

# **The Quality of Prekindergarten Education in Vermont**

**Response to 2014 Act 166 Sec 3(b)**

**REPORT**

**February 2018**

**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:**

**Secretary of Education, Dr. Rebecca Holcombe**

**Secretary of Human Services, Al Gobeille**



## 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, 2017:**

**382 Public and Private Early Childhood 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. There are 14 more prequalified programs this year than there were in 2016, all are private providers.
3. 100% of prequalified programs met all of the Act 166 program criteria above.
4. Public schools make up 35.6% of prequalified programs (136).
5. Private providers make up 64.4% of prequalified programs (246).
6. As represented in Table 1a below, all programs meet the program quality standards; only 10% have the lowest quality standard “3 Stars with a plan to get to 4 Stars”.

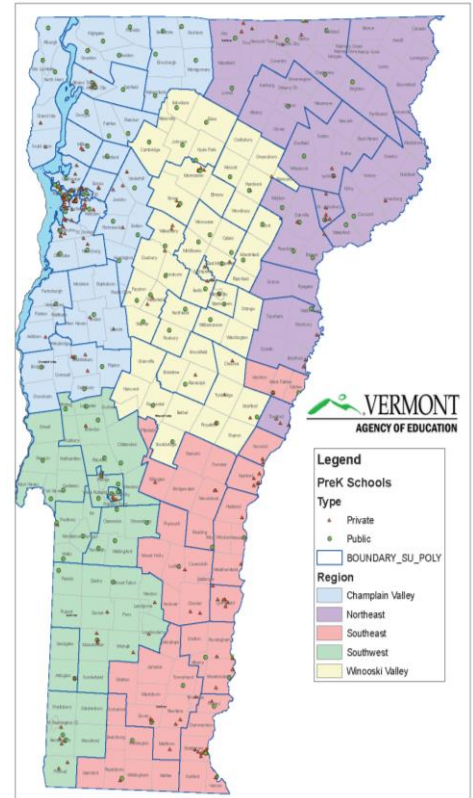


Table 1: Public and Private PreK Programs and STARS ratings as of November 1, 2017.

5 Stars or NAEYC Accredited	4 Stars 39%	3 Stars with approved plan 10%
78 public schools 115 private programs	50 public schools 100 private programs	8 public schools 31 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.

Table 2: Number of Licensed Educators Teaching in 382 Prequalified PreK Programs as of November 1, 2017

Public School Licensed ECE/ECSE in each classroom	Private Center-based Licensed ECE/ECSE at each site	Private Family Childcare Home Provider with ECE/ECSE license	Private Family Childcare Home Provider with ECE/ECSE mentor
195 teachers in 136 programs	199 teachers in 181 programs	33 teachers in 33 programs	3 hours per week in 32 programs

### 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.

On November 14<sup>th</sup>, 2017 the Secretaries of Human Services and of Education presented *Recommended Reform of Act 166* to the House and Senate Committees on Education, House Committee on Human Services and Senate Committee on Health and Welfare. The eight recommendations contained in the report include a specific recommendation that the state revisit the quality criteria for provider participation in the PreK voucher program. The AOE is working with stakeholders to refine the recommendations into more specific actions to provide a more robust report to the standing committees during the 2018 Legislative session. The agencies will provide suggested legislative language the Legislature may use to revise Act 166, consistent with these recommendations.

Agency of Education: Kate Rogers, Early Learning Team Manager, [kate.rogers@vermont.gov](mailto:kate.rogers@vermont.gov) or (802) 479-1454

Agency of Human Services: Melissa Riegel-Garrett, Director of Statewide Systems, DCF Child Development Division  
[melissa.riegel-garrett@vermont.gov](mailto:melissa.riegel-garrett@vermont.gov) or (802) 989-9685