tremendous promise early childhood education can bring for ALL of our children this is the direction in which we need to go. Additionally, not having a limit on the number of children that can be served is also a step in the right direction.
- Struggling with tuition vs. ADM. Administration split. In some places that have the space and ability to run full-day programs, or enroll a large number of students, they have actually lowered their per pupil costs. Losing ADM for the first 10 hours of preschool will be a financial hit for some of these schools that will negatively impact per pupil spending.
- Finally, high quality preschool programming is essential in Vermont if we truly want to be the “education state.” However, offering 10-hours of state paid prekindergarten programming, although perhaps a step in the right direction, does nothing to really address the gap between our wealthiest vs. or neediest children. And in fact, may make the problem worse.

Respectfully submitted,

Jay Nichols