

Early Learning & Develop Committee  
January 8, 2015 Meeting Minutes  
Williston, VB3 Meeting Room 10:00am-12:00pm  
Conference Call Option: 866-951-1151 Rm 8602046

Facilitator/Time Keeper: Cynthia Greene  
Minute Taker: Dana Anderson

10:00 Introductions:

Attendees:

Special Guests:

Reeva Murphy, Deputy Commissioner, Dept. Children and Families

Manuela Fonseca, Early Education Coordinator, Vt Agency of Education

Moderator: Cynthia Greene

**ELDC Members:**

LouAnn Bennanati, Diane Carter, Barbara Saunders, Megan Godfrey, Jackie Sprague, \_\_\_Manson, Maunuela Fonseca, Reeva Murphy, Cynthia Greene, Eddie Gale, Dana Anderson, Bethany Hale, Sherry Carlson, Marsha Perrenias, Maureen Danielczyk, Hope Campbell

**Community Members:**

Conference Call participants (over 20 listeners) were in listen-only mode.

- ELD Committee is open to new members, meetings are open to public. Meet 5x/yr, dates TBD.
- Minutes will be available on BBF website or by emailing [cgreene@buildingbrightfutures.org](mailto:cgreene@buildingbrightfutures.org)
- Meeting has been combined with Alliance initiative and is being videotaped, video link can be found at [www.buildingbrightfutures.org](http://www.buildingbrightfutures.org) under PreK4All.

**10:15 Monthly Focused Topic Discussion: Act 166 & Pre-K Expansion Initiatives**

**Overview of Act 166 and Current Status of Rules- Manuela and Reeva**

Act 166 ensures access for all 3,4,5 yr old children (who are not enrolled in Kindergarten) to Pre-K education. The focus is on access. Act 166 replaces Act 62. Prequalification standards have not changed since Act 62. Act 62 is no longer a law.

Focus in on simplification of access universally throughout the state. Parents may choose public or private Pre-K at a pre-qualified program.

Parents must enroll through their local school. Schools do not need to provide a Pre-K program, but have the option to set a regional geographic boundary of acceptable programs for residents.

**Rulemaking Process Overview**

Interim Guidance Part 1: Based on drafted Act 166 rules (follows State Board of Education rules) have been submitted to State Board of Education at this time.

Once passed, draft rules move to Interagency Committee on Administrative Rules for approval. Act 166 rules have gotten this approval to date.

File with Secretary of State- current standing of the rules. Once filed, the draft rules must be advertised and open for public comment period of 4-6 weeks. VIT sessions for public comment feedback will occur regionally. Agency must respond to all comment themes.

Revised rules must go back to State Board of Education for vote to move forward.

Legislative Committee of Administrative Rules must pass for this to become law. Anticipated date: June 2015.

Act 166 school program expansion- defined as adding additional slots that require more teachers or classrooms. Request must be submitted with data. Must be approved by Dept. of Children and Families. Application/approval process is a requirement. Process is subject for change after rulemaking public comment period.

Pre-K monitoring system- to be developed in coming year. Purpose- feedback and oversight for all public/private programs.

#### Program Prequalification Application

Prequalification application is available on AOE and CDD websites. Application process is 30 business days. Prequalified programs will be listed on the Bright Futures Information System (BFIS) website. Prequalification is required for participation. Programs may opt not to participate.

Rolling application process- no deadline for pre-qualification, but programs are encouraged to apply soon to: a) allow schools to assess Pre-K capacity within the region and determine if expansion is necessary and b) allow families to search for programs early.

This year- all programs, public or private must apply for prequalification.

If a program plans to apply, but is not yet in STARS or NAEYC accredited, act quickly to begin process of meeting quality standards.

Online application- guidance is available \_\_\_\_\_.

### **10:30 Bulletin to Delay Implementation**

- What is the current status of “all or nothing” implementation vs “cherry picking” components to implement for the coming school year?
- Who is and how can folks get involved in the discussion of delayed implementation? What is the timing of these discussions? Statewide or local?

Bulletin to Delay Implementation may be found at AOE Early Education website with TS Gold, draft rules and prequalification application.

Why was there transition relief allowed for delayed implementation?

