



**Legislative Report**

# **Universal Prekindergarten Report 2024**

**16 VSA Sec 829(e)(10)**

**June 16, 2025**

Issued by the Vermont Agency of Education Program/Student Support Services and The Department for Children and Families/Child Development Division

## Executive Summary

Act 166, enacted in 2014, established Vermont's Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) program. As part of Vermont's cradle-to-career vision, this program is jointly overseen by the Agency of Education (AOE) and the Department for Children and Families (DCF) and aims to provide high-quality pre-kindergarten education to each and every PreK-aged child in Vermont. The AOE's Early Education team works in conjunction with DCF's Child Development Division (CDD) to implement and monitor all aspects of the program. The purpose of this report is to provide programmatic details, and evaluate quality and outcomes of PreK across Vermont.

## Key Takeaways

### Enrollment

The number of PreK students in Vermont grew steadily from the establishment of Universal Prekindergarten in Act 166 of 2014 reaching a peak of 9,596 PreK students before declining due to the pandemic. In 2023-24, there were 8,733 PreK students. About 40 percent of PreK students are 3-year-olds and 60 percent are 4- and 5-year-olds. Nationally, in 2023 Vermont ranked 2nd for access to PreK for 3-year-olds and 6th for access to PreK for 4-year-olds according to the National Institute for Early Education Research. The 2022-23 census estimates of the population of 3- and 4-year-olds in Vermont showed 61 percent of 3-year-olds and 78 percent of 4-year-olds were enrolled in publicly-funded PreK programs.

### Access

The number of private and public PreK providers that serve publicly-funded PreK students slightly increased between 2019-20 and 2023-24. Currently 393 PreK providers (241 private and 152 public) serve publicly-funded PreK students in Vermont through its current mixed delivery model. When surveyed, superintendents indicated the need for increased funding and adjusting the current method of funding PreK students from a -.54 ADM to fully funding as a 1.0 ADM (92% for both), followed by needing more qualified PreK teachers (89%), additional classrooms or facilities (86%), and support for transportation (84%).

### Quality

In terms of provider quality, for the most recent year of data available, 47 percent of private PreK providers and 54 percent of public PreK providers are rated 5-stars on STARS, Vermont's Quality Recognition and Improvement System (QRIS). With respect to student performance, about 90 percent or more of 3- and 4-year-olds are meeting social emotional, literacy and math objectives on the Teaching Strategies GOLD assessment in 2023-24. These percentages have increased since 2017-18, especially for 4-year-olds. When measuring kindergarten readiness through the Ready for Kindergarten! Survey, entering kindergartners who attended a publicly-funded PreK

performed better, and more consistently, than their peers that did not attend publicly-funded PreK.

### **Expenditures**

Statewide, since FY21 statewide expenditures in supervisory unions/supervisory districts (SU/SDs) for programs and services for PreK-aged children have ranged between about \$10,000 and \$11,000 per PreK student (\$10,958 per PreK student in FY23); over 75 percent is funded through the Education Fund and taxpayer contributions. Just over 60% of the expenditure is for Universal Prekindergarten and just under 40% of that amount is for Early Childhood Special Education.

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## Summary of Legislation

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

1. Since Fall 2016, all School Districts are mandated to offer publicly-funded PreK to resident families who voluntarily enroll their child in an available prequalified public or private PreK program.
2. All Vermont children who are 3, 4, and 5 years old by the date established by the district of residence for kindergarten eligibility and who are not yet enrolled in Kindergarten are eligible for PreK education.
3. PreK is defined as at least 10 program hours per week, 35 weeks per year (during the school year).
4. Publicly-funded PreK can be provided in prequalified public school-operated PreK programs or prequalified community-based private programs (family child care home and licensed center-based child care).
5. The Agency of Education and the Department for Children and Families are charged with joint oversight of prekindergarten education including approval of prequalified programs, ongoing monitoring, and support for implementation.

**Reference:** [Vermont State Board of Education Rule Series 2600 Prekindergarten Education](#)

Act 166 requires the establishment of a system by which the AOE and the AHS/CDD shall jointly monitor and evaluate publicly-funded PreK education programs to promote optimal outcomes for children and to collect data that will inform future decisions. The Agencies are required to report annually to the General Assembly in January. At a minimum, a system shall monitor and evaluate:

- A. programmatic details, including the number of children served, the number of private and public programs operated, and the public financial investment made to ensure access to quality PreK education;
- B. the quality of public and private PreK education programs and efforts to ensure continuous quality improvements through mentoring, training, technical assistance, and otherwise; and
- C. the outcomes for children, including school readiness and proficiency in numeracy and literacy.

The Universal PreK system has undergone several changes since the last report in 2020. Key developments include:

- **Act 35 and Act 166 Suspension and Expulsion Ban:** This legislation prohibits the suspension and expulsion of children under eight, except in cases of imminent harm, and mandates reporting of such incidents to the AOE. To support

this change, the AOE has focused on providing proactive and preventative supports in implementing Early Multi-tiered System of Supports (Early MTSS) through professional development, coaching and data collection to promote positive social-emotional outcomes, high-quality inclusive practices, and effective family engagement.

- **Accountability and Continuous Improvement System (ACIS):** Act 166 mandates that the state UPK monitoring system be established and implemented to ensure all prequalified UPK public, private, and family child care home providers maintain compliance with the law. Launched in 2019, Accountability and Continuous Improvement System (ACIS) is a joint agency (AOE/AHS) oversight that is a tiered monitoring system based upon the eleven UPK compliance requirements. ACIS is regularly evaluated to ensure it effectively meet the current needs of the UPK system.
- **STARS Quality Recognition and Improvement System:** On July 1, 2023, Vermont launched a major revision to STARS (STep Ahead Quality Recognition and Improvement System) which is a requirement for all Universal Prekindergarten programs. The system focuses Vermont’s efforts more closely on positive outcomes for children, engagement of families, and continuous quality improvement within early childhood education programs and incorporates inclusion and Early MTSS. DCF’s Child Development Division has also invested in external assessments, a cadre of quality coaches, and incentives for participating programs.
- **Preschool Development Grant Birth-5 (PDG B-5):** This three-year grant (December 2022-December 2025) is managed by Child Development Division, Maternal and Child Health Division, Building Bright Futures, Agency of Education, and Department of Mental Health. The program is designed to support Vermont to strengthen our early childhood system and ultimately improve outcomes for Vermont’s young children.

## Joint Administration and Oversight

Vermont’s Universal Prekindergarten is designed to leverage strengths, expertise, and systems at both the Agency of Education and the Department for Children and Families’ Child Development Division. Together, the teams work to set policy, support implementation, monitor compliance, and improve practice in service to Vermont’s youngest students.

The state’s approach is deeply informed by the [Vermont Early Childhood Guiding Principles](#), which emphasize the rights and needs of each and every child as the core focus of all early childhood efforts. They are consistent with relevant state and national laws and policies. These principles articulate Vermont’s commitment to fully include each and every child and their family in a continuum of meaningful experiences to

ensure their health, mental health, safety, happiness and success now and into the future.

