

Universal Prekindergarten Education in Vermont

House Committee on Human Services

February 25, 2026

Universal Prekindergarten Overview

- Vermont's [current universal prekindergarten program](#) was enacted in 2014
- The program requires all school districts to provide access to publicly funded prekindergarten services for not fewer than 10 hours a week for 35 weeks/year to:
 - Children ages 3 and 4 on the date established by the district of residence for kindergarten eligibility (or 5 years of age but not yet enrolled in kindergarten); and
 - Whose parent/guardian chooses to enroll the child in a prequalified program

Prequalified Programs

- A school district may choose to operate its own prequalified prekindergarten program but is not required to do so
- A parent or guardian seeking to enroll a prekindergarten child in Vermont's universal prekindergarten program may choose between:
 - A private prequalified program; or
 - A public prequalified program, either outside the student's district of residence or inside the student's school district of residence (if the district has chosen to operate a program)
- If a private prequalified program or a public prequalified program outside the student's district of residence is selected by the student's parent/guardian, the school district of residence must pay the statewide prekindergarten tuition rate to the selected prequalified program



Insufficient Prekindergarten Programs

- If there is insufficient prekindergarten programming to meet the demand in a region, there is no obligation for a school district to begin or expand programming
- However, statute directs AOE, AHS, and the Building Bright Futures Council to collaborate with school districts and private providers in the region affected to develop a regional plan to expand capacity

Prequalification

- AHS/AOE are required to jointly develop rules governing prequalification requirements, including the following minimum quality standards:
 - Receipt of:
 - Accreditation from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC);
 - 4 STARS under the CDD's STARS system; or
 - 3 STARS with a provider plan, approved by DCF/AOE, to achieve 4 STARS
 - A licensed provider must employ/contract for the services of at least one teacher who is licensed and endorsed in early childhood education or in early childhood special education; and
 - A registered home provider who is not licensed and endorsed in early childhood education or early childhood special education shall receive regular, active supervision and training from a teacher who is licensed and endorsed in early childhood education or early childhood special education

Average Daily Membership & Weight

- Under current law, a school district may include a prekindergarten child as one full-time equivalent pupil in its average daily membership if the child is enrolled in 10 or more hours of prekindergarten per week or receives 10 or more hours of EEE services per week
 - If a child is enrolled in 6 or more but fewer than 10 hours of prekindergarten per week, or receives fewer than 10 hours of EEE per week, the child is counted as a percentage of one full-time equivalent pupil, calculated as one multiplied by the number of hours per week, divided by 10
 - If a child is enrolled in prekindergarten education for fewer than 6 hours per week, the child is NOT included in the district's ADM
 - There is no limit on the total number of children who may be enrolled in prekindergarten education or who receive EEE
- Under current law, a grade level weight of -0.54 is applied to each prekindergarten pupil in a district's long-term membership
- Act 73 retains the -0.54 prekindergarten weight as the only grade level weight in the foundation formula
 - Sec. 1(b)(2)(A)(vi) expresses legislative intent to “establish an appropriate weight for prekindergarten students” during the 2026 session

Services in Excess of Benefit

- Statute permits a private provider to receive additional payment directly from the parent/guardian only for prekindergarten education in excess of the hours paid for by the district or for child care services, or both
- The private provider is not bound by the statewide rate when determining the rates it will charge the parent or guardian for additional prekindergarten services

Funding