- 1) School Budgets: Concerns for short timeframe for school budgets. Full implementation will increase budgets, without enough time for communities to work tuition rates into budgets.
- 2) Time: Prequalification and expansion policies are interim, and a mandate is needed, and will occur when rules are adopted in June.

Currently in place: Expansion and pre-qualification process

Not yet in place: tuition rate, ages, region setting

#### Early/Late Implementation

2015/16: To date, approximately 40-50% of school districts are expected to implement (early adopters) in 2015/16. Late adopters (2016/17 implementers) can contract with providers on tuition rates for 15/16. Centers must negotiate contracted rates with schools. "Cherry picking" parts of Act 166 to implement is not an option-choices are full implementation or individual contracts with providers.

ADM: this is a benefit to school budgets when implementing Act 166. Pre-K students may be counted in ADM under 166 full implementation only. School budgets will be passed after town meeting day, when schools will officially be able to report as early or late adopters. Decisions at the local level on implementation dates are made by school boards. School boards are following the same guidance documents as providers and public, and folks are encouraged to talk with school boards about Act 166 plans. List of participating schools will be available after school budgets are passed.

ALL schools must implement by 2016/17 school year.

Early adopters are eligible for technical assistance from AOE and CDD.

Vermont is the 4th or 5th state to ensure Universal Pre-K. Vermont is one of the first to ensure Universal Pre-K to children ages 3-5.

#### Tuition Rate

\$3000 rate is open for public comment, but is an accurate average tuition rate.

Annual increase in tuition rate is built in.

Providers may not charge parents an additional fee for the ten hrs/wk of Pre-K.

35 weeks during school year. May be pro-rated if a child starts late or does not attend full year.

Birthdate requirement must match school entry (ie. Sept. 1) 5 yr olds not attending

Kindergarten may participate. No hybrid model of half day Pre-K and half day Kindergarten allowable.

Center becoming pre-qualified mid-year- researching legal parameters of this scenario currently.

Tuition Schedule: Will be determined locally. Suggested schedule will be shared, but not mandated. Mandated will be no fewer than 2 payments per year, and schedule must not be detrimental to a program.

Question: PreK Expansion federal money : NO, Pre-K Expansion may not supplant 166. Keep these two separate. More later in mtg.

#### **11:00 Regional Designation**

- What is the process for determining Pre-K regions?
- Who is and how can folks get involved in the discussion of regional determinations?
- How to ensure a transparent discourse and process which is inclusive of providers, parents and community members?

Geographic limitation: Originally in Act 62 families could go to any prequalified program in Vermont (not another state) brought concerns about benefit to all.

#### Current Region Setting Guidelines

Legislature put provision within the law which charges agencies to develop suggested criteria and process for developing Pre-K regions. Plan to be submitted by agencies by Jan. 15.

Approval will be granted-unknown timeframe at this time. Draft guidance and FAQ's will be provided once confirmed (Implementation Guidance Part 2).

### Application process for school districts that want to set a region:

School boards, parents must submit application, region must be no smaller than a school district, and preferably larger than a school district.

Most districts currently planning on a region are using Supervisory Union boundaries.

Must clearly identify the region, rationale and include report of dates/summaries of school board discussions, involving providers and families impacted by region.

Agencies will have a timeframe to review and approve. Opportunity for agencies to gather additional information from within the region and from surrounding regions, if needed.

Agencies will determine turnaround period for applications which will be published in Guidance Part 2, to come out in 1-2 months.

Justification on approval is based on access, not budgets.

Special Education is a major concern for region setting.

Rationale for region setting: If all families attend programs outside of region, local programs could be forced to shut down, which will limit access for families wanting a local program.

It is expected that most families will continue to attend programs geographically as they currently are.

Is there a region setting renewal process? If needed or requested. School district may change if their school board decides to.

### Appeal Process/Administrative Complaint Process

An exception process for parents will be established for grievances. Parents can make request to the school board for an exception to the region. (Included in law and rules)

Local decisions: A school board may grant the exception - no need to go through state for approval. Case by case process.

A parent can then appeal to the state, if not pleased with school board decision.