AOE and CDD monitor and ensure compliance with Act 166 and other state and federal regulations for over 400 public and private UPK programs, reviewing applications and annual assurance submissions and conducting ongoing monitoring. CDD monitors UPK prequalified programs for compliance with child care licensing regulations and the STARS quality system. AOE monitors the licensed AOE Licensed Educator with an ECE/ECSE endorsement, Vermont Early Learning Standards, suspension and expulsions, TSGOLD®, special education and federal law, and Act 166 administrative rules. Together, the team reviews child care licensing incident reports and other data for compliance. Co-investigations may include on-site visits, in-person or virtual interviews, and other forms of communication.

Joint administration and oversight of the program includes:

- **Programmatic Quality Assurance:** Supports programmatic quality through the implementation of the UPK ACIS monitoring system, STARS, targeted observations, interviews, file reviews, and feedback to improve child outcomes.
- **Professional Development and Technical Support:** Provide professional development, training, messaging and technical assistance on educator licensing, Vermont Early Learning Standards (VELS), Teaching Strategies Gold, Act 166, suspension and expulsion, Early MTSS, ensuring programmatic quality implementation of evidence-based practices and desired child outcomes.
- **Collaboration and Policy Alignment:** Work closely with supervisory unions, districts, UPK coordinators, educators, community partners and each other to align initiatives and strengthen UPK, including representation across state committees and councils.

The Early Education Team is the lead for these key responsibilities under Act 166:

- **Data Collection:** Coordinates collection of multiple required statewide assessments and programmatic details, including Teaching Strategies Gold, Ready for Kindergarten Survey, suspension and expulsion, restraint and seclusion, National Institute for Early Education Research (NIEER), Vermont Head Start data, Early Childhood Special Education, loss of licensed educator, Early MTSS, enrollment, access, program quality, and PreK expenditures. ensuring accurate collection and reporting to inform system-wide improvements.
- **Alignment of Multi-tiered System of Supports (MTSS):** Supports the scale-up and sustainability of an evidence-based framework building capacity at both the system and practices level, Vermont's Early Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (Early MTSS) wraps around the Pyramid Model to enhance outcomes for children and families by using a proactive, preventative approach, and ensures

alignment with the Vermont MTSS (VTmtss) and K-12 MTSS system, Vermont's Guiding Principles, Division for Early Childhood (DEC) Recommended Practices and the U.S. Department of Education and Health and Human Services Joint Policy Statement on Inclusion. Early MTSS is one of the projects included within the PDG B-5, expanding implementation across Vermont's mixed delivery system, providing free professional development and coaching, measured data collections to reflect proactive and preventative supports and positive outcomes for each and every child and their family. Additionally, PDG B-5 supports the expansion of the Early MTSS State Leadership Team.

- **Early Childhood Special Education Services (ECSE):** Ensures effective and compliant implementation of State and Federal requirements including IDEA, Americans with Disabilities Act, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and State of Vermont Special Education Rules for children ages three through five. Collects, analyzes and interprets the data of IDEA indicators, provides support to school districts, and collaborates with the AOE Special Education team to align consistency across the system.

The Child Development Division is the lead for these key responsibilities under Act 166:

- **Child Care Licensing:** Outlines and enforces the minimum requirements established to protect the health and safety of children and ensure they are provided developmentally-appropriate growth and educational experiences. Includes annual inspections as well as investigations of complaints and concerns.
- **STARS quality improvement and recognition system:** Recognizes child care, preschool, and afterschool programs that demonstrate quality within three key domains: Adult-Child Interactions, Family and Youth Engagement, and Responsive Practices. Includes external quality assessments using a national research-based evaluation tool conducted by trained, reliable assessors as well as quality coaching through companion SPARQS program. (See [Appendix A](#) for more information.)
- **Head Start collaboration:** Promotes effective collaboration with Head Start programs in Vermont at state and district levels and alignment with federal Head Start standards and practices through the Vermont Head Start Collaboration Office (which is housed within CDD).

## Enrollment

### Data Sources

Data for this section included PreK data collected by AOE on a rolling basis; as such it will differ slightly from October 1st enrollment data presented in the State Profile.

### Definitions

**PreK Enrollment:** Publicly-funded 3-, 4-, and 5-year-olds enrolled in a licensed and registered PreK provider setting.

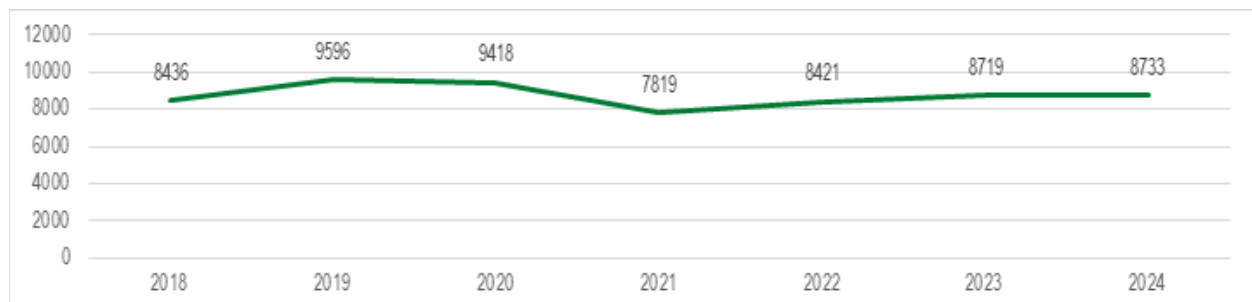
Since 2014, Act 166 (Universal Prekindergarten - UPK) has provided access to publicly-funded prekindergarten (PreK) education for Vermont students. All universal prekindergarten education programs, including Head Start, center-based child care programs, family child care homes (described as “private”), and public school-operated programs (“public”), must meet specific requirements to operate in Vermont. In 2023-24, there were 8,733 publicly-funded PreK students enrolled in 395 approved PreK providers.

The number of PreK students in Vermont grew steadily from the establishment of Universal Prekindergarten in Act 166 of 2014 until the decline associated with the pandemic. Enrollment reached a pre-pandemic peak of 9,596 PreK students, declining to the lowest enrollment point in 2020-21 (7,819 PreK students). PreK enrollment has increased since then, and in 2023-24, there were 8,733 PreK students. In most years, about 40 percent of PreK students are 3-year-olds and 60 percent are 4- and 5-year-olds (55 percent and 5 percent respectively).

Vermont ranks highly nationally for PreK access. Nationally, in 2024 Vermont ranked 2nd for access to PreK for 3-year-olds and PreK for 4-year-olds according to the National Institute for Early Education Research. In 2022-23, using census estimates of the population of 3- and 4-year-olds in Vermont, 61 percent of 3-year-olds and 78 percent of 4-year-olds were enrolled in publicly-funded PreK programs.

