

The Quality of Prekindergarten Education in Vermont

Response to 2014 Act 166 Sec 3(b)

REPORT

February 2017

Report to the:

House and Senate Committees on Education

House and Senate Committees on Appropriations

House Committee on Human Services

Senate Committee on Health and Welfare

Submitted by:

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Legislation

[Act 166 of 2014](#). *An act relating to providing access to publicly funded prekindergarten education.*

Introduction

In January of the 2016, 2017, and 2018 legislative sessions, the Agencies shall report to the House and Senate Committees on Education and on Appropriations, the House Committee on Human Services, and the Senate Committee on Health and Welfare regarding the quality of prekindergarten education in the State.

Act 166 of 2014 has an effective date for universal prekindergarten enrollments of July 1, 2015. The law was enacted on May 10, 2014. The implementation of the law required the promulgation of administrative rules by the Vermont State Board of Education and the timeline for adoption of the rules extended through September 2015. On November 25, 2014 an AOE/AHS memo was issued allowing school districts to choose to implement Act 166 as of July 1, 2015 or to wait one (1) year with full implementation July 1, 2016. Just under a third of school districts moved forward with implementing Act 166 in the 15/16 school year. The remaining school systems began implementing Act 166 in 16/17 school year.

Summary of Quality of Prekindergarten Education in Vermont

Act 166 Quality Standards include standards for both programs as well as qualified teachers. This report to the legislature covers both types of standards.

Program Standards

Act 166 Legislation and Rules require that a public school or private prekindergarten education program shall be considered prequalified only if it meets all of the following criteria:

1. The public or private program receives and maintains at least one of the following quality program recognition standards:
 - a. National accreditation through the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC);
 - b. A minimum of four stars in Vermont's Step Ahead Recognition System (STARS), with at least two points in each of the five arenas; or
 - c. Three stars in Vermont STARS if the program has a plan approved by the Commissioner for the Department for Children and Families and the Secretary of Education to achieve four or more stars within two years, including at least two points in each of the five arenas.
2. The public or private program is currently licensed or registered, as applicable, by the Department for Children and Families, and is in good regulatory standing;
3. The public or private program's curricula are aligned with the Vermont Early Learning Standards.

As of November 1, 2016:

368 Public and Private programs are prequalified to offer PreK

1. The map to the right shows where public and private PreK programs are located across five regions of the state.
2. 100% of prequalified programs met all of the Act 166 program criteria above.
3. 37.5% of prequalified programs are public schools (138).
4. 62.5% are private prequalified programs (230).
5. As represented in Table 1a below, all programs meet the program quality standards; only 12% have the lowest quality standard “3 Stars with a plan to get to 4 Stars”.

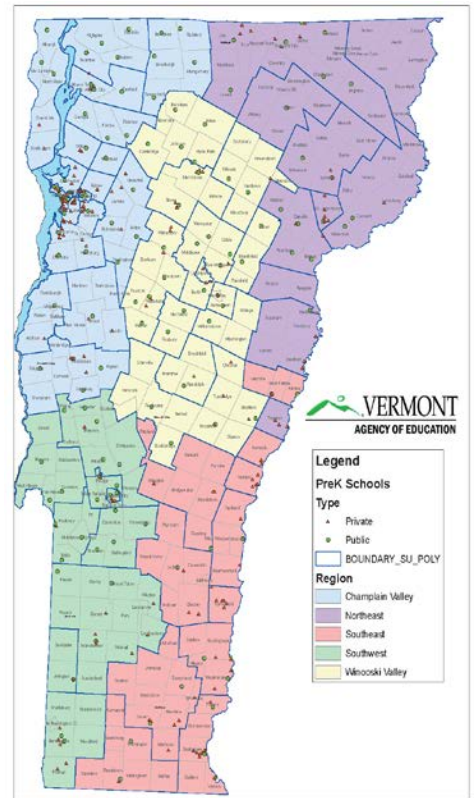


Table 1 a: Public and Private PreK Programs and STARS ratings as of November 1, 2016.