Parents/Community members: be a part of conversation at school board meetings- this is where all decisions will be made. Agendas for school board mtgs posted ahead of time. Be your own advocate (message)

If too many complaints for a single region: a request for an exception to region must be made and tracked by school district. If there is not enough capacity within region, BBF Building Bright Futures (regional councils) will work with agencies to design solutions to meet capacity.

Anecdotally, not many 3, 4, 5 yr olds unable to currently access Pre-K, but data needs to be collected. Data collection will happen as kids are enrolled through local school.

Districts that only serve 4 yr olds are most likely face capacity issues.

### How to get involved in local region setting discussion?

School board involvement, public meetings and rulemaking public comment period. Process must be transparent locally and state-wide.

### EI Grant

10% cut from general fund budget. Unsure if EI grants will be maintained. Depend on governor's administration decides for budget cuts.

## **11:20 Pre-K Expansion Grants**

- How will this grant impact Act 166 implementation? Bulletin for delay?

- Process for determining Pre-K regions? Ability to ensure inclusion and participation from interested and important cross-sector parties?
- How might the impact school expansion of Pre-K vs partnership/full day full year services via pre-qualified childcare providers?

### Overview

Act 166 implementation is state law. Pre-K Expansion should not impact or intersect with 166. Pre-K Expansion grant was helped by passing of 166.

Highly prescriptive federal grant. Quality criteria standards in line with HeadStart standards. 1 yr grant with yearly renewals up to four years.

Full time Pre-K (same as regular school day, school calendar)

Full time licensed teacher in every classroom.

Comprehensive services such as nutrition, family support, similar to what HeadStart offers.

Require comparable teacher compensation.

Require evidence based curriculum.

Health and safety standards align with new licensing regulations.

Limited to 4 yr old children under 200% of poverty rate.

Vermont had 28 school district partner in grant application, as did all HeadStarts throughout the state.

Goal: 70% of 4 yr olds under 200% poverty to be served by this grant by end of four year period.

This will be done through new slots, improved slots.

Complexity of grant is quite different from Act 166. Act 166 must be moved forward first.

A statewide director will be hired for this grant implementation with school district partners.

Fiscal management person will be hired to manage this grant and to seamlessly blend the funding sources within guidelines and legal parameters.

This is an opportunity to figure where we want to go as a state next, after 166 is implemented, and resources we can use in future.

Sept. 2015: Implementation of this grant will begin.

In future, multiple funding streams will enable programs to best serve. Will be open to serve everyone, in addition to only eligible youth. This is a chance to pilot best practices for Vermont, and provide lessons to be learned, what benefits kids and families, as we think about all programs in future.

Partner schools and HeadStarts have signed MOU. Schools, districts may opt out or additional partners may be added in. There is a list of partners posted on governor's website.

Money for partner schools is tuition, teacher compensation, expansion- specifics to be worked out. Waiting period for state to accept the money, and guidance from feds for moving forward.

More specifications to be forthcoming. Agency websites will house additional information as it is made available.

Vermont was third out of 18 successful states applying.

Supplanting rules are in effect- Pre-K Expansion Grant must NOT pay for Act 166. But can pay for additional hours toward full time programming for eligible kids in high quality programs. Does not affect Act 166 in regions, tuition etc.

Dosage: 10 hours is insufficient dose for many children, this creates opportunity to find adequate and sustainable dose.

Many school districts are interested in expanding through partner programs as opposed to school based programs.

Regional meetings will happen to address capacity.

Question: Can districts not currently under MOU- yes, they can be added on later on, not right now.

Question: If districts can't expand their programs through 166, will the expansion grant allow opportunity to expansion? Not yet able to answer or define this fully, due to not enough information at this time. However these funds cannot pay for the ten hours prescribed in 166. This grant is not universal. This is a new grant, so rollout is unknown at this time.

Question: If you had a mixed classroom of 4 yrs olds (based on eligibility requirements) can families not under poverty level be charged tuition? Yes. Those under 200% must not be charged tuition. Does not have anything to do with the ten hours of Act 166.

Pre-rating teacher salary- this has not yet been determined.

### **11:45 Messaging and consistent language crafting for parents, community members etc.**

- Who is responsible for crafting consistent messaging?
- How to get involved with crafting of messaging?
- How to disseminate appropriate messaging?