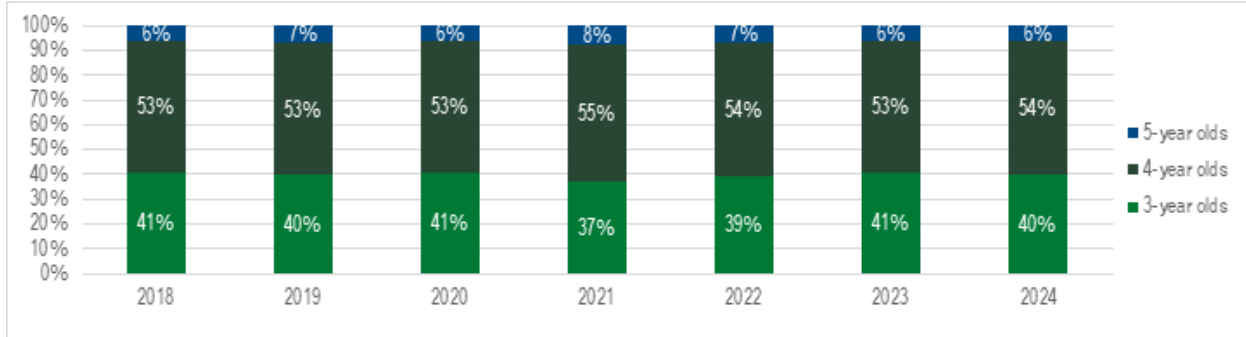
A map showing PreK enrollment by SU/SD is included in [Appendix A](#).

**Figure 1: PreK Enrollment 2018-19 to 2023-24**



**Considerations:** Changes in prekindergarten enrollment likely reflect changes in the availability of PreK spots and uptake by families and not necessarily changes in the numbers of students in that age group.

**Figure 2: PreK Enrollment by Age, 2018-19 to 2023-24**



## PreK Access

### Data Sources

Data presented in this section includes 2019-20 to 2023-24 data collected by AOE on all PreK providers that serve publicly-funded PreK students, including provider name, address, and designation as a private or public provider. In 2024, AOE and CDD also distributed a survey to districts that included questions regarding capacity to serve more PreK students.

### Definitions

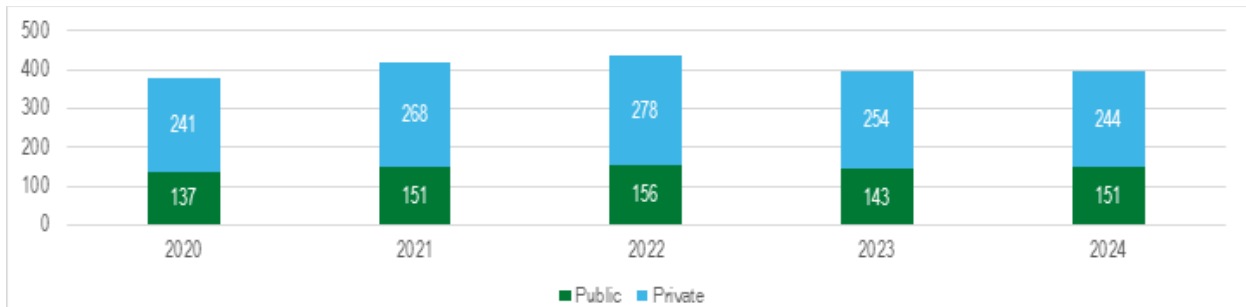
**Public Provider:** a school district that operates a prekindergarten education program.

**Private Provider:** a community-based provider that operates a prekindergarten education program, including Head Start, center and family or home-based settings.

In 2019-20 there were 378 PreK providers serving publicly-funded students (241 private and 137 public). The total number of PreK providers has slightly increased since then to 393, with 241 private PreK providers and 152 public PreK providers.

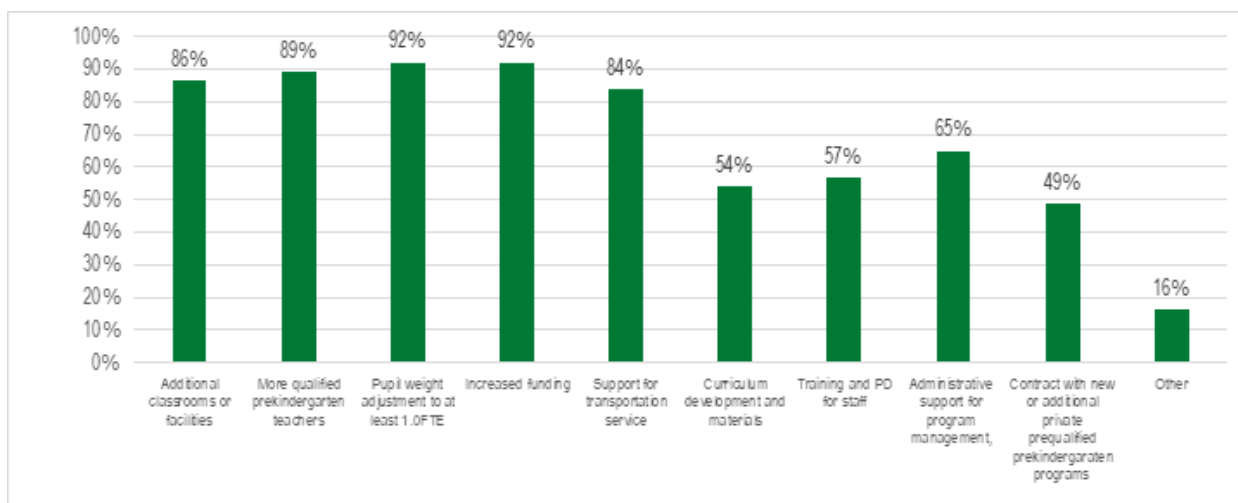
A map of PreK providers is included in [Appendix A](#).

**Figure 3: Public and Private PreK Providers, 2019-20 Compared to 2023-24**



In a recent survey, 37 of 42 responding SU/SDs reported partnering with community-based PreK providers or other districts, reflecting the state’s current mixed delivery model for providing PreK. When asked what they needed to be able to provide universal PreK to all 4-year-olds through this mixed delivery model, SU/SDs most commonly identified the need for increased funding and adjusting the current method of funding PreK students as a .54 ADM to fully funding as a 1.0 ADM (92% for both), followed by needing more qualified PreK teachers (89%), additional classrooms or facilities (86%), and support for transportation (84%).

**Figure 4: SU/SD Reported Needs to Expand PreK Programs, 2024 SU/SD Survey Results (n=37)**



## PreK Quality

### Data Sources

STARS provider ratings are awarded by CDD and information is shared with AOE for PreK providers that serve publicly-funded PreK student. This section also includes performance of 3- and 4-year-olds on the Teaching Strategies GOLD (TSGOLD) assessment and the Ready for Kindergarten! Survey (R4KIS) for entering kindergartners as reported to AOE.

### Definitions

**Star Rating:** Rating of 3, 4, or 5 stars through STARS Vermont’s Quality Recognition and Improvement System (QRIS) for child care, preschool, and afterschool programs.

**TSGOLD performance figures:** The percentage of 3- and 4-year-olds who met the objectives in the three domains: social emotional, literacy, and math.

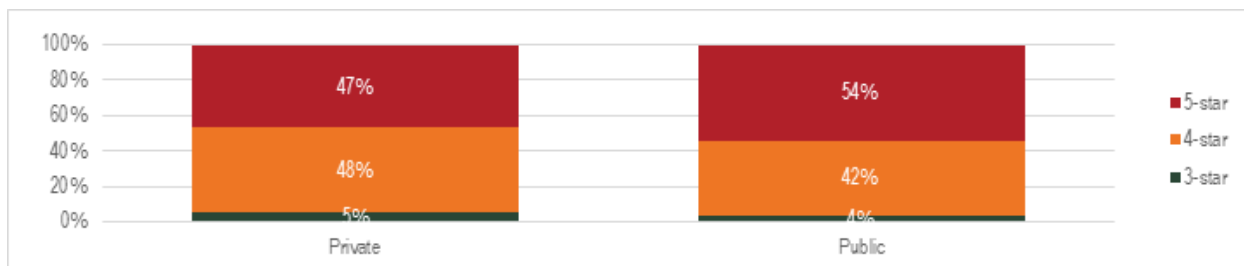
**R4KIS performance figures:** the percentage of entering kindergartners that are ready for kindergarten, disaggregated by whether a student attended PreK or not.

