



# PreKindergarten Education Implementation Committee – Capacity and Funding Considerations Workgroup Meeting

March 19, 2024: 9:30 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

Microsoft Teams Virtual  
Meeting Call In: 802-552-8456  
Conference ID: 386 374 430#  
[Meeting Link](#)

## DRAFT MEETING MINUTES

### Workgroup Charge:

The Capacity & Funding Considerations Workgroup is charged with exploring, documenting and reporting back to the Committee on issues, perspectives and possibilities related to:

1. Measures to ensure capacity is available to meet demand for prek;
2. The min # of hours that shall constitute a full school day for both prek and K;
3. Any necessary infrastructure changes to expand prek;
4. Costs associated with expanding prek, incl. fiscally strategic options to sustain expansion;
5. Recommendations for the oversight of the prek system.

### Draft Meeting Minutes

#### **Present:**

Anne Bordonaro, Interim Deputy Secretary of Education; Sandra Cameron, Vermont School Board Association; Sherry Carlson, Let's Grow Kids, Nicole Miller, Vermont Afterschool; Jeff O'Hara, representative of a prequalified private provider; Chris Wells, family representative

**AOE:** Molly Loomis, Facilitator; Meg Porcella; Suzanne Sprague

**Others:** Carrie Bullard; Katie Salina, Let's Grow Kids

Facilitator Molly Loomis called the meeting to order at 9:32 a.m. She suggested amending the [agenda](#) to include a representative from Let's Grow Kids to present their recent report on prekindergarten capacity. Nicole Miller made a motion to amend the agenda and Anne Bordonaro seconded the motion. The motion carried.

Loomis asked if there were any suggested amendments to the draft meeting [minutes](#) from February 20. There were none. Nicole Miller made a motion to approve the minutes and

Sandra Cameron seconded the motion. The motion carried.

The group warmed up by introducing themselves and sharing what motivated them to participate in the Capacity & Funding Considerations Workgroup.

Loomis welcomed Katie Salina, Policy and Research Manager from Let's Grow Kids. Sherry Carlson shared that Let's Grow Kids publishes [Stalled at the Start](#), a biennial report on the supply of and demand for regulated child care for children birth through five in Vermont. The Let's Grow Kids policy and research team used data from the soon-to-be released 2024 report to conduct a secondary analysis of university prekindergarten programs. Katie Salina presented this [Analysis of Vermont's Universal Prekindergarten Program Capacity](#) and talked the Workgroup through the analysis. After the presentation, the group identified additional questions they had about kindergarten capacity, including:

- The difference between a program's licensed capacity (the number of slots a program is allowed to provide based on licensing requirements) versus desired capacity, (the number of slots a program reports are available).
- Can we compare desired capacity versus current enrollment to understand unused capacity across the system?
- Can we know the hours that both school- and community-based programs operate, including part-time and split program slots?
- How do we create consistency in hours available to families starting in prekindergarten? Act 76 is focused on full school day, but public schools don't currently have scheduling requirements until first grade (e.g. some kindergarten is half day). It's important to look at the continuum of hours from prekindergarten through first grade.
- Is there a correlation between the number of school- and community-based programs and poverty levels, or between the number of children with IEPs in school- and community-based programs?
- How do we account for system barriers and influences? Public programs can't charge families and so can either program based on the .46 of funding or raise taxes to pay the difference.
- Where do families who cross county and state lines to attend child care fit into the data?

The group acknowledged the importance of these questions and the lack of current data to address many of them.

Meg Porcella, Director of the Student Support Services Division at the Vermont Agency of Education offered additional data from AOE based on surveys completed by universal prekindergarten programs. She noted that school-based programs generally offer more hours than the ten hours/week mandated for universal prekindergarten, whereas community-based programs offered a greater range of hours. Although AOE tracks attendance in universal prekindergarten programs, they don't track if children are attending other programs outside of the ten hours.

The group discussed the nuance and limitations of the available data sources. There are challenges to collecting additional data that won't duplicate other efforts or over-tax stakeholders, which can be mitigated by pausing to think strategically and piggy-backing on other data collection efforts. There are also additional data sources to consider, including Child Development Division data on how many three- and four-year olds are being served in universal prekindergarten programs and other childcare programs. There is also demographic and outcome data collected through Teaching Strategies Gold, which may provide additional information on capacity. Loomis shared additional resources on prekindergarten data, including:

- [Vermont's UPK Data, Publications, Report, and Resources](#), a linked list of resources (from 2023) of information related to universal prekindergarten;
- [Potential UPK Study Questions for Consideration](#), a list of universal prekindergarten topics and questions for further study;
- [Act 76 Indicator Snapshot](#), a high-level inventory of data gaps and data available to monitor the impact of Act 76 implementation.

Members of the group shared that more questions than answers were emerging for them. Loomis reminded them to consider only the information necessary to understand the “measures required to ensure capacity is available to meet demand for prekindergarten” (the Consideration under discussion) rather than nice-to-know information. For clarity, they reiterated the charge of the Committee – “to assist the Agency of Education in improving and expanding accessible, affordable, and high-quality prekindergarten education for children on a full-day basis on or before July 1, 2026” along with the Workgroup list of Considerations.

Loomis asked the group how they might identify the most critical missing pieces of information. Members suggested estimating how many four-year-olds would attend full school day, full school year prekindergarten if it was available, and calculating various participation strategies based on the available data. Anne Bordonaro shared that AOE faced a similar challenge when they had to estimate the cost of universal meals, which they addressed by looking a census data to understand the outside limit of potential participants, analyzing current meals served by subgroups, then calculating several scenarios – from zero uptake to maximum uptake – to estimate a range of potential costs. Bordonaro suggested that a similar process could be used here. Additional questions included:

- How do we better understand the mandate for both public and private providers? What is the requirement to serve four-year-olds?
- How would implementing a full-day program for four-year-olds impact how services are provided? How would it impact services for three versus four-year olds? Public-versus private-based settings? Part- versus full-time programs?
- How would the impact vary regionally? Talk to people who have invested in understanding regional child care needs, including Building Bright Futures, Let's Grow Kids, Universal prekindergarten coordinators, and principals & superintendents.

- Tap into the school Construction Task Force that is currently collecting data to evaluate aging school buildings to understand infrastructure capacity.
- Identify the three critical pieces of information that we need to move forward, along with the most strategic ways to capture them. Narrow down our questions so that we can better use the data already available to us to start to answer those questions.
- Although the Committee charge is focused on four-year-olds, there are three thousand three-year-olds participating in universal prekindergarten who would lose access if it only served four-year-olds. It's not as easy as saying they can relocate to child care because they must have a service need to be eligible for child care financial assistance. What are the implications of this for children and families?

Loomis suggested that Workgroup members reflect on the conversation for a few days before sharing additional thoughts. She summarized three possible next steps:

1. Inventory and synthesize what can already be known about capacity;
2. Build on existing information to estimate possible scenarios for capacity needs;
3. Identify critical missing information and the most strategic ways to collect it.

There were no members of the public present to be heard.

The meeting adjourned at 11:00 a.m.

Meeting minutes recorded by: Molly Loomis.