#### Accurate Information vs. Messaging

Agencies are responsible for ensuring all get people receive the same information throughout state. (regs, processes) Clear, consistent information. Forward questions to Reeva or Manuela for clarity. Vetted answers will be provided after time.

Messaging: Happens in advocacy, is persuasive, and not responsibility of agencies.

#### Information Dissemination

Current agency partnership with BBF: BBF is crafting messaging documents (Toolkit) based on information provided by agencies for schools, providers, parents. The toolkit will be submitted by BBF and awaiting approval from agencies before public release. (current status). Toolkit will include messaging and info for three audiences: parents, providers, schools. BBF network will set up consistent outreach for messaging, once info can be clear, consistent and final.

Karen Conner, Communications from BBF: Video will be on [www.buildingbrightfutures.org](http://www.buildingbrightfutures.org) under prek4All. Everything, including toolkit, will be posted here once approved.

Direct questions from community, schools, providers to Guidance Document Part 1, to agency websites, and BBF website.

Advise people to pay attention for upcoming information.

Question: When can message be shared with families about enrollment process? Must first know which districts will be early adopters. That list will be finalized after town mtg day and budget votes. For late adopters- proceed as have it past.

Meeting with school districts has not yet happened. Message and information should happen when it can be accurate, up to date and definite from schools.

Flyers on what is Act 166 will be forthcoming from BBF.

Some families/community members have heard of Act 166.

Let's Grow Kids has done a great job and has materials out regarding the importance of early education. The more people hear about the importance, the more understanding there will be for Act 166. They could be helpful in getting messaging out regionally or locally.

## 11:55 Wrap Up and Next Steps

### Announcements

Governor Peter Shumlin has been announced through vote of 110-69.

Vermont Early Childhood Alliance: One of the Alliance agenda items for this year is to increase rates of the Child Care Financial Assistance Program (CCFAP). If interested in working on this or learning more about this issue, contact kelly Ault, [kelly@vteca.org](mailto:kelly@vteca.org)

Outstanding questions or to be on ELD committee distribution list: email

[cgreene@buildingbrightfutures.org](mailto:cgreene@buildingbrightfutures.org)

Early Learning & Development Committee is through BBF, and open to anyone.

Meeting schedule TDB (every other or third month).

### Actionable Items:

- ★ Meeting Minutes: Dana Anderson: *Completed 1/17/15*
- ★ Post minutes on BBF website- **Cynthia**
- ★ Post video on BBF website- Karen Conner: *Completed 1/13/15*
- ★ Summary conference call within one week-Cynthia, Sherry, Megan, Dana : *Completed 1/13/15*
- ★ Discuss potential second meeting when Guidance Part 2 is published (tentatively discuss in March): **Early Learning & Development Steering Committee: Cynthia, Dana, Sherry, Megan**

### Action items from call:

- ★ Info summary to regional coordinators for distribution: Half page of “Top Ten Action Items” or “Next Steps”- **Dana and Cynthia**
- ★ Next Meeting- March 12, 2015: Teacher Licensure
  - ★ Updates from the Field
    - · The BBF Website ([www.buildingbrightfutures.org](http://www.buildingbrightfutures.org)) now has an active “Pre-K For All” tab where the latest news and information about Act 166 and other Pre-K initiatives can be found. Please visit regularly to find updates, informational materials and links to resources.
    - · The T.E.A.C.H. licensure scholarship model is developed and pending Advisory Committee approval and long-term funding.
    - · Please sign up at [www.sharedservicesVT.org](http://www.sharedservicesVT.org) for all ECE information including Act 166 news.
    - · The Early Learning and Development Committee meeting of January 8<sup>th</sup> was video-taped and will be posted on the BBF website during the week of January 12<sup>th</sup>. Please refer folks to the link so they can catch the latest news on the Act 166 and Pre-K Expansion Grant discussions. ([www.buildingbrightfutures.org](http://www.buildingbrightfutures.org) and click on the “Pre-K For All” tab.

- · Part two of the Implementation Guidance document for Act 166 should be available in the coming 4-5 weeks. Please check the BBF and AOE websites for updates.