Each provider site is also rated as 3, 4, or 5 stars through STARS, Vermont’s Quality Recognition and Improvement System (QRIS) for child care, preschool, and afterschool programs. Participation in STARS means that a program is striving beyond licensing regulations to meet higher quality standards, uphold professional practices, and commit to continuous quality improvement. Per Act 166 Universal Prekindergarten prequalified programs are required to meet a minimum of 3 STARS with an approved plan to attain 4 STARS within one year. In terms of quality, for the most recent year of data available, 47 percent of private PreK providers and 54 percent of public providers are rated 5-stars.

A revised STARS system was launched by CDD in July 2023. Providers are currently in an acclimation period (through June 30, 2025) that allows programs to navigate changes in the new model with coaching support at their current STARS level. As such, this report presents 2022 provider ratings. The proportion of providers in each star ratings category was similar in prior years.

[Appendix B](#) provides more detail about the STARS.

**Figure 5: Public and Private PreK Providers, 2022 Ratings**

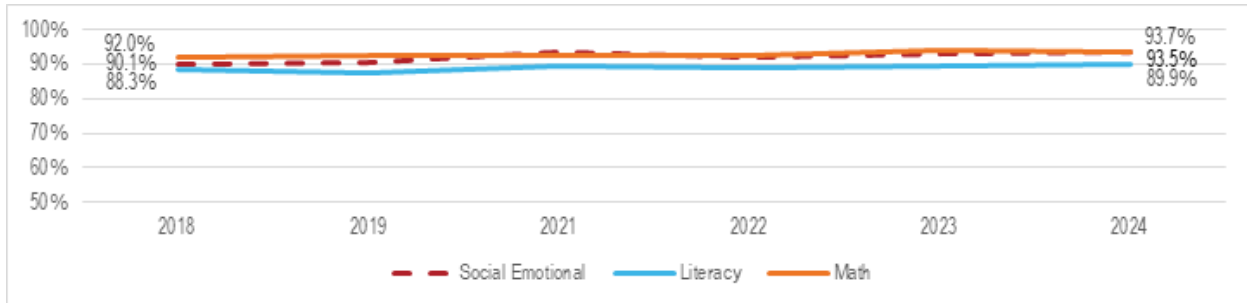


### Teaching Strategies Gold (TSGOLD®)

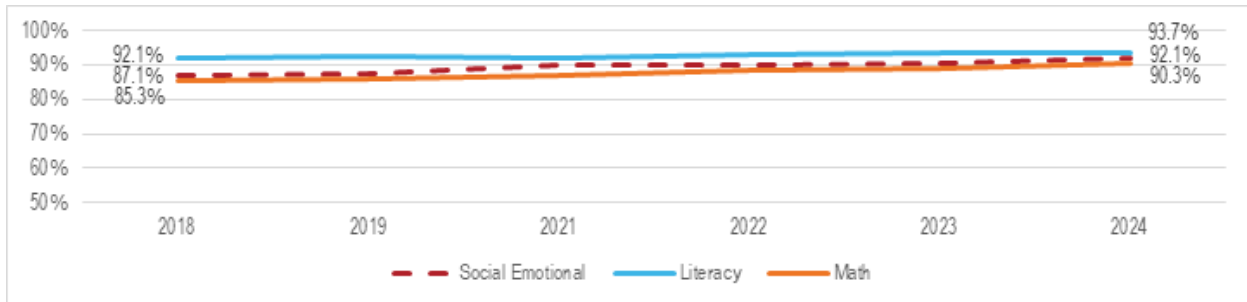
Teaching Strategies GOLD (TSGOLD®) is a developmental assessment employed by Universal PreK in Vermont to measure students against 38 research-based objectives that include predictors of school success and are aligned with the Common Core State Standards, Vermont Early Learning Standards, and the Head Start Child Early Learning Outcomes Framework. [Appendix C](#) provides more detail on TSGOLD®

In 2023-24, about 90 percent or more of 3- and 4-year-olds are meeting TSGOLD® social emotional, literacy and math objectives by the end of the school year. These percentages have increased since 2017-18, especially for 4-year-olds (5-point gains in the areas of social emotional and math objectives).

**Figure 5: Statewide Percentage of 3-Year-Olds Meeting TSGOLD® Objectives, 2017-18 to 2023-24\***



**Figure 6: Statewide Percentage of 4-Year-Olds Meeting TSGOLD® Objectives, 2017-18 to 2023-24\***



\* Note, 2020 TSGOLD® results are not shown as testing requirements were waived that year and most children were not in school during the spring testing window; as such, these results are excluded for any accountability, analysis, or reporting purposes.

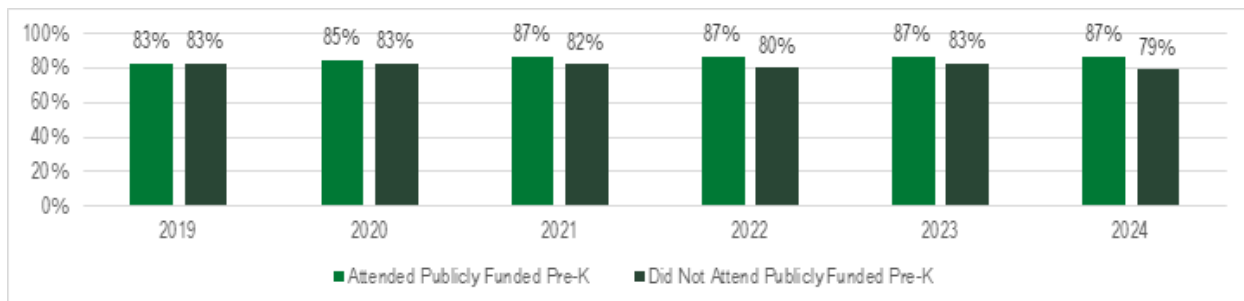
### Ready for Kindergarten! Survey

Ready for Kindergarten! Survey (R4K!S) is a readiness assessment of children entering kindergarten about students’ knowledge and skills within the first six to ten weeks of school. Vermont’s concept of children’s readiness is multidimensional; it includes social and emotional development, communication, and physical health, as well as cognitive development, knowledge, and approaches to learning (e.g., enthusiasm for learning, persistence, curiosity).

When measuring kindergarten readiness, entering kindergartners who attended a publicly-funded PreK performed better and more consistently, than their peers that did not attend publicly-funded PreK. For the last four years, a steady 87 percent of entering kindergartners who attended publicly-funded PreK were ready for kindergarten. These students performed better and more consistently than their peers who did not attend publicly-funded PreK.

[Appendix D](#) provides more detail on R4K!S.

**Figure 7: Percentage of Entering Kindergarteners that are Kindergarten Ready, 2018-19 to 2023-24**



## PreK Expenditures

### Data Sources

Data for this section include expenditure data reported by districts to AOE at the state level. Data include all expenditures (with limited exclusions) and the source of those expenditures by SU/SD. Detail on how to calculate these figures is included in [Appendix D](#).