| NAEYC Accreditation 11% | 5 Stars, not accredited 41% | 4 Stars 36% | 3 Stars with approved plan 12% |
|--|--|--|--|
| 2 public school 38 private programs | 76 public schools 75 private programs | 47 public schools 87 private programs | 13 public schools 30 private programs |

Teacher Standards

Act 166 Legislation and Rules require staff in prequalified public and private prekindergarten education programs shall meet the following qualifications:

1. Teachers in each prekindergarten classroom in a district-operated prekindergarten education program shall hold a valid Vermont educator license with an endorsement in either early childhood education (ECE) or early childhood special education (ECSE);
2. Private prequalified prekindergarten education program operated in a licensed Center-Based Program shall employ, or contract for the services of, at least one teacher who holds a valid Vermont educator license with an endorsement in either ECE or ECSE. Ten hours that the licensed teacher is present shall coincide with the hours of prekindergarten education paid for by tuition from districts;
3. The operator of each registered or licensed Family Child Care Home approved as a prequalified prekindergarten education program shall ensure that one of the following requirements is met:
 - a. The operator holds a valid Vermont educator license with an endorsement in either ECE or ECSE; or
 - b. The operator employs or contracts with the services of a teacher who holds a valid

Vermont educator license with an endorsement in either ECE or ECSE for at least ten hours per week for 35 weeks annually. Ten hours that the licensed teacher is present shall coincide with the hours of prekindergarten education paid for by tuition from district; or

- c. The program receives regular, hands-on active training and supervision from a teacher who holds a valid Vermont educator license with an endorsement in either ECE or ECSE at least three hours per week, during each of the 35 weeks per year in which prekindergarten education is paid for by tuition from districts. The operator shall maintain appropriate written documentation of the supervision on location.

As of November 1, 2016

483 ECE/ECSE Licensed Educators Teaching in 538 classrooms in 368 prequalified programs

1. Of these ECE/ECSE Licensed Teachers: 199 are teaching in public schools (41%) and 284 are teaching or mentoring in private programs (59%).
2. 100% of prequalified programs met the Act 166 teaching staff program-type criteria.

| Teachers | Public | | Private Provider | | Total |
|-----------------------------|--|--|--|-----------------|------------|
| | Public Schools (#1 above) 185 classrooms in 138 schools | Center-Based (#2 above) 311 classrooms in 188 centers | Home-Based (#3 above) 42 programs/classrooms | | |
| | | | Operator holds (#3a,b) | Mentor (#3c) | |
| Educator Licensed | 175 | 195 | 10 | 25 | 405 |
| Provisional Licensed | 24 | 46 | 4 | 4 | 78 |
| TOTAL | 199 | 241 | 14 | 29 | 483 |
| TOTAL | 199 | 284 | | | 483 |

Act 166 Sec. 3. QUALITY STANDARDS

Act 166 legislation and Rules require that the two agencies examine quality standards for pre-kindergarten programs:

- (a) The Agencies of Education and of Human Services shall review existing quality standards for prekindergarten education programs and may initiate rulemaking under 3 V.S.A. chapter 25 to require higher standards of quality; provided, however, that no new standards shall take effect earlier than July 1, 2016.

The agencies are engaging in several activities under our Federal Grants (Early Learning Challenge Grant and the Preschool Development and Expansion Grant) that will increase our understanding of specific aspects of quality and impact. In addition, the Blue Ribbon Commission on quality, affordable Child Care has also recommended a working definition of a high-quality early care and learning programs as part of the November 2016 report. Finally, the implementation of Vermont’s PreK Evaluation (following SY16/17) will look specifically at how quality (both program and teacher) impacts child outcomes.

This work will give us data over the next several years on the impact of the quality

characteristics of prequalified programs on child outcomes. Once we receive the results of the evaluation on the SY16/17 school year we plan to convene a PreK Quality work group that will use that information and other data from the federal grant outcomes to review existing quality standards for prekindergarten education programs.

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