### Definitions

*PreK Expenditures:* Total SU/SD expenditures coded to the prekindergarten level (01) from all sources and funds; excluding duplicated expenditures. SU/SD PreK expenditures are further distinguished as being for special education using program codes 20-29. *PreK ADM:* Single year average daily membership (ADM) in PreK for the minimum number of hours; for the students enrolled in a public or private program other than one operated by a school district where they live, the district counts those students in their ADM as a .46. *Fiscal Year (FY):* The financial year that expenses occur, which may differ from the date range of the school year (such as a fiscal year being July 1- June 30).

### PreK Expenditures Per PreK ADM Trends

For background, PreK is publicly-funded by resident school districts, and the cost of PreK is part of a school district's budget as approved by district voters. If a PreK student is enrolled in a PreK program operated by the school district where they live, the cost of the program is paid from the voter-approved district budget. If the PreK students is enrolled in a prequalified public or private program other than a program operated by school district where they live, the law sets a specific amount that district will pay for 10 hours per week for 35 weeks annually of PreK and this tuition is paid from the voter-approved district budget. The statewide 2023/2024 school year PreK Tuition Rate was \$3,764.

Additionally, districts receive funding to provide Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) for 3- to 5-year-olds with individualized education plans (IEPs). While these students are receiving special education services that are publicly-funded, they do not have to be enrolled in a universal PreK program. Expenditures in this section are made by SU/SDs to provide programs and services to PreK-aged children Vermont, including students in universal PreK programs and ECSE students. Statewide since FY21, SU/SD expenditures for PreK-aged students have ranged between about \$10,000 and \$11,000 per PreK student, including all sources of funding (local, state and federal).

District expenditures were \$10,958 per PreK student in FY23. The majority of funds (at least 75 percent) are through the Education Fund (using SU/SDs’ General Funds 1000-1999 as a proxy), which is primarily taxpayer contributions. The remainder of expenditures are funded through special revenue funds that include state and federal grants such as:

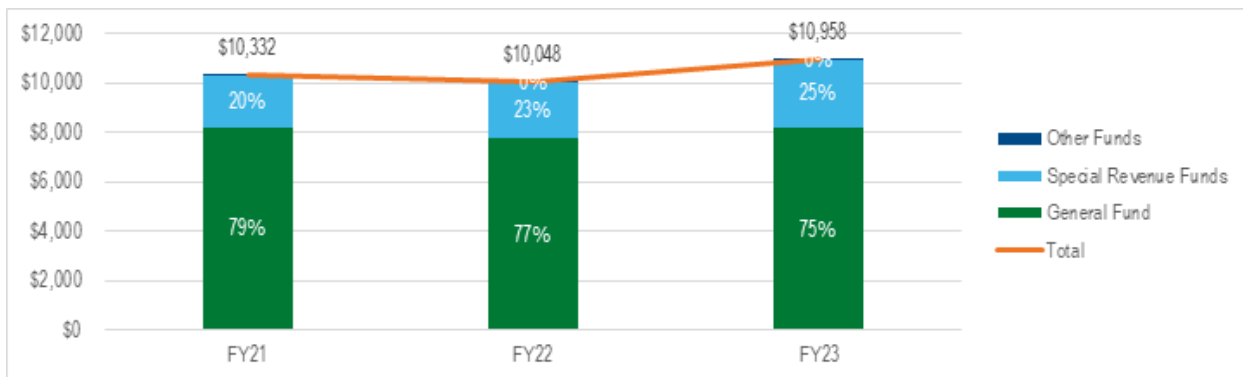
- IDEA, Part B
- State Census Block Funding for Special Education

**State Grants for ECSE**

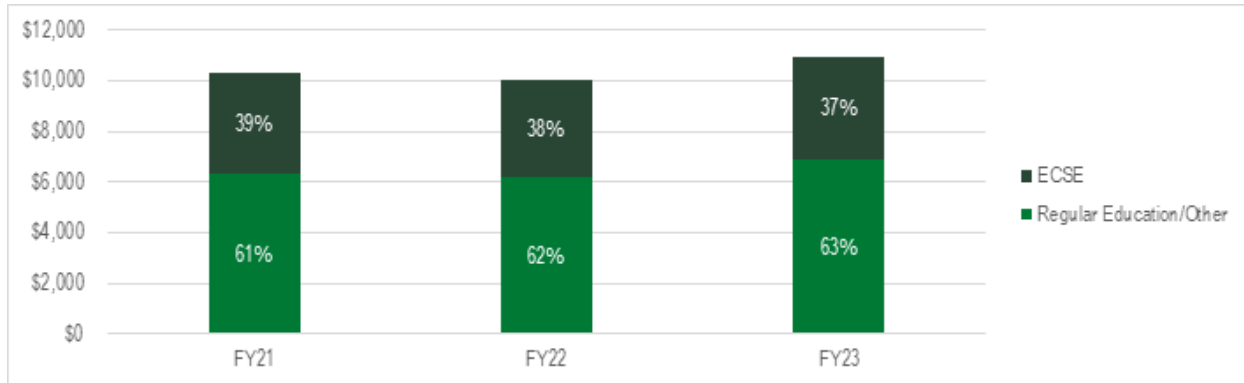
Overall, federal funding accounts for about 16 percent of total expenditures. It is important to note that during this time, there was additional federal funding available to address the impact of the pandemic on schools that may have been used to support PreK.

Of SU/SD expenditures for Pre-K-aged students, just under 40 percent of these expenditures were for ECSE.

**Figure 8: Statewide SU/SD Expenditures for Programs and Services for PreK-aged Children Per PreK ADM from All Funding Sources, FY21-23**



**Figure 9: Percentage of Statewide SU/SD Expenditures for Programs and Services for PreK-aged Children Per PreK ADM for ECSE, FY21-23**



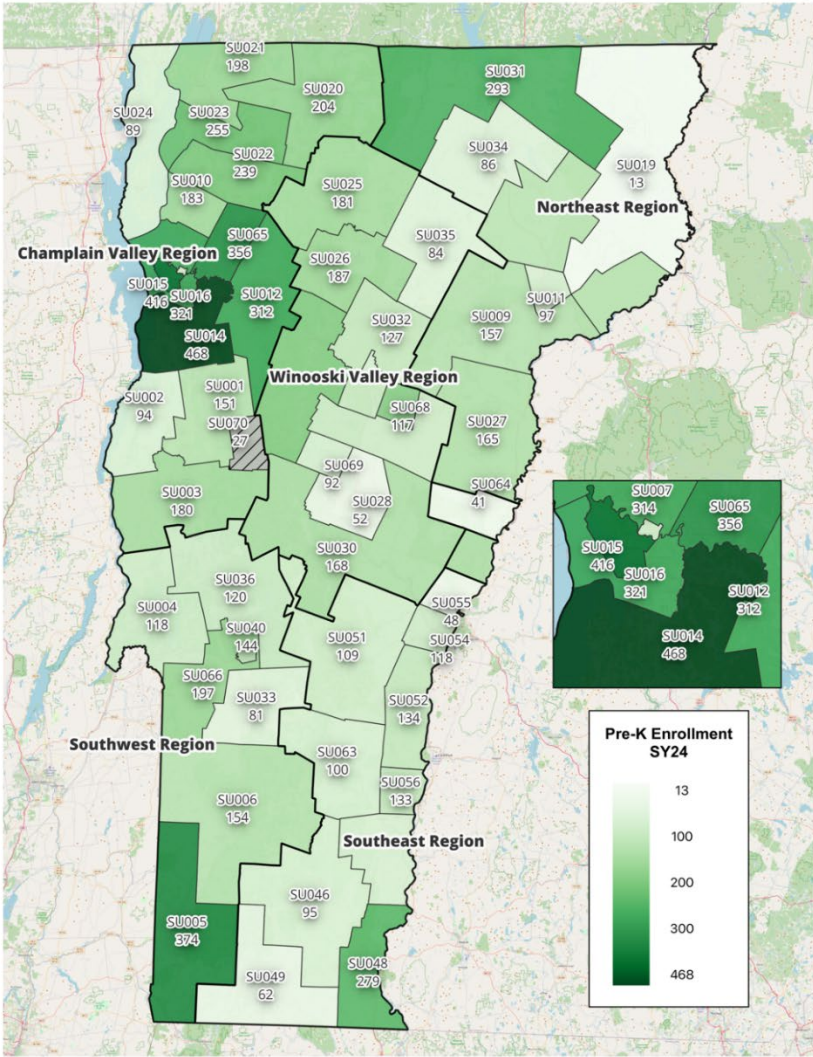
## Conclusion

Universal Prekindergarten in Vermont has achieved its primary goal of promoting access to prekindergarten education and positive outcomes for each and every child through a mixed delivery system. Over the past ten years, UPK allowed public schools to increase their capacity and promote prekindergarten education as part of the K-12 system. Current assessment data indicates that the system is effective in fostering early literacy and math skills. A significant majority of students, 90%, met or exceeded expectations in both literacy and math on the TSGOLD assessment. However, the data also highlights potential achievement gaps among specific student groups, including those eligible for free or reduced lunch, students with special education needs, and certain racial/ethnic groups.

To promote optimal outcomes for children enrolled in Vermont’s UPK program, future decisions must focus on equity, quality, and targeted support across the mixed delivery system. Addressing both social and emotional achievement gaps among underserved groups, evaluating resource allocation, and enhancing program accountability will ensure each and every child will benefit from high-quality early learning environments. A continued focus on the partnership between the Agency of Education and The Child Development Division needs to prioritize equitable access, age-specific, evidence-based instructional strategies, and professional development for educators, including inclusive decision-making and continuous improvement. Doing so will ensure that each and every child in Vermont has the opportunity to reach their full potential.

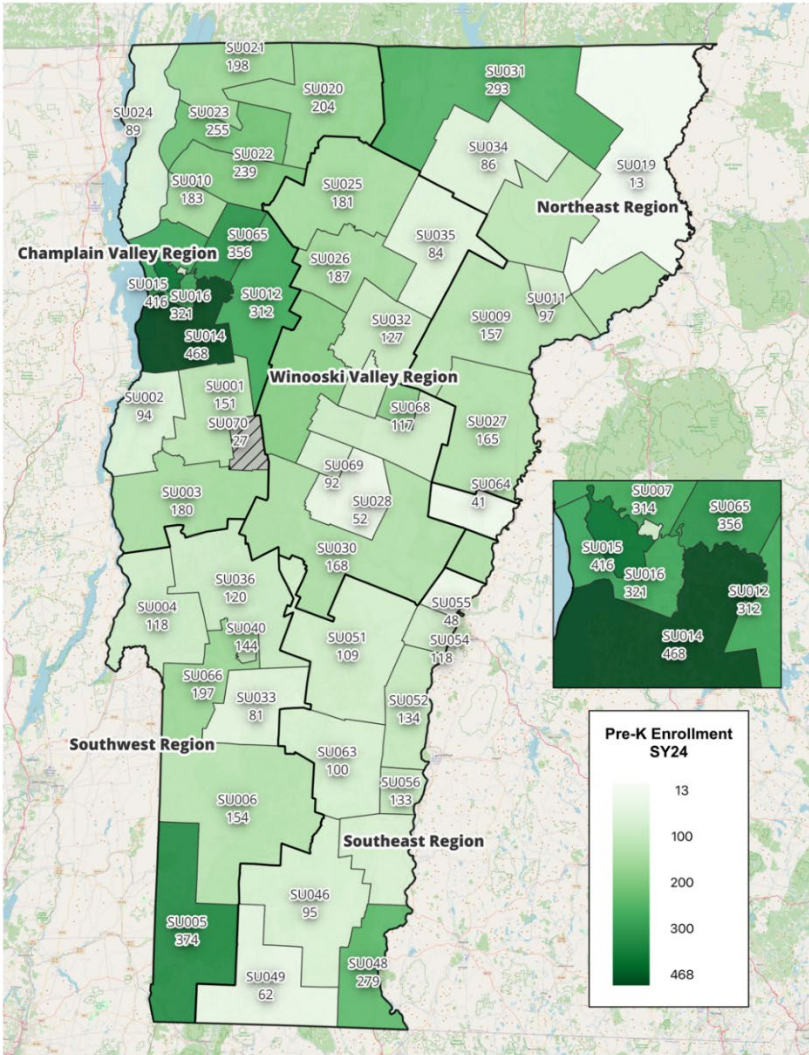
Appendix A: Maps

Pre-K Enrollment by SU (SY24)



SUNION	SU Name	PreK Enrollment SY24
SU001	Mt.Abraham	151
SU002	Addison NW	94
SU003	Addison Central	180
SU004	Slate Valley	118
SU005	SW Vermont	374
SU006	Bennington-Rutland	154
SU007	Colchester	314
SU009	Caledonia Central	157
SU010	Milton Town	183
SU011	St.Johnsbury	97
SU012	Mt.Mansfield	312
SU014	Champlain Valley	468
SU015	Burlington	416
SU016	S Burlington	321
SU017	Winooski	113
SU019	Essex N	13
SU020	Franklin NE	204
SU021	Missisquoi Valley	198
SU022	Franklin W	239
SU023	Maple Run	255
SU024	Grand Isle	89
SU025	Lamoille N	181
SU026	Lamoille S	187
SU027	Orange E	165
SU028	Orange SW	52
SU030	White River Valley	168
SU031	North Country	293
SU032	Washington Central	127
SU033	Mill River	81
SU034	Orleans Central	86
SU035	Orleans SW	84
SU036	Rutland NE	120
SU040	Rutland City	144
SU042	Harwood	222
SU046	Windham Central	95
SU047	Windham NE	99
SU048	Windham SE	279
SU049	Windham SW	62
SU051	Mountain Views	109
SU052	Windsor SE	134
SU054	Hartford	118
SU055	SAU #70	48
SU056	Springfield SD	133
SU061	Barre	218
SU063	Two Rivers	100
SU064	Rivendell Interstate	41
SU065	Essex Westford	356
SU066	Greater Rutland County	197
SU067	Kingdom East	148
SU068	Central Vermont	117
SU069	Montpelier Roxbury	92

Pre-K Enrollment by SU (SY24)



SUNION	SU Name	PreK Enrollment SY24
SU001	Mt.Abraham	151
SU002	Addison NW	94
SU003	Addison Central	180
SU004	Slate Valley	118
SU005	SW Vermont	374
SU006	Bennington-Rutland	154
SU007	Colchester	314
SU009	Caledonia Central	157
SU010	Milton Town	183
SU011	St.Johnsbury	97
SU012	Mt.Mansfield	312
SU014	Champlain Valley	468
SU015	Burlington	416
SU016	S Burlington	321
SU017	Winooski	113
SU019	Essex N	13
SU020	Franklin NE	204
SU021	Missisquoi Valley	198
SU022	Franklin W	239
SU023	Maple Run	255
SU024	Grand Isle	89
SU025	Lamoille N	181
SU026	Lamoille S	187
SU027	Orange E	165
SU028	Orange SW	52
SU030	White River Valley	168
SU031	North Country	293
SU032	Washington Central	127
SU033	Mill River	81
SU034	Orleans Central	86
SU035	Orleans SW	84
SU036	Rutland NE	120
SU040	Rutland City	144
SU042	Harwood	222
SU046	Windham Central	95
SU047	Windham NE	99
SU048	Windham SE	279
SU049	Windham SW	62
SU051	Mountain Views	109
SU052	Windsor SE	134
SU054	Hartford	118
SU055	SAU #70	48
SU056	Springfield SD	133
SU061	Barre	218
SU063	Two Rivers	100
SU064	Rivendell Interstate	41
SU065	Essex Westford	356
SU066	Greater Rutland County	197
SU067	Kingdom East	148
SU068	Central Vermont	117
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## Appendix B: Step Ahead Recognition System (STARS)

This document provides an overview of STARS as the state's quality recognition and improvement system (QRIS).

### Introduction to Step Ahead Recognition System (STARS)

The Step Ahead Recognition System (STARS) is the State of Vermont's Quality Recognition and Improvement System (QRIS) for child care, preschool, and afterschool programs. Participation in STARS means that a program is striving beyond licensing regulations to meet higher quality standards, uphold professional practices, and commit to continuous quality improvement.

The Child Development Division (CDD) launched a revised STARS mode on July 1, 2023 with increased focus on positive outcomes for children, engagement of families, equitable opportunities for programs and providers to participate, and support for continuous quality improvement. STARS recognizes program's practices within three elements of quality: Adult-Child Interactions, Family and Youth Engagement, and Responsive Practices.

There are five levels in STARS. All registered and licensed child care programs in good standing with Vermont child care licensing are considered STARS level 1, and engagement at the consecutive levels is voluntary. All Universal Prekindergarten Education programs must be recognized at the 4 or 5 STARS levels (or, in some instances, 3 STARS will a plan to increase to 4 within one year). Programs renew on a three-year basis, providing annual updates on their non-renewal years.

When programs renew or achieve a higher STARS, they receive a monetary bonus, issued through the Quality and Capacity Incentive Program. Bonuses are calculated and distributed based on a program's participation in Child Care Financial Assistance Program (CCFAP), STARS level, program type, and current number of children enrolled.

### 1. Elements of Quality in STARS

#### Adult-Child Interactions

This element focuses on nurturing, supportive and reciprocal adult-child interactions that occur between adults and children in the classroom. These relationships are foundational to the learning process and overall development of youth. The tool used to assess this Element of Quality within the Early Childhood Education field is the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS). CDD funds external assessors to complete the assessments. Programs that the Agency of Education (AOE) has identified as Early Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) Implementation sites have the option to submit their TPOT scores and AOE issued Early MTSS Certificate in place of CLASS for their STARS application.

## Family and Youth Engagement

This element focuses on practices that programs use to engage and increase family strengths, which help enhance the child's development. The framework used to support this Element of Quality is the Center for the Study for Social Policy's Strengthening Families Approach. As part of Level 2, programs complete the Strengthening Families Self-Assessment, which provides feedback on current family engagement practices, and opportunities for further engaging families and youth. At levels 4 and 5, programs are integrating at least three of the five Strengthening Families protective factors into their program.

## Responsive Practices

This element focuses on utilizing practices in the classroom that are responsive to individual children and youth's interests, needs and developmental level, and their family culture, race and ethnicity, language, and gender identity. Approaches and standards used within this element include programs being required to reference and utilize Vermont Early Learning Standards, Developmentally Appropriate Practices, and child observations to inform curriculum planning. Programs that the Agency of Education (AOE) has identified as Early Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) Implementation sites automatically meet this requirement.

## 2. System for Program Access to Resources for Quality Supports

As part of the revised STARS model, CDD also launched the System for Program Access to Resources for Quality Supports (SPARQS) as a hub of direct resources and supports for educators across the state. SPARQS is funded through Vermont's Child Development Division and administered through Vermont Association for the Education of Young Children. SPARQS supports a system of quality through providing direct supports, including the CLASS observation, mentoring, coaching and technical assistance and professional development opportunities.

## 3. Avenues for Streamlined Applications

There are multiple avenues that a program may be able to either fully or partially streamline their STARS application. Programs that are NAEYC accredited, or Head Start Recipients are automatically streamlined to STARS level 5 at all elements of quality. Programs that are Early MTSS Implementation sites, Head Start Partner sites, and National Association for Family Child Care (NAFCC) accredited programs are partially streamlined, meaning they automatically meet requirements for elements of quality at specific STARS levels.

## 4. Resources and References

### Resources for STARS

- **System for Program Access to Quality Supports (SPARQS):**
  - Offers assessments, coaching, mentoring and professional development
  - Link: [System for Program Access to Resources for Quality Supports](#)
- **Classroom Assessment Scoring System Website:**
  - CLASS is a continuous quality improvement system centered on interactions. This is achieved by focusing on effective adult-child interactions, followed by measuring the quality of interactions and then improving teaching quality driven by data captured in the CLASS observation.
  - Link: [Classroom Assessment Scoring System](#)
- **Center for the Study of Social Policy - Strengthening Families:**
  - The Strengthening Families Framework is a research-informed approach, with five protective factors identified to support children and families to thrive: Parental Resilience, Social Connections, Knowledge of Parenting and Child Development, Concrete Supports in Times of Need, and Social and Emotional Competence of Children.
  - Link: [Strengthening Families](#)

## Appendix C: Teaching Strategies Gold (TSGOLD®)

This document provides an overview of TSGOLD®'s role in Vermont's UPK program, emphasizing its use in tracking critical developmental domains while providing key resources for educators.

### Introduction to Teaching Strategies Gold (TSGOLD®)

Teaching Strategies Gold (TSGOLD®) is an authentic, observation-based assessment system designed to monitor the growth and development of children from birth through kindergarten. In Vermont, TSGOLD® is a key component of the state's Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) program and is the state approved developmental child assessment for all UPK prequalified programs. It is used to assess developmental progress and ensure alignment with Vermont's Early Learning Standards (VELS). This measure provides educators with actionable insights to support individualized learning and growth for children across diverse developmental domains.

### 1. What is TSGOLD® and How Was it Developed?

TSGOLD® was developed by Teaching Strategies, LLC, and is grounded in extensive research on child development. It incorporates evidence-based practices to measure children's progress across multiple domains of learning. The system was designed to be developmentally appropriate, culturally sensitive, and applicable for diverse learning contexts. TSGOLD® aligns with widely accepted early childhood standards, including the Common Core State Standards and the Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework.

The tool's emphasis is on formative assessment, allowing educators to gather ongoing data through observation, documentation, and interaction. Its development included rigorous psychometric testing to ensure reliability and validity.

### 2. Administration of TSGOLD® in Vermont UPK Programs

#### How the Measure is Administered

TSGOLD® is the state approved developmental child assessment for all UPK prequalified programs. TSGOLD® is primarily administered by teachers in Vermont's UPK programs, which serve children aged 3 to 5. Educators use the platform to observe and document children's developmental milestones during routine classroom activities. Data collection occurs in naturalistic settings to provide authentic insights into children's skills and behaviors.

### To Whom It is Administered

The measure is used for all students enrolled in Vermont’s UPK programs, including children from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds, English Language Learners (ELL), and children with special needs. This inclusive approach ensures that assessments capture the needs and strengths of all learners.

### Assessment Windows

In Vermont, TSGOLD® assessments occur two times during the academic year:

1. **Fall Window** (September–December): Establishes baseline data for individual and group growth plans.
2. **Spring Window** (December–June): Summarizes year-end outcomes for state reporting and transitions to kindergarten.

These cyclical assessment periods provide educators with timely data to guide teaching strategies and communicate child progress data to families.

### 3. Domains Measured by TSGOLD®

TSGOLD® evaluates children's progress across **10 developmental domains**, which include English Language Arts (ELA), Mathematics, and Social-Emotional Learning (SEL). These three domains are particularly emphasized in Vermont’s UPK reporting requirements.

#### English Language Acquisition (ELA)

- Focus: Oral language, phonological awareness, vocabulary development, and emergent literacy skills.
- Example Objective: Demonstrates understanding of spoken language through conversation and story retelling.

#### Mathematics

- Focus: Number sense, pattern recognition, spatial awareness, and problem-solving.
- Example Objective: Recognizes and counts numbers sequentially and identifies shapes in the environment.

#### Social-Emotional Learning (SEL)

- Focus: Interpersonal skills, self-regulation, and emotional awareness.
- Example Objective: Demonstrates the ability to engage in cooperative play and manage emotions effectively.

Educators in Vermont use the data collected in these domains to ensure children are on track for kindergarten readiness and to report required outcomes to the state.

## 4. Resources and References

### Training Resources for TSGOLD®

- **Vermont Agency of Education:**
  - Offers guidance on implementing TSGOLD® in UPK settings and hosts professional development opportunities for educators.
  - Link: [Vermont Agency of Education - Early Education](#)
- **Teaching Strategies Official Website:**
  - Provides online modules, tutorials, and educator resources for mastering TSGOLD®.
  - Link: [Teaching Strategies Gold](#)
- **Local Support Networks:**
  - Vermont Early Childhood Professional Development System offers workshops and networking opportunities.

### References on TSGOLD® Development and Norming

- Teaching Strategies (2017). "Teaching Strategies GOLD®: Research and Validation."
  - A comprehensive report on the reliability, validity, and research base for TSGOLD®.
  - Snow, C. E., and Van Hemel, S. B. (Eds.). (2008). *Early Childhood Assessment: Why, What, and How*. National Academies Press.
  - Provides foundational insights into formative assessment in early childhood.
- Vermont Early Learning Standards (VELS):
  - Aligns with the developmental objectives of TSGOLD®.
  - Link: [VELS Website](#)

## Appendix D: Ready for Kindergarten Survey (R4K!S)

This document outlines the role of R4K!S in Vermont's early education system, emphasizing its developmental domains and its capacity to evaluate the impact of pre-K education.

### Introduction to Ready for Kindergarten Survey (R4K!S)

The Ready for Kindergarten (R4K!S) measure is an assessment tool designed to evaluate children's readiness for kindergarten. It provides a comprehensive understanding of children's developmental progress across multiple domains. In Vermont, R4K!S is integrated into the state's early learning system to align with Vermont Early Learning Standards (VELS) and to support transitions from Universal Pre-Kindergarten (UPK) to kindergarten. The measure helps educators, families, and policymakers understand the impact of early education and identify areas where additional support may be needed.

## 1. What is the R4K!S Measure, and How Was It Developed?

### Background on R4K!S

R4K!S builds on the foundations of previous readiness measures, integrating advances in child development research and incorporating feedback from educators. Its focus is on aligning early learning assessments with broader educational standards while maintaining a child-centered approach.

### Re-norming by AIR

The American Institutes for Research (AIR) played a critical role in re-norming R4K!S in 2017, ensuring that the measure accurately reflects developmental milestones across diverse populations. This process involved extensive field testing, statistical validation, and updates to domains based on emerging research. The revised R4K!S emphasizes equity and inclusivity, accounting for variations in cultural, linguistic, and socioeconomic backgrounds.

## 2. Administration of R4K!S in Vermont UPK Programs

### How the Measure is Administered

R4K!S is administered through direct child assessments, teacher observations, and parent surveys. Teachers use a blend of structured tasks and naturalistic observations to document children's developmental progress.

### To Whom It is Administered

The measure targets children transitioning from Vermont’s UPK programs to kindergarten, encompassing those with diverse educational and cultural experiences. It is particularly useful for identifying developmental differences between children who have attended pre-K and those who have not.

### Assessment Windows

R4K!S assessments are conducted at the beginning of the kindergarten year, providing baseline data on children’s readiness. Vermont mandates a fall assessment window, typically spanning September through October, to align with school entry timelines and to inform instructional planning early in the academic year.

## 3. Domains Measured by R4K!S

### Key Domains

R4K!S assesses five major domains of development, with an emphasis on:

- **English Language Acquisition (ELA):** Measures literacy, vocabulary, and language comprehension.
- **Mathematics:** Focuses on foundational numeracy, pattern recognition, and problem-solving.
- **Social-Emotional Learning (SEL):** Evaluates self-regulation, interpersonal skills, and emotional well-being.

### Relationship to TSGOLD®

The domains of R4K!S overlap significantly with those measured by Teaching Strategies Gold (TSGOLD®), particularly in ELA, Math, and SEL. However, while TSGOLD® provides ongoing formative data, R4K!S offers a summative snapshot of kindergarten readiness. Together, these tools allow Vermont to evaluate the longitudinal impact of early childhood education.

### Comparison of Pre-K Attendance

One of R4K!S’s strengths is its ability to compare outcomes for children who have participated in UPK with those who have not. By examining developmental disparities, the measure helps identify gaps and informs decisions about resource allocation and program enhancements.

## 4. Resources and References

### Training Resources for R4K!S

- **Vermont Agency of Education:**  
Offers professional development workshops and online resources tailored to R4K!S implementation.
  - Link: [Vermont Early Education](#)
- **Ready for Kindergarten Official Portal:**  
Provides user guides, webinars, and interactive training modules for educators and administrators.
  - Link: [R4K!S Resources](#)

### References on R4K!S Development and Norming

- American Institutes for Research (2017). *Re-norming and Validation of the R4K!S Measure*.
  - This document outlines the methodologies used to ensure accuracy and reliability.
  - Snow, C. E., and Van Hemel, S. B. (Eds.). (2008). *Early Childhood Assessment: Why, What, and How*. National Academies Press.
- Vermont Early Learning Standards (VELS):
  - Aligns closely with R4K!S developmental domains.
  - Link: [VELS Website